
Catholicism and Anti-Catholicism in Cheshire during the Long Reformation, c.1560 – c.1720

A thesis submitted to
The University of Birmingham
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D)

by

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27 March 2022

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Abstract

This thesis is a county study of Catholicism in Cheshire during the Long Reformation period – notionally 1560-1720, when Catholicism was a proscribed minority faith whose practice could attract significant penalties. It remained proscribed for a further century after this period, but was penalised somewhat more routinely than hitherto, and in that sense the 1720s marks a break point in the history of anti-Catholic persecution and thus a natural end point for this study. This revival of the county study genre, in vogue in the 1960s and early 1970s but subsequently historiographically less fashionable, seeks to interrogate the low-level evidence of early modern English Catholicism in the context of the substantial body of literature on the subject that has been produced over the last thirty years.

Firstly, it will demonstrate the limited impact of anti-Catholic initiatives in Cheshire over the period. It will show that only a small minority of Catholics were penalised: initially, during the mid-late Elizabethan years, by imprisonment, when no alternative punishment proved operable; and latterly, through distraint of property. There were, however, peaks and troughs in this trajectory, most noticeably in the post-Civil War period.

Secondly, it will show how significant the alternatives to the traditional model of gentry-centred recusant Catholicism were: the different forms of Catholicism (recusant and church papist, seigneurially and plebeian led) that flourished in the county. They show that Catholicism there was stronger than previous generations of historians have acknowledged.

Lastly, it will differentiate the degree of confessional co-existence with the wider community – limited integration in matters of faith and family life, but rather more integrated in matters of everyday life which touched on neither of these areas. It will also demonstrate engagement with the principal national issues of the era – the Civil War, the Popish Plot, and Jacobitism.

Dedication

In memoriam

PASCHAL BENEDICT AMBROSE SIXTUS

15.iv.MMVI – 12.iii.MMXXII

A faithful friend throughout the gestation of this thesis

Who went to a Greater Light

just as the final corrections were being made

Acknowledgements

Most of these relate to the seven happy years I have spent on and off at the University of Birmingham, but there are some which go back rather further. The earliest of these relate to my late parents Christopher and Jessie Barlow, who fostered my precocious interest in matters historical in my pre-school days, with books and trips out to historical sites, and my masters at grammar school, Mervyn Edwards, John Bradbury and Derrick Kay sustained that interest through my teens. My interest in the early modern period was first kindled at Durham University by the late Professor David Loades, who was also an unwavering support to me through personal health difficulties.

Fast forward to UoB 2014. Most of the early modernists in the History Department have contributed to my academic development – Dr. Tara Hamling and Dr. Margaret Small with valuable comments on my submission for my first year Ph.D checkpoint - but my principal debt is to my two supervisors, Professor Richard Cust and Dr. Jonathan Willis. It was serendipitous that my researches coincided with Richard's own for his recent book on the pre-Civil War gentry of Cheshire, and he has provided me with numerous starters for ten, as well as wise guidance developed over decades of doctoral supervision. Jonathan has provided invaluable feedback from the complementary standpoint of a historian of early modern religion (as well as eagle-eyed proof reading). I am also very grateful to my examiners, Professor Michael Questier and Professor Elaine Fulton. Michael I had previously met and had lengthy, helpful discussions with at a couple of conferences, and Elaine had helped shape my postgraduate career during my MA (as had Dr. David Gange, who pleasingly re-appeared in a cameo role as chairman of the viva panel). Both Michael and Elaine have provided me with extremely useful feedback for taking this work further. Thanks are also due to the Birmingham Research Institute for History and Cultures (BRIHC) for funding my doctoral research.

The final thanks are due to my wife, Pat. It was her university studies in 2009 that inspired me to pick up my own academic career, and her diligent researching that identified Birmingham's MA in the History of Christianity as an ideal vehicle for my interests. For these and other reasons, without her this thesis would not have seen the light of day.

Howard Barlow

Laetare Sunday, 2022

Abbreviations

AAW	Archives of the Archbishop of Westminster
BIY	Borthwick Institute, University of York
CALS	Cheshire Archives and Local Studies
CRS	Catholic Record Society
EHR	English Historical Review
HJ	Historical Journal
JCAS	Journal of the Chester Archaeological Society
JEH	Journal of Ecclesiastical History
MH	Midland History
NA	National Archives
NH	Northern History
NWCH	North West Catholic History
ODNB	Oxford Dictionary of National Biography
P&P	Past and Present
RH	Recusant History
SRO	Staffordshire Record Office
THSLC	Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire
TRHS	Transactions of the Royal Historical Society
VCH	Victoria County History
YAJ	Yorkshire Archaeological Journal

Conventions

Dates are given in the Old Style, but for the avoidance of ambiguity the contemporary convention that the year commenced on 25 March is retained. Dates between 1 January and 24 March are expressed in the hybrid convention <old year>-<newyear>, eg 1640-1.

Texts from manuscript sources have been reproduced as found but for clarity contemporary contractions have been expanded in brackets, eg co(mmun)ion. Texts taken from published sources have followed the conventions of the editor in question.

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Introduction

‘The main conclusion is a negative one: there were few recusants in Cheshire in the second half of the sixteenth century.’¹ This assessment by Keith Wark in his 1971 monograph, *Elizabethan Recusancy in Cheshire*, was reflected four years later in John Bossy’s examination of the national distribution of early modern Catholicism: ‘it stopped more or less abruptly at the Mersey, from whose shores the Blundells and their neighbours gazed across at the resolute conformity of Cheshire.’² Two further high-level surveys of Catholicism in the county over the *longue durée* of the post-Reformation period appeared a few years later: both took Wark as their starter for ten and did not dissent his judgement.³ Michael Mullett reiterated it in a study of 1998, and little of substance has been written on the subject since.⁴ *Prima facie*, then, the topic would appear an unpromising one for the present study.

Yet the historiography of early modern English Catholicism has expanded substantially since these works were written, and its methodology has altered radically, particularly over the last twenty years. This thesis seeks to capture the insights of this recent scholarship and cascade them down to the local level in a case study of post-Reformation Catholicism in Cheshire over the Long Reformation, from its Elizabethan origins down to the early Hanoverian years. In terms of its chapter structure, it will demonstrate, firstly, the limited impact of anti-Catholic initiatives in Cheshire over the period; secondly, the different Catholic identities (recusant and church papist, seigneurially and plebeian led) that flourished

¹ Keith Wark, *Elizabethan Recusancy in Cheshire* (Manchester, 1971), p. 130.

² John Bossy, *The English Catholic Community 1570-1850* (London, 1975), p. 92.

³ Stephen Lander, ‘Roman Catholicism’ in Brian Harris (ed.), *The Victoria History of the County of Chester* (5 vols., Oxford, 1979-2005), III, pp. 88-100, p. 88; J. A. Hilton, ‘Post-Reformation Catholicism in Cheshire’, *NWCH* 9 (1982), pp. 1-7, pp. 1, 6.

⁴ Michael Mullett, *Catholics in Britain and Ireland 1558-1829* (Basingstoke, 1998), p. 16. Christina Michelle Brindley, ‘Images of Female Piety and the Development of Post-Reformation Catholicism in the Diocese of Chester, c. 1558 – c. 1625’ (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Manchester Metropolitan University, 2014) does consider some Cheshire cases, but predominantly focuses on Lancashire, owing to the preponderance of evidence from that shire.

there; and lastly, the degree to which confessional co-existence allowed Catholics to live as their Protestant neighbours did, or alternatively placed constraints on such toleration. It will also demonstrate interlocks with the principal national issues of the era.

A key milestone in the recent transformation of English Catholic historiography was a conference held at University College London in 1997, its objective being ‘to break free of the constraints that have traditionally bedevilled the subject matter: its largely conservative framework, the hagiographical tone of traditional scholarship, and a principally internalist narrative.’⁵ To unpack this quotation, the framework of traditional Catholic history was ‘the twin pillars [...] of recusancy and martyrdom’⁶, its quasi-hagiographical focus the heroism of the faithful ‘in spite of dungeon, fire and sword’⁷, and its *dramatis personae* predominantly Catholics. This was not to gainsay the scholarly contribution of traditionalist Catholic historiography, rather to recognize that ‘Catholicism was not a discrete subject but a crucial facet of early modern English culture and politics’ which had hitherto been disconnected from the historiographical mainstream.⁸

Consideration of two significant and conflicting historiographical interventions of the 1970s and 1980s, both by mainstream historians, illustrates this point. Bossy’s *The English Catholic Community* portrays post-Reformation English Catholicism as a new creation of continental exiles imbued with the purified Catholicism of the Council of Trent, whereas Christopher Haigh’s *oeuvre* stresses the continuity of pre-Reformation Catholicism through the endeavours of recusant pre-Reformation clergy.⁹ But both historians agreed on the

⁵ Ethan Shagan, ‘Preface and Acknowledgements’, in idem (ed.), *Catholics and the ‘Protestant Nation’: Religious Politics and Identity in Early Modern England* (Manchester, 2005), p. vi.

⁶ Idem, ‘Introduction: Catholic history in context’ in *ibid.*, p. 2.

⁷ The quotation is from the hymn ‘Faith of our fathers, living still / In spite of dungeon, fire and sword’ by the Catholic convert and priest Frederick William Faber (1814-63).

⁸ Shagan, ‘Preface’, p. vi.

⁹ Bossy, *Community*, esp. pp. 4, 10; Christopher Haigh ‘The Continuity of Catholicism in the English Reformation’, *P&P* 93 (1981), pp. 37-69.

eventual outcome: post-Reformation Catholicism in England survived under the aegis of a passive gentry anxious to avoid the worst excesses of the penal laws. Bossy spoke of Elizabethan Catholicism as being ‘a progress from inertia to inertia within three generations’ and Haigh asserted that ‘[Jesuits and seminaries] chose to spend their time with their social and educational equals, in the relative security of a manor-house, rather than tramp the cold moors from one hovel to the next.’¹⁰ For both historians, post-Reformation English Catholicism was marginalised from the mainstream of early modern political and social life.

By the 1990s, however, the mainstream historiography of the English Reformation was undergoing a shift. The revisionist arguments of Haigh – that Reformation was a slow war of attrition against deeply ingrained Catholic sentiment, rather than the rapid fall of a moribund institution depicted by traditionalist historians like A. G. Dickens – were accepted orthodoxy by the time that his *English Reformations* and Eamon Duffy’s *The Stripping of the Altars* were published early in that decade.¹¹ A post-revisionist school of historians were by then seeking to nuance the revisionists’ conclusions and investigate their implications for sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English religious history, through thematic studies of various aspects of early modern religious life, both Protestant and Catholic. Generally acknowledging the key points of the revisionist case for a ‘slow’ Reformation, many of these studies had longer horizons than those of the traditionalists, with a terminus *ad quem* of 1625 or 1642, or even 1700, rather than 1559 or 1603.¹² Early and representative examples of this genre whose titles encapsulate their approach and coverage are Tessa Watt’s *Cheap Print and*

¹⁰ John Bossy, ‘The Character of Elizabethan Catholicism’, *P&P* 21 (1962), pp. 39-59, p. 59; Christopher Haigh, ‘From Monopoly to Minority: Catholicism in Early Modern England’, *TRHS* 31 (1981), pp. 129-147, p. 147.

¹¹ Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations: religion, politics and society under the Tudors* (Oxford, 1993); Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580* (1st edn, New Haven and London, 1992). A. G. Dickens, *The English Reformation* (2nd edn, London, 1967) is the classic statement of the traditionalist interpretation.

¹² Christopher Haigh, ‘The recent historiography of the English Reformation’, *HJ* 25 (1982), pp. 995-1007, articulated a paradigm of ‘rapid’ and ‘slow’ models of Reformation, each qualified by whether they were ‘from above’ or ‘from below.’ Peter Marshall, *Reformation England 1480-1642* (2nd edn, London, 2012) provides an overview of traditional, revisionist and post-revisionist scholarship.

Popular Piety, 1550-1640 (which has a Protestant focus) and Michael Questier's *Conversion, Politics and Religion in England 1580-1625* (which is principally oriented towards Catholicism.)¹³

The conference of 1997 thus had synergy with the *zeitgeist*, and subsequently post-revisionism has transformed Catholic historiography from being the niche specialisation of co-religionists that it was for most of the twentieth century into the mainstream of early modern history. The re-branding in 2014 of the Catholic Record Society's journal, *Recusant History*, as *British Catholic History* is symbolic of that shift.

This introduction will firstly explore some of the major implications of post-revisionist Catholic historiography. It will elaborate the project justification above, articulate the research questions that recent scholarship poses for this project, and outline the chapter structure in which they will be addressed. It will then go on to discuss the project's sources, their advantages and limitations, and how they have shaped its scope and methodology. It will conclude with a brief survey of the historical and geographical background for a study of early modern Cheshire.

0.1 *Historiographical background*

Wark's monograph on Cheshire is one of a number of county studies of Elizabethan Catholicism that were produced as either MA or PhD theses in or around the 1960s.¹⁴ Their genesis would seem due in no small part to the arch-traditionalist, A. G. Dickens, whose *oeuvre* (and in particular *The English Reformation*) had demonstrated the value of 'bottom

¹³ Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550-1640* (Cambridge, 1994); Michael Questier, *Conversion, Politics and Religion in England, 1580-1625* (Cambridge, 1996).

¹⁴ J. E. Paul, 'The Hampshire Recusants in the Reign of Elizabeth I' (PhD thesis, University of Southampton, 1958); M. O'Dwyer 'Catholic Recusants in Essex, c. 1580 - c. 1600' (MA thesis, University of London, 1960); Alan Davidson, 'Roman Catholicism in Oxfordshire from the late Elizabethan period to the Civil War (c.1580 - c.1640)' (PhD thesis, University of Bristol, 1970); Vincent Burke, 'Catholic Recusants in Elizabethan Worcestershire' (MA thesis, University of Birmingham, 1972). All of the above are unpublished. Wark, *Cheshire* had its origins in a University of Manchester MA thesis of 1966.

up' research of the local archives in the increasingly accessible county and city record offices.¹⁵ Dickens had himself during the 1940s and 50s produced articles on Yorkshire recusancy, and some of these later studies show the influence of his prototypes.¹⁶ Firstly, they are heavily focused on enumeration of Catholics, a feature they share with pre-war studies of recusancy in the *longue durée* by Catholic authors who were keen to maximise the vitality and critical mass of their predecessors, in the climate of a campaign for canonisation of the English Martyrs.¹⁷

Secondly, their scope is strictly confined to recusancy – separation from the rites of the established Church of England – and disregards the admittedly more nebulous but still significant phenomenon of semi-conformity (church papistry). Dickens was dismissive of the latter: '[t]here seems, however, no reason to suppose that these so-called church papists remained very numerous toward the end of [Elizabeth's] reign.'¹⁸ Wark, on the other hand, acknowledged the reality of the problem but pleaded the methodological difficulties of its investigation:

Little attempt is made to assess the extent to which Cheshire men and women of the late sixteenth century adjusted their ideas and feelings to the official Protestant Christianity of their day [...]. This is because only those who took up a publicly Catholic position by failing to attend worship at the parish church made any significant impact on the documents of their day. Those who shared their beliefs but not their defiance of the harsh penal law remain almost wholly unknown.¹⁹

Not all historians of the time disregarded church papistry: Hugh Aveling's survey of the adaptability of Catholicism over the post-Reformation centuries argued that '[i]t was the Church-papists who saved the Catholic community'²⁰ The equation of Catholicism with

¹⁵ Haigh, 'Recent historiography', p. 997.

¹⁶ A. G. Dickens, 'The First Stages of Romanist Recusancy in Yorkshire', *YAJ* 35 (1943), pp. 157-182; idem, 'The extent and character of recusancy in Yorkshire, 1604', *YAJ* 37 (1951), pp. 24-48; idem and J. Newton, 'Further Light on the scope of Yorkshire recusancy in 1604', *YAJ* 38 (1955), pp. 524-528.

¹⁷ Brian Magee, *The English Recusants: A Study of the Post-Reformation Catholic Survival and the Operation of the Recusancy Laws* (London, 1938) is a characteristic example of such works. The Forty Martyrs of England and Wales were beatified by Pope Pius XI in 1929 and canonised by Pope Paul VI in 1970.

¹⁸ Dickens, *English Reformation*, p. 425.

¹⁹ Wark, *Cheshire*, p. vii.

²⁰ J. C. H. Aveling, *The Handle and the Axe* (Colchester, 1976), p. 162.

recusancy was not, however, finally blown out of the water until the publication of Alexandra Walsham's *Church Papists* in 1993. This early example of post-revisionist historiography argued that such semi-conformity, typically drawing the line at the reception of communion in the Church of England, was 'the most prevalent form of spontaneous religious resistance' in a society where Church membership and community were closely intertwined.²¹ It was a practice connived at by most Catholic priests by 1600, was common down until the Civil War, and persisted until the end of the seventeenth century.²² Implicitly, Walsham's researches point to the need for this phenomenon to be factored into the picture of Cheshire painted by Wark: in her central chapter where she characterises the practices of church papistry, there are no fewer than twenty references to his monograph.²³

A further implication of Walsham's work is that Catholics were rather more integrated into the society and politics of the day than traditional Catholic historiography had suggested. Bossy's *English Catholic Community*, a high-level survey largely built upon the county studies of the 1960s and earlier works, had described that community as 'a branch of the English nonconforming tradition.' In contrast Ethan Shagan, in his introduction to a 2005 collection of essays deriving from the 1997 conference, called for the integration of Catholic history into the early modern mainstream, pointing to its political engagement and the fluidity of religious identities in that period, which defies their pigeon holing into two discrete blocs.²⁴ Two important studies of Catholic families later that decade addressed that deficiency: Michael Questier's study of the Sussex Montague family demonstrated their involvement in key political issues between Elizabeth's accession and the English Civil War, and Marshall and Scott's account of the Throckmortons of Coughton over three centuries

²¹ Alexandra Walsham, *Church Papists: Catholicism, Conformity and Confessional Polemic in Early Modern England* (Manchester, 1993), pp. 13, 21.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 70, 96-97.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 73-99.

²⁴ Bossy, *Community*, p. 7; Shagan, 'Introduction', esp. pp. 1-3, 18.

observed that ‘in no way were they part of a recusant bubble.’²⁵ More recently Questier has applied this thesis to a national canvas, in a narrative which displays the interlocks between religious interest groups, both Catholic and Protestant, and the key dynastic and political issues of the Elizabethan and early Stuart periods.²⁶ The works of these authors have thus modified our understanding of the Catholic elite, and provide a lens for examination of the career of Sir Thomas Savage, a Catholic and the leading aristocrat of early Stuart Cheshire.

Meanwhile other historians produced studies of Catholics of the humbler sort, who had hitherto not featured significantly in Catholic historiography.²⁷ In an important article of 1998 Bill Sheils traced the fate of the community of Egton Bridge in the North York Moors over the course of two centuries, and the same year Marie Rowlands’ collection of essays, *Catholics of Parish and Town 1558-1778* appeared, which included a further essay by Sheils analysing the demography of Jacobean recusants in Yorkshire, and one by Malcolm Wanklyn on seventeenth-century Madeley in Shropshire.²⁸ Regrettably, however, these interventions have not given rise to a succession of similar local studies: only a further article on North Yorkshire by one of Sheils’ pupils and a recent PhD thesis by Wendy Brogden on Herefordshire are known to have addressed this historiographical dearth subsequently.²⁹ This study therefore seeks to supplement this literature through particular consideration of the

²⁵ Michael Questier, *Catholicism and Community in Early Modern England: Politics, Aristocratic Patronage and Religion c. 1550-1640* (Cambridge, 2006); Peter Marshall and Geoffrey Scott, ‘Introduction’ in idem (eds), *Catholic Gentry in English Society: The Throckmortons of Coughton from Reformation to Emancipation* (Farnham, 2009), pp. 1-30, p. 6.

²⁶ Michael Questier, *Dynastic Politics and the British Reformations, 1558-1630* (Oxford, 2019).

²⁷ Bill Sheils, ‘Catholics and their Neighbours in a Rural Community: Egton Chapelry 1590-1780’, *Northern History* 34 (1998), pp. 109-133.

²⁸ Marie Rowlands (ed.), *Catholics of Parish and Town 1558-1778* (CRS, 1999). The component essays cited are Bill Sheils, ‘Household, Age and Gender among Jacobean Yorkshire Recusants’, in *ibid.*, pp. 131-152 and Malcolm Wanklyn, ‘Catholics in the Village Community: Madeley, Shropshire, 1630-1770’ in *ibid.*, pp. 210-236.

²⁹ Emma Watson, ‘A Stiff-Necked, Wilful and Obstinate People: The Catholic Laity in the North York Moors, c. 1559-1603’, *YAJ* 77 (2005), pp. 181-204; Wendy Brogden, ‘Catholicism, Community and Identity in late Tudor and early Stuart Herefordshire’ (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 2018).

parishes of Bunbury and Malpas in south-western Cheshire, whose substantial Catholic communities were predominantly plebeian.

Another important article by Sheils in 2009 examined Protestant-Catholic relations amongst the middling and humbler sorts and argued, from evidence such as Catholics holding public office and Catholic and Protestants standing as executors and witnesses to each other's wills, that 'getting on' (prospering) and 'getting along' (peacefully co-existing) were the dominant characteristics of cross-confessional interaction.³⁰ Sadly, and probably owing to the difficulty of mining relevant evidence from the archives, this piece has prompted little subsequent historiographical engagement in other local studies, though it did stimulate a number of thematic articles in Sheils's *festschrift*.³¹ This study will thus seek to examine Sheils' argument against the Cheshire evidence, not only for the lower orders but also for the gentry, incorporating the findings of a recent study by Cust and Lake showing that Everett's notion of a 'county community' which recent historiography of the early Stuart period has largely abandoned, is applicable to the case of Cheshire.³²

A further concept deriving from post-revisionist scholarship is that of a 'Long Reformation', extending well into the eighteenth century and embracing, for example, the rise of Methodism. This notion, which had long been established in the historiography of continental Europe, was also mooted with respect to English history at a conference at University College London, the Neale Colloquium of 1996.³³ It has again had limited traction subsequently, the bulk of subsequent scholarship falling on one side or other of the

³⁰ Bill Sheils, "'Getting On" and "Getting Along" in Parish and Town: Catholics and their Neighbours in England', in B. Kaplan, R. Moore, H. van Nierop and J. Pollman (eds), *Catholic Communities in Protestant States: Britain and the Netherlands c. 1570-1720* (Manchester, 2009), pp. 67-83,

³¹ Nadine Lewycky and Adam Morton (eds), *Getting Along?: Religious Identities and Confessional Relations in Early Modern England: Essays in honour of Professor W. S. Sheils* (Farnham, 2012). An example of particular relevance to this study is Peter Marshall, 'Confessionalisation and Community in the Burial of English Catholics, c. 1570-1700' in *ibid.*, pp. 57-75.

³² Richard Cust and Peter Lake, *Gentry Culture and the Politics of Religion: Cheshire on the Eve of the Civil War* (Manchester, 2020), p. 1. I am extremely grateful to the authors for a pre-publication copy of this work.

³³ Nicholas Tyacke (ed.), *England's Long Reformation 1500-1800* (London, 1998) contains the papers given at that colloquium.

1640-1660 watershed. The example of local post-Reformation Catholic history offered at the conference, Joy Rowe's study of Suffolk 'The Lopped Tree' was unintentionally appositely titled in that it examined Elizabethan Catholicism, and then fast-forwarded to the eighteenth century, leaving the branches between unfoliated.³⁴ A number of macro-historical studies by Alex Walsham form a pleasing exception to this lack of engagement. Her *Charitable Hatred* of 2006, which demonstrates that toleration in early modern England (1500 to 1700) was temporary and contingent, the least worst option at any particular juncture, rather than the inevitable by-product of Reformation asserted by Whig historians, is an example particularly pertinent to this study.³⁵ Nevertheless the present project may then modestly claim to be the first extended local study of early modern English Catholicism to engage with post-Reformation Catholicism in the *longue durée*.³⁶

This brief survey of post-revisionist historiography does not purport to consider all the considerable literature of relevance to the present study, merely that which is contributory to its primary research questions, which are discussed in the following section. Consideration of Bossy's *English Catholic Community* is also pertinent. Though Bossy's work is firmly rooted in traditionalist historiography – inevitably, considering the scholarship available to inform his analysis – the questions it asks anticipate those of the post-revisionists. Thus, for example he considers devotional practices, a topic subsequently elaborated upon by Walsham and McClain³⁷; discusses rites of passage, thus prefiguring the work of Peter Marshall on

³⁴ Joy Rowe, "'The lopped tree': the re-formation of the Suffolk Catholic community', in *ibid.*, pp. 167-193.

³⁵ Alexandra Walsham, *Charitable Hatred: Tolerance and Intolerance in England, 1500 -1700* (Manchester, 2006).

³⁶ J. C. H. Aveling's studies of York and the Yorkshire Ridings (1960-71) cover the period to 1791, and J. A. Hilton, *Catholic Lancashire: From Reformation to Renewal, 1559-1991* (Chichester, 1994) deals with the entire post-Reformation *longue durée*.

³⁷ Alexandra Walsham, 'Translating Trent? English Catholicism and the Counter-Reformation', *Historical Research* 78 (2005), pp. 288-310; *idem*, 'Beads, books and bare ruined choirs: transmutations of Catholic ritual life in Protestant England', in B. Kaplan, R. Moore, H. van Nierop and J. Pollman (eds), *Catholic Communities in Protestant States: Britain and the Netherlands c. 1570-1720* (Manchester, 2009), pp. 103-122; Lisa McClain, *Lest We Be Damned* (New York and London, 2004).

Catholic burials;³⁸ and examines the role of matriarchy, which features prominently in gender history, notably for the present geography in Brindley's researches.³⁹

In conclusion of this historiographical discussion one further observation is pertinent. Though post-revisionism has made major inroads into the religious landscape of pre-Civil War England, consideration of Catholicism in the later Stuart period has been slight. The only broad coverage of this era to have emerged in the last thirty years is an article by Sheils on the Civil War and Commonwealth, one by Glickman on the Restoration period, and a monograph by Glickman on the period after the Glorious Revolution.⁴⁰ Doctoral theses of the same period number only three: a study of sequestration during the interregnum, another on Restoration Wales, and a third on the gentry Catholicism of the Thames Valley during the long eighteenth century.⁴¹ To contextualise and compare evidence from this later period, the historian is still heavily reliant on the scholarship of the 1960s - Miller's *Popery and Politics in England 1660-1688*, and the county studies of Wiltshire and Staffordshire by Williams and Rowlands respectively, although a substantial body of recent literature on the political and wider religious history of the period is also of relevance, in particular two extensive monographs by Tim Harris.⁴²

³⁸ Marshall, 'Confessionalisation and Community'.

³⁹ Brindley, 'Female Piety'.

⁴⁰ Bill Sheils, 'English Catholics at war and peace', in Christopher Durston and Judith Maltby (eds), *Religion in Revolutionary England* (Manchester, 2006), pp. 137-157; Gabriel Glickman, 'The Church and the Catholic community 1660-1714' in Grant Tapsell (ed.), *The later Stuart Church 1660-1714* (Manchester, 2012), pp. 217-242; Gabriel Glickman, *The English Catholic Community, 1688-1745: Politics, Culture and Ideology* (Woodbridge, 2009).

⁴¹ Eilish Gregory, 'Catholics and sequestration during the English Revolution, 1642-60' (unpublished PhD thesis, University College London, 2017); Hannah Roberts, 'Re-examining Welsh Catholicism, c. 1660-1700' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Swansea, 2014); Sally Anne Jordan, 'Catholic identity, ideology and culture: the Thames Valley Catholic gentry from the Restoration to the Relief Acts' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Reading, 2002).

⁴² John Miller, *Popery and Politics in England 1660-88* (Cambridge, 1973); John Anthony Williams, *Catholic Recusancy in Wiltshire, 1660-1791* (CRS monograph no. 1, 1968); Marie Rowlands, 'Catholics in Staffordshire from the Revolution to the Relief Acts' (unpublished MA thesis, University of Birmingham, 1965); Tim Harris, *Restoration: Charles II and his Kingdoms, 1660-1685* (London, 2005); idem, *Revolution: The Great Crisis of the British Monarchy, 1685-1720* (London, 2006).

0.2 *Project justification and research questions*

As the survey above has indicated, the literature on early modern English Catholicism has expanded massively in scope and in coverage over the last thirty years, but in several areas important findings have been made which merit but have not received further engagement, notably in the area of plebeian Catholicism. Though a number of studies of gentry families have been produced as doctoral theses over the last two decades, geographically-based local studies have been few – there has been only one county study in the same period.⁴³ County studies were commonplace in the 1960s and 70s, but have since fallen out of favour. This may reflect Marie Rowlands’ observation that they ‘compartmentalis[e] to the extent of falsification’, and regional studies, which mitigate this limitation, have to some extent taken their place: three over the same period may be noted.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, county studies permit a greater granularity of analysis and record linkage, and there would seem to be a case for further examples which interlock with the present-day historiographical consensus. This is the principal objective of this project: at the same time, it will seek to avoid the pitfall highlighted by Rowlands by examining networks which cross the county’s boundaries, including those with London.

As already stated, a second objective, and one which arguably is unprecedented at the local level, is to engage with the concept of a ‘Long Reformation’ and to illustrate to what extent Catholicism changed and evolved, and to what extent it remained unchanged over the *longue durée*. Previous local or regional studies almost invariably have either a *terminus ad quem* of 1642 or earlier, or a *terminus a quo* of 1660 or later.⁴⁵ This project will therefore

⁴³ Brogden, ‘Herefordshire’.

⁴⁴ Marie Rowlands, ‘Introduction’ in idem, *Parish and Town*, pp. 1-9, p. 5; Jordan, ‘Thames Valley’; Roberts, ‘Welsh Catholicism’; Laura Verner, ‘Post-Reformation Catholicism in the Midlands of England’ (unpublished PhD thesis, King’s College London, 2016).

⁴⁵ The only exception to this rule that I am aware of is R Clark, ‘Anglicanism, recusancy and dissent in Derbyshire, 1603-1730’ (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Oxford, 1979).

seek to present a unified account which highlights significant continuities and changes between pre- and post-Civil War Catholicism, and also in Catholicism before and after the Glorious Revolution. This is particularly pertinent to its first major research question, which is the subject of Chapter 1. How did official persecution of Catholics, and popular discourses of anti-Catholicism, wax and wane over the century and a half after Elizabeth's accession, and what contributory factors may be discerned? How severe, and how efficient, were anti-Catholic campaigns at any particular time?

Chapter 2 deals with the demography of Catholicism in early modern Cheshire. In what areas of the county was it strong, and what reasons may be advanced for this? To what extent did this geographical distribution change over time? What was its socio-economic breakdown – by gender, age, occupation and social status – and how did that vary over the *longue durée*? Key areas of focus will be the extent and duration of church papistry versus recusancy, and the strength and influence of seigneurial Catholicism. On the other hand, can independent plebeian Catholic communities, like Sheils' in Egton Bridge, be identified and characterised?

The third and final chapter explores qualitative aspects of Catholic life. It seeks to understand how, and how far, a proscribed faith succeeded in sustaining itself in the long-term. How significant were the factors that bound Catholics together– their religious practices, their family life and bonds with a wider circle of co-religionists? Conversely, to what extent did they succeed in 'getting on' and 'getting along' with the wider non-Catholic community? Evidence from both elite and plebeian communities will be considered.

Wark's assertion that 'there were few recusants in Cheshire in the second half of the sixteenth century' poses further research questions, sitting as it does awkwardly alongside the evidence of Catholic strength in most of the surrounding counties – Lancashire, Flintshire,

Denbighshire, Shropshire, and Staffordshire.⁴⁶ Was this really the case, and if so, why?

Does consideration of the Catholic community as a whole, including church papists, modify this assessment? Did Catholicism grow or decline in the county over the following century?

My previous research into a limited sample of early Stuart evidence from the county suggests significant growth from the levels reported by Wark.⁴⁷ Above all, how few is few? Wark's

study unfortunately offers no comparisons with other counties to substantiate his observation.

The conclusion will offer some thoughts on this gap in the evidence.

Why Cheshire? Qualification of this minor historiographical orthodoxy of the county's 'resolute conformity' was a major driver of my earlier researches, but in the course of this work three other points became apparent. Firstly, that the study of an area outside the recognized Catholic heartlands of the north, west midlands and south coast might serve to paint a different picture of post-Reformation Catholicism, one perhaps more typical of the country overall. Secondly, that a smaller archival base, coupled with the absence of major episodes like the 1605 Gunpowder Treason in the west midlands or the Whitsun Riots of the same year in Herefordshire, might be amenable to the hitherto unattempted but potentially unwieldy local study of Catholicism in the Long Reformation. And lastly, that the continuity and quality of the county's archives, which had provided, either wholly or in part, the building-blocks of the initial monographs of John Morrill, Judith Maltby, and Steve Hindle would further facilitate such a project, as illustrated in the following section.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Bossy, *Community*, pp. 404-405. For Flintshire and Denbighshire, E. Gwynne-Jones, 'Catholic Recusancy in the Counties of Denbigh, Flint and Montgomery, 1581-1625', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* (1945), pp. 114-134.

⁴⁷ Howard Barlow, 'Catholicism in early Stuart Cheshire, 1603-42' (unpublished MA dissertation, University of Birmingham, 2015).

⁴⁸ John Morrill, *Cheshire 1630-1660: County Government and Society during the English Revolution* (London, 1974); Judith Maltby, *Prayer Book and People in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1998); Steve Hindle, *The State and social change in early modern England c. 1550-1640* (Basingstoke, 2000).

0.3 *The sources, their advantages and limitations*

The kernel of this project is a prosopographical matrix of over 4,000 Cheshire Catholics from the period 1560-1706, recording their presentment at over 200 ecclesiastical or civil proceedings across the period. These come from four major sources.

The first of these are the correction books from ecclesiastical visitations, held by Cheshire Archives and Local Services (hereafter CALS) in Chester. For the most part the visitations were mostly those of the diocesan bishop, which were typically triennial, although from the 1670s onwards the majority come from twice yearly ruridecanal visitations, and there are also across the period surviving records of seven primary visitations of their province by the Archbishops of York, held by the Borthwick Institute at York.⁴⁹ These documents record presentments for recusancy, absence from church, non-communication and other offences suggestive of Catholicism, principally failure to have a child baptised. They are largely complete for the years 1590-1685, with the exception of the period of the interregnum when ecclesiastical jurisdiction was abolished. There are no surviving visitation books from 1565 to 1578, and those from the critical decade of the 1580s, when recusancy legislation was first introduced, contain very few cases, which supports Haigh's hypothesis that the bishop of the time, William Chadderton, recorded them in a separate set of books which have not survived.⁵⁰ Ecclesiastical cases against Catholics lapsed with James II's proclamation of the first Declaration of Indulgence in 1687 and were unenforceable after his fall, when the 1689 Toleration Act permitted Protestant nonconformity.

The second set of sources is the Crown Books of Assize, held in the National Archives, which record the names of recusants presented before the Assize judges at the

⁴⁹ CALS, EDV1 series, vols 2a-100; BIY, V series, vols 1578-9, CB.3, 1590-1, CB.2, 1595-6, CB.3, 1629-30, CB.3, 1633.CB2, 1662-3, CB.2, 1684-5, CB.2.

⁵⁰ Christopher Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire* (London and New York, 1975), pp. 269-270.

twice-yearly meetings of the Court of Great Sessions. The first cases date from 1584, and thereafter are continuous through to 1686, resuming briefly for a year after the Glorious Revolution.⁵¹ From 1660 onwards, however, recusancy legislation was also used to police the emerging problem of Protestant dissent, and such confessional allegiances as are recorded are not always reliable, though the tracing of individuals' histories of presentments over the course of time has resolved the bulk of such ambiguities. There are in addition bundles of case papers from each of the Assize sessions, although constraints of time have precluded their systematic examination by this project.⁵²

Thirdly, there are the Recusant Rolls of the Exchequer, also held in the National Archives, which record the fines and sequestrations of lands and goods reported by the county sheriff each Michaelmas in respect of the year ending the previous Easter. These penalties, which represent a subset of convictions at the Assizes, to which they were reserved between 1587 and 1606, were initially recorded in the Exchequer Pipe Rolls after the introduction of anti-recusancy legislation but transferred to a discrete series of records in 1592 when their volume became unmanageable in a multi-purpose system.⁵³ The series comprises eighty-two rolls, each normally covering a regnal financial year in the period 1592 to 1691, when the system ceased, though there are gaps in this sequence, notably during the interregnum. The rolls, written in Latin (except during the Commonwealth), are made up of parchment scrolls (rotulets) stitched together, one or more rotulets per county depending on the volume of entries, though not all counties feature in every roll: there are, for example, rotulets for Cheshire in only twenty-five of the rolls.⁵⁴

⁵¹ NA, CHES 21 series, vols 1-5.

⁵² NA, CHES 24 series.

⁵³ Hugh Bowler and Timothy McCann (eds), *Recusants in the Exchequer Pipe Rolls, 1581-1592*, CRS 71 (1985); NA, E 377 series.

⁵⁴ NA, E377, nos 1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 10, 14, 17, 19, 22, 28, 30, 36, 37, 41, 42, 45, 47, 56, 63, 67, 73, 76, 77, 78, 79.

The last major set of sources are the books of Quarter Sessions held by CALS, which are continuous from 1570 onwards, with only a three-year gap at the beginning of the Civil War.⁵⁵ They record cases of recusancy between 1581 and 1584, when Assize proceedings commenced, but thereafter only occasional presentments for absence from church until after the Restoration, when regular quarterly presentments of recusants resumed with regularity, continuing down to 1702. The respective functions of two parallel systems of civil policing (Assizes and Quarter Sessions) during this later period are unclear, although the legal personnel involved would obviously have been different. The survival of Quarter Sessions presentments after 1690 suggests that they were perhaps concerned with identifying potential Catholic dissidents rather than financially penalising them.⁵⁶ As with the Assizes, files of papers survive from each quarter session, although for the reasons previously noted these have only been examined systematically for the period after 1689, when presentment lists were no longer recorded in the sessions books.⁵⁷

Consideration of these four sets of bulk sources shows that construction of a multi-dimensional picture of the Catholic population of Cheshire, or at least of that part of it which failed to escape the law, is possible for the period up to the end of the seventeenth century. After the end of persecution, the evidence base changes, as Williams observed of Wiltshire in the long eighteenth century, when civil and ecclesiastical cases against Catholics were a thing of the past.⁵⁸ There are, however, four important sets of sources for Cheshire from the first quarter of the eighteenth century: the diocesan returns of papists of 1706 and 1717, the registration of papists' estates, and the records relating to the Catholic Taxation Act of 1723.⁵⁹ Although the registration of estates continued until 1759, the majority took place in

⁵⁵ CALS, QJB series.

⁵⁶ See section 1.8 below.

⁵⁷ CALS, QJF series.

⁵⁸ Williams, *Wiltshire*, p. 87.

⁵⁹ Allan Mitchinson (ed.), *The Return of the Papists for the Diocese of Chester, 1705* (Wigan, 1986), pp. 1-3; CALS, EDA 6/5, QDR 17 and QDR 4.

the period 1717 to 1723, and although there were further returns of papists in 1767 and 1778, 1723 marks an abatement in the eighteenth-century persecution of Catholics, and forms a natural *terminus ad quem* for the present study.⁶⁰

It should be noted that the records of the civil courts (Assizes and Quarter Sessions) cover only the county of Cheshire, as distinct from the city of Chester, which was during the period a county in its own right.⁶¹ Recusancy and absence presentments from the city survive in a variety of sources – the Mayor’s Books, the Mayor’s Letters, and a series of Quarter Sessions files – but seemingly only sporadically, and in low volume, and have accordingly been excluded from systematic study by the project.⁶² There are no entries for the city in the Recusant Rolls, which raises questions as to whether the proceedings of the Crown Mote, which have not survived, included recusancy prosecutions.

Other records from the county are less plentiful. A collected edition of the papers of Sir Thomas Savage, the leading aristocrat of the early seventeenth century, has been published,⁶³ and papers of the Whitmores of Leighton are contained in the Mostyn collection at the University of Bangor,⁶⁴ but other family papers held by CALS and elsewhere, which occasionally shed light on the later seventeenth century, are those of Protestants. CALS holds over 20,000 wills of the period, including those of a representative sample of the Catholic gentry, though plebeian Catholic wills are relatively scarce.⁶⁵ The papers of the pre-Civil War bishop of Chester, bishop John Bridgeman, held by the Staffordshire Record Office, provide information concerning Catholic policy during the 1620s and 30s,⁶⁶ and there

⁶⁰ J. H. E. Bennett and J. C. Dewhurst (eds.), *Quarter Sessions Records with Other Records of the Justices of the Peace for the County Palatine of Chester, 1559 - 1760, Together With A Few Earlier Miscellaneous Records Deposited With the County Council, RSLC 94* (1940), pp. 2-19 shows that six of the eight rolls of registrations were completed by 1723.

⁶¹ Morrill, *Cheshire*, p. 7.

⁶² CALS, ZMB, ZML and ZQSF series.

⁶³ Lyn Boothman and Richard Hyde-Parker (eds), *Savage Fortune: An Aristocratic Family in the Early Seventeenth Century* (Woodbridge, 2006).

⁶⁴ University of Bangor, Mostyn MSS.

⁶⁵ CALS, WS series.

⁶⁶ Staffordshire Record Office, D1287/18/2 (P/399 sub-series).

survives a diary by James II's bishop of Chester, Thomas Cartwright, which sheds valuable light on his support for the King's policy of Catholicisation.⁶⁷ The parish of Bunbury contained the largest concentration of Catholics in the county, and provides a number of sets of records – an Easter Book of 1590, the journal of the Caroline schoolmaster of the parish, churchwardens' accounts from 1655 onwards, and a well cross-referenced edition of the parish registers – all of which facilitate more granular analysis through record linkage at various points in the study.⁶⁸ The legacy of relevant material culture surviving is unfortunately insignificant: none of the houses of the Catholic gentry of the period are still standing.⁶⁹

0.4 *The evidence of Catholicism*

Since the backbone of the evidence of early modern English Catholicism derives from either civil or ecclesiastical presentments for religious delinquency, it is appropriate before proceeding to specifics to consider this evidence generically, and what it reveals about the Catholic community. Three types of offence account for the overwhelming majority of presentments: recusancy, that is to say, absence from any church for a month without good reason, as per the statute of 1581 and subsequent legislation; the lesser offence of absence from one's parish church on a Sunday or holy day, as per the 1559 Act of Uniformity; and failure to receive the Holy Communion (not a civil offence). I will argue that whilst the first and last of these respectively are indicative of the two major sub-groups of the Catholic community – recusants and church papists, the latter practising partial or token conformity to

⁶⁷ J. Hunter (ed.), *The Diary of Thomas Cartwright, Bishop of Chester* (Camden Society, 1843).

⁶⁸ CALS, DCR27/3; Hall, J. (ed.). 'Memorials of the Civil War in Cheshire and the Adjacent Counties, by Thomas Malbon, of Nantwich, Gent., and Providence Improved, by Edward Burghall, Vicar of Acton, near Nantwich', *Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire* 19 (1889), pp. 1-22; CALS, P40/13/1; J. Elsworth (ed.), *Register (Transcript) of Baptisms, Burials and Marriages in the Parish of Bunbury in the County of Chester* (21 vols., unpublished, held by CALS).

⁶⁹ Peter de Figueiredo and Julian Treuherz, *Cheshire Country Houses* (Chichester, 1988), pp. 244, 262-5, 268 records that none of the major gentry houses mentioned below have survived in any recognisable form.

the established Church – the equation of absence with Catholicism is questionable. Prior to the systematic policing of these offences, however, the early post-Reformation years saw a persistent and widespread attachment to traditional Catholic practices, which nevertheless stopped short of separation: this will be considered first.

0.41 Conservative traditionalists

In the early Elizabethan years it is probable that a large proportion of the population remained Catholic in sympathy, which manifested in an attachment to those externals of the old faith which had survived the Henrician and Edwardine changes, or been revived under Mary – rosaries, Latin primers and liturgies, communion wafers, vestments, rood lofts, devotional gestures such as the sign of the Cross, and prayers and bells for the dead. As Haigh has shown, such artefacts and practices remained common throughout the religious no man's land of the 1560s, but thereafter they were gradually eroded by the regime's programme of anti-Catholicism, until by the mid to late 1580s examples of them are rare.⁷⁰ Their devotees, too, were a transient group, in whom the impulse to conform was ultimately dominant. To Haigh, they became a deCatholicised but unProtestantised rump of 'parish Anglicans' with little more than an aversion to change and a penchant for the traditional festive culture, though Judith Maltby views them more positively as 'Prayer Book Protestants' who as if by osmosis developed a strong attachment to Cranmer's rolling periods through their reverent delivery by surpliced clergy. The two interpretations are not mutually exclusive, rather a matter of emphasis. Although through their conformity such traditionalists disappear from the record,

⁷⁰ Haigh, 'Continuity', pp. 40-41; idem, 'The Church of England, The Catholics and the people', in Peter Marshall (ed.), *The Impact of the English Reformation 1500-1640* (London and New York, 1997), pp. 235-256, pp. 236-238.

Walsham has postulated that they formed a constituency in support of the Laudian innovations of the 1630s.⁷¹

0.42 Recusants

For the historian, the recusants are the most visible of these three groups, which may in some degree explain their historiographical predominance for much of the twentieth century.

Technically, recusancy was an offence which applied equally to separatist Puritans as well as Catholics, and a statute of 1593 was introduced specifically to address the former group, although prosecutions of Protestants were few and far between before 1660.⁷² It attracted a draconian fine of £20 per month – double the annual earnings of a day labourer – and from 1587 onwards, sequestration of lands and goods for non-payment. It was an offence placing a heavy burden of proof on the prosecuting regime – that the accused had not attended church anywhere over the period of a month without lawful excuse – which inefficient or recalcitrant churchwardens often failed to provide, though with the automatic renewal of recusancy penalties introduced by the statute of 1587, the onus of self-exculpation through proof of conformity switched to the convicted recusant.⁷³ Comparison of the recusants indicted at the 1587 Cheshire Assizes with the first Recusant Roll of 1592 illustrates this point: of the twenty-one of the former who still appear in the record in or after 1592, fifteen feature in the latter source, two are wives of men listed there and two others were in prison for recusancy.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Alexandra Walsham, 'The Parochial Roots of Laudianism Revisited: Catholics, Anti-Calvinists and "Parish Anglicans" in Early Stuart England', *JEH* null (1998). pp. 620-651.

⁷² Bowler, 'Introduction', pp. vii – cxiv, pp. xxxvi – xxvii.

⁷³ Francis Xavier Walker, 'The Implementation of the Elizabethan Statutes against Recusants, 1581-1603' (unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of London, 1961), pp. 192-3, 242.

⁷⁴ NA, CHES21/1, ff. 131v, 133v, 134Av; *ibid.*, E377/1, mss.6, 6d; Wark, *Cheshire*, pp. 142-171 gives prosopographies of these and ten others of whom there is no record after 1592.

0.43 Absentees

In contrast, the offence of absence from one's own parish church on a specific occasion, as per the 1559 Act of Uniformity, attracted the much smaller but still non-trivial fine of 1/- per week. As late as 1598 magistrates in Chester were still operating the (by then generally discredited) penalty of the 1559 statute against recusants, but generally speaking, the equation of absence with Catholicism is an unsafe assumption: the vast majority of cases were one off instances rather than part of a pattern of recidivism, and the attendant circumstances are rarely recorded.⁷⁵ In the minority of cases where they are, the reasons are for the most part non-religious – working, in the pub, cavorting in the churchyard, looking after livestock or the sick – as Christopher Haigh has demonstrated.⁷⁶ If a visitation register simply says 'he doth not frequent his parishe churche', popery or plain apathy would seem possible explanations, but if we take cognizance of John Spurr's estimate that 10 per cent of the population were non-churchgoing and only 2 per cent recusant, the balance of probability would seem to favour the latter option.⁷⁷ Hence this study disregards cases of one-time absenteeism, but errs on the side of caution in reflecting recidivist cases in the Catholic numbers: as the sample statistics from visitations around the turn of the seventeenth century in Table 0.1 below show, these are not of great significance in the bigger picture.

⁷⁵ Wark, *Cheshire*, p. 115. John Anthony Williams, *Catholic Recusancy in Wiltshire, 1660-1791* (CRS monograph no. 1, 1968), pp. 85-86, however, identified cases from post-Restoration Wiltshire of presentments for three weeks' absence, to circumvent the threshold of the punitive monthly fine.

⁷⁶ Christopher Haigh, *The Plain Man's Pathways to Heaven: Kinds of Christianity in Post-Reformation England, 1570-1640* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 83-87, 95.

⁷⁷ John Spurr, *The Post-Reformation: Religion Politics and Society in Britain 1603-1714* (Harlow, 2006), p. 24.

Table 0.1: Catholic Offences at Visitations, 1598-1605*				
	1598	1601	1604	1605-6
Recusancy	55	28	47	61
Absence & non-communication	26	26	4	18
Absence only (recidivist)	17	8	7	6
Sub-total absentees	98	62	58	85
Non-communication only	89	80	26	83
Papistry**	0	2	1	0
Other**	5	2	6	3
Total known Catholics	192	146	91	171
Absence (one time)	11	20	12	0
* Excludes figures for the deanery of Bangor (in the Chester diocese but in Wales) but includes those for the Welsh parish of Holt in Chester deanery.				
** Excludes individuals also presented for one of the above offences				
Sources: CCALS, EDV 1.12a, 1.12b, 1.13, 1.14				

0.44 Church papists

Church papists, or ‘schismatics’ as they were sometimes referred to abusively by recusants, were Catholics who practised partial or token conformity to the Elizabethan religious laws to avoid the associated legal penalties. The frequency of their conformity could vary: it might be once a month to avoid a liability for three fines of a 1/- per week (which the churchwardens might well never collect) escalating into one of £20 for a month’s recusancy, or it might be just before the assizes, as Haigh has noted of a group of recusants on the Fylde peninsula of Lancashire.⁷⁸ It was alleged of Sir Randulph Brereton of Shocklach in the early 1580s that ‘hymself, his house and family never come to the church, and yet, notwithstanding, at the assizes tyme with the Justices and at Sermons.’⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Walker, ‘Implementation’, p. 240; Haigh, *Lancashire*, p. 277. The official records for Cheshire are, however, overwhelmingly silent about such granular distinctions. If a charge of non-communication is qualified in as to its duration (most are not), it is generally in years, very rarely in months. For example, of the forty-eight presentments for absence or non-communication at the 1578 visitation, only four note their duration, all of them in years: BIY, V.1578-9, fos 16v, 22v, 23.

⁷⁹ NA, SP 15/27/2, f. 170.

A more common phenomenon, at least among the wealthier sort, was for the head of household (and perhaps his heir) to conform alone, to protect the family assets (and in fairness, its place in the community) whilst his wife and other offspring absented themselves.⁸⁰ But most typically the characteristic of the church papist was to balk at the reception of Holy Communion, itself an infrequent occurrence: in many parishes during the Elizabethan period it took place only once a year, at Easter.⁸¹ Non-communication need not necessarily have entailed outright refusal: Roger Leasome of Nantwich, who was presented for ‘affray in churche’ at the 1578 visitation alongside seven non-communicants, may well simply have been adopting a different and not uncommon tactic to avoid communicating.⁸²

But given the caveat above about the interpretation of cases of absence, how certain can we be that the same is not true of non-communication, also largely an offence not generally characterised by recidivism?⁸³ In the first place, separatist Puritanism can be discounted as a factor here: it was a late flowering phenomenon in the north west.⁸⁴ Mainstream Puritanism does account for some cases of non-communicancy but the reasons for these – refusal of wafers, refusal to kneel, going to a church other than that of one’s own parish - are usually distinguishable in the record.⁸⁵ It also would seem unlikely that non-communicants included many of Judith Maltby’s ‘Prayer Book Protestants’, who had taken to

⁸⁰ Walsham, *Church Papists*, pp. 78-79.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁸² BIY, V.1578-9, CB.3, f. 10v; Walsham, *Church Papists*, pp. 89-90.

⁸³ Of the 1,084 putative Cheshire Catholics from the period 1559-1629 whose offences stopped short of recusancy, only 73 offended in multiple years.

⁸⁴ R.C. Richardson, *Puritanism in north-west England: a regional study of the diocese of Chester to 1642* (Manchester, 1972), p. 86 notes that the first known conventicle in the county, at Middlewich, did not emerge until 1605 (a generation later than in Essex, for example) and may well have been supplementary to parish worship rather than a replacement for it.

⁸⁵ CCALS, EDV 1.14, ff. 27, 71v. records that at the visitation of 1605 John Ashbrooke of Tattenhall was presented for refusing the communion ‘because of the wafer bread’, and eight citizens of Middlewich for non-communication ‘because they might not receive it standing or sitting.’ *Ibid.*, EDV 1.24, ff. 4v, 9, 9v, 15, 16, 32v, 33v, 37, 38, 48, 52, 84v shows that by the time of the visitation of 1622 this issue of communicant posture is widespread, and in Chester there are numerous cases of individuals presented because they have not received ‘at their owne parische churche’, the inference of the wording being that such individuals are communion gadders, wishing to receive the Sacrament according to Puritan protocols. Arnold Hunt, ‘The Lord’s Supper in Early Modern England’, *P&P* 161 (1998), pp. 39-83, pp. 51-60 demonstrates the enthusiasm of the ‘godly’ for the Lord’s Supper and their desire for its more frequent celebration and provides a context for these incidents.

heart the exhortation to ‘bee in loue and charitie with your neighbours’.⁸⁶ Celebration of Holy Communion was infrequent, and participation as a symbol and bond of community was very important, driving individuals to get themselves back into neighbourly love and charity if at all possible.⁸⁷ Moreover, the few surviving instances of persistent uncharity which are noted on in the Cheshire visitation books may well be there to deflect suspicions of popery, whether true or false.⁸⁸ Similarly, there is only one instance in the Cheshire records of an individual absenting himself from communion ostensibly to escape his creditors, like William Shakespeare’s father.⁸⁹ Lastly, apathy can for the most part be dismissed as an explanation of non-communication.⁹⁰ The annual obligation to receive was hardly onerous, and one would expect the indolent to appear on a dual charge of absence and non-communication rather than the latter alone.

Thus the inference that non-communication signifies closet Catholicism would appear reasonably robust. The reception of what to Catholics was a sacrilegious parody of the Eucharistic Body and Blood of Christ – ‘Calvin’s supper’ - was the most common point where the church papist drew the line, and the balance of probability is that the majority of non-communicants were church papists.⁹¹ Such individuals were far less exposed than their recusant peers: they were vulnerable only to presentments before the ecclesiastical

⁸⁶ Judith Maltby, “‘By this book’; parishioners, the Prayer Book and the established Church’ in Peter Marshall (ed.), *The Impact of the English Reformation 1500-1640* (London and New York, 1997), pp. 257-278, p. 259; Douglas Harrison (ed.), *The First and Second Prayer Books of King Edward VI* (London, 1968), p. 386: this text remained unchanged in the Elizabethan revision of 1559.

⁸⁷ Hunt, ‘Lord’s Supper’, p. 41; Walsham, *Church Papists*, p. 13. Christopher Haigh, ‘Communion and Community: Exclusion from Communion in Post-Reformation England’, *JEH* 31 (2000), pp. 721-740, pp. 721-722 demonstrated how individuals excluded from the Sacrament could raise instance cases in the church courts in response.

⁸⁸ BIY, V.1595-6, CB.3, f. 6v and CCALS, EDV 1.12b, f. 63v contain the only three such cases in the visitation records of the pre-Civil War period for Cheshire, and the two 1595 examples come from the strongly recusant parish of Eastham, bailiwick of the Catholic Stanley family.

⁸⁹ CCALS, EDV 1.14, f. 70v; Walsham, *Church Papists*, p. 86.

⁹⁰ CCALS, EDV 1.10, f. 27 perhaps records the exception that proves the rule. At the 1592 visitation Roger Clough of St Oswald’s parish, Chester, was presented as being ‘a drunkard an excom(municate) p(er)son and one that receyvee nott the co(mmun)ion these sixe yeares’, the sequence of the charges perhaps reflecting a perception of their respective gravity.

⁹¹ Walsham, *Church Papists*, pp. 21, 22.

authorities, and although these could potentially lead to excommunication, in most cases the visitors went no further than to instruct that the delinquency be remedied the following Easter.

0.45 The situation after 1660

Application of these categories to the evidence from the post-Restoration period is problematic methodologically, owing to the breakaway from the established Church during the Civil War of a plethora of sects – Independents, Baptists, Quakers – and the survival of the Presbyterians, who had during this period represented Church of England orthodoxy. These groups collectively outnumbered the Catholics by a multiple of something between two and five.⁹² Hence cases of persistent absence from church and non-communication are on balance more likely to relate to dissenters than to Catholics, and Catholicism can only be inferred where record linkage provides independent evidence of this.⁹³ This problem presents particular difficulties for the evidence after 1681, when presentments for recusancy became few in Cheshire, Catholics and dissenters alike being presented on the charge of absence from church. Even the offence of recusancy, which hitherto had been confined to Catholics, is problematic after 1660, as the recusancy laws started to be applied to dissenters. Record linkage shows that the designation ‘new recusant’, which appears from 1668 onwards, invariably denotes Protestant non-conformity, whereas the corresponding term ‘old recusant’ would appear to have been reserved to Catholics.⁹⁴ The terms ‘papist’ and ‘popish recusant’ or simply ‘recusant’ are generally more reliable as evidence of Catholicism, although not invariably so: in Macclesfield fourteen individuals were presented as papists and absentees to

⁹² Spurr, *Post-Reformation*, pp. 24 estimates that recusants constituted 2 per cent of the seventeenth century adult population, and *ibid*, p. 150, than post-Restoration dissenters amounted to between 4 and 10 per cent.

⁹³ See for example CALS, EDV1.42, f. 36v and EDV1.43, f. 29v for George Stubb of Mobberley, who was presented for that offence five times between 1671 and 1673: others of that family, probably his parents, appear in the same pages as recusants.

⁹⁴ CALS, EDV series, nos 1.35 ff., *passim*. These terms occur only in ecclesiastical presentments.

the ruridecanal visitation of 1681, twelve of whom were listed as Quakers by the same body the following year.⁹⁵ Overall, over 10 per cent of the case histories examined (ninety-eight of 931) exhibit some degree of ambiguity as to religious leanings.

0.5 *Cheshire – the historical and geographical context*

A distinctive feature of early modern Cheshire was that it was peaceful and free of disturbances. There were none of the popular socio-economic revolts found elsewhere in the country – in East Anglia or the west country in 1549, for example – nor, as noted above, such religiously motivated events such as the Herefordshire Whitsun Riots. In spite of their divisions on the eve of the Civil War, the gentry of the county sought neutrality for as long as was possible and came to war with extreme reluctance.⁹⁶ In this respect, Bossy's reference to Cheshire's 'resolute conformity' is correct, though such qualities as conservatism and dirigibility would seem more apt.⁹⁷

The root of this passivity lay in the county's relative independence, stability and self-sufficiency. Its independence derived from its status as a county palatine, a frontier jurisdiction on the Welsh Marches: in 1450 the county had successfully asserted its autonomy in matters fiscal and judicial on the basis that 'the seide comite is and hath ben a comite palatyne als well afore the conquest of England as sithence distincte & separate from you coron of England', and though this autonomy was severely curtailed by the administrative reforms of Henry VIII, the county largely retained its own courts and equally importantly, its notion of independence.⁹⁸

This notion was underpinned by the antiquity and stability of the county's gentry. The majority of the elite families could trace their lineage back to the thirteenth century, and

⁹⁵ Ibid., EDV 1.58 f. 33, EDV 1.59 f. 29.

⁹⁶ Morrill, *Cheshire*, pp. 53-54, 56-57, 65-69.

⁹⁷ Bossy, *Community*, p. 92.

⁹⁸ Morrill, *Cheshire*, pp. 1-2.

only two were post-Dissolution *parvenus*.⁹⁹ This continuity underpins the suggestion of Cust and Lake's recent study that Everett's notion of a pre-Civil War 'county community' which has been discredited since the local studies of Holmes and Hughes in the 1980s, may be applicable in the case of Cheshire.¹⁰⁰ The absence of any resident aristocracy until the early seventeenth century also militated towards cooperation amongst the gentry, and the rotation of Quarter Sessions across the major market towns of the shire also made for integration.¹⁰¹ With the exception of the county town of Chester, these were mostly small – the second town, Nantwich, had a population of around 2,500 – and lacked the borough status which might have challenged Chester's dominance.¹⁰²

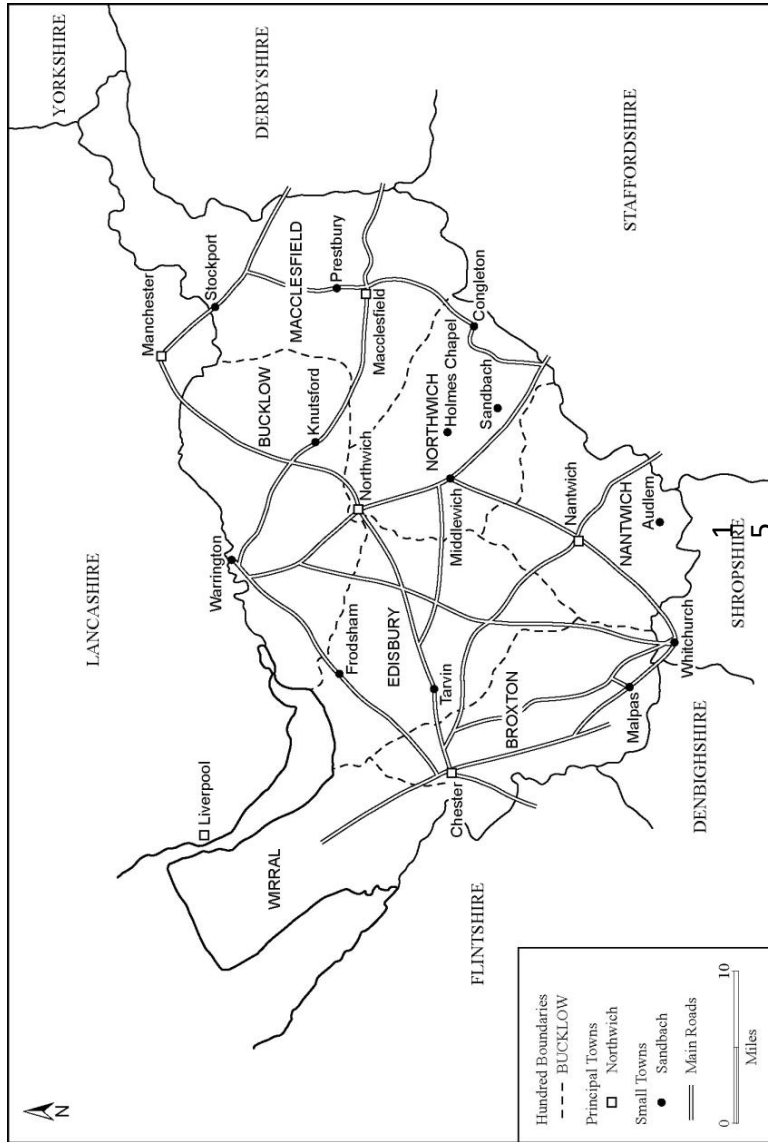
⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁰⁰ Cust and Lake, *Cheshire*, pp. 9, 10, 31.

¹⁰¹ Morrill, *Cheshire*, pp. 9, 17.

¹⁰² C. B. Phillips and J. H. Smith, *Lancashire and Cheshire from AD 1540* (Harlow, 1994), p.7; Morrill, *Cheshire*, p. 6.

Fig. 0.1
Cheshire in
the early
seventeenth
century



Reproduced by kind permission of Professors Richard Cust and Peter Lake from their book *Gentry Culture and the Politics of Religion: Cheshire on the Eve of the Civil War* (Manchester, 2020).

The county's economic integrity was a further unifying force. Though its western and eastern extremities – the peninsula of Wirral, with its poor communications, and the foothills of the Pennines – were relatively remote, the county was essentially a low-lying basin ('the Cheshire plain'), interrupted only towards its western flank by the gently rolling Peckforton Hills, and primarily agrarian. As Morrill observed, '[w]hat gave unity to the county's farming was not the presence of cows but the absence of sheep.' By the mid-sixteenth century enclosure was well-advanced, the county was largely self-sufficient in arable, and the renowned cheese from the south-west was exported to the rest of the country. The county was not 'conspicuously wealthy', but it was for the most part comfortable.¹⁰³

Chester, situated on the river Dee in the extreme west of the county, was, as the county town and cathedral city, an exception to this pattern. With a population in excess of 5,000, it was, at least until the silting up of the river in the late seventeenth century, the principal port of north-west England, and home to a variety of specialised industries, principally leather goods. It was also, as noted above, from 1507 a county in its own right, with its own system of courts.¹⁰⁴

If the county's civic traditions and status were long established, its ecclesiastical governance was rather less so. The diocese of Chester was only created in 1540 out of the dioceses of York and Lichfield and Coventry, its cathedral being the recently dissolved abbey of St. Werburgh. The third largest diocese in the country, it was an unwieldy entity, especially considering the peripheral position of the cathedral city: it stretched northwards from Cheshire into the south of Cumberland, westwards into north Wales, and eastwards into

¹⁰³ Morrill, *Cheshire*, p. 5.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

the Richmondshire area of north Yorkshire. It was also one of the poorest: its bishops invariably held other benefices *in commendam*, notably the living of Wigan in Lancashire, and the Caroline bishop John Bridgeman even resided there.¹⁰⁵ Cheshire was also characterised by unusually large, unmanageable parishes: the parishes of Great Budworth and Prestbury, which were largely conformist, contained thirty-five and thirty-two townships respectively, whereas the Catholic strongholds of Malpas and Bunbury had twenty-four and twelve apiece.¹⁰⁶

The early phases of Reformation in the county passed without controversy. The dissolution of the county's monasteries was uncontested, as were the Edwardine reforms of the liturgy, and the reversal of Reformation under Mary. There is little evidence of positive responses to any of these changes: rather passive acquiescence seems to have been the prevailing mood.¹⁰⁷ It seems reasonable to infer that, like most of England, Cheshire remained Catholic, at least nominally, at the end of 1558. The response of officialdom to those who continued to embrace the old faith is the subject of the following chapter.

¹⁰⁵ SRO, D1287/18/2 (P399/51).

¹⁰⁶ Ian Dunn, *The Ancient Parishes, Townships and Chapelries of Cheshire* (Chester, 1987), pp. 25, 28, 29, 31.

¹⁰⁷ Patricia Cox, 'Reformation responses in Tudor Cheshire c.1500-1577' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Warwick, 2013), pp. 153, 221, 284-5.

Chapter 1

The Peaks and Troughs of Persecution, 1560-1723

Cheshire did not acquire its sole Catholic martyr, John Plessington, until 1679, in the final round of executions on the British mainland.¹⁰⁸ Nor does the county feature in any of the Catholic plots of the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods: the only denizen of the county actively involved in such conspiracies was the military adventurer Sir William Stanley, who after his handover of the Dutch town of Deventer to the Spanish in 1587 was a permanent expatriate in Flanders, enjoying intermittent funding from the Spanish Crown.¹⁰⁹ Hence the persecution of Catholics in early modern Cheshire was much less dramatic than elsewhere in the country: it was confined to routine presentments before episcopal visitors and the justices at Quarter Sessions and Assize, and anti-Catholic rhetoric hardly ever escalated to the point where physical conflict ensued.

This chapter will trace the trajectory of this low-level persecution of Catholics across eleven successive and contrasting periods of the early modern era. There was a lack of coherent policy towards Catholicism in the first two Elizabethan decades, but the development of a draconian but inefficient one in the 1580s and early 1590s, and thereafter an attempt to work out its implications through to the early years of Charles I's reign. During the Personal Rule the emphasis switched from persecution to exploitation, tolerating Catholics if they were willing to pay the price, an approach which was briefly interrupted during the Long Parliament, but which resumed under the rather different circumstances of the Civil War and interregnum. The Restoration saw a Church of England weakened by the

¹⁰⁸ Peter Phillips, 'St John Plessington, Priest and Martyr', *RH* 28 (2007), pp. 424-433. The accidental deaths of John Hocknell, who in 1590 met his end in Chester Castle as a result of a pitchfork injury inflicted by his gaoler, and of the priest Humphrey Evans from a fall down a staircase in the same series of raids of Christmas 1678 which resulted in Plessington's capture, should also be noted: see Wark, *Cheshire*, p. 72 and Phillips, 'Plessington', p. 428.

¹⁰⁹ Rory Rapple, 'Stanley, Sir William (1548–1630)', *ODNB* (online edition, 2008), accessed 19 February 2021.

rise of dissent attempting to restore its pre-war hegemony through the policing of orthodoxy. It failed to achieve traction through the fraught years of the Popish Plot and Exclusion Crisis, but succeeded when the King assumed personal rule. The brief rule of James II brought the uneasy Catholic-Protestant politics for the previous century to a head, and after the Glorious Revolution the regime reverted to the mid-century policy of exploitation, coupled with measures of security to manage the underlying Jacobite threat.

This chapter will chart these peaks and troughs of persecution and seek to contextualise them, and will then address two overarching questions: how efficient were the ecclesiastical and civil authorities in identifying and prosecuting Catholics, and what degree of privation did Catholics suffer in consequence?

1.1 Initial *laissez-faire*, 1559-77

The historiographical consensus is that the first Elizabethan decade was to a degree a religious no man's land, characterised by uncertainty: Lucy Wooding has spoken of an unpolarised 'Reformation consensus' during this period.¹¹⁰ The religious fluctuations of the previous generation and of the previous decade in particular had engendered scepticism about the permanence of the new regime, which were compounded by the Queen's spinster status.¹¹¹ For her own part Elizabeth was reluctant to alienate either a strong traditionalist constituency at home, or overseas a France and Spain free of the distractions of mutual war after Cateau-Cambrésis, or above all Mary Stuart, whose claims to both Scotland and the English succession might prompt French intervention.¹¹² For similar diplomatic reasons reconciliation with Rome remained a possibility, albeit a rapidly diminishing one, until 1565, by which time the religious policy of the regime was focused upon the actual challenge from

¹¹⁰ Lucy Wooding, *Rethinking Catholicism in Reformation England* (Oxford, 2000), p. 272.

¹¹¹ Marshall, *Reformation England*, p. 191; Haigh, 'Continuity', pp. 178-179.

¹¹² Alan Dures, *English Catholicism 1558-1642* (Harlow, 1983), pp. 2, 6; Questier, *Dynastic Politics*, p. 17.

the emerging godly faction rather than a potential papist one which was yet to manifest in extensive nonconformity.¹¹³ Consequently the implementation of the Elizabethan settlement at the local level was slower than that of previous changes, removal of the paraphernalia of Catholic worship from parish churches continuing well into the mid-1560s, and later in some areas.¹¹⁴ Such resistance as was exhibited was largely to these changes in externals, although some of the first generation of Elizabethan bishops, notably Scory of Hereford and Horne of Winchester, took early and aggressive action against instances of Catholic persistence in their sees.¹¹⁵

This section will firstly compare the evidence from 1560s Cheshire against this wider national pattern and show that such opposition to the settlement as was encountered was largely conservative traditionalism, as opposed to the principled resistance of convinced Catholics. In particular it will consider the arguments of Knighton and Wark that the first Elizabethan bishop of Chester, William Downham, was lax in his administration, against Patricia Cox's recent rehabilitation of him as a conscientious diocesan.¹¹⁶ It will then repeat these assessments against the much scantier local evidence from the early and mid-1570s, the final years of Downham's episcopate.

For the first three Elizabethan years the diocese was in interregnum, following the deprivation of Cuthbert Scot (together with all but one of his fellow bishops), in June 1559. Its routine legal business was handled for most of this period by his commissary John Hanson, the deprived archdeacon of Richmond, on what one may presume was a Marian business as usual basis, given Hanson's flight to the continent in 1561.¹¹⁷ The Royal

¹¹³ Dures, *English Catholicism*, pp. 11-12; Marshall, *Reformation England*, pp. 131,191.

¹¹⁴ Dures, *English Catholicism*, pp. 8-9; Haigh, 'Church of England', p. 236.

¹¹⁵ Frederick Smith, 'The Origins of Recusancy in Elizabethan England Reconsidered', *HJ* 59 (2016), pp. 1-32, pp. 20-21; Ralph Houlbrooke, *Church Courts and the English People during the English Reformation, 1520-1570* (Oxford, 1979), pp. 250-251, 259-260.

¹¹⁶ C. S. Knighton, 'Downham, William (1510/11–1577)', *ODNB* (online edition, 2008), accessed 19 February 2021; Cox, 'Reformation Responses', pp. 289-322.

¹¹⁷ Cox, 'Reformation Responses', pp. 292-293.

Visitation of 1559 was primarily concerned with the usual staples of moral offences, church fabric and clerical negligence, and the only evidence of religious nonconformity in its findings from the diocese is a pair of cases from Chester of the possession of images and other religious artefacts, together with one of absence from church.¹¹⁸ None of these are atypical of the northern archdiocese overall.¹¹⁹ The sole known deprivation of a parish cleric during that period was not for non-subscription to the oath of allegiance, but to restore the married Edwardian incumbent to the living of Mottram, in the north-eastern Pennine extremity of the county.¹²⁰

Scot's successor, William Downham (1562-78), was a married cleric who had conformed under Mary. His rapid rise from a parochial living through a royal chaplaincy, the archdeaconry of Brecon and a canonry of Westminster to the see of Chester in under eighteen months would seem at least in part due to his acquaintance with the then Princess Elizabeth, and probably also reflects the excess of demand over supply for quality resources to repopulate the episcopal bench after the purge of the Marian bishops (he was not the first choice appointment).¹²¹ Historians have for the most part been damning of him, portraying him as easy going to the point of laxity, though Cox has recently sought to rehabilitate him as a conscientious prelate, albeit facing difficult circumstances, and lacking the necessary skills.¹²²

Downham certainly executed his primary visitation promptly in late 1562 and early 1563, and there were further partial visitations over the following two years.¹²³ A diocesan

¹¹⁸ NA, SP 12/10, ff. 134r-135r, reproduced verbatim in Christopher Kitching (ed.) *The Royal Visitation of 1559: Act Book for the Northern Province*, Surtees Society 187 (1975), p. 85.

¹¹⁹ Kitching, *1559 Act Book*, pp. xxxiv – xxxv. The returns for the Canterbury province have not survived.

¹²⁰ Cox, 'Reformation Responses', pp. 323-324. *Ibid.*, pp. 326-327 validates the doubts expressed in Wark, *Cheshire*, p. 2 about two other possible deprivations, showing that the clergy in question resigned in 1563.

¹²¹ Knighton, 'Downham'; Cox, 'Reformation Responses', p. 289.

¹²² Knighton, 'Downham'; Wark, *Cheshire*, pp. 6-15, esp. p. 7; Haigh, *Lancashire*, pp. 210, 223-224; Roger Manning, 'The Making of a Protestant Aristocracy: the Ecclesiastical Commissioners of the Diocese of Chester, 1550-98', *BIHR* 49 (1976), pp. 60-79, p. 62; Cox, 'Reformation Responses', pp. 289-322, esp. pp. 320-322.

¹²³ CALS, EDV 1.2b, 1.3, 1.4, EDV 1.5a, EDV 1.5b, EDV 1.6a, EDV.1.6b. Downham conducted a further visitation in 1568, but the records of it have not survived: see Cox, 'Reformation Responses', p. 314.

Ecclesiastical Commission was also set up in July 1562 to deal with religious offences. It was the prototype of this Elizabethan policing instrument, replicated in the Gloucester diocese in 1574 and subsequently elsewhere.¹²⁴ The reasons for the selection of Chester for this treatment are unknown, although the timing suggests that it may have been at the incoming bishop's request, as was the case at Worcester: Cox comments that Downham 'attended the commission hearings assiduously'.¹²⁵ The Chester Commission's ineffectiveness as a tool against nonconformity is, however, fairly clear. Though equipped with powers that exceeded those of the church courts, including the ability to impose heavy fines or to imprison, it seems to have been disinclined to exercise them: its transactions are mostly recognisances, frequently for unspecified offences, as in the case of the future Chester recusant Fulk Aldersey.¹²⁶ The Commission was a joint venture between the bishop and the Justices of the Peace, who were generally reluctant to proceed against their peers.¹²⁷ Downham's response to the survey of the bishops in 1564 to establish the religious affiliations of the Justices of the Peace found seventeen 'favorable' to the Elizabethan settlement, and an equal number 'not favorable': the use of this term as against the harder 'papist' is indicative of the blurred, non-doctrinaire state of contemporary religious opinion to which Wooding alludes.¹²⁸

The records of the visitations and of the Ecclesiastical Commission contain some twenty-two instances of absence from church services for the period 1562-5¹²⁹, together with one of not receiving Holy Communion at Easter, as well of a number of cases of persistent

¹²⁴ Roger Manning, 'Elizabethan Recusancy Commissions', *HJ* 15 (1972), pp. 23-36, p. 27.

¹²⁵ Manning 'Recusancy Commissions', pp. 23-24; Cox, 'Reformation Responses', pp. 304-305.

¹²⁶ Manning, 'Recusancy Commissions', p. 24; CALS, EDA12.2, passim. For Aldersey, *ibid.*, f. 2; Wark, *Cheshire*, p. 138.

¹²⁷ Manning, 'Recusancy Commissions', pp. 24-25.

¹²⁸ Mary Bateson (ed.), 'A Collection of Original Letters from the Bishops to the Privy Council, 1564', *Camden Miscellany* 9 (Camden Society, new series 53, 1895), pp. 73-76; Dures, *English Catholicism*, p. 6; Peter Marshall, 'The Naming of Protestant England', *P&P* 214 (2012), pp. 87-128, p. 113; Wooding, *Rethinking Catholicism*, p. 272.

¹²⁹ CALS, EDA 12.2, fos 81v, 82; *idem*, EDV 1.2b, fos 3v, 14, 20, 20v; *idem*, EDV 1.4, f. 4; *idem*, EDV 1.5a, fos 2, 4v, 11v.

traditionalism in the form of the use of beads, dilatoriness in reordering church fabric and the ringing of bells at All Saints' tide.¹³⁰ Little may be inferred from these cases, which are characteristic of the conservative traditionalism that Dickens found in the York visitation of 1567-8.¹³¹ As Marshall has noted, the withdrawal of Catholics from the Church of England was unusual at this stage, and only one of the absentees recurs in the record.¹³² On the other hand, cases of conservative traditionalism were relatively common in these years, though as the Introduction above argued, they tended to die away in the mid-Elizabethan years rather than developing into full-blown recusancy.¹³³ The only suggestion of embryonic Catholic resistance is in the batch of eight Cestrians (three of them subsequent recidivists) for absence in 1562, a year in which Bishop Bonner's former chaplain John Morwen was in Chester advocating recusancy *avant la lettre*:¹³⁴

ye shall prove by no record or authority or chronicle, that this manner of service now used in the church was ever heard tell of afore Luther's time, which is not forty years old. Therefore, it is to be rejected and put away, as a new fangled doctrine and schismatical: therefore come back again unto the old fathers' steps.¹³⁵

As Frederick Smith has recently shown, Morwen was of the most influential of a group of ex-Marian cathedral clergy who were promulgating what was to become the seminarist party line of strict recusancy more than a decade before the mission priest set foot in England.¹³⁶ The subsequent presentments of a further six recidivist absentees before the City Quarter Sessions in 1568 also points to the early emergence of a Catholic cell in the cathedral city.¹³⁷ This apart, however, there is no further evidence of Catholic delinquency in the skeletal surviving local records before 1576.

¹³⁰ Ibid, EDA 12.2, f. 72; Wark, *Cheshire*, pp. 6-8.

¹³¹ Dickens, 'First Stages', pp. 161-164.

¹³² Marshall, 'Reformation England', pp. 191-192.

¹³³ Ibid.; see also section 'The evidence of Catholicism', sub-section 'Conservative traditionalists' in the Introduction to this thesis.

¹³⁴ CALS, EDV 1.2b, f. 14; *ibid.*, EDA 12/2, ff. 2, 81v. The two Alderseys and Bolton were recidivist offenders.

¹³⁵ J. Scholefield (ed.), *The Works of James Pilkington*, quoted in Wark, *Cheshire*, p. 3.

¹³⁶ Smith, 'Origins of Recusancy', pp. 10-15.

¹³⁷ CALS, ZMB19, 1567-1568, f. 73v. Two of these, Aldersey and Bolton were among the presentees of 1562.

The turn of the 1570s is generally portrayed as a turning point in the fate of post-Reformation Catholicism. Mary Stuart's flight to England in 1568, the revolt of the northern earls the following year in support of her, and Pius V's 1570 bull *Regnans in excelsis* declaring Elizabeth excommunicate and encouraging Catholics to depose her, collectively hardened the confessional lines.¹³⁸ Recusancy was on the increase, attracting Government concern, and throughout the 1570s leading bishops agitated unsuccessfully in Parliament for specific anti-Catholic legislation in place of the 1/- fine of the 1559 settlement.¹³⁹ The only limited local suggestion of the heightened tension of these years, however, lies in the transfer of the *detecta* from Grindal's initial metropolitanical visitation of 1571 into the remit of the York Ecclesiastical Commission, which Haigh notes was increasingly interventionist at the diocesan level over the course of the 1570s.¹⁴⁰ A handful of future recusants appear in this source – John Eldershawe of Audlem, the solitary non-communicant of the 1562 presentments, Henry Bolton, one of the Cestrian recidivists, and John Whitmore and Thomas Maddocks of Thurstaston, but their offences are not stated.¹⁴¹

From 1568 onwards Downham had a difficult time with the Privy Council about the extent of recusancy in his Lancastrian domains.¹⁴² Cheshire, however, does not feature in this correspondence until November 1575, when the Council enquired about the extent of nonconformity across his diocese: the covering letter to his response three months later validates Cox's assertion of his conscientiousness, whilst at the same time exhibiting a certain credulity:

some have come before us and by good perswacons have shewed themselves conformable. [...] the other have not come but either remaine in their wilfulness still

¹³⁸ Marshall, *Reformation England*, pp. 192-193; Dures, *English Catholicism*, pp. 12-17.

¹³⁹ Walker, 'Implementation' pp. 33-43.

¹⁴⁰ Haigh, *Lancashire*, pp. 234, 260.

¹⁴¹ BIY, HC.AB, 6, fos 74, 78v, 80, 141; Wark, *Cheshire*, p. 10.

¹⁴² Wark, *Cheshire*, pp. 7-8, 12-13; Cox, 'Reformation Responses', pp. 312-316.

or els have shewed in the countries where they dwell some token of obedience as we have understanding from those whom we judge worthie of credite¹⁴³.

Though Downham supplied a respectable seventy-three names from Lancashire, there were a mere eight from Cheshire.¹⁴⁴ All of these were from county areas, whereas there were a further five presentments from Chester City alone at the Quarter Sessions later that year.¹⁴⁵

Downham's final challenge came in the October of 1577, when the Privy Council demanded a return within seven days of all nonconformists, together with valuations of their property.¹⁴⁶ Peter Lake has shown how this survey, the first concerted campaign against Catholics on a national scale, formed part of a campaign to rehabilitate Grindal, and represents the beginning of an ongoing tension between anti-popery and anti-Puritan discourses in the Council, which contrasts with the predominance of the latter during the prophesying issue of the preceding years.¹⁴⁷

A list for the county compiled by Downham was forwarded by Sir Edward Fitton following the bishop's death a month later. It was barely more substantial than that of the preceding year, consisting of fifteen names, and in his covering letter Fitton noted that 'the chief of them are not touched who hear mass daily'.¹⁴⁸ Yet Wark's observation that '[i]n its clarity, brevity and incompleteness the list forms a fitting epilogue to [Downham's] episcopate' is unduly harsh, and fails to take account of the novelty of this national exercise and the short timescale for its completion (as well, one presumes, of Downham's failing health). Across England and Wales only 1,387 delinquents in total were reported, and as many counties reported lower figures than Cheshire's (for example subsequently stalwart

¹⁴³ BL, Harley MS 286, f. 27; Cox, 'Reformation Responses', pp. 320-321.

¹⁴⁴ BL, Harley MS 360, f. 68. The eight were the aforementioned Eldershaw and Whitmore, William Hough of Leighton, the wives of these three, Mary Tatton of Wythenshaw and Anne Grosvenor of Eaton.

¹⁴⁵ CALS, ZMB21, ff. 241, 246.

¹⁴⁶ NA, SP 12/116, f. 45.

¹⁴⁷ Peter Lake, 'A Tale of Two Surveys: The Strange Fates of Edmund Grindal and Cuthbert Mayne Revisited', *TRHS* 18 (2008), pp. 129-163, pp. 136-142, esp. p. 141.

¹⁴⁸ NA, SP 12/118, f. 113, reproduced in Patrick Ryan (ed.), 'Diocesan Returns of Recusants for England and Wales, 1577', *Miscellanea* 12, CRS 22 (1921), pp. 1-114, pp. 68-69; Wark, *Cheshire*, p.15.

Warwickshire, only three) as higher ones (including thirty-nine for the Lancashire portion of Downham's diocese).¹⁴⁹

Moreover, the return conforms to the Council's instructions to focus on the delinquency of the elite:

First it shall be convenient that letters be sent to the bishops and others well affected in each dioces to make enquierie by such meanes as by them shall be thought meete after such as refuse to come to church especiallye such are of countenance & qualitie, and doe offende in example.¹⁵⁰

Apart from the physician Eldershawe and his wife, all the 1576 contingent were gentry: the following year's contingent also contained a further three gentlemen, three former Marian priests, two widows, and a Chester linen-draper, together with his wife.¹⁵¹ The return thus teases out a high proportion of the elite recusants who feature in the much more rigorous exercises of the following decade (discussed below).

Downham undoubtedly had a difficult problem: he was managing one of the largest (and most under-endowed) dioceses in the country from a base awkwardly positioned on its south-western periphery, and certainly the most problematic see in terms of its Catholicism. His lack of convenient satellite bases in Lancashire rendered him heavily reliant in policing the problem upon the cooperation of a gentry who were of a conservative bias. During the 1560s he seems to have used the Ecclesiastical Commission reasonably effectively to address traditionalist survivals, but as recusancy became more common during the following decade, he appears to have been oblivious of its significant extent even in his cathedral city, which Sandys' metropolitanical visitation the following year (discussed below) showed to be considerable.

¹⁴⁹ Ryan (ed.), 'Diocesan Returns', pp. 6-9.

¹⁵⁰ NA, SP 12/45, f.10, quoted in Walker, 'Implementation', p. 44.

¹⁵¹ Ryan (ed.), 'Diocesan Returns', pp. 68-69. Wark, *Cheshire*, p. 139 notes that the draper William Aldersey may have been a previous mayor and justice during the 1560s. Apart from Anne Grosvenor (Gravenor), the female presentees of 1576 were not listed in the 1577 return.

1.2 The development of persecution, 1578-1594

The switch in official focus from anti-Puritan to anti-Catholic activity which Lake observed in the 1577 survey inaugurated a steady, if sometimes faltering and ineffective, intensification of efforts to address the Catholic problem over the next decade and a half, which reflected the growing international dimension of the issue. From 1574 onwards there had been a steady stream of missionary priests from the seminaries of the Low Countries, who numbered around one hundred by 1580 and who came to be perceived as the fifth column of a resurgent Catholic Europe headed by France and Spain.¹⁵² A series of plots against the Queen's life in the mid-1580s, centred on the succession of the Catholic Mary Queen of Scots, and also the threat of invasion from Spain, which remained a real concern even after the failure of the Armada in 1588, bolstered the myth.¹⁵³ Catholicism was no longer seen merely an issue of internal conformity and order: it was a potential source of treason and international conspiracy.

The episcopal pressure of the 1570s for tougher anti-Catholic legislation finally bore fruit in the draconian measure of 1581 which increased the penalty for absence from church to £20 per month, but left the bishops disempowered to enforce it, assigning the responsibility for its implementation to the Justices of the Peace, who proved both partial and ineffective.¹⁵⁴ A further statute of 1587 sought to address this defect by reserving indictment and conviction of recusants to the Justices of Assize, streamlined the process by automatically renewing convictions in the absence of proof of conformity, and enabled the distraint of recusants' lands and goods.¹⁵⁵ Legislation of 1585 also declared missionary priests to be traitors, and those that aided and abetted them felons, both vulnerable to capital punishment.¹⁵⁶ In this

¹⁵² Dures, *English Catholicism*, pp. 20-21, 28-29.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 31, 34-35.

¹⁵⁴ 23 Eliz. c. 1; Walker. 'Implementation', pp. 131-133.

¹⁵⁵ 29 Eliz. c. 6; Walker. 'Implementation', pp. 240-242, 245-246, 274-277.

¹⁵⁶ 27 Eliz. c. 2; Dures, *English Catholicism*, p. 30.

radically changed climate, and under a new episcopate, an anti-recusancy drive in Cheshire slowly gained traction.

This section will examine the successive initiatives in Cheshire against recusancy over this period – Sandys’ metropolitanical visitation, the Ecclesiastical Commissions, and civil prosecutions at the Quarter Sessions and Assizes. It will demonstrate that though these exercises substantially increased the visibility of Catholics to the authorities and led to the imprisonment of a minority of them, it was not until the end of the period that they succeeded in imposing financial penalties upon recusants, and then only upon a limited number.

The anti-Catholic drive of 1577 coincided with the translation of the zealous anti-Catholic Edwin Sandys to the archbishopric of York, and the contingency of these two factors perhaps explains the extensive focus on Catholic offences in his initial metropolitanical visitation of the following year.¹⁵⁷ A total of seventy-nine religious delinquents were presented before the visitors, over five times the volume of the return of the previous year. The visitation also marks a widening of focus from the gentry to the wider population: of the twenty-five whose occupations are recorded (principally from their appearance in other sources), the eleven gentry listed are still the largest single socio-economic group, but are accompanied by four learned professionals, six tradespeople, a husbandman and his wife, a servant and a Marian priest.¹⁵⁸ It suggests an emerging recognition that the scale of the problem precluded containment merely by targeting the ringleaders in the hope that the smaller fry would thereby fall into line, which had been the approach of the 1577 survey.

¹⁵⁷ Patrick Collinson, ‘Sandys, Edwin (1519?–1588)’, ODNB (online edition, 2008); BIY, V.1578-9, CB.3, fos 6-30v, *passim*.

¹⁵⁸ Wark, *Cheshire*, pp. 16-17, 19, 160. To the twenty- two individuals of known socio-economic status listed at *idem*, pp. 16_n need to be added the gentlemen Hugh Bromley and Richard Massey senior, and Mrs. Tatton’s servant Anne Dickenson.

Of the seventy-nine, twenty-two were presented for absence from church (a contravention of the 1559 Act of Uniformity: the charge of recusancy did not at this stage exist), fifteen as non-communicants, and thirty-three were presented on both charges. The survey thus provides the earliest local evidence of the growth of church papistry, and shows the bishops' attempts of the 1570s to include it within the scope of anti-Catholic legislation to have reflected a realistic concern.¹⁵⁹

The exercise was not without its limitations. The preponderance of presentees from the county town (at thirty-eight almost half of the total) would seem suspiciously high even in the context of the early evidence of delinquency there, and the further thirteen presentees from the rural areas of the Chester deanery reinforces the impression: the visitation did not look significantly beyond its base location. There were no presentments from Bunbury, and only two from Malpas, both of which housed recusant Marian clergy and which were to become centres of recusancy. This would seem to exemplify the inefficiency of the visitation process when confronted with a substantial Catholic population in large scattered parishes where it was easy for Catholics to hide, a phenomenon Haigh noted in a number of Lancastrian fastnesses.¹⁶⁰ Furthermore, evidence of corrective action following the visitation is slight and once more focused on the elite, five of whom were referred for conference with Puritan divines, and Whitmore and Eldershawe to the High Commission in York.¹⁶¹ None the less the visitation is significant as the first serious attempt to identify the county's Catholic delinquents.

The diocese remained in interregnum for a further year after Sandys's visitation

¹⁵⁹ Walker, 'Implementation', pp. 33-38.

¹⁶⁰ Haigh, *Lancashire*, pp. 267-268, 271-273; Wark, *Cheshire*, p. 133; Dunn, *Ancient Parishes*, pp. 25, 29. The last of these references notes that Bunbury and Malpas parishes contained twelve and twenty-five townships respectively.

¹⁶¹ Wark, *Cheshire*, pp. 18-19.

until William Chadderton was consecrated as Downham's successor in November 1579. An Elizabethan ordinand who had held two Cambridge chairs, he was of a much higher calibre than his predecessor. Though the recusancy problem he faced in Lancashire was intractable, his tenacious pursuit of it avoided serious rebukes from the Privy Council, and indeed earned him some praise, and subsequently, in 1595, the bishopric of Lincoln.¹⁶² The evidence of his diligence in this matter, however, comes obliquely from his correspondence with the Privy Council, since his three books of visitations from the 1580s record in total only three recidivist absentees, eighteen non-communicants and one papist, as against the forty-one he reported to the Council in 1582 and the 200 of his 1590 submission to them.¹⁶³ Haigh noted similar discrepancies in the records for Lancashire and posited that Chadderton may have kept separate records of recusants: equally it would seem possible that he saw no purpose in duplicating detail of matters that had by that stage been transferred to the responsibility of the civil authorities.¹⁶⁴

During 1580 Chadderton's focus was initially on progressing the work of the renewed Ecclesiastical Commission in Lancashire. From February 1580/1 onwards he turned his attention to the Commission's work in Cheshire, with a number of sessions taking place over the period February to June.¹⁶⁵ This lengthy exercise, however, seems to have been hardly more successful in identifying Catholics than Downham's cursory surveys. The principal surviving source, an Exchequer deposition, records fines against fifty-three individuals from the Cheshire proceedings, but the vast majority of these are for non-appearance, and the original charges are rarely stated.¹⁶⁶ They were certainly not confined to recusancy (three

¹⁶² Christopher Haigh, 'Chaderton, William (*d.* 1608)', *ODNB* (online edition, 2008), accessed 21 February 2021.

¹⁶³ CALS, EDV 1.6d, fos 35v, 37, 67v, 72v; *ibid.*, EDV 1.7, fos 13, 31, 31v, 32, 93v, 96v; *ibid.*, EDV 1.8, fos 85v, 90, 94, 114, 136v, 138; NA, SP12/156, f. 68; *idem*, PC 2/17, f. 829.

¹⁶⁴ Haigh, *Lancashire*, pp. 269-270.

¹⁶⁵ Wark, *Cheshire*, p. 22.

¹⁶⁶ NA, E134, Eliz. 25, Trinity, 5. Haigh, *Lancashire*, p. 287 notes that 178 of the 193 fines imposed by the Commission were for contumacy.

adulterers are listed).¹⁶⁷ As Wark demonstrated through record linkage, there were only nineteen probable Catholics amongst the Cheshire presentees.¹⁶⁸

But in their concluding report of 27 September to the Privy Council the Commission reported that ‘they have committed certen gentlemen, whome they have found very obstinate and not willing to yeld to conformetye, unto the Castle of Chester.’¹⁶⁹ These included the lawyer Ralph Worsley, and probably the three Wirral gentry Whitmore, Hocknell and Hough who had been reported by Downham in 1576: all four were noted as prisoners in the Castle when they were presented for recusancy at the October Quarter Sessions. This is the first instance in the county of the imprisonment of Catholic laymen.¹⁷⁰ In its contravention of recent Privy Council guidelines recommending the bailing of recusants and their confinement to their homes it would seem to suggest a step change in the gravity with which local officialdom was treating the Catholic issue.¹⁷¹

By this time the 1581 statute was in force, and the civil arm appears to have responded promptly to the new legislation, with a handful of absentees being presented at the county Quarter Sessions in June and July, and a further twenty-eight in October.¹⁷² At the spring sessions of 1582 the number of offenders increased, with forty-one individuals presented for absence and seventeen (including twelve of the forty-one) for attending a Holy

¹⁶⁷ NA, E134, Eliz. 25, Trinity, 5, m. 4 (Thomas Carter of Lache); *ibid.*, m. 5 (John Lathom of Macclesfield, Thomas Combes of Gatley).

¹⁶⁸ Wark, *Cheshire*, pp. 24-26. The nineteen include James Aspden, of whom nothing else is known and who may not be from Cheshire, together with Hugh and Sampson Erdeswick, who resided in Staffordshire but had property in Cheshire. A possible omission from those named by Wark is William Eare of Tilston, (NA, E134, Eliz. 25, Trinity, m. 11), presented with his wife Margaret for non-communication at the visitation of 1589. Margaret was persistently recusant for the rest of Elizabeth’s reign: see Wark, *Cheshire*, p. 138.

¹⁶⁹ NA, PC 2/13, f. 575.

¹⁷⁰ Wark, *Cheshire*, pp. 27, 31. *Ibid.*, pp. 174-177 also notes that Marian priests had been imprisoned in Chester Castle from 1577.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, *Cheshire*, p. 28.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, *Cheshire*, p. 30-31.

Week mass that had taken place in Malpas a month earlier.¹⁷³ There were no recusancy cases at Quarter Sessions in 1583, but in May 1584 there were seventeen.¹⁷⁴

As Table 1.1 below demonstrates, however, the authorities' success in identifying and presenting recusants was far from equalled by their prosecution of the cases to a satisfactory conclusion:

Table 1.1: Presentments of Catholics at county Quarter Sessions, 1581-4					
	July 1581	Oct 1581	1582/1	1584/1	Total
A Total presentees	5	28	45	17	95
B Total appearances by presentees					
<i>Case dismissed</i>	3				
<i>Case suspended</i>	2				
<i>Released</i>		1			
<i>E1 Conformed</i>		1	8		
<i>Fined</i>		5			
<i>Imprisoned</i>				3	
	5	7	8	3	23
C Total non-appearances					
<i>Died before trial</i>		1			
<i>Case suspended</i>		1			
D Not apprehended		12	23	12	
<i>Recognizances</i>		3			
<i>E2 Conformed later</i>		3	12	2	
<i>Imprisoned later</i>		1	2		
		21	37	14	72
%age appearances	100%	25%	18%	18%	24%
%age cases successful (<i>black bold italics</i>)	0%	46%	49%	29%	42%

Source: Wark, *Cheshire*, pp. 30-35, 41-45, 56-57



Only twenty-three of the ninety-five presentees of those years (B of A) appeared to answer their charges, and the failure to apprehend almost two-thirds of those who did not appear (D of C) was in spite of a series of writs issued at subsequent sessions. In less than half (forty) of the cases (highlighted in ***black bold italics***) was a successful prosecution outcome achieved, although admittedly in the two-thirds of those (twenty-six) where the outcome was

¹⁷³ Ibid., p. 41, 44n.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 56.

conformity (E1 + E2) the level of subsequent recidivism was low, only seven subsequently reoffending.

After 1584 presentments of Catholics at the County Quarter Sessions more or less ceased.¹⁷⁵ From this point onwards the Assize became the principal vehicle for proceedings against recusants, a function which was reserved to it after a second statute of 1587 streamlined the cumbersome processes of the 1581 Act.¹⁷⁶ For most of the 1580s, however, the cases at the Chester Assize were confined to a group of nine obdurate recusants who were imprisoned more or less indefinitely in Chester Castle, though their number was occasionally supplemented by others with shorter sentences, as Fig. 1.1 below shows.

Fig 1.1: Recusant prisoners in Chester Castle, 1581-9													
Surname	Xtian name	Location	Occupation/status	Note	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89
Cheswis	Alice	Bunbury	Spouse?										
Cheswis	Richard	Bunbury	Labourer thru yeoman				?	?					?
Cheswis	William	Bunbury	Labourer thru yeoman										
Hocknell	John	Prenton	Gentleman	killed 90		NF	NF	NF	LFr	LFr			
Hough	William	Leighton	Gentleman			NF	NF	NF	d				
Isherwood (Us)	Christopher	n/a	Labourer thru yeoman										
Longton	James	Bunbury	Skinner										
Longton	John	Bunbury	Labourer										
Maddocks	Thomas	Thurstaston	Yeoman										
Massey	Richard (sen)	Waverton	Gentleman										
Trine	Thomas	Whitchurch, Salop	Yeoman / labourer										
Whitby	John	Aldford	Servant									?	
Whitmore	John (sen)	Thurstaston	Gentleman				?						
Worsley	Ralph	Chester	Lawyer				NF	NF	NF	NF			
Sutton	Richard	n/a	Priest	also 77,79			NF						
Culpage	John	n/a	Priest	from 77			NF	NF?					
Houghton	Thomas	Malpas	Priest				NF						
Holford	Thomas	Nantwich	Priest	escaped					M				
					<p>Key</p> <p> in prison in Chester Castle</p> <p> as above, start/end dates uncertain</p> <p>LFr on recognisance from London Fleet</p> <p>M said mass whilst in prison</p> <p>NF imprisoned in New Fleet, Salford</p>								
Sources: NA, CHES21/1; CHES 29; information on priests and imprisonments elsewhere from Wark, <i>Cheshire</i>													

¹⁷⁵ Wark, *Cheshire*, p. 115 notes a single case in 1602.

¹⁷⁶ Walker, 'Implementation', p. 239.

These recusant prisoners were presented twice yearly for extension of their incarceration and additional £20 per month fines in respect of their non-attendance at St Mary's Chester, in whose parish the Castle stood, and account for eighty-two of the 123 recusancy indictments at Assize over the period 1584-9.¹⁷⁷ In fact imprisonment seems to have been the only effective weapon the authorities had at their disposal: Walker's researches demonstrated that there were no payments of recusancy fines from Cheshire before 1587, and only one individual paid between 1587 and 1593 (John Whitmore, whose lands were seized and leased to a tax farmer in 1588, under the new provisions of the statute of the preceding year).¹⁷⁸

The only exception to this business as usual renewal of sentences was at the April and September sessions of 1587, where respectively fourteen and twenty-one individuals at liberty were presented, four of them on both occasions.¹⁷⁹ The reasons for this sudden spike are unclear. Wark posits two possible explanations, the heightened tension as a result of the Spanish threat, and the opportunity to address the recusancy issue which the new legislation offered.¹⁸⁰ I am inclined to favour the latter theory: the tension was equally acute in mid-decade, in the wake of the Parry, Throckmorton and Babington plots, and even higher in the year of the Armada, yet in both of these periods anti-Catholic activity was at desultory levels, as the few new imprisonments shown in Fig. 1.1 above indicates.¹⁸¹ It would seem more likely that the 1587 presentments represent a vigorous trial of the new legislation, but like that of 1581, it was weighed in the balance and found wanting, and its use lapsed: all thirty-one individuals were fined, but none of them paid.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁷ NA, CHES21/1, fos. 114v, 121v, 123v, 127v, 131v, 133v, 134Av, 137, 140, 142v.

¹⁷⁸ Walker, 'Implementation', pp. 226-228, 252-253; Bowler and McCann, *Recusants 1581-92*, p. 189.

¹⁷⁹ NA, CHES 21/1, f. 133v; *ibid.*, CHES 29/325.

¹⁸⁰ Wark, *Cheshire*, p. 68. The new legislation was 28 & 29 Eliz., c. 6.

¹⁸¹ CALS, ZQSF 37, nos. 23, 24, 41, 47, 53 and *ibid.*, ZMB24, 16 August, 30 Elizabeth, however, record eight presentments at the city Quarter Sessions in 1588, most of them resulting in the imposition of the one shilling fine.

¹⁸² Walker, 'Implementation', pp. 226-228.

In fact the evidence from the mid-1580s suggests that the authorities were already at this stage toying with the idea of financially exploiting recusants, as they were to do under Charles I, rather than vainly attempting to suppress them. In 1585 the Wirral gentleman John Hocknell, who had recently been released from prison on recognizances, and Lady Mary Egerton, who had thus far evaded prosecution through friends in high places, up to and including Sir Christopher Hatton, were included in the scope of a Privy Council initiative to fund Leicester's Dutch expedition through levies on wealthy recusants. The success of this exercise led the Council to survey the potential of a composition scheme the following year, although the paltry sums offered led them to abandon the idea.¹⁸³

Dures observes that the wave of persecution of Catholics during the 1580s reached its peak between 1588 and 1592, after which the perceived possibility of a further invasion abated.¹⁸⁴ This observation requires nuancing if the case of Cheshire is representative: whilst increasing prompting from the Privy Council is clearly visible in the record from 1589, it took time for it to achieve traction at the local level. There was no significant anti-recusant initiative in the county between the Assizes of 1587 and those of 1591.¹⁸⁵ But the pressure of the centre on the periphery was certainly on the rise.

In June 1589 Chadderton was instructed by the Privy Council, who were exercised that 'there be within that countrie soundrie obstinate Recusantes against whom noe execucion is used for lacke that the mynisters doe not in their severall cares presente them' that:

in your Visitation Generall, which we understand your Lordship is in hand presentlie to make, you doe corporallie sweare everie of the said mynisters in your Dioces to

¹⁸³ Walker, 'Implementation', pp. 200-225: Wark, *Cheshire*, pp. 33-34, 58-59, 63-65. See section 1.4 below for details of Caroline recusancy finance.

¹⁸⁴ Dures, *English Catholicism*, p. 28.

¹⁸⁵ Wark, *Cheshire*, p. 106 states that fifty-one Catholics were indicted at the Assize in 1589, but this assertion is not supported by NA, CHES 21/1, ff. 137-155v, which shows only the prisoners held in Chester Castle being presented between 1588 and 1590. Wark's statement would appear to derive from Chadderton's return to the Privy Council of December 1590 in BL, Lansdowne MS 64 f. 21, which reports that number and the associated outstanding fines of £15,440 – figures respectively in the same orders of magnitude as the total number of recusants convicted from 1584 onwards, and the total value of recusancy fines imposed by the Assizes upon them. See Bowler and McCann, *Recusants 1581-92*, pp. 28, 37, 42, 58, 59, 64, 85, 89, 92, 108, 109, 116, 118, 138-140, 144, 159, 167, 189, 190, 193, 196 for supporting details.

observe henceforth dulia the presentments of everie such person so offending the lawes.¹⁸⁶

Chadderton was evidently sufficiently concerned about the findings of his visitation that October to write to Walsingham about the matter. The Council's reply of April 1590, shortly after the Secretary's death, instructed him to compile 'the names, livelyhoodes and dependaunces of the said recusantes'.¹⁸⁷ The bishop apparently complied with a list of over 200 names (plus 700 from Lancashire) but 'there wanted to be sett downe the dwellinge places and quallities and livelyhoode of the persons', as the Council observed in their reply of 25 July.¹⁸⁸ In the same letter and in parallel ones to the Earl of Derby and the Justices, the Council sought to orchestrate a campaign against recusants at the autumn Chester Assize, but it was not until the following April that any further volume presentment was achieved.¹⁸⁹ Some thirty-one individuals were indicted on that occasion, although the absence of any fines for them in the Exchequer Pipe Rolls suggests that few, if any, of them were convicted.¹⁹⁰

The government exerted further pressure in October 1591 with the issue of a royal proclamation 'for remedy of the treasons which, under pretext of religion, have been plotted by seminaries and Jesuits'.¹⁹¹ This reconstituted the Ecclesiastical Commissions with additional powers of enquiry and of engaging the existing authorities, and with a distributed structure extending down to parish level.¹⁹² The proceedings of the commission for Chester City survive amongst the Quarter Sessions Examinations files: they were meticulously

¹⁸⁶ NA, PC 2/16, f. 89.

¹⁸⁷ NA, PC 2/17, f. 619. As noted above, the visitation book (CALs, EDV 1.8) contains no record of any recusancy presentments.

¹⁸⁸ NA, PC 2/17, f. 829.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, ff. 828, 830.

¹⁹⁰ NA, CHES 21/1, ff. 156v, 157. For a list of presentees, see Appendix A: only one of them (Mary Massey) is listed in Bowler and McCann, *Recusants 1581-92* (p. 119) and not in the 1591 roll. Possible exceptions are Margaret Davenport and William Poole, whose lands were subject to distraint in the following two years, and William Stretbarrell, who like Poole, is shown as owing fines for multiple years on the first Recusant Roll of 1593-4: see M. Calthorp (ed.), *Recusant Roll No. 1, 1592-3*, CRS 18 (1916), pp. 22, 23, 25. The remaining persons on the first Recusant Roll with multiple years' fines (more than £260) against them were not presented at the Assize before 1593, the year to which the majority of the entries on the roll relate.

¹⁹¹ NA, SP 12/240, f. 68.

¹⁹² Manning, 'Recusancy Commissions', pp. 31-33; Walker, 'Implementation', p. 307.

narrated by Wark, and may be summarised here.¹⁹³ In January and February 1591-2 some twenty-two individuals were interrogated, some of them partially under oath. These examinations, together with presentments from the city parishes, identified a further twenty-six suspected of Catholicism, or in one or two cases of having Catholic connections, though none of this latter group were subsequently examined. The net result of all this effort, the Commissioners' report informed the Privy Council, was the names of two seminary priests who had said masses at nearby Christleton, 'which is in the Countie of Chester, out of our jurisdiction; wherof we have written our letters to the Comissioners of that Countie.' Their counterparts in the shire were slow to proceed, however, and the birds had flown.¹⁹⁴

The exercise did uncover evidence of other priests having operated in the area, but it was even less actionable: one, unnamed, had celebrated a mass in the Castle four years previously¹⁹⁵; another, also unidentifiable, had married the prisoner John Whitmore and his second wife, presumably in the same place¹⁹⁶; and a third, Humphrey Hanmer, was reported to be operating a missionary circuit in north-west Shropshire.¹⁹⁷ The Commissioners' failure to interview half of the suspects identified suggests that they were overwhelmed with the size of the problem they faced, coupled with the evasiveness of, and conflicts between, the testimonies they received.

The Commission was, however, the most thorough investigation to date into the city's recusancy and was not totally without results. Two of the examinees were already jailed in the Northgate prison, and a further three joined them there in the course of the enquiry.¹⁹⁸ No evidence survives of the corresponding exercise in the county apart from a complimentary

¹⁹³ Wark, *Cheshire*, pp 88-102.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 71-72.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 95, 100.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 89-92.

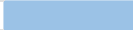
response from the Privy Council to its report¹⁹⁹, but the increase in the numbers of recusant prisoners around this time, reflected in Table 1.3 below, may have been a result.

Imprisonment was increasingly used as a sanction during the early 1590s, mostly on a short-term basis, though the surviving long-term inmates of the Castle remained there for most of the decade.

Fig. 1.2: Catholic Prisoners, 1590-8

Surname	Christian name	Location	Occupation/status	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98
Amos	Joan	Waverton	Servant									
Ball	Robert	n/a - prisoner	n/a									
Browne	Robert	Chester	n/a - son of gaoler			Ng	Ng		?			?
Burscowe	Gilbert	n/a - prisoner	Gentleman									
Cheswis	Alice	Bunbury	Widow									
Cheswis	Richard	Bunbury	Labourer thru yeoman									
Cheswis	William	Bunbury	Labourer thru yeoman									
Darme	Eleanor	n/a - prisoner	n/a									
Elmideth?	Elmcott	n/a - prisoner	n/a									
Elmideth?	Thomas	n/a - prisoner	n/a									
Hesketh	Thomas	Thurstaston	Gentleman									
Hocknell	John	Prenton	Esquire	d								
Huxley	Thomas	Bunbury	Husbandman									
Isherwood (Us	Christopher	n/a - prisoner	Labourer thru yeoman	?								
Killiburne	Henry	n/a - prisoner	n/a									
Langton	Ralph	Chester	Yeoman									
Maddocks	John	Malpas	Husbandman									
Maddocks	Thomas	Thurstaston	Yeoman									
Mallam	Anne	West Kirby	Widow									
Massey	Margaret	Waverton	Spouse (of gentleman)									
Massey	Richard (sen)	Waverton	Gentleman									
Mawdesley	Nicholas	n/a - prisoner	n/a									
Mellung	Jane	n/a - prisoner	n/a									
Probin	Edward	Malpas	Husbandman									
Spurstow	Richard	Bunbury	Gentleman									
Stevenson	Thomas	?Chester	n/a - guide to escapees 1595			Ng						
Stoke	Peter	n/a - prisoner	n/a									
Street	John	Nantwich	Husbandman			n/a						
Stretbarrell or	William	Bunbury	Yeoman									
Trine	Thomas	n/r - Whitchurch, S	Unknown									
Whitmore	John (sen)	Thurstaston	Gentleman									d?
Wilden	Elen	Chester	Maid			Ng			?			?
Wilson	John (sen?)	Bunbury	Yeoman									
Worsley	Ralph	Chester	Lawyer									

KEY

 prisoner in Chester Castle

Ng Northgate

Source: NA, CHES 21/1, fos. 146v ff.

¹⁹⁹ NA, PC 2/19, f. 252.

The campaign against recusancy only achieved significant traction in 1593, when seventy-one individuals were convicted at the April Assizes.²⁰⁰ Thirty-eight of them were fined £240 for twelve months' recusancy and most of the remainder multiples of the £20 per month fine for shorter periods, though at least ten received fines for multiple years, ranging up to £1,440 in the case of Mary Lawton of Church Lawton. These ten were by no means all drawn from the elite: four members of the yeoman Cotgreve family and the husbandman Randle Platt were each fined £960, and Joan Wilbraham, wife of the blacksmith of Malpas, £720.²⁰¹ The amounts, however, proved to be largely academic, since the *fiat commissio* entries against all of them in the first Recusant Roll, for the Exchequer year ending Michaelmas 1593, indicate that none of them were paid.²⁰² More incisive, one supposes, were the five distraints that are also recorded in the roll. These appear to be the clawback or renewal of historic debts of the elites: that against John Whitmore, previously mentioned, renewed a charge on his estates dating back to 1587; three others were against the heirs of offenders from the 1580s who were by that time dead; and the dower land of Margaret Davenport was seized in 1592, a year after her sole presentment at the Assizes.²⁰³

There were no volume presentments at the Assizes for several years after this, but the second Recusant Roll, for the Exchequer year ending Michaelmas 1594, shows distraint biting further, in particular into the less wealthy who had incurred fines the previous year. In addition to ongoing charges on the lands of the five distrainees above, the roll records charges on the rents due to four landowners (only one of whom is classed as a gentleman) and seizure of the goods and chattels of ten individuals, all of plebeian status, two of whom also lost land.²⁰⁴ The rationale for the selection of these twelve individuals is unclear, though Wark's

²⁰⁰ NA, CHES 29/334, f. 17.

²⁰¹ Calthorp, *Recusant Roll 1*, pp. 22-28.

²⁰² Walker, 'Implementation', p. 262.

²⁰³ Calthorp, *Recusant Roll 1*, pp. 20-22.

²⁰⁴ Bowler, H. (ed.). *Recusant Roll No. 2, 1593-4*, CRS 57 (1965), pp. 9-13.

observation that land seizures during the 1590s were mostly at the behest of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners applies to the four cases here.²⁰⁵ All four distrainees, however, were from Bunbury parish, as were six of the ten whose goods were taken, which suggests that local knowledge and agendas also played a part.²⁰⁶ There is a similar randomness in the values of the assets distrained: the yeomen Ralph Cooke and Thomas Huxley both owed £240, yet Cooke lost goods valued at 1/-, and Huxley, a prisoner at the time, goods worth £2 6s 8d. No doubt the sheriff's men took whatever of value they could get.

The mid-Elizabethan years thus saw a series of attempts to address the emerging Catholic problem in Cheshire, but with little to show in the way of results. The opportunities offered by the statutes of 1581 and 1587 were promptly taken up but found to be illusory and not pursued. Even the peak levels of persecution during 1592 and 1593, driven by Privy Council pressure, yielded no more than the imprisonment of a handful of recusants and the loss of assets by a group of similar size, albeit one on whom that loss was a significant one.

From 1590 onwards substantial visitation returns exist, which for the first time give some indicative measure of the extent of Catholicism in the county. John Piers's primary metropolitan visitation of 1590 identified 123 probable Catholics, and Chadderton's final visitation of 1592 115.²⁰⁷ These two sources thus enable record linkage with the Assize presentments of 1591 and 1593.²⁰⁸ What is striking is the authorities' lack of coordination. Across the four exercises, 148 individuals were presented, but over half of them (seventy-seven) only once. Forty appeared twice and a further twenty-seven three times, but only four

²⁰⁵ Wark, *Cheshire*, p. 118.

²⁰⁶ Ranulf Aldersey, Ralph Cooke, Katherine Crockett, Thomas Huxley, Robert Longton, John Whitby, John Wilson junior, and Ellen Wooley. See Wark, *Cheshire*, pp. 139, 145, 146, 154, 157, 167, 171-172 for details of these individuals.

²⁰⁷ BIY, V.1590-1, CB.2, fos. 80-109v, passim: CALS, EDV 1.10, fos 21-93v, passim.

²⁰⁸ NA, CHES 21/1, ff. 156v, 157; *ibid.*, CHES 29/334, f. 17.

on all four occasions.²⁰⁹ Even at this peak anti-Catholic initiatives were considerably less than systematic.

1.3 The long Jacobean era (1594-1628)

The final Elizabethan years saw the intense anti-recusancy campaigns of the early 1590s die down into a steady state of reluctant coexistence, limited containment and ongoing if inefficient exploitation. The attempt of 1593 to introduce genuinely draconian legislation, which could potentially have eliminated recusancy within a generation, had floundered on the Whitgiftian party's efforts to embrace Puritan recusancy within the same legislation, and, as Walker observed, left the regime with the only option of systematic enforcement of the existing measures on a routine basis.²¹⁰ This approach remained essentially unchanged for three and a half decades, notwithstanding the tougher legislation which followed the Gunpowder Plot, until a composition policy was adopted during the Personal Rule. Hence the counter-intuitive heading and periodisation of this section, which witnessed the classical operation (or inoperation) of the Elizabethan recusancy laws.

Another factor linking the last Elizabethan decade to the Jacobean period was a milder religio-political climate. Behind this resigned acceptance of Catholicism as a permanent fixture in the Queen's final years was the anticipation of her death and an expectation that James's succession would inaugurate a more benign regime with some degree of toleration, and at the national level both leading Catholic gentry and secular priests approached Cecil's government to this end, mooted the offer of an oath of allegiance.²¹¹ James's attitude to the Scottish Catholics had been somewhat ambivalent, and Questier has

²⁰⁹ See Appendix A.

²¹⁰ Walker, 'Implementation', pp. 343-347.

²¹¹ Dures, *English Catholicism*, pp. 36, 38, 40.

noted that from the mid-1590s onwards ‘popery was fought with an eye to what might happen when Scottish James came to assert his rights south of the border.’²¹²

As King of England James did seek to pursue an eirenic policy towards moderate Catholics, whom he saw as loyal subjects, though a similar sentiment towards moderate Puritans, and intermittently the financial dependence of his cash-strapped regime on anti-Catholic Parliaments, constrained his room to manoeuvre.²¹³ This tension has been seen as playing out in four stages: a brief honeymoon period at the start of the reign, in which hopes of toleration on the part of both Catholic and Puritan nonconformists remained high: a further period of relative benignity, which was not seriously disturbed by the Gunpowder Treason of 1605; a period of crackdown following the assassination of Henri IV of France in 1610, which was perceived as symptomatic of an international Catholic threat; and finally, a further period of leniency after 1622 in the climate of the Spanish and subsequently the French marriage negotiations, which revived the prospect of toleration.²¹⁴

This section will show that whilst the trajectory of civil persecution in Cheshire shows some correspondence to this model, there are some notable divergencies which demand a more granular explanation. In particular the approaches of the ecclesiastical and civil authorities exhibit something of a contrary motion over the period: the former was generally more vigorous under evangelical bishops in the last Elizabethan and early Jacobean years, as Table 1.2 below shows, and the latter in James’s last decade. Hence their peaks and troughs will be analysed separately below.

²¹² Michael Questier, ‘The Politics of Religious Conformity and the Accession of James I’, *Historical Research* 71 (1998), pp. 14-30, pp. 20-21.

²¹³ Kenneth Fincham and Peter Lake, ‘The Ecclesiastical Policy of James I’, *JBS* 24 (1985), pp. 169-207, pp. 181-186; Dures, *English Catholicism*, pp. 41; A. Okines, ‘Why Was There So Little Government Reaction to Gunpowder Plot?’, *JEH* 55 (2004), pp. 275-292, esp. pp. 275-277.

²¹⁴ Dures, *English Catholicism*, pp. 40-54.

	1595	1596	1598	1601	1604	1605	1608	1611	1614	1619	1622	1625	1628
recusants	19	101	55	28	47	61	108	19	0	7	38	125	97
recidivist absentees	18		43	34	11	24	16	15	30	10	26	53	18
non-communicants	16		89	80	26	83	58	92	56	29	52	27	22
other	2		5	4	7	3	7	9	2	0	0	5	2
all	55	101	192	146	91	171	189	135	88	46	116	210	139
recusants %	35%	100%	29%	19%	52%	36%	57%	14%	0%	15%	33%	60%	70%

* Figures from episcopal visitations except for 1595 (metropolitan visitation) and 1596 (provincial survey by archbishop)

Hutton's primary metropolitanical visitation of 1595, during the interregnum occasioned by Chadderton's translation to Lincoln, was perfunctory in its identification of Catholics: though a committed evangelical Protestant, Hutton believed that Catholics should converted to Protestantism rather than compelled to it, and opposed government anti-Catholic initiatives until his death in 1606, despite official rebukes for his failure to address the problem of recusancy vigorously.²¹⁵ But in January 1595-6 he submitted a further survey of recusancy in the northern province to Cecil, a much more thorough document containing the estimates of recusants' property values that the Privy Council had been requesting unsuccessfully for nigh on twenty years.²¹⁶ The role in this of the incoming bishop of Chester, Hugh Bellot, is unclear (he is only mentioned once, in connection with the commissaries who conducted the survey of the Yorkshire archdeaconry of Richmond)²¹⁷, but his active involvement would explain his reputation as a persecutor of recusancy, which appears otherwise to have been based on a single case from his previous role as bishop of Bangor.²¹⁸ Bellot died later that year, and his successor at Bangor, Richard Vaughan, was preferred to Chester in 1597.

²¹⁵ Claire Cross, 'Hutton, Matthew (1529?–1606)', *ODNB* (online edition, 2004), accessed 4 March 2021.

²¹⁶ Hatfield House, Cecil Papers 238/1, 'A Book of Recusants', reproduced verbatim in Clare Talbot (ed.), *Miscellanea 13*, CRS 53 (1961), pp. 1-107.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

²¹⁸ Glanmor Williams, 'Bellot, Hugh (1542–1596)', *ODNB* (online edition, 2008), accessed 4 March 2021.

Vaughan was preoccupied with the problem of Catholicism and corresponded extensively with Cecil about the issue of recusancy.²¹⁹ The following extract from a letter of 1600 is characteristic both of his mindset and ‘hands-on’ approach to the matter:

Give me leave to interrupt your graver affairs with the cause of the poor messengers so cruelly entreated in Lancashire, by bloody recusants, since which time Her Majesty's service in those parts has been much hindered, they undone, and ill-disposed subjects hardened in all lewd practices against the government of the Church. I have delivered to the sheriff of the county of Chester the prisoners apprehended and indicted for that outrage, and by the judges of assize sent hither; there are eight others indicted but not apprehended; many more were guilty of this conspiracy, whom I persuade myself these persons, being strictly examined, will discover.²²⁰

His primary focus was, as the quotation suggests, upon Lancashire, where there were 3,516 recusants at his final visitation of 1604.²²¹ One may question whether Cheshire received sufficient attention: whilst his initial visitation of 1598 exceeds all previous ones in its identification of potential Catholics, the growth in numbers is largely amongst non-communicants rather than recusants, and the figures for both tail off over his following two visitations.

George Lloyd, previously bishop of Sodor and Man, succeeded Vaughan on his translation to London in 1604-5, and was probably the most effective of the Jacobean bishops of Chester in policing Catholicism. His track record in office belies Quintrell's assessment that he ‘treated Roman Catholics with moderation and even diffidence’. The recusancy totals from his first two visitations were the highest to date, and this ‘enthusiastic anti-papist’ was one of the first to administer the Oath of 1606.²²² In 1608 his conscientiousness in pursuing recusants even had to be constrained by the Privy Council, who:

[h]ave considered the King's letter to the late Lord Treasurer, which he enclosed to them, with respect to the stay of his proceedings against recusants. The King wishes

²¹⁹ Brett Usher, ‘Vaughan, Richard (c.1553–1607)’, *ODNB* (online edition, 2008), accessed 6 March 2021.

²²⁰ NA, SP 12/274, f. 37.

²²¹ Hilton, *Catholic Lancashire*, p. 17.

²²² CALS, EDV 1.14 and 1.15; Michael Questier, ‘Loyalty, Religion and State Power in Early Modern England: English Romanism and the Jacobean Oath of Allegiance’, *HJ* 40 (1997), pp. 311-329, p. 323.

not to stop them altogether, but to have him proceed with moderation, and only against obstinate persons.²²³

This caution is one possible explanation why recusant totals dip sharply at the last two visitations of his episcopate (1611, 1614): another is a corresponding increase in civil persecutions, discussed below.²²⁴ Analysis of prosopographies suggests it does not represent a retreat into church papistry, despite the increase in the volume of non-communicants.²²⁵ Whatever the reason, it would not seem to represent a diminution of episcopal zeal: even in the final months of his life, Lloyd was engaged in correspondence with the Council regarding the treatment of Catholics ‘who refuse to be bound for revocation of their children from foreign seminaries.’²²⁶

The low volume of Catholic presentments at visitations continued through the last decade of James’s reign. Of the primary and sole visitation of the next bishop, Thomas Morton (1616-19), only a badly damaged fragment for a single deanery survives, but evidence from the bishop’s short career at Chester (he was translated to Lichfield and Coventry after three years) would suggest it probably did not reverse the pattern of Lloyd’s later visitations.²²⁷ Quintrell assesses that this scholarly former Dean of Winchester ‘never settled at Chester’ and that his ‘long and scholarly concentration on the fundamental problems of international Catholicism’ (he was a controversialist of international repute) ‘had not prepared him for the interplay of religious extremes in the local community.’²²⁸ When the King was in Lancashire in 1617 Morton displayed a ‘limited grasp’ of the sabbatarian

²²³ NA, SP 14/37 f. 52.

²²⁴ CALS, EDV 1.17, fos 5-94v passim: *ibid*, EDV 1.19, fos 10-58v passim.

²²⁵ See Chapter 2, section 2.2.2 below.

²²⁶ NA, SP 14/80 f.143.

²²⁷ CCALS, EDV 1.20.

²²⁸ Brian Quintrell, ‘Morton, Thomas (bap. 1564, d. 1659)’, *ODNB* (online edition, 2008), accessed 6 March 2021.

controversy which resulted in the Book of Sports, and his attempt to seek translation to Lincoln the same year floundered on his failure to discipline Puritans in his diocese.²²⁹

Morton was succeeded in 1619 by his friend John Bridgeman, rector of Wigan, who remained bishop until his divestment at the start of the Civil War. Bridgeman retained *in commendam* the living of Wigan, which was his principal residence, ostensibly as a base from which to deal with Lancashire recusancy, although his main concerns seem to have been with the exercise and enhancement of the privileges of the lordship of Wigan, which was attached to his living, and with the reordering of the parish church there.²³⁰ These preoccupations possibly explain the desultory returns of his primary visitation in 1619.²³¹ It was not until his third visitation, in the autumn of 1625, that he seems to have been exercised by the Catholic problem.²³² The context for this was probably the new King's reactivation in August of the penal laws, which had been suspended for most of the previous three years during the negotiations firstly for the Spanish marriage and then for the French, although in 1624 there had been pressure from his episcopal superiors about the use of pursuivants, possibly emanating from archbishop Abbot.²³³ Within a week of the visitation completing its dealings with the Catholic strongholds in the deaneries of Chester, Malpas, Wirral and Bangor on 4 October, Bridgeman wrote on the subject to the Privy Council, and six days later received a reply that 'it appeareth there is a verie great and unaccustomed resorte to the houses of recusants in that County' and requesting 'particular informacion'.²³⁴ This request prefigures the focus on the financial exploitation of recusants that was to characterise the new reign.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Peter David Yorke, 'Bridgeman, John (*bap.* 1577, *d.* 1652)', *ODNB* (online edition, 2010), accessed 6 March 2021; Brian Quintrell, 'Lancashire ills, the king's will, and the troubling of Bishop Bridgeman', *THSLC* 132 (1982), pp. 67–102, pp. 68-70.

²³¹ CALS, EDV 1.22, fos 3-60 *passim*.

²³² CALS, EDV 1.26, fos 2-86v *passim*.

²³³ Dures, *English Catholicism*, pp. 52, 71: SRO, D1287/18/2 (P/399/15-16).

²³⁴ NA, PC 2/33, f. 137.

Once the Assize of April 1593 had succeeded in convicting recusants *en masse*, the civil regime settled down into routine albeit intermittent operation against a much smaller volume of recusants, as Table 1.3 below demonstrates. The automatic renewal of penalties in the absence of proof of conformity reduced the recusant traffic at Assize sessions to just first-time offenders.

Table 1:3: Presentments of recusants at Assize and enforcement of penalties, 1593-1603											
	1593	1594	1595	1596	1597	1598	1599	1600	1601	1602	1603
Assize pres'mnts											
spring	72	3	2					51			
autumn		5	3								
Recusant Roll											
finer (unpaid)	75	1			7	6		49			
distrains - lands	5	8			11	1		3		1	
distrains - goods		10			5			5		4	
Note: the Recusant Roll figures reflect the total number of entries, including arrears from previous years											
Sources: NA, CHES21/1, fos 173 ff. ; <i>ibid.</i> , E377 rolls nos 1, 2 ,5, 6, 8, 10											

There were nine such offenders in 1594, none of whom were convicted, although four of them were fined after re-presentment the following year, together with a first-time offender.²³⁵ Thereafter there were no new presentments until 1600. Meanwhile efforts were being made by means of distrains to erode the backlog of outstanding fines due from those convicted in 1593, mostly at the behest of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners.²³⁶ A further eleven of these convicted in 1591 or 1593 lost lands and/or goods over the remaining years of Elizabeth's reign.²³⁷

A similar low temperature is visible in Chester, which was still operating the one shilling fine of 1559 at Quarter Sessions, and where there were only four presentments for

²³⁵ Wark, *Cheshire*, pp. 114-115.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 144,145, 156-157, 160-165 (Alice Cheswis, Richard Cheswis, William Cheswis, William Cooke, Richard Longton, John Maddocks, Richard Poole, William Poole, Edward Probin, Hugh Sim, Peter Spurstowe).

absence during the last Elizabethan decade,²³⁸ although the interception of youths in transit to foreign seminaries on three occasions in 1594 and 1595 exhibits a sustained level of vigilance in this port city.²³⁹ Also indicative of a gradual relaxation of persecution in the mid-late 1590s is the release of long-term prisoners in Chester Castle. Richard Massey was released in 1595 subject to the proviso of the 1593 Act that recusants remain within five miles of their homes,²⁴⁰ and three others by 1598, though this may have been for reasons of capacity rather than clemency. The records of the September Assize of that year show five new prisoners of whom no other record exists in the county records, suggesting that the facility may have been required for delinquents from other shires: Vaughan's letter of 1600, above, shows that he had recently sent prisoners from Lancashire there.²⁴¹

The only significant exception to the relative tranquillity of this period was at the Assize of April 1600, when fifty-one recusants were presented and each fined for twelve months' recusancy (£240). There is a gap in the Crown Books at this point, and the only surviving evidence of this exercise is in the Recusant Roll of that year, so there is little to contextualise this isolated peak.²⁴² Possibly it was at the behest of a frustrated bishop Vaughan, or that of the Ecclesiastical Commission, which had been renewed in 1598 with a strong Puritan element, though that is purely speculative.²⁴³

The level of persecution rose only slightly through the first decade of the new century, apart from a brief spike after the Gunpowder Plot, as Table 1.4 shows:

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 115-116.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 108-114.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

²⁴¹ See section 1.2, Figure 1.2.

²⁴² NA, E377/8.

²⁴³ Manning, 'Ecclesiastical Commissioners', p. 65.

Table 1:4: Assize presentments & penalties, 1593-1603							
	1604	1605	1606	1607	1608	1609	1610
Assize pres'mnts							
spring		48	15	20		6	10
autumn	18	119	27	7			147
Recusant Roll							
fines (unpaid)			99			54	
distrainments - lands			5			11	
distrainments - goods							
Note: the Recusant Roll figures reflect the total number of entries, including arrears							
Sources: NA, CHES 21/2, fos 18-64v: <i>ibid.</i> , E377/14 & E377/17							

For most of the first eighteen months of the new reign the penal laws were suspended, and it was not until James reimposed them in November 1604, probably in response to Parliamentary pressure, that presentments recommenced.²⁴⁴ This revival of persecution probably reflects both local and national issues: in May a plot by seminary priests in Lancashire to seize the port of Chester had been reported, but a wider concern about the increase in recusancy amongst Catholics expecting toleration is also visible.²⁴⁵ The first batch of returns from the 1604 visitation, dated October, contain entries from the strongly Catholic parish of Hanmer (in Wales but within the diocese) which differentiate between those ‘recusant before his majesty’s reign’ and those ‘recusant since his majesty’s reign’.²⁴⁶

Unsurprisingly, there was a sharp spike of presentments in the wake of the Gunpowder Plot. The unusually late date of the autumn Assizes that year (December 17) suggest the sessions may have been deferred to allow exhaustive enquiries and maximise presentments: over half (sixty-five) of the presentees were first offenders.²⁴⁷ The fifteen presentments of the following spring, however, show that the aftermath of Gunpowder in Cheshire was short-lived, and persecution quickly settled at a moderate level which, though

²⁴⁴ Dures, *English Catholicism*, p. 41.

²⁴⁵ NA, SP 14/8, fos 62-64.

²⁴⁶ CCALS, EDV 1.13, ff. 15v-16v.

²⁴⁷ NA, CHES 21/2, fos 27-29.

above that of the final Elizabethan decade, was well below the peak of the post-Armada years. The Recusant Roll of 1606 shows that the only revenue collected flowed from the existing Elizabethan distraints: no additional lands or goods were seized, and there were only four new sequestrations in 1609.²⁴⁸

This picture is consistent with Okines's observation that the Government's response was one of 'surprising leniency': the plot's significance 'owes more to propaganda and polemic over the following 300 years than to the reaction of the Jacobean government'²⁴⁹ The primary concerns of both James and Cecil were to safeguard domestic stability and the peace with Spain, both of which might be jeopardised by the draconian treatment of Catholics.²⁵⁰ For that reason, there was no systematic attempt to implement the more severe anti-Catholic legislation which Parliament passed in 1606, as there had been in 1581 and 1587.²⁵¹ Admittedly, as noted above, bishop Lloyd took early advantage of the Oath of Allegiance against a yeoman and six husbandmen that year (it was not in general use until 1610), but this was a maverick operation decoupled from government objectives, possibly making an example of high-profile delinquents *pour encourager les autres*.²⁵²

The assassination of Henry IV of France in May 1610 shattered the tranquillity of the first Stuart decade and caused a step change in the regime's treatment of Catholics. Whether one views the initiative in this as lying with a paranoid King in fear of his life (Okines's view), or like Dures with an anti-Catholic Parliament which now held an ace in the ongoing negotiation of the Great Contract, the response was swift, a proclamation of 2 June mandating stricter enforcement of the existing legislation being followed the same month by further

²⁴⁸ NA, E377/14 & 377/17.

²⁴⁹ A. Okines, 'Why Was There So Little Government Reaction to Gunpowder Plot?', *JEH* 55 (2004), pp. 275-292, pp. 275, 292.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 286, 291-292.

²⁵¹ 3 & 4 Jac I, caps iv & v.

²⁵² CCALS, QJF 35/3, m. 36; Michael Questier, 'Oath', p. 323. Four of the seven had previously been imprisoned for recusancy: Richard Cheswis of Bunbury and his brother William (imprisoned 1584-1597), Thomas Huxley, also of Bunbury (first offence 1587, imprisoned 1592 and 1598) and John Street of Nantwich (first offence 1590, imprisoned 1592).

legislation which in particular extended the scope of the oath of 1606 to all subjects, and brought it into widespread usage.²⁵³ In Cheshire, this stricter policy manifested in a massive increase in recusancy presentments at the September Assizes of that year (see Table 1.4 above).²⁵⁴

Yet the duration, or at least the severity of this change of policy, which both Dures and Okines see as extending well into the 1610s and related to the financial needs of the regime following the failure of the Great Contract negotiations, is problematised by the Cheshire evidence, summarised in Table 1.5 below.²⁵⁵

Table 1.5: Presentments of recusants at Assize and enforcement of penalties, 1611-21											
	1611	1612	1613	1614	1615	1616	1617	1618	1619	1620	1621
Assize pres'mnts											
spring			85				67	30	220		36
autumn	101			58		88	117				125
Recusant Roll											
fines (unpaid)	212			20							
distraints - lands				11						3	
distraints - goods				1							
Note: the Recusant Roll figures reflect the total number of entries, including arrears from previous years											
Sources: NA, CHES21/2, fos 65v ff. & CHES21/3 fos 1-64; <i>ibid.</i> , E377, rolls nos 19, 22, 26											

The 1611 Recusant Roll shows that none of the £140 fines levied on those convicted at the previous year's Assizes were paid²⁵⁶; the only Assize presentment in 1611 was of a list from Bunbury which had been compiled the previous year but not processed²⁵⁷; and there were no presentments in 1612.²⁵⁸ In 1613, however, when there was widespread fear of a Spanish

²⁵³ Okines, 'Gunpowder Plot', pp. 289-290; Dures, 'English Catholicism', pp. 47-48.

²⁵⁴ NA, CHES 21/2, fos 63-64v.

²⁵⁵ Okines, 'Gunpowder Plot', p. 291; Dures, 'English Catholicism', pp. 48-51.

²⁵⁶ NA, E377/19.

²⁵⁷ NA, CHES 21/2, fos 75-76.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, fos 78v-86, *passim*.

invasion and recusant disarming was imposed, there was a spike in presentments at the Assizes.²⁵⁹

It was not until the second half of the 1610s, though, that civil presentments increased in both regularity and volume. The tendering of the Oath of Allegiance during these years also points to a bleaker climate for Catholics. Apart from the atypical examples of 1606 discussed above, there is no evidence of anyone taking the oath – and, as Questier observes, the informal circumstances in which it was often tendered militated against documentation of the exercise - but at the Assizes of spring 1618 the imprisonments of four individuals for refusing it were recorded.²⁶⁰

The Recusant Roll for 1614 shows a change of approach to the problem of revenue collection, in the abandonment of the abortive £20 fine and attempts instead to go directly to distraint of realistic amounts (an opportunity afforded by the 1606 legislation), but it only succeeded in generating revenue from the existing distrainees or, where they had died, from their heirs and successors.²⁶¹ Thereafter payments into the Exchequer are recorded only in the Recusant Rolls of 1620 and 1622 from the period prior to the Personal Rule, and show merely three and four payments respectively.²⁶² This meagre yield conflicts with the conventional picture of recusant finance in the Jacobean era, when ‘tax farmers ran riot in the provinces unchecked’ and ‘recusant land was frequently leased out to Crown tenants’.²⁶³ It would seem, however, that Cheshire was not fertile soil for such exploitation: the Catholic elite of the county at this time were predominantly church papists rather than recusants (a point demonstrated in Chapter 2, at section 2.2.2) - and thus immune to the penalties of the

²⁵⁹ Brian Quintrell, ‘The Practice and Problems of Recusant Disarming’, *RH* 17 (1985), pp. 208-222, p. 208.

²⁶⁰ *Idem*, ‘Oath’, p. 325; NA, CHES 21/3, fos 18, 18v.

²⁶¹ NA, E377/22.

²⁶² NA, E377/28 and E377/30.

²⁶³ Michael Questier, ‘Sir Henry Spiller, Recusancy and the Efficiency of the Jacobean Exchequer’, *HR* 66 (1993), pp. 251-266, pp. 252, 253.

law. The vast majority of distrainees were of lower status, and the effort of pursuing them perhaps in many cases disproportionate to the gains.

The final Jacobean years brought some relief to Catholics through the suspension of the penal laws during the Spanish marriage negotiations of 1622-3, and again after Charles's marriage to Henrietta Maria had been arranged in 1625. But as Table 1.6 shows, either side of these two periods Assize presentments were higher than ever.

Table 1.6: Assize presentments & penalties, 1622-8							
	1622	1623	1624	1625	1626	1627	1628
Assize pres'mnts							
spring			161		217		
autumn			191		262		127
Recusant Roll							
finer (unpaid)							
distrainments - lands	4						
distrainments - goods							
Note: the Recusant Roll figures reflect the total number of entries, including arrears							
Sources: NA, CHES 21/3, fos 66v-184: <i>ibid.</i> , E377/30							

These figures reflect the anti-popish reaction to the lax administration of the penal laws which manifested in the parliaments of the 1620s. That of 1625 succeeded in introducing new legislation against the education of children abroad and caused the penal laws to be reinstated in August of that year.²⁶⁴ The Privy Council's response to Bridgeman's report of his third visitation in October has been noted above: its semi-standard wording, found in other correspondence from the Council around this date, suggests that the problem was perceived as a national rather than local one, and contextualises the order for recusant disarming issued in November.²⁶⁵ Across the wider nation its results were disappointing,

²⁶⁴ Dures, *English Catholicism*, p. 71.

²⁶⁵ NA, PC 2/33, fos 134, 160, for example, contain an identical form of words relating to Buckinghamshire and Surrey respectively; Dures, *English Catholicism*, p. 71.

though locally it caused some consternation amongst the Savage family, the leading aristocrats of Cheshire, and also prominent Catholics. Thomas Savage's eldest daughter Lady St. John wrote to Lord Conway to express her 'great griefe' at the prospect of her father being disarmed, though her fears subsequently proved groundless: no doubt through his Court connections, Savage ended up as a disarmer rather than the disarmed.²⁶⁶

In contrast to the campaigns against recusancy in the 1580s and 1590s, where the Privy Council was clearly the driving force, those of the 1620s show that the discourses of anti-popery had been internalised by a Puritan elite. There are several examples of this from Cheshire: in the parliament of 1621 one of the Cheshire MPs, Sir Richard Grosvenor, called for the Catholic Edward Floyd to be sent to the Tower for rejoicing at the fall of the Palatinate²⁶⁷; in that of 1624 another Cheshire MP, Sir William Booth, denounced two prominent Cheshire church papists, Sir Hugh Beeston and Sir William Massey, as Catholics²⁶⁸; and in 1628, Grosvenor similarly exposed two others, Viscount Thomas Savage and his son John.²⁶⁹

A protégé of Bruen and probably also during his undergraduate days at Oxford of William Hinde, the preacher of Bunbury, Grosvenor provides the best example of the anti-popery of Puritan gentry mentioned above.²⁷⁰ He saw Catholics as a cancer in the body politic which unless aggressively treated will be pervasive:

locusts which eate up and devoure the seedes of loyalty and religion, and who labour to seduce our wives and children from their profession whereby the later proves disobaydient to their parents, the former unconstant to their husbands, and both of them (with all such others over whom they prevayle) disloyall to their prince and country: for these are the effects of popish lectures and blind obedience.²⁷¹

²⁶⁶ NA, SP 16/10/23: Quintrell, 'Disarming', pp. 218-219.

²⁶⁷ Richard Cust, 'The Papers of Sir Richard Grosvenor, 1st. Bart (1585-1645)', *Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire* 134 (1996), p. xviii.

²⁶⁸ Bodleian MS Rawl., D1, 100.

²⁶⁹ Robert Johnson, Mary Frear Keeler, Maija Johnson Cole and William Bidwell (eds.), *Proceedings of Parliament 1628: Commons Debates 1628* (6 vols., New Haven and London, 1977-1983), III, pp. 61, 63-64.

²⁷⁰ Richard Cust, 'Grosvenor, Sir Richard, first baronet (1585-1645)', *ODNB* (online edition, 2004), accessed 17 March 2021.

²⁷¹ Cust (ed.), 'Papers of Sir Richard Grosvenor', p. 10.

Thus in his election address of 1624, almost a third of which was given over to the denunciation of popery, he articulates the risk that the recent suspension of the recusancy laws will become permanent:

For consider with mee a little the hopes and insolencies of the papists, to what a height they are growne. Have they not (as it were) made open proclamation to the world that the tymes are now come that they have soe longe hopes for and that they expect at the least a publique tolleration of their religion?²⁷²

In his charges to the Grand Jury of 1625 and 1626 he exhorts them to present any who either assert the rights of the Pope or deny the royal supremacy; any who ‘perswade any of the king’s subjects from the religion established here to the Romaine religion’, together with any who aid or protect these; harbourers of ‘Jesuits or seminary priestes’; those ‘as you know to have sayd or hard masse’, or ‘as harbourers recusants in their houses; and ‘popish schoolemaster[s].’²⁷³

The Jacobean years, together with the last Elizabethan decade and the Caroline period before the Personal Rule, were characterised by attempts to bend in the recusancy legislation of the 1580s and achieved only limited success. Three conflicting trends may be seen at work here. For the first half of the period a series of Calvinist bishops campaigned to expose Catholicism, but their efforts were not matched by those of the civil authorities, except in years of national crisis like 1605, 1610 and 1613. But as civil presentments became more regular and more numerous – and the local internalisation of anti-popish tropes may be a factor here – the episcopal impulse waned, only reviving in the early Caroline years. The third trend, the imposition of recusancy penalties, was slowly consolidated through to the death of Elizabeth, but tailed off under James, declining to negligible levels in the last decade

²⁷² Ibid, p. 3.

²⁷³ Ibid., pp. 10-11.

of his reign. This last pattern was, however, to be dramatically reversed during the Personal Rule, as the next section demonstrates.

1.4 The Personal Rule (1629-40)

A central theme in the historiography of Caroline Catholicism (and indeed in the broader historiography of the era) concerns the fiscal demands of an already cash-strapped King who exacerbated his problems by suspending Parliament, which was a major source of royal revenue. In particular a policy of composition was adopted during the Personal Rule, under which Catholics paid an agreed annual sum based on the value of their lands, and in return were exempted from prosecution under the recusancy laws. Coupled with the overt Catholicism of Henrietta Maria's Court, where numerous aristocrats converted, papal ambassadors were received, and Londoners flocked freely into the Catholic chapels of foreign embassies, this policy gave contemporaries like Lord Cottington (and some later historians) an impression of a more benign climate for Catholics.²⁷⁴ Yet Havran observed that such leniency did not extend into the provinces, and Lindley that 'the weight of evidence suggests that [Catholics], on the whole, bore heavier financial burdens under Charles 1 than they had done previously.'²⁷⁵ Changes to the fining of Catholics were set in motion at the beginning of Charles's reign, with double subsidies upon them being granted by the parliaments of 1625 and again in 1628.²⁷⁶ This financial expedient was precluded during the Personal Rule, but revived after Parliament was recalled in 1640, as discussed in the following section. In 1626 two new recusancy commissions were created, responsible for the collection of revenue from north and south of the Trent respectively. The Northern

²⁷⁴ Dures, *English Catholicism*, p. 70.

²⁷⁵ Martin Havran, *The Catholics in Caroline England* (Stanford, CA and London, 1962), p. 91; Keith Lindley, 'The Lay Catholics of England in the reign of Charles I', *JEH* 22 (1971), pp. 199-221, p. 214.

²⁷⁶ The hundredal assessment lists from Cheshire which survive for these subsidies are either too fragmentary or damaged (NA, E179/85/123-4, 138-140), or from hundreds with too few Catholics (NA, 179/85/125-128, 132) to be susceptible to meaningful analysis,

Commission achieved little in its initial years under Sir John Savile but became a major source of revenue after the appointment of Sir Thomas Wentworth in 1629, netting over £100,000 in its operation up to 1640.²⁷⁷ This section will therefore consider the policing of, and financial impositions upon, Cheshire Catholics during the Personal Rule.

As the previous section demonstrated, up to 1628 Assize presentment levels for recusancy remained high in Cheshire. Thereafter, however, they ceased altogether in all hundreds bar Wirral, where they continued spasmodically until 1634, and after they resumed in the wider county in 1636 their volume was negligible, as Table 1.7 below demonstrates.²⁷⁸

Table 1.7: Civil and ecclesiastical presentments of Catholics, 1629-40												
	1629	1630	1631	1632	1633	1634	1635	1636	1637	1638	1639	1640
Assizes		36	54			51		10	1	5		1
Quarter Sessions										90		
Visitations*	264	76			263	273				63		
* Visitations of 1629 and 1633 were metropolitanical (Harsnett and Neile), remainder were episcopal												
Visitations of 1630 and 1638 were partial, covering only three and four deaneries respectively												
Sources: NA, CHES 21/3 & CHES 21/4; CALS, QJB 2/5, fos 235v-239, EDV 1.31b & EDA5.3-5; BIY, V.1629-30, CB & V.1633, CB.2												

This reduction in volumes is almost certainly due to the introduction of composition for recusancy, which commenced in the county in 1629. This system of payment of a pre-agreed annual charge in place of repeated fines would have made the process of repeated presentment at Assizes much less necessary, which would account for its sudden cessation: it may be noted that all of the six recusants who appear in the Crown Book for the years 1637-8 were first-time offenders.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁷ John Aveling, 'Introduction' (to documents relating to the Northern Commission for Compounding with Recusants 1627-1642), in Clare Talbot (ed.), *Miscellanea: Recusant Records*, CRS 53 (1960), pp. 291-303, p. 297; Fiona Pogson, 'Wentworth and the Northern Recusancy Commission', *RH* 24 (1998), pp. 271-287, pp. 273, 284.

²⁷⁸ NA, CHES 21/3, fos 203-203v, 221-222v and 281v-282v show ongoing presentments from Wirral in 1630, 1631 and 1634 respectively: idem, 356v and CHES 21/4, fos 19v, 47, 95 the few from the whole of the county from 1636 onwards.

²⁷⁹ NA, CHES 21/4, fos 19v, 47.

Conversely, ecclesiastical presentments increased during the period. It would seem likely that the high volumes of Catholics at the metropolitan visitations of 1629 and 1633 were due to the thorough efforts of Archbishop Samuel Harsnett and his fellow anti-Calvinist and successor Richard Neile to impose *avant-garde* conformity on the northern province: the portion of Neile's correction book relating to Cheshire consists of 170 folios, almost double the volume of any preceding visitation.²⁸⁰ Bridgeman's vigour in his subsequent visitations would seem to be aimed at rehabilitating himself with his masters after his troubles of 1633: Cust and Lake note that by the mid-1630s he had adopted distinctly Laudian credentials.²⁸¹

In the late 1620s Bridgeman had been under pressure to support the Northern Commission's efforts, initially from the Bishop of Durham and Savile, and then from Wentworth, by providing more accurate information on recusants and in particular realistic valuations of their estates, but his efforts seem to have been focused on the Lancastrian portion of the diocese.²⁸² Aveling observes that in its initial stages that the Northern Commission was 'frankly experimental', and closely interlocked with the Council for the North, whose remit did not extend to Cheshire.²⁸³ Wentworth's congratulatory tone in his letters to Bridgeman also suggests this focus, for while compositions were achieved with eighty-seven Lancastrian recusants between October and December 1629, in Cheshire only one recusant compounded during that period.²⁸⁴

There were, however, a further twenty-two compositions from Cheshire during 1630, when the initial round of surveys completed. The vast majority of these, however, are with plebeian Catholics and of relatively low value, ranging between £2 and £9 9s.²⁸⁵ No

²⁸⁰ BIY, V.1629-30, CB, fos 142-207v, passim; idem, V.1633, CB.2, fos 384v-551v, passim.

²⁸¹ CALS, EDV 1.32, 7-92v, passim and EDA5.3-5.5, passim; Brian Quintrell, 'Troubling of Bishop Bridgeman', passim, esp. p. 94; Cust and Lake, *Cheshire*, pp. 192-206.

²⁸² SRO, D1287/18/2 (P/399/35, P/399/36, P/399/44, P/399/48, P/399/51, P/399/53, P/399/54, P/399/56).

²⁸³ Aveling, 'Introduction', p. 296.

²⁸⁴ Clare Talbot (ed.), 'An Abstract of the Book of Compositions for the Lands, Goods and Arrearages of Recusants Convicted within the County's of York, Lancaster, Stafford & etc', in idem (ed.), *Miscellanea 13: Recusant Records*, CRS 53 (1960), pp. 309-371, pp. 322-328, 335.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 335-336, 351-352.

composition value or subsequent payments are recorded for John Starkey, the only esquire listed, and of the only two compounders described as gentlemen John Young of Tarporley was a very minor example, having been described as a yeoman at his wife's appearance at the Assizes of 1610.²⁸⁶ This harvest appears sparse and grossly insufficient to explain the cessation of Assize presentments but is not untypical of composition totals from other counties, with the exception of Lancashire and Yorkshire: there were, for example only sixty-two compositions from strongly Catholic Staffordshire, and a mere seventeen from Derbyshire.²⁸⁷ This third Commission under Wentworth's auspices was still in its infancy at this stage, only having been established in June 1629, and was operating in parallel with the existing system, which did see a sharp spike in payments into the Exchequer that year: the total of thirty-six sequestrations recorded as paid in the Recusant Roll for the year ending Michaelmas 1629 is double that of the previous peak of receipts, which was back in 1594.²⁸⁸ Analysis of the offence profiles of those sequestrated displays the commissioners' tenacity in chasing historic debts: fourteen of them had not offended for at least ten years, including one who had died in 1603 and whose offence dated back to 1587.²⁸⁹

The twenty-two individuals who compounded in 1629-30 represent slightly less than two-thirds of the Cheshire recusants who feature in the Commission's account books (see Table 1.8 below) which is consistent with Aveling's observation that the Commission's volume of business was greatest in those years.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁶ NA, CHES 21/2, f. 63.

²⁸⁷ Talbot (ed.), 'Book of Compositions', pp. 332-337, 352-353.

²⁸⁸ NA, E377/2 and E377/36.

²⁸⁹ The fourteen and the dates of their last Assize presentment for recusancy were Sampson Erdeswick of Nantwich (1587, died 1603), Thomas Hesketh of Thurstaston (1595), Edward Probin of Wichaugh, Malpas (1605, d. 1607), William Lucas of Beeston, Bunbury (1605), Margaret Prescott of Marbury (1605), Margaret Ashton of Daresbury (1605), Anne Larden of Alpraham, Bunbury (1605), Jane Follyhurst of Copenhall (1610), Thomas Huxley of Alpraham, Bunbury (1611), Ralph Bushell of Tiverton, Bunbury (1613), Richard Longton of Tiverton, Bunbury (1613, d. 1623), Alice Burrows of Alpraham, Bunbury (1619), Thomas Moulton of Faddiley, Acton (1619) John Kelsall of Daresbury (1619). See NA, CHES 21/1-3 passim for details of offences.

²⁹⁰ Aveling, 'Introduction', pp. 301-302.

Table 1.8 - Cheshire Recusancy Compositions and Payments, 1629-41								
Surname	Xtian nam	Comp	£	NRC accounts	Total	Total / comp	Rec Rolls	Total
Egerton	Ralph	1629/12	£6/13/4	£6/13/4 x 3 (to 1632)	£20		3 £6/13/4 (1635)	£6/13/4
Street	John	1630/08	£6	varying to 1641	£43		7 1630, 1634	£16/2/2
Chantrell	William	1630/08	£6/13/4	£6/13/4 x 3 (to 1632)	£23/6/8		3.5 £6/13/4 x 2 (to 1631)	£13/6/8
Bennett	William	1630/08	£2	£10, £1 (1632, 1639)	£11		5.5 £2 (1634)	£2
Wilson	Randall	1630/08	£6	varying to 1641	£46/6/8		7.5 varying to 1634	£10/6/8
Wilson	John	1630/08	£6	£6/13/4 x 3 (to 1632)	£23/6/8		4 varying to 1634	£8/6/8
Buckley	George	1630/08	£3/6/8	46/8 to 1632	£9/13/8		3 varying to 1634	£3
Dunne	William	1630/08	£2	£2 to 1632	£7		3.5 26/8 1630	26/8d
Bennett	Thomas	1630/08	£3	varying to 1632	£10/10/-		3.5 varying to 1634	£7/6/8
Probin	William	1630/08	£3	varying to 1632	£9/10/-		3 103/6 (1630)	103/6d
Walley	Randall	1630/10	£3/6/8	varying 1631-33	£7/6/8		2 46/8 (1634)	46/8d
Massey	Ralph	1630/10	£6	nil	nil		varying to 1641	£8/19/11
Maddock	Richard	1630/10	£5	varying 1639-41	£20 + ?		4+ varying to 1641	£6/6/8
Cornes	Anne	1630/10	£2	varying 1632-41	£56/13/2		28 £1 (1634)	£1
Vawdrey	Richard	1630/10	£6/13/4	varying 1632-41	£143/6/8		21.5 nil	nil
Young	John	1630/10	£9/9/-	varying 1632-9	£40/5/-		4 varying to 1634	£28/6/9
Cheswis	William	1630/10	£6	varying 1632-41	£111		18.5 varying to 1634	£10/8/10
Warren	Anne	1630/10	£2	varying 1632-41	£6		3 £2 (1634)	£2
Coventry	William	1630/10	£4	varying 1632-41	£14 + ?		3.5+ nil	nil
Whitmore	Katherine	1630/10	£2	varying 1632-41	£17		8.5 nil	nil
Billington	John	1630/10	£6/13/4	varying 1632-41	£96/13/4		14.5 varying to 1634	£14/3/4
Starkey	John	1630/10	n/a	nil	nil		nil	nil
Whitmore	Jane	1633/8	n/a		1641 £10		1630-41 (2 payments)	£20
Warren	Edward	1634/3	n/a		1641 £53/6/8		1635	£20
Poole	John	1635/2	n/a		1641 £70		1638	£50
Stanley	William	1635/4	n/a		1641 £40		1635	£40
Parsons	George	1635/8	n/a		1641 £3		1638	£2
Moore	Edward	1636/2	n/a	1639-41	£47		1640	£10
Macount	John	1636/8	n/a	1639-41	£2		1640	£2
Brayne	Thomas	1638/8	n/a		1639 £5		1640	£5
Deane	Anne	1638/8	n/a		nil		1640	46/8d
Whitby	Richard	1638/8	n/a		1641 £10/10/-		1640	£7
Billington	John jnr	1638/9	n/a		1640 £26/13/4		1640	£6/13/4
Wickstead	Elizabeth	1638-9?	n/a		1639 £2		1640	£2
Mathew	John	1638-9?	n/a	1639-41	£2 + ?		nil	nil
Harcourt	Elizabeth	1639-40?	n/a	1640-41	£34		nil	nil
Roby	Anne	1639-40?	n/a		1641 8/4d		nil	nil
Non-compounders								
Smith	Elen						1630	£2
Bickerton	Katherine						1630	£2
Owley	?						1630	44/5d
Cheswis	Robert						1630	£4/8/10
Dutton	Richard						1630	8d
Gardner	Owen						1630, 1634	14/2d
Massie	Ellen						1634	£4/8/10
Wilson	Thomas						1634	£6
Moore	John						1635	£21/13/4
Williams	John						1640	£2

Table 1.8 lists those who compounded during the Personal Rule, sequenced by date of composition, followed by those who did not compound but whose payments feature in the Recusant Rolls. The ‘Comp’ and ‘£’ columns of the table show the date and initial value of

the composition, and the 'NRC Accounts' column the frequency and duration of subsequent payments to the Northern Recusancy Commission. The next two columns give the cumulative composition payments, both as a monetary total and as a multiple of the initial composition payment, and the final two columns show for comparison purposes the frequency and total value for the payments recorded in the Recusant Rolls.

The subsequent payments by the initial compounders of 1629-30 exhibit two patterns. Seven ceased to make payments after 1632 and an eighth by 1633, by which time their cumulative payments are all between three and four times the annual composition amount. This is consistent with Aveling's observation that compounders increasingly defaulted on payments from 1634 onwards. The remainder continued to pay throughout the decade, all but one up until 1641, but in irregular amounts at irregular intervals.

To cite the most extreme cases, Anne Warren of Poynton and Anne Cornes of Wyver (Middlewich) both compounded at £2 per annum in 1630, but whereas Warren paid only £6 over the decade 1632-41, Cornes paid £56 13s 2d, more than twenty-eight fold. Cornes's is one of the few Cheshire cases mentioned in the papers surviving from the Commission, which suggests the increase may be due to her remarriage in 1634.²⁹¹ Other examples of such abnormally high multiples may represent an attempt to claw back historical non-payments: John Billington of Little Budworth, who compounded for £6 13s 4d but whose cumulative payments amounted to fourteen and a half times that amount, had been recusant since 1624, and payments for the veteran recusant William Cheswis of Spurstow, Bunbury, who had spent fourteen years in Chester Castle for recusancy under Elizabeth, were still being made in 1641, nine years after his death. But Richard Vawdrey of Bank (Bowdon), who compounded in 1630, was not presented before the Assizes until 1638, yet had paid over twenty times his

²⁹¹ Leeds Central Library, Temple Newsom MS, T.578, reproduced verbatim in Clare Talbot (ed.), 'Other Documents Concerning the Northern Commission' in idem (ed.), *Miscellanea 13: Recusant Records*, CRS 53 (1960), pp. 372-437, p. 420.

composition by 1641.²⁹² Overall, the impression is that the commissioners were taking whatever revenue they could wherever they could.

The remaining fifteen recusants who feature in the Commission's accounts all compounded between 1633 and 1640, and exhibit a different pattern, possibly attributable to a change of management after Wentworth's departure for Ireland in the former year, though both Aveling and Pogson argue that he remained closely involved, albeit remotely.²⁹³ For the majority of these individuals only a single payment is recorded, mostly in 1641, the final year of the Commission's books, which Pogson notes as a bumper year.²⁹⁴ The sums paid are substantially more than in the accounts of the early 1630s and show a greater focus on the gentry: thus Sir William Stanley paid £50 that year, Sir Edward Warren £53 6s 8d, and Sir John Poole £70.²⁹⁵ The entries in the accounts, however, indicate that these three gentlemen compounded several years earlier, which prompts speculation as to whether the accounts are complete.

Pogson's examination of Exchequer receipts has shown that the Northern Commission's overall revenue of £2,200 in 1630-1 trebled or quadrupled in subsequent years and totalled almost £100,000 over the eleven years of Wentworth's receivership, peaking at £23,200 in the Exchequer year ending Michaelmas 1635, and overall dwarfing the returns of the equivalent commission for the southern counties.²⁹⁶ The Commission's own account books, examined in this project, suggest a rather different revenue profile, since no books exist for the five years 1634-8.²⁹⁷ It would seem likely that these were lost at some stage and that the more modest picture painted above understates the true position, and the Recusant

²⁹² NA, CHES 21/4, f. 47.

²⁹³ Aveling, 'Introduction', p. 297; Pogson, 'Northern Recusancy Commission', pp. 271-2.

²⁹⁴ Pogson, 'Northern Recusancy Commission', p. 274.

²⁹⁵ NA, E351/433.

²⁹⁶ Pogson, 'Northern Recusancy Commission', pp. 273-274.

²⁹⁷ NA, E351/426-433. These documents have been used by this project because they are summarised and sequenced by county, thus avoiding the trawling of Exchequer receipts which Pogson's analysis entailed.

Rolls underpin this observation: that for the year ending Michaelmas 1635 contains payments of £20 and £40 for Warren and Stanley respectively, both of whom had compounded by then, and that of 1638, the next containing entries from Cheshire, £50 for Poole.²⁹⁸ Any understatement of revenue, however, is unlikely to be of great magnitude. The Exchequer was responsible for accounting for the Commission's revenue, which thus should be reflected in the Recusant Rolls, and the rolls contain only six entries for those four years.²⁹⁹ As Table 1.8 shows, the account books and the Recusant Rolls defy precise reconciliation – possibly due to the deduction of operational expenses – but in general the figures in the rolls are considerably smaller. The Commission's accounts are, then, not understated.

Appendix B3 shows that about £400 of revenue from recusancy was raised from the county over the eleven years of the Commission's operation. Viewed in the context of total receipts of £110,000 across the nation, this is loose change, but is consistent with the sparseness of references to the county in the Commission's correspondence.³⁰⁰ It should also be noted that whereas Wentworth's fellow commissioners brought to the party local knowledge of Yorkshire and the border counties, for Lancashire and Cheshire he was reliant on Bridgeman, whose efforts seem to have been largely focused on the northern portion of his see.³⁰¹ If one considers that some forty-seven denizens of Cheshire paid either compositions or other recusancy fines during the Personal Rule, and only twenty-one paid anything during James's reign, which was twice as long but raised only a third of the value from sequestrations, and that the levels of recusancy across the two reigns were not significantly different, the Commission's achievements were not negligible.³⁰²

²⁹⁸ NA, E377/42 and E377/45.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁰ Talbot, 'Other Documents', *passim*.

³⁰¹ Pogson, 'Northern Recusancy Commission', pp. 274-275.

³⁰² See Appendix B.

1.5 The prelude to Civil War (1640-2)

The anti-papery which was prominent in the Parliaments of the 1620s was deprived of its principal mouthpiece during the Personal Rule but was re-emerge in the run-up to the Civil War, refuelled not only by the culture of the Court, as noted in the previous section, but also by Laudian innovations in the Church of England, which were seen by an increasingly influential Puritan lobby as the re-introduction of Catholicism by stealth. Local examples of the resultant popular anxiety during the immediate pre-war period are numerous, and this section will examine the evidence of such sentiments in Cheshire.

When the Long Parliament assembled on 3 November 1640, fears of Catholicism which had been somewhat muted during the Personal Rule found a mouthpiece. On 7 December Parliament mandated Justices of the Peace nationwide to conduct a census of recusants, an exercise which had already taken place in London and Middlesex.³⁰³ The results of this survey exceeded anything achieved before or after. On 12 January 1640-1 313 recusants from six of the hundreds of the county were presented at the Quarter Sessions in Chester, with a further eighty-eight from the remaining hundred, Wirral, listed at the next sessions at Northwich in May.³⁰⁴ It seems that the principal issue here was security rather than finance: despite the conviction of the vast majority of the presentees, the Recusant Roll for 1641 has no rotulet for Cheshire.³⁰⁵

Yet the financial burden on Catholics did not lessen: as noted above, 1641 was a record year for compositions, and additionally, with Parliament now reconvened, they were once again subjected to double subsidy payments, as in 1625 and 1628. Four subsidies were voted by the Long Parliament in December 1640, and three hundredal lists survive which

³⁰³ Maija Jansson (ed.), *Proceedings in the Opening Session of the Long Parliament: House of Commons* (7 vols., Rochester, NY and Woodbridge, 2000-2007), I, p. 482.

³⁰⁴ CALS, QJB 2/6, fos 7-20v; *ibid.*, ZCR63/2/7/1.

³⁰⁵ NA, E377/48.

demonstrate their coverage of the Catholic population, at least in the assessment process (no details of individual payments have been found). The first, from Wirral, dating from between December 1640 and March 1640-1, lists thirty-four recusants, a fairly low proportion (39 per cent) of the eighty-eight who were subsequently presented at Quarter Sessions in May of that year.³⁰⁶ The second, for Broxton hundred, dating from April 1641, exhibits much greater coverage - forty-two recusants are listed, as against fifty-four at the previous January's Quarter Sessions (78 per cent).³⁰⁷ The final document, from the following October, contains a further assessment for Broxton, identifying thirty-four recusants (63 per cent), all bar two of whom appear on the earlier return, together with that for Nantwich (twenty-five recusants as against thirty-six in January, or 69 per cent).³⁰⁸ The sharp increase in coverage in the last two assessments suggests that the Quarter Sessions presentments earlier in the year had significantly refreshed the authorities' intelligence of the extent of recusancy after the desultory presentments of the 1630s.³⁰⁹

The double subsidy rate for Catholics was draconian – 10s 8d in the pound on moveable goods worth more than £3, and 16/- in the pound on lands worth over £1, with a flat charge of 1s 4d on those whose assets fell below these thresholds.³¹⁰ The vast majority in these three hundreds paid only the flat rate, but this would still have been a heavy burden on families like the Probins of Wichaugh (Malpas) or the Mostons of Burland (Acton) who had recusant offspring, since it was applied *per capita*. Some fourteen individuals were levied for larger amounts, ranging from the 6/- of Roger Johnes of Whitby (Eastham) to the £2 5s of the widow Mary Plunkett of Malpas. The fact that this range of payments included those of the

³⁰⁶ NA, E179/85/134; CALS, ZCR63/2/7/1.

³⁰⁷ NA, E179/85/131; CALS, QJB 2/6, fos 7-20v.

³⁰⁸ NA, E179/85/135.

³⁰⁹ See Table 1.7 above.

³¹⁰ NA, E179 database at [The National Archives | E179 | Search](https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/search/), last accessed 21 November 2020.

leading recusant Wirral gentry (Stanley, Poole, Massey and Whitmore of Thurstaston) suggests a considerable degree of concealment of assets from the exercise by the latter group.

Some indication of the fevered anti-Popery abroad amongst the county's hotter Puritans may be gauged by an intervention in the Commons of 19 April 1640-1, when an anti-episcopacy petition from Calvin Bruen, son of the late godly gentleman John and MP for Chester, was presented there. The proponents claimed that among the 6,000 signatories of an earlier, pro-episcopacy petition submitted by Sir Thomas Aston were listed dead men, children and papists.³¹¹ The only firm evidence to support the last part of their assertion, however, is the name of the church papist William Whitmore of Leighton heading the signatories from his parish of Great Neston.³¹²

The temperature of this anti-Catholic sentiment rose by several degrees following the outbreak of the Irish rebellion, which was reported in Chester on 30 October.³¹³ Troops embarked from there to quell the rebellion, and impoverished refugees poured through the port into Cheshire and Staffordshire, bringing with them stories of atrocities.³¹⁴ Edward Burghall, the schoolmaster of Bunbury, wrote that 'the Cruelties and Outrages of the Rebels were unparalleled (sic) in burning Houses, killing, robbing, spoiling, stripping naked, drowning, & destroying the poor Protestants.'³¹⁵ On 20 November the Commons, targeting Cheshire, Lancashire and Staffordshire as 'most stocked with papists and in this respect most dangerous', ordered the arrest and transport to London of three leading recusant gentlemen

³¹¹ Maija Jansson (ed.), *Proceedings in the Opening Session of the Long Parliament: House of Commons* (7 vols., Rochester, NY and Woodbridge, 2000-2007), IV, pp. 6-7.

³¹² Parliamentary Archives, HL/PO/JO/10/1/53. Sixty-three of the 180 names in the Quarter Sessions presentments of January and May appear in Aston's petition, but these are mostly common names which are not unique within the petition, let alone the county. Moreover, most of the parish lists in the petition do not state their origin, and no matches against the petition have been found in the few that do (e.g. Malpas).

³¹³ Cust and Lake, *Cheshire*, p. 323.

³¹⁴ Atherton, I. and Cooksley, M. 'Staffordshire and the Irish Revolt of 1641', *Staffordshire Studies* 13 (2001), pp. 55-78, p. 56.

³¹⁵ Hall (ed.), 'Memorials of the Civil War', p. 20.

(Poole, Starkey and Stanley).³¹⁶ There were rumours of a 'Beale Plot' in neighbouring Staffordshire.³¹⁷

Clifton's example of Chester as one of the few places where the anti-popery epidemic of November 1641 resulted in actual violence is, however, incorrect: his evidence originates from one of the many pamphlets that emerged from fevered Puritan imaginations at this time.³¹⁸ Had the grave events described there been founded in fact, they would undoubtedly have been corroborated in other sources, both local and national. Still, the pamphlet merits consideration as an example of the Cestrian anti-popist mindset of the time.

A bloody Conspiracy by the Papists in Cheshire narrates events which supposedly took place in Chester on the night of 19 October 1641, the evening before the trained bands were scheduled to disarm recusants, by force if necessary, following their resistance to peaceful requests:

which the Papists having intelligence of, gathered themselves altogether to my Lord Chomes his house, the chief Leader was one Mr. Henry Starkey, and in the night time some of them having Armor on the watch heard the[m] to make a very great noise without the City gates, and going, to see what might bee the cause thereof, they discovered fifteene in Armes, battering downe the City walles

The watch summoned the trained band, who arrested two of the conspirators at the alleged scene of the crime, and the remaining thirteen at a Lord Chomes's house, to which they had fled. The band then 'discharged their Muskets and battered downe part of the house', at which point Chomes escaped via a postern, thus conveniently precluding any further

³¹⁶ Cust and Lake, *Cheshire*, pp. 323-324.

³¹⁷ Atherton and Cooksley, 'Staffordshire', p. 69.

³¹⁸ Robin Clifton, 'The Popular Fear of Catholics During the English Revolution', *P&P* 52 (1971), pp. 23-55, p. 31; CALS, CWP/41, *A Royal Message from the Kings Most Excellent Majestie to the honourable Houses of Parliament. With the answer of the House of Commons concerning the said message. Likewise the true relation of a bloody conspiracy by the papists in Cheshire. Also the relation of a bloody skirmish between the traine band of Chester and the conspiritors with the number of those that were slaine, likewise the confession of Henry Starkey* (London, 1641), pp. A3 - end (second and subsequent pages unnumbered). Clifton cites J.A. Atkinson (ed.), 'Tracts Relating to the Civil War in Cheshire', *Chetham Society* (new series) 65 (1909), which contains a verbatim transcript of this pamphlet.

discussion of his involvement on the part of the author. The watch searched the premises and:

comming into a private Wood-house they stood 50. Papists with Muskets ready charged, so soon as they saw the Trayne Band they discharged altogether, and slew 25. of the Protestants, and retreated [...] but being met by the rest of the Trayne Band which were without, betweene whom grew a bloody skirmish, but at length the Papists trusted to the swiftness of the feet, but the bullets made great hast after them, and slew nineteene of them

Starkey was mortally wounded and committed to prison, where before dying he confessed:

what their intents were, being urged thereunto by the lord Chomes to have beate downe privately the greatest part of the City walles, and before they could be possibly builded, againe the Papists in Lancashire and Cheshire should have had an advantage to use the Protestants as they pleas'd themselves, which would have beene welcome Newes to the Rebels in Ireland

Though the pamphlet was produced in London, it bears the hallmarks of local customisation of what may well be a generically applicable artefact (the names of people and places are largely italicised, suggesting later insertion into boilerplate text), the object being to add what W.S. Gilbert's *Pooh-Bah* described as 'merely corroborative detail, intended to bring artistic verisimilitude to an otherwise bald and unconvincing narrative.'³¹⁹ The character of Lord Chomes is no doubt a thinly veiled attempt to discredit Viscount Cholmondeley, who with the Catholic Earl Rivers was one of the leaders of the royalist party in the county.³²⁰ That of Henry Starkey is equally plausible: the Starkeys of Over were one of the Catholic gentry families of the shire, and Henry, after ordination in Lisbon in 1638, returned to England and fought for the King in the Civil War, where he lost a leg. Unfortunately for the credibility of the narrative, he also lived to see James II on the throne.³²¹ In their study of the impact of the Irish rebellion upon Staffordshire, Atherton and Cooksley note a similarly fictitious pamphlet concerning a gathering of Catholics on Mow Cop, an upland area on the Cheshire-

³¹⁹ W.S. Gilbert, *The Mikado* (London, 1884).

³²⁰ Morrill, *Cheshire*, p. 16.

³²¹ Godfrey Anstruther, *The Seminary Priests: A Dictionary of the Secular Clergy of England and Wales* (4 vols., *Ushaw* (Durham) and *Wakering* (Essex), 1969-1977), II, p. 310.

Staffordshire border, and posit that it originated in south Cheshire.³²² It would seem quite possible that the two documents share a common authorship.

Returning to reality, it is certainly true that anti-popish tensions remained high until the following spring. In Chester the city aldermen, fearful of being ‘open and naked to the assaults and depredations of those wicked and barbarous rebels’ drew up a petition for the king to supply them with ordnance and fortifications.³²³ Having already arrested an Irish mercenary, Arthur Maginnis, the city authorities in February 1642 commissioned Sir William Brereton, the emerging leader of the godly party in the shire, to obtain permission for them to tender the oaths of supremacy and allegiance to ‘all Irishmen or other persons suspected to be popishly affected’, and over the following months imprisoned in the Northgate two men who refused the oath of allegiance, the Irish merchant Barnes Transon and Anthony Porter, on suspicion of being Catholic priests.³²⁴ Yet in spite of these actions the routine policing of Catholicism in the city remained as desultory as ever: only nine recusants, most of them prosperous, were presented before the city Quarter Sessions between March 1640-1 and November 1642.³²⁵

In the county, the Quarter Sessions of January 1641-2 issued a warrant for the arrest of one Francis Foster, who had been caught travelling between recusants’ houses carrying Catholic artefacts.³²⁶ The following month there were further rumours of plots in Lancashire and Staffordshire, and the gentleman Henry Delves purchased horse arms from Hull ‘for himself and his friends in Cheshire to defend themselves against the popish faction and league.’³²⁷ In March Brereton, on behalf of the Commons, ordered the county justices to search recusant houses, and at the April Assize session two Puritan grand jurors drew up a list

³²² Atherton and Cooksley, ‘Staffordshire’, pp. 72-74.

³²³ Cust and Lake, *Cheshire*, p. 324.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 323-324; CALS, ZQJF77, nos 121, 153, 154.

³²⁵ CALS, ZQJF77, nos. 8, 51, 53, 54, 63, 184, 185.

³²⁶ Cust and Lake, *Cheshire*, p. 324.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*

of Catholics for presentment, including the prominent church papist William Whitmore.³²⁸ Twenty-one Wirral Catholics were presented at that session, but Whitmore was not among them.³²⁹ Thereafter in the prelude to Civil War, however, visible anti-Catholicism seems to have abated in the county, which is consistent with the national picture portrayed by Clifton.³³⁰

Cheshire, then, experienced the wave of anti-popish hysteria which swept the country in 1640-2, particularly during in the months following the outbreak of hostilities in Ireland. Yet as comparison with parallel anxieties elsewhere in the country reveals, such concerns rarely had any substance, which probably explains why here as elsewhere they did not escalate to the point of violence.³³¹

1.6 The Civil Wars and interregnum (1642-59)

The historiography of Catholicism in this period, in comparison with that of those previously discussed, is slight, and its conclusions varied as to its impact upon individual Catholics. Aveling observed ‘a strange mixture of freedom and repression’, with increasingly severe legislation coupled with an unwillingness to exercise it, though T. S. Smith’s study of Staffordshire pointed to financial exactions of unprecedented severity.³³² Bill Sheils has sought to tease out the several interwoven elements of this question, two of which had local impacts which are examined here: initial choices, and subsequent changes, of allegiance, and the official policy of the Parliamentary regime towards Catholics.³³³

³²⁸ Ibid., pp. 324-326.

³²⁹ NA, CHES 21/4, fos 121, 121v, 134v.

³³⁰ Clifton, ‘Popular Fear’, p. 31.

³³¹ Idem. ‘Fear of Popery’, in C. Russell (ed.), *The Origins of the English Civil War* (2nd edn. London and Basingstoke, 1978), pp. 144-167, pp. 158-161.

³³² Aveling, *Handle and Axe*, pp 170-171, 175; Terence Stephen Smith, ‘The Persecution of Staffordshire Roman Catholic Recusants: 1625-1660’, *JEH* 30 (1979), pp. 327-351, pp. 346-350.

³³³ Bill Sheils, ‘English Catholics at war and peace’, in Christopher Durston and Judith Maltby (eds), *Religion in Revolutionary England* (Manchester, 2006), pp. 137-157, p. 138.

As Aveling also observed, the outbreak of war presented Catholics with the same dilemma as their Protestant neighbours: which side to support (or neither, if that was a realistic option)?³³⁴ Much printer's ink was expended on the topic of Civil War allegiances in the 1970s, no less on Catholic than Protestant ones. Lindley argued that Catholics were overwhelmingly neutral, with such limited royalist support as was forthcoming being confined to the elite and increasing in direct proportion to their status, whereas Newman observed a substantial Catholic presence amongst royalist officers.³³⁵ Before proceeding to the Cheshire evidence, it may be noted that the two views are not necessarily incompatible, the former reflecting the Catholic population overall and the latter a largely elite subset. Morrill and Dore's inconclusive analysis of the allegiances of the Cheshire gentry overall also provides a caveat, which would seem to support the Lindley case. Composition proceedings against delinquents (royalists) cannot be treated as *prima facie* evidence of commitment to the King: they may equally reflect no more than a failure to support the Parliamentary cause, perhaps coupled with local and personal animosities.³³⁶

Amongst the Cheshire elite, several examples of Catholic royalists in arms may be noted, particularly amongst the higher echelons, as Lindley observed. At the start of the war Earl Rivers brought a Commission of Array from the King at York, and followed him with a regiment from Cheshire to Shrewsbury, and possibly thence to Edgehill.³³⁷ His younger brother, Thomas Savage, admitted to the Committee for Compounding in 1649 that he had served under his sibling's command, 'though he only rode one afternoon'.³³⁸ The baronet of Nova Scotia, Edward Moore, a newcomer to the county in the mid-1630s, was mortally

³³⁴ Aveling, *Handle and Axe*, p. 166.

³³⁵ Keith Lindley, 'The Part Played by the Catholics', in Brian Manning (ed.), *Politics, Religion and the English Civil War* (London, 1973), pp. 125-176, pp. 174-175; Peter Newman, 'Roman Catholic royalists: papist commanders under Charles I and Charles II, 1642-60', *RH* 15 (1981), pp. 396-405, pp. 401-402.

³³⁶ John Morrill and Norman Dore, 'The Allegiances of the Cheshire Gentry in the Great Civil War', *Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Archaeological Society* 77 (1967), pp. 47-76, pp. 47-50, 61-62.

³³⁷ Morrill, *Cheshire*, p. 56; Norman Dore, *The Civil Wars in Cheshire* (Chester, 1966), pp. 14-15.

³³⁸ Mary Everett Green (ed.), *Calendar of the Proceedings of the Committee for Compounding &c, 1643-1660* (5 vols., London, 1889), III, p. 1949.

wounded at Marston Moor, as was James Poole of Poole at the siege of Chester, and the aforementioned Henry, second son of Henry Starkey of Darley, returned to England from his seminary in Lisbon to fight for the King, and had his leg shot off by a cannonball.³³⁹ Finally, although not a permanent fixture amongst the Cheshire elite, the celebrated military adventurer Sir Arthur Aston served the King at Edgehill, Reading and Bristol before being slaughtered at Drogheda.³⁴⁰

Other Catholic gentry also feature as delinquents in the proceedings of the Committee for Compounding, although evidence of their activism is less clear, illustrating Morrill and Dore's point about the reliability of some Parliamentary sources. In the case of William Massey of Puddington, the charge appears to have been no more than that he took up residence in Chester during the siege, 'because his house was subject to three garrisons of the Parliament.'³⁴¹ William Stanley may well have faced the same charge, since another Parliamentary garrison was stationed on his land at Hooton: the composition plea was raised by his eponymous son after his death, and like the Massey case, is concerned primarily with his religion.³⁴² His Wirral neighbours were similarly charged: Thomas Poole of Stanlow with being in Chester when it was a royal garrison, and the church papist Thomas Glasier of Lea, slightly more strongly, with 'going into the King's quarters and adhering to his party.'³⁴³ Less substantial, perhaps, is the charge against Henry Starkey senior of 'some words pretended to be spoken by him against the Parliament.'³⁴⁴ None of Cheshire's Catholic

³³⁹ *Cheshire Sheaf*, 3rd series, vol. 8, p. 27; George Ormerod, *The history of the county palatine and city of Chester: compiled from original evidences in public offices, the Harleian and Cottonian mss., parochial registers, private muniments, unpublished ms. collections of successive Cheshire antiquaries, and a personal survey of every township in the county; incorporated with a republication of King's Vale royal, and Leycester's Cheshire antiquities* (2nd edn., 3 vols., London, 1882), II, p. 235; Anstruther, *Seminary Priests*, II, p. 310.

³⁴⁰ Basil Morgan, 'Aston, Sir Arthur (1590x93–1649)', ODNB (online edition, 2004), accessed 28 October 2021. Though rarely resident in the county because of his military campaigns, Aston was of the Cheshire family of that name, purchased a property at Cattenhall, Frodsham in 1639, and was presented for recusancy at the Assizes of September 1648 (NA, CHES 21/4, f. 189).

³⁴¹ Everett Greene, *Committee for Compounding*, II, p. 1565.

³⁴² *Ibid.*, III, p. 2359.

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, II, p. 1568; III, p. 1802.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, III, p. 2035.

gentry are recorded as having opted for Parliament, unsurprisingly given the force of its anti-popish rhetoric.

The evidence would thus seem compatible with the observations of both Lindley and Newman. A fair proportion of the gentry, perhaps half, positively took the King's part, whereas the remainder unsuccessfully attempted to live quiet lives and avoid antagonising either side, as did the vast majority of plebeian Catholics, of whom only one, Randolph Billinge of Little Budworth, was reported as a delinquent (royalist) as well as a papist in the minutes of the Committee for Compounding.³⁴⁵ Both delinquents and papists were, however, penalised by the Committee: the extent of their privations will be considered in the following section.

Armed conflict began in the county at the beginning of 1643 and over the course of that year Parliamentary forces gained control of the bulk of it, through small-scale victories at Nantwich and Middlewich.³⁴⁶ The western hundreds of Broxton and Wirral, however, remained in royalist hands, as did the city of Chester until it fell in February 1646 following a fifteen-month siege.³⁴⁷ The hostilities included one of the atrocities of the Civil War, the massacre of twelve civilians in a siege of Barthomley church on Christmas Day 1643. The incident was recorded by Thomas Malbon in his chronicle of the Civil War in Cheshire, yet from the viewpoint of Catholic-Protestant relations it is curious that this staunch parliamentarian omits to mention that the incident was perpetrated by a royalist army containing a heavy contingent of Irish troops – seemingly a heaven-sent opportunity for anti-popish invective.³⁴⁸ Will Coster has suggested that the situation was less clear-cut than it

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, I, p. 101.

³⁴⁶ Dore, *Civil Wars*, pp. 23-39.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 41-57.

³⁴⁸ Hall (ed.), 'Memorials of the Civil War', pp. xiii, 94-96; Peter Gaunt, 'Barthomley Church and the Civil War', *Cheshire History* 35 (2014), pp. 16-21, p. 18.

seems – for example, the parson’s son may have fired the first shot from the tower, killing a royalist, and a local man in the army later claimed a pension from Charles II for his involvement – which may explain the apparent lack of local outrage at the incident.³⁴⁹

Early Parliamentary control of the county thus enabled the implementation of the Parliamentary ordinance of March 1643 which authorised sequestration of the lands and personal estates of delinquents and papists.³⁵⁰ The definition of the latter group was broader than that of the existing recusancy legislation, including those who had attended a mass or housed someone reared as a Catholic, and was subsequently crystallised in an explicit anti-Catholic Oath of Abjuration. Those charged as both delinquents and papists were subject to the loss of four-fifths of their estates, as opposed to the previous two-thirds.³⁵¹

Sequestration committees were set up in each of the hundreds of Cheshire, and were by far the most important source of Parliamentary revenue in the county, raising around £100,000 over the period 1644-7 from the sale of personal estates and the management of sequestered lands.³⁵² Although in theory the revenue from this source was supposed to be forwarded to London, in practice the bulk of it was disbursed locally to defray operational costs.³⁵³ The need for Parliament to coordinate its finances nationally thus led it in 1645 to set up an overarching body, the Committee for Compounding, which allowed defeated royalists and papists to recover their lands by appearing before it at Goldsmiths’ Hall in London and paying fines based on the annual valuation of the estate.³⁵⁴ This body continued to function through the interregnum, although its powers were severely pruned by the

³⁴⁹ Will Coster, ‘Massacre and Codes of Conduct in the English Civil War’ in Mark Levene and Penny Roberts (eds.), *The Massacre in History* (London and New York, 1999), pp. 89-105, p. 102.

³⁵⁰ C. H. Firth and R. S. Rait (eds), *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum* (3 vols, London, 1911), I, pp. 106-117.

³⁵¹ Aveling, *Handle and Axe*, pp. 170-171.

³⁵² Morrill, *Cheshire*, pp. 99, 105.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 203.

Protectorate in 1654, being limited to the management of outstanding sequestrations rather than the creation of new ones.³⁵⁵

Survey returns from March 1646-7 (for Wirral) and April 1648 (for elsewhere in the county) in the minutes of the Committee for Compounding show that up to those points fifty-six papists resident in Cheshire had had property sequestered, together with a handful of individuals who were non-residents but held lands there, like the Earl of Shrewsbury.³⁵⁶ The coverage of the Catholic population was thus roughly comparable to that of the Caroline compositions: the severity of the penalties, however, was considerably greater, and patterns of treatment relating to socio-economic status are discernible.

Earl Rivers and Sir William Massey both applied to compound at the end of the first Civil War in order to recover their lands, but it was not until 1649 that they were discharged from sequestration.³⁵⁷ Composition cases could be protracted affairs, because of the need for the central Committee to validate the activities of their local counterparts, check claims for exemptions and check for the concealment of estates, but these two cases were probably further delayed by the inability of the plaintiffs to pay their fines³⁵⁸ Rivers seems to have been already in financial difficulties before the war, having mortgaged Melford Hall, the family's Suffolk property.³⁵⁹ He pleaded 'the weakness of his estate' to the Commissioners and requested to compound 'the merits and good deserts of Sir Anthony St John considered', which suggests a dependence on the beneficence of relatives.³⁶⁰ Massey had to mortgage the family estates for fifty years to a group of trustees headed by the parliamentarian Sir George

³⁵⁵ Mary Everett Green, (ed.). *Calendar of the Proceedings of the Committee for Compounding &c, 1643-1660* (5 vols., London, 1889), I, p .xx.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, I, pp. 60-61, 100-101, 103-104, 106-107, 112-113, 120-124.

³⁵⁷ Everett Green, *Committee for Compounding*, II, pp. 914, 1565 are the sources for the information contained in this paragraph, except where otherwise indicated.

³⁵⁸ Morrill, *Cheshire*, p. 205.

³⁵⁹ Boothman and Hyde Parker, *Savage Fortune*, p. lix.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 187. St John was probably a relative by marriage of Rivers' eldest sister Jane, who became Lady St John on her marriage to the heir of the Marquis of Winchester.

Booth. Both had to take the Oath of Abjuration, though Rivers was classed only as a delinquent and not as a papist.

The privations of the Savage family, however, were not confined to the penalties imposed by the Committee for Compounding. Elizabeth, Rivers's mother, who had been made Countess Rivers in her own right by a grateful King in 1641, was a year later driven from her own family's estates at St Osyth in Essex and Melford Hall in Suffolk when the anti-papist riots in the Stour valley ransacked them, and took refuge in London, thence fleeing to France twice during the war years.³⁶¹ In the course of the war the family's Cheshire home at Rocksavage was looted and laid waste by Parliamentary forces, and Rivers also suffered the seizure of his goods from Halton Castle.³⁶² It was not until 1660, six years after Rivers's death, that his son and heir Thomas had recovered Rocksavage and resumed residence there.³⁶³ The family of Rivers's younger brother Thomas abandoned their home in Beeston during the war, and from 1648, if not earlier, his wife Bridget and her children were living on her family's Whitmore estate at Leighton.³⁶⁴ In 1649, when he compounded for delinquency, Thomas was living apart from his family at Barrow in Cheshire, and two years later he died in prison for debt, as did his mother the same year.³⁶⁵

The heirs of five other elite Catholics also raised claims on the committee in other lengthy cases. Thomas Poole of Stanlow claimed his late father's estate in 1647, but by 1650 his wife Elen had not received her one-fifth portion, and it was not until 1655, two years after Thomas's death, that the case was settled in favour of his son James.³⁶⁶ The plea of Sir William Stanley's eponymous son was unresolved by 1654, when he disappears from the Committee's records, though his elevation to the baronetcy in 1661 suggests that a happy

³⁶¹ Boothman and Hyde Parker, *Savage Fortune*, pp. lviii, lx, lxii.

³⁶² *Ibid.*, p. lxiv.

³⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. lxxxiii.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. xxxvi; Dore, *Civil Wars*, pp. 29, 33, 56; TNA, CHES 21/4, fos 166, 166v, 227, 247v.

³⁶⁵ Everett Green, *Committee for Compounding*, III, p. 1949; Boothman and Hyde Parker, *Savage Fortune*, p. lx.

³⁶⁶ Everett Green, *Committee for Compounding*, III, pp. 1802-1803.

outcome was eventually achieved.³⁶⁷ The case of Sir Edward Moore's younger brother John concerning the family's Nottinghamshire estates was resolved in 1653, though fines in respect of their estates in Thelwall continued through the decade and may have contributed to their sale in 1661.³⁶⁸ Sir Arthur Aston's son secured his one-fifth portion in 1651, two years after his father's death, and in 1652 Henry Vawdrey of Baguley eventually secured the estate he had purchased from his recusant brother Richard before the Civil War, on condition that he cleared Richard's debts and maintained him and his wife for life.³⁶⁹ It would seem unlikely that the purchase was a fiction to protect Richard's assets, as in the post-Restoration years he led a somewhat peripatetic existence, being presented as a papist from at least three locations in the county over the following decade.³⁷⁰

Like the Savages, other leading Catholics managed to compound for delinquency only, like Sir John Starkey of Darley and Thomas Wickstead of Marbury, though Wickstead lost lands through the third Act of Sale of November 1652, as did two other minor Catholic gentry, Thomas Poole of Marbury and George Parsons of Bunbury, and two yeomen, Robert Chantrell of Noctorum (Woodchurch) and Thomas Bennett, probably of Over Whitley (Great Budworth).³⁷¹ Smith notes the years 1650-2 as the period of greatest exploitation of Catholics in Staffordshire, as the Rump struggled to achieve solvency, and it would seem likely that was also true of Cheshire.³⁷² Morrill observed that after 1649 the replacement of the hundredal committee system with a single committee of three men 'brought a new vigour to the administration' and substantially increased revenue, especially from the minor

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, III, p. 2359; Ormerod, *Cheshire*, II, p. 229.

³⁶⁸ Everett Green, *Committee for Compounding*, IV, p. 2546-7; *Cheshire Sheaf*; NA,

³⁶⁹ Everett Green, *Committee for Compounding*, IV, 2450-1, 2548-9.

³⁷⁰ NA, CHES 21/5, fos 15v, 31 and 79 respectively record his residence as P??hall Green in 1663, Baguley in 1664, and Etchells in 1668.

³⁷¹ Everett Green, *Committee for Compounding*, III, p. 2012-2013; Firth and Rait, *Acts and Ordinances*, III, pp. 623-652

³⁷² Smith, 'Staffordshire Recusants', p. 346.

gentry.³⁷³ Unfortunately the recent loss of the relevant papers in the National Archives precludes examination of the impact upon the county's Catholics.³⁷⁴

Below the level of the elite, there were few composition pleas, at least not successful ones. At the beginning of 1654, when legislation permitting recusants to compound became operative, there was a flurry of 'petition(s) to contract', eight of them from Cheshire.³⁷⁵ Only one of these appears to have been successful: the accounts of Receiver-General Whitby, which commenced at Michaelmas 1655, show the remaining plaintiffs and twenty other Cheshire Catholics, mostly of the middling sort, making half-yearly payments through to Michaelmas 1658, with very few defaults.³⁷⁶ The payments ranged in value from the £50 of Katherine Poole of Marbury, widow of Sir Thomas, down to the 10/- of Joan, daughter of the late Edward Probin of Wichaugh (Malpas).

The final group of sequestrated Catholics to be considered are those who were of personal estate only. These were exempt from sequestration after 1646, when the penalty was limited to estates greater than £200 in capital value, though eight such individuals were listed in the minutes of the Committee from Compounding for April 1648.³⁷⁷ At least six of these are recorded as suffering loss of goods and chattels valued between 7/- and £5 in the accounts of the hundredal committees.³⁷⁸

The evidence discussed above would thus seem to underpin Smith's assertion that the financial penalties exacted by the Parliamentary regime were of unprecedented severity, not least through their recurrent imposition. Yet this observation needs to be contextualised: all of these individuals were targeted as delinquents or papists by 1648, and though subsequently

³⁷³ Morrill, *Cheshire*, pp. 206-208.

³⁷⁴ NA, SP28/208, bundles of sequestration papers for the counties Cambs – Cumberland, undated. This source, cited at Morrill, *Cheshire*, p. 335 has been missing for some time, probably at least since the digitisation of State Papers completed in 2009.

³⁷⁵ Everett Green, *Committee for Compounding*, III, p. 2103; IV, p. 3175; V, pp. 3193, 3198.

³⁷⁶ NA, SP 28/218. John Wilson of Wardle is the only petitioner to contract who does not appear in this later source.

³⁷⁷ Everett Green, *Committee for Compounding*, I, pp. 101, 104; Morrill, *Cheshire*, p. 204.

³⁷⁸ BL, Harley MS 2136, fos 226-226v; idem, MS 2144, f. 88v.

some 350 recusants were presented at the Assizes between their resumption that year and 1659, only one of them features in Whitby’s accounts for the years 1655 to 1658.³⁷⁹ Thus, since the pre-war processes for composition and collection of fines had fallen into abeyance and were formally abolished by the Act for the better Ordering and Managing the Estates of Delinquents and Papists of January 1649-50, the vast majority of recusants were immune from penalties during the interregnum.³⁸⁰ There is a final trickle of payments into the Exchequer in the Recusant Roll of 1648-49, a phenomenon which Smith noted is paralleled in Staffordshire, and which he posits may be attributable to the attempts of some recusants to validate the legitimacy of their more lenient pre-war contributions, but thereafter the Recusant Rolls are void for Cheshire until 1657-8, as they are in the majority of counties, a phenomenon discussed below.³⁸¹

The rationale for these Assize presentments is thus unclear, and one is forced to the conclusion that security was the main driver. It may be noted that they diminish in frequency during the period of the Protectorate (from 1653 onwards), as Table 1.9 below shows, and to some extent in volume also, though there were spikes in 1655 and 1658, discussed below.

Table 1.9: Recusancy presentments at Assizes during the interregnum													
1648-1	1648-2	1649-2	1650-1	1650-2	1651-1	1651-2	1652-2	1653-2	1655-2	1657-2	1658-1	1658-2	1659-1
72	74	61	44	22	81	78	46	16	48	37	100	45	5
Note: the -1 and -2 suffixes to the year denote the spring and autumn sessions respectively													
Source: NA, CHES 21/4, fos 165-332, passim													

Aveling’s observation of a mixture of freedom and repression would seem particularly applicable to the Protectorate, during which further sequestrations by the commissioners were

³⁷⁹ William Bennett of Bebington. For lists of the recusancy presentments at the Assizes of those years, see CHES 21/4, fos 165-332, passim.

³⁸⁰ Firth and Rait, *Acts and Ordinances*, III, pp. 329-335.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 336; TNA, E377/56, E377/63. The 1651 roll E377/59, for example, consists only of three rotulets for Yorkshire and one each for County Durham and Sussex.

precluded, and leading Catholics sought to negotiate a limited toleration with Cromwell, but which also saw spikes of persecution, albeit abortive ones.³⁸² The first, in the wake of Penruddock's rising of 1655, was a proclamation demanding the enforcement of the recusancy laws and requiring JPs to certify recusants, but seems to have had no impact in Cheshire, or indeed in most places: the 1,000 names in the following Recusant Roll that Smith noted appear to be almost exclusively from Yorkshire.³⁸³

It also appears unlikely that Catholics were impacted by the introduction of the decimation tax upon delinquents, another consequence of Penruddock's revolt. Durston notes that the application of the tax to Catholics was one of a number of technical queries raised by the major-generals, though there appears to be no indication of any decision ever being made on the matter.³⁸⁴ In the case of Cheshire the matter must remain uncertain, since no assessment lists from the county have survived, but one letter of Major-General Worsley, who was responsible for Cheshire, Lancashire and Staffordshire, perhaps indicates that Catholics were not taxed.³⁸⁵ A report to Cromwell of 24 December 1655 notes that 'In Cheshire we have taxed as many as amounted to one thousand five hundred pounds *per ann.* and in Lancashire about one thousand one hundred pounds *per ann.*' Had Catholics been included within the target contributors, a much larger sum might reasonably have been expected from the latter county, with its far greater Catholic population, notwithstanding Worsley's subsequent observation that 'Many of the delinquents in this county were papist-delinquents, and their estates quite sold by the state'.³⁸⁶

³⁸² Everett Green, *Committee for Compounding*, I, p. xx; Sheils, 'English Catholics', pp. 147-150; Smith, 'Staffordshire Recusants', pp. 343-344.

³⁸³ TNA, SP 25/76A f.25; TNA, E377/61. The absence from the latter source of the county headings characteristic of the Recusant Rolls makes identification of the provenance of the entries uncertain.

³⁸⁴ Christopher Durston, *Cromwell's Major-Generals: godly government during the English Revolution* (Manchester, 2001), p. 101.

³⁸⁵ J. T. Cliffe (ed.), 'The Cromwellian Decimation Tax of 1655: The Assessment Lists', *Camden Society* (5th series) 7 (1996), pp. 403-492, pp. 451, 489 identified only one assessment from Cheshire, that of the Protestant George Warburton of Arley.

³⁸⁶ Thomas Birch (ed.), *A Catalogue of the State Papers of John Thurloe* (7 vols., London, 1742), IV, at <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/thurloe-papers/vol4/pp333-343#h3-0022>, accessed 15 June 2019.

The second spike of persecution in this period, the Act against Popish Recusants of 1657, is reflected in the Recusant Roll for 1657-8, but as work in progress, and reads like a list of presentments rather than convictions.³⁸⁷ 100 named individuals were to present themselves at the April Quarter Sessions and take the Oath of Abjuration, on penalty of two-thirds sequestration, but the absence of any names in the 1659 roll would suggest that this exercise was not followed through to its conclusion.³⁸⁸

Those Catholics who were sequestered during the Civil War undoubtedly suffered financial exactions greater than those of the pre-war generation, because those exactions were not intermittent as before, but in almost half of the cases were sustained through the interregnum. But these individuals were a minority, no more than 15 or 20 per cent of the Catholic population. The majority, it would seem, had it easier than their predecessors, certainly during the Protectorate, when the appetite for the policing of Catholics visibly waned.

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, E377/63.

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, E377/64.

1.7 The Restoration settlement (1660-78)

If ‘the English civil war [...] was the last of the Wars of Religion’, it failed to lance the boil.³⁸⁹ The restored episcopal Church of England of Charles II’s reign found itself sandwiched between the problem of Catholicism on its right flank, as before the war, and a more substantial challenge on its left from the plethora of dissenting Protestant sects which had developed from a threat into a reality over the preceding two decades. Religion remained a major issue in post-Restoration politics, perhaps the major issue if one considers the foreign policy dimension of a spectre of Counter-Reformation successes, spearheaded no longer by Spain but by an expansionist France, to which the King was in thrall for much of his reign.³⁹⁰ Particularly during the years of the Popish Plot and Exclusion Crisis (1678-81, discussed in the following section), Popery and arbitrary government were conflated in political discourse, and the twin religious challenges gave rise to a persistent fear that ‘Forty-One is come again.’³⁹¹

John Miller’s 1973 monograph *Popery and Politics in England 1660-88* remains the definitive study of Catholicism during this period and stands largely unchallenged by subsequent scholarship.³⁹² He discerns **five** phases in the development and resolution of a crisis for the Stuart regime, the first three of them covering these years: a laissez-faire climate which characterised the 1660s; the sowing of the seeds of crisis in the French alliance and third Dutch War, and the 1672 Declaration of Indulgence; and the emergence of popery as a major issue following the Duke of York’s conversion in 1673 and the resultant prospect of a Catholic succession.³⁹³ Inevitably, however, given the dearth of local studies of the period – a situation

³⁸⁹ John Morrill, ‘The Religious Context of the English Civil War’ (1984), in idem, *The Nature of the English Revolution* (Harlow, 1993), pp. 45-68, p. 68.

³⁹⁰ Jonathan Scott, ‘England’s Troubles: Exhuming the Popish Plot’, in Tim Harris, Paul Seaward and Mark Goldie (eds), *The Politics of Religion in Restoration England* (Oxford, 1990), pp. 107-131, esp. pp. 114-115; Gary De Krey, *Restoration and Revolution in Britain: A Political History of Charles II and the Glorious Revolution* (Basingstoke and New York, 2007), pp. 134-5.

³⁹¹ Tim Harris, ‘Introduction: Revising the Restoration’ in idem, Paul Seaward and Mark Goldie (eds), *The Politics of Religion in Restoration England* (Oxford, 1990), pp. 1-28, pp. 4, 9, 14.

³⁹² Miller, *Popery and Politics*.

³⁹³ Ibid., chs 5-7 respectively.

which remains unchanged today – Miller’s focus is predominantly metropolitan.³⁹⁴ The Cheshire evidence suggests that the escalating issues of high politics that mark the first three stages of Miller’s paradigm had negligible impact in the provinces, hence they will be treated as a single phase in the analysis below. This will demonstrate that for most of the reign the restored Church of England sought conscientiously to combat religious heterodoxy, but its efforts were not supported by those of the civil authorities.

The changes of the interregnum took time to reverse. This may reflect a climate of uncertainty following Charles’s Declaration of Breda of April 1660, whereby before leaving the Low Countries to claim his throne he promised ‘liberty to tender consciences’ whose religious opinions ‘do not disturb the peace of the kingdom.’³⁹⁵ The first two years of the new reign saw Presbyterians engaged in a number of discussions aimed at a comprehension within the Church of England, and leading Catholics like the Earl of Bristol resuming the negotiations of the Protectorate for toleration.³⁹⁶ Even after the Act of Uniformity had shattered these aspirations, in December 1662 Charles issued a declaration suspending its operation, and it was not until July 1663, following Parliamentary opposition, that he instructed the Assize judges to enforce the laws against dissenters and recusants.³⁹⁷ Between 1660 and 1662 there were only two presentments of recusants, one of them very small-scale, at the Cheshire Assizes.³⁹⁸ In the ecclesiastical sphere, the first two episcopates of the new reign were too brief to achieve any traction: Brian Walton (1660-1) made only one visit to his diocese, and Henry Ferne (1662) none at all, dying within five weeks of his consecration in

³⁹⁴ The provincial evidence Miller cites is taken from John Anthony Williams, *Wiltshire*, which is still the only extended local study of Restoration Catholicism, and from what appear to be Miller’s own researches on Norfolk (see Miller, *Popery and Politics*, pp. 267-268).

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 144; Miller, *Popery and Politics*, p. 96.

³⁹⁶ John Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England, 1646-1689*, pp. 31-32, 34-35, 38; Miller, *Popery and Politics*, pp. 96-102.

³⁹⁷ Miller, *Popery and Politics*, p. 101; J. S. Cockburn, *A History of English Assizes 1558-1714* (Cambridge, 1972), p. 247.

³⁹⁸ NA, CHES 21/4, fos 426, 437-439.

London.³⁹⁹ But following the passage of the Act of Uniformity, the primary visitation of the Archbishop of York, Accepted Frewin, in the winter of 1662-3, shows an effort to enforce conformity to Prayer Book Anglicanism: 162 recusants and a comparable number of nonconformists were presented on that occasion.⁴⁰⁰

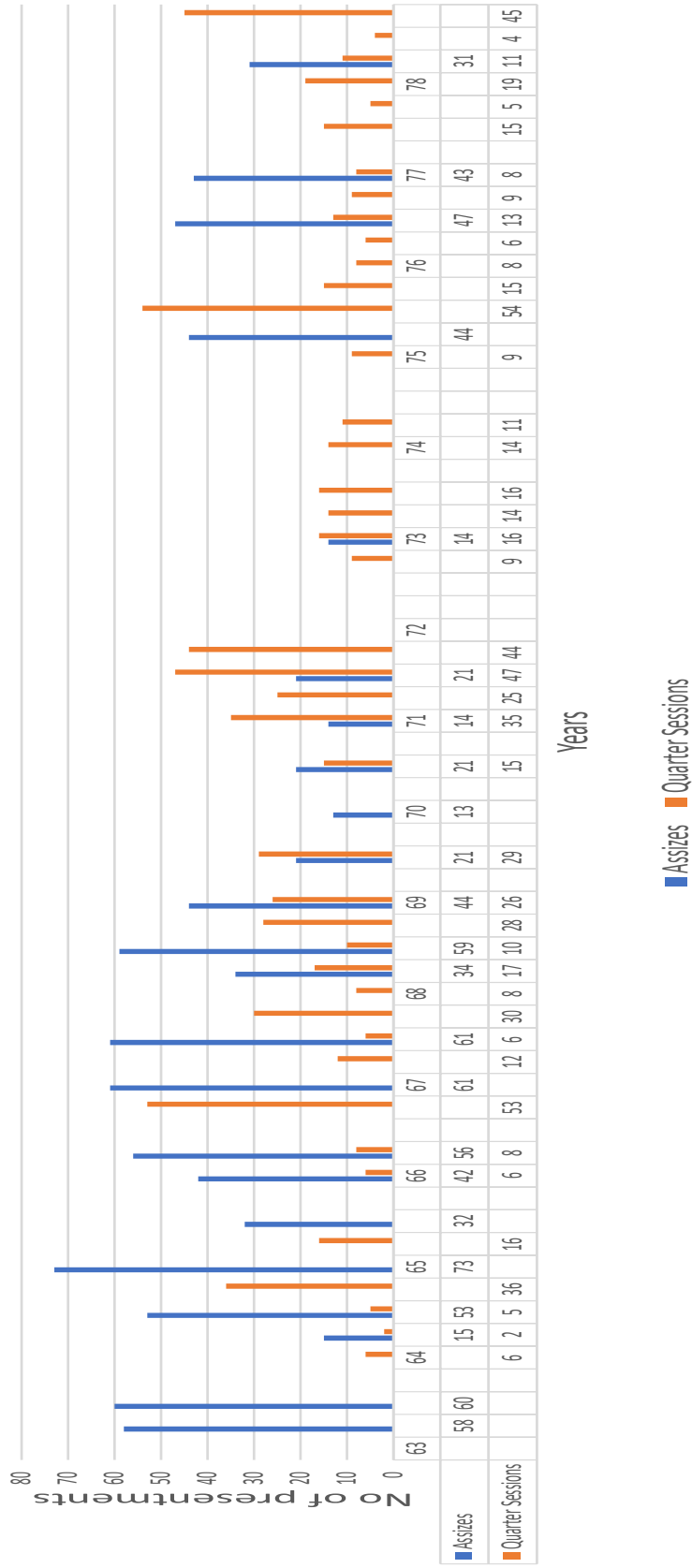
As Figure 1.3 below shows, from 1663 onwards regular presentments of Catholics at the Assizes resumed at levels comparable to those of the interregnum, in mid-double figures, through to the end of the decade, when they fall off sharply in volume. In parallel, a pattern emerges of presentments at Quarter Sessions, which had been very rare prior to 1660.⁴⁰¹ These were less regular - typically, twice rather than four times a year - and also lower in volume. No explanation has been found for this apparent duplication of systems, though the possibility that the Quarter Sessions were utilised to police the measures of the Clarendon Code against Protestant nonconformity, and that their use against recusancy was a logical contingent, merits investigation.

³⁹⁹ D. S. Margoliouth, rev. Nicholas Keene, 'Walton, Brian (1600-1661), bishop of Chester and biblicist', ODNB (online edn, 2008), accessed 13 May 2021; Brian Quintrell, 'Ferne, Henry (1602-1662), bishop of Chester and controversialist', ODNB (online edn, 2010), accessed 13 May 2021.

⁴⁰⁰ BIY, V. 1662-3, CB.2, fos 26v-79.

⁴⁰¹ CALS, QJB 2/7, which covers the period the period from 1654 to the Restoration, records of two concerted presentments of recusants, and one of them is limited to the parish of Tattenhall.

Figure 1.3: Presentments of Catholics at Assizes and Quarter Sessions, 1663-78



The lower volumes at Quarter Sessions do not seem to support Forster's observation that '[o]n the whole the J.P.s proved unwilling to enforce the recusancy laws – often against kinsmen, friends, and neighbours – without specific government orders.'⁴⁰² Darcy Savage of Leighton, for example, was presented for recusancy at Quarter Sessions on twelve occasions between 1664 and his death in 1670, and his neighbours Sir James Poole and Sir Edward Massey seven and six times respectively over the same period.⁴⁰³ In fact it would seem reasonable to infer from Sir Peter Leicester's 1668 observation that 'there [was] not a man' in Cheshire who had reported dissenters' meetings to the authorities, 'though there be hundreds that knew it' that concealment of religious delinquency was rather more common further down the social scale.⁴⁰⁴

More convincing is the possibility that the low numbers represent the learning curve of a novel undertaking: Sir Peter Leicester's charges to the Grand Jury of Cheshire over the period 1660 to 1677 sought to educate the jurors in the operation of the law, the religious elements of which would certainly have been unfamiliar.⁴⁰⁵ But Forster's rider about government orders is important: the presentment at the sessions of January 1666-7, the largest of the decade, followed a royal proclamation, though the possibility of an outbreak of popular anti-popery in the wake of the Great Fire cannot be discounted.⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰² G. C. F. Forster, 'Government in provincial England under the later Stuarts', *TRHS* 33 (1983), pp. 29-48, p. 32.

⁴⁰³ CALS, QJB 3.1, fos 243v-283v, passim; idem, QJB 3.2, f. 213v.

⁴⁰⁴ Peter Leicester, ed. Elizabeth M. Halcrow, *Charges to the Grand Jury at Quarter Sessions, 1660-77*, *Chetham Society*, 3rd series, 5 (1953), p. 47.

⁴⁰⁵ Leicester, *Grand Jury Charges*, passim. CALS, QJB 2.7, which covers the period from 1654 onwards, contains only two concerted presentments for recusancy and the first of these is confined to the parish of Tattenhall. At the Restoration, charges of recusancy reverted to the pre-Civil War definition of absence from church, rather than refusal of the Oath of Abjuration.

⁴⁰⁶ CALS, QJB 3/1, fos 228-274, passim. On 17 November 1666 Sir Geoffrey Shakerley wrote to Secretary Williamson that '[the people] are largely satisfied with the late proclamation' (of 10 November, calling for the enforcement of the recusancy laws.) See NA, *CSPD Aug 1666-Mar 1667*, p. 251; *ibid.*, SP 29/178, f. 125. Spurr, *Restoration Church*, p. 54 notes that a Catholic French watchmaker was executed for starting the fire, and Miller, *Popery and Politics*, p. 103 that there was subsequently a spate of anti-Catholic rioting in Warwickshire.

The marked drop in Assize presentments around the end of the 1660s is also problematic. It probably indicates that dissent was increasingly being seen as a greater problem than popery, an observation underpinned by the passage of the 1670 Conventicle Act, though it is problematised by Challinor's evidence that presentments of Catholics at Quarter Sessions were consistently greater than those of dissenters throughout the Restoration period.⁴⁰⁷ Perhaps though this merely reflects Leicester's observation, noted above, of the difficulties of catching the latter. Conventicles certainly loom large in Leicester's writings, and it may be noted that when in 1669 a survey of the extent of nonconformity and Catholicism in the diocese was commissioned at the behest of Gilbert Sheldon, the Archbishop of Canterbury, thirty-one parishes from Cheshire reported the incidence of nonconformity, but only one, Waverton, provided any evidence of popery, noting that '[t]here are two or three Papists & Quakers in this p[ar]ish'.⁴⁰⁸ A letter to Sheldon from the third post-Restoration bishop, George Hall (1662-68), seeking guidance on the treatment of Catholics also suggests this switch of focus, together with a certain distaste for the recusancy laws:

It is a great scandal and offence to let them alone, though I wish the sectaries were but as quiet and yet inoffensive as they are. To make pecuniary mulcts on them is base, to proceed by church censures is vain, to leave them unobserved is to multiply them, I can but wayt my direction.⁴⁰⁹

Hall's activities as bishop were consistent with his words: he secured the imprisonment of a number of nonconforming clergy that he had ejected under the terms of the 1662 Act, and required Presbyterian clergy who conformed to accept episcopal ordination and abjure their Presbyterian orders.⁴¹⁰ But conversely, when in 1667 he wrote again to Sheldon about a

⁴⁰⁷ P. J. Challinor, 'The Structure of Politics in Cheshire, 1660-1715' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Wolverhampton, 1983), p. 246.

⁴⁰⁸ CALS, EDV 1/36, passim (f. 14 for Waverton). The returns from Wirral deanery, which contained several Catholic strongholds, alludes (f. 13) to details of recusants 'on the third page next' but that folio is not present.

⁴⁰⁹ Bodl. MS Add., quoted in Miller, *Popery and Politics*, pp. 58-59. Miller suggests that the letter dates from 1665, on account of a reference to the plague.

⁴¹⁰ Stephen Lander and A. T. Thacker, 'The Diocese of Chester' in Brian Harris (ed.), *VCH Cheshire*, III, pp. 12-87, pp. 39-40.

presentment of 1,500 Catholics at Lancaster Assizes, his views about Catholics were more forceful: ‘it may be imprudence, to undertake a prosecution of them to no issue.’⁴¹¹

Hall may have been aware of the improbability of any fines imposed ever being collected. Between 1660 and 1672 the Exchequer received only £157 from recusancy fines from Catholics across the country, none of it from Cheshire.⁴¹² A degree of process improvement was achieved after 1675, when Danby appointed a Receiver and instructed the Exchequer to set up commissions to sequester recusants’ lands, though it was not until 1678 that a rotulet for Cheshire appeared in the Recusant Rolls of the Restoration era.⁴¹³ Even then, no sequestrations were made, nor were any fines collected. Although the list is far longer than any preceding one, running to two double-sided rotulets containing the names of 183 known Catholics and a further 118 presumed to be Protestant dissenters, it appears to be no more than a catalogue of historic debts.⁴¹⁴

Assize and Quarter Sessions presentments came to an abrupt halt in 1672 when Charles issued a Declaration of Indulgence suspending the penal laws against dissenters and Catholics, in line with his commitment to Louis XIV under the secret Treaty of Dover of 1670. The Declaration was, however, in force for less than a year before the King was forced to rescind it in the face of a hostile Commons, and to assent to the first Test Act which required office holders to receive the Anglican communion and swear an oath repudiating transubstantiation.⁴¹⁵ The Duke of York’s failure to communicate at Easter 1673 and his resignation from his position at the admiralty that summer rather than taking the Test confirmed

⁴¹¹ Bodl. MS Add., quoted in Gabriel Glickman, ‘The Church and the Catholic community 1660-1714’ in Grant Tapsell (ed.), *The later Stuart Church 1660-1714* (Manchester, 2012), pp. 217-242, p. 220.

⁴¹² Aveling, *Handle and Axe*, p.1 94; NA, E377/65-67, the three Recusant Rolls covering this period, contain no rotulets (county specific parchment scrolls, which are bound together to form the roll) for Cheshire.

⁴¹³ Miller, *Popery and Politics*, p. 136: NA, E377/73.

⁴¹⁴ NA, E377/73.

⁴¹⁵ Miller, *Popery and Politics*, p. 125.

the unpalatable truth that many had suspected for some time: the country now had a Catholic heir to the throne.⁴¹⁶

This series of events undoubtedly brought the Catholic question into the political spotlight: Miller observes that '[t]he fact of the Duke of York's Catholicism underlay all the politics of [the] period [1673-8].'⁴¹⁷ Yet the Cheshire evidence would suggest that his further comment that 'the ominous course of political events now shook the magistrates of the shires out of their inertia' is something of an exaggeration, particularly given his exclusion of Norfolk, the only provincial county for which he had detailed evidence, from that trend.⁴¹⁸ Only fourteen Catholics were presented at the spring Assize of 1673, and no further names are recorded in the Crown Books until the summer of 1675.⁴¹⁹ This gap may be one of record keeping rather than one of justice, as summary entries in the Books record that presentments took place, though it would seem symptomatic of a lack of diligence.⁴²⁰ From 1675 onwards the recording of Assize presentment details resumed, but in volumes typical of the 1660s, giving no sense of a charged political atmosphere.⁴²¹ Quarter Sessions presentment volumes in the mid-1670s were equally desultory, only once reaching significantly into double figures.⁴²²

In contrast, ecclesiastical presentments of recusants under Hall's two successors, John Wilkins (1668-72) and John Pearson (1672-86) display a Church of England conscientiously battling against the perceived Catholic threat. From this point onwards books of twice yearly ruridecanal visitations survive, which were consistently in three figures.⁴²³ Figure 1.4 below shows these results alongside the lacklustre Assize figures.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 119, 127.

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 132-3.

⁴¹⁹ NA, CHES 21/5, fos 128v-153v, *passim*.

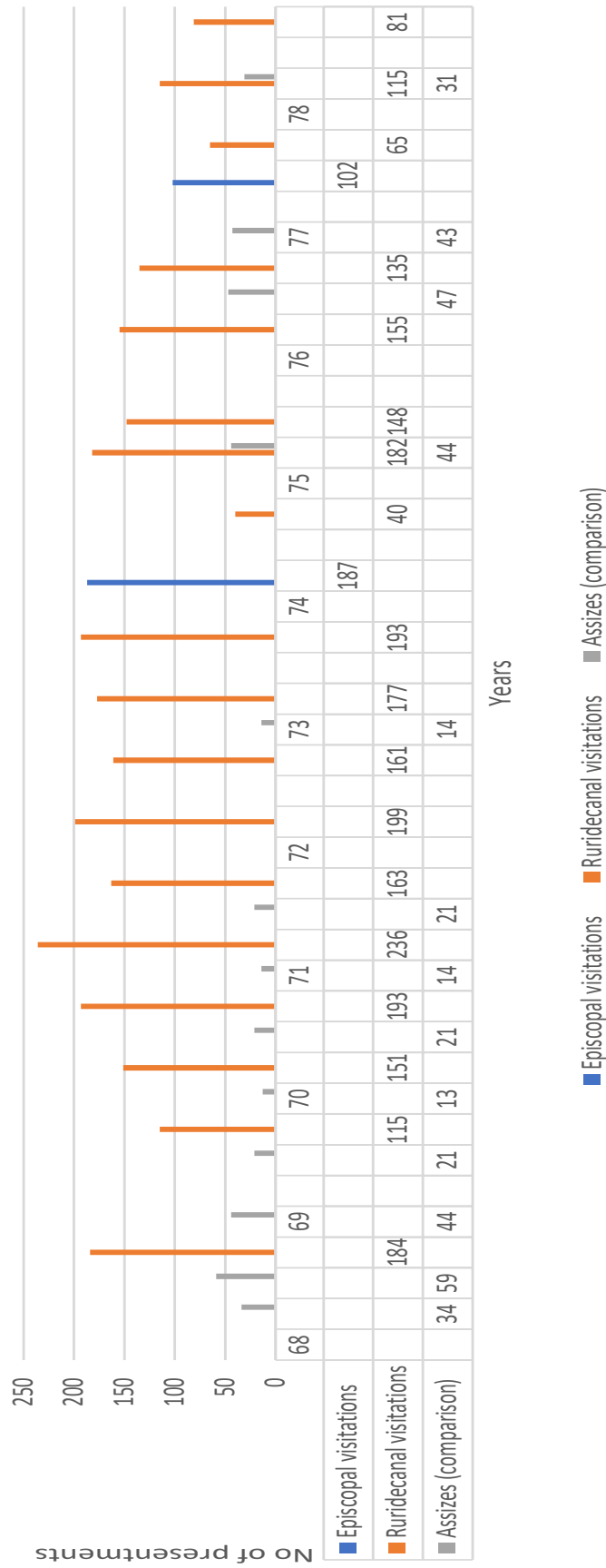
⁴²⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴²¹ *Ibid.*, fos 153v-184v, *passim*.

⁴²² CALS, QJB3/2, fos 239v-248v, *passim*.

⁴²³ *Ibid.*, EDV 1.35, EDV 1.37 – 1.43, EDV 1.45 – 1.49, and EDV 1.51 – 1.53, all *passim*.

Figure 1.4: Presentments of Catholics at visitations, 1668-78



There is no record of Wilkins conducting an episcopal visitation, but Pearson did so in 1674 and 1677, and presentments were commensurate with those of his rural deans.⁴²⁴

The Church's frustration with the inactivity of the civil arm in general is evident in a letter to the King of January 1675-6, to which Pearson and five other bishops were co-signatories with Danby, Lauderdale and others.⁴²⁵ It is draconian in tone, requesting 'that convictions of Roman Catholics be encouraged, quickened, and made effectual', together with the enforcement of the Elizabethan statutes against the saying of mass and the presence of seminary priests in the realm, and the exclusion of Catholics from Court. The speed of the official response testifies to the level of government concern: Secretary Williamson's instructions may have been drafted within a day of receipt of the letter, and before the end of the month the bishops had written again to the King, expressing their 'thankfulness [for] his great sense and care of religion'.⁴²⁶ This intervention may well explain the upturn in civil presentments that year.

Though the Catholic issue was central to the high politics of the mid-1670s, its repercussions in the provinces, certainly in Cheshire, were not significant. The overall impression from the 1660s and early and mid-1670s is of dilatory attempts of policing by the civil arm, which frustrated clerical attempts to highlight the problem.

⁴²⁴ Ibid., EDV 1.44 and EDV 1.50, both *passim*.

⁴²⁵ NA, SP 29/367, f. 197.

⁴²⁶ Ibid., fos 193, 205. The PRO calendar suggests a date of 26 January for the bishops' first letter: Williamson's draft is dated 27 January.

1.8 The Popish Plot and Exclusion Crisis (1678-81)

Fictitious rumours of a Popish Plot against the King in the autumn of 1678, however, cascaded the concerns of the political nation down to provincial level, giving rise to a climate of anti-popish panic comparable only to that of 1641-2. Although the hysteria generated was similarly short lived, it had the effect of escalating concerns over the succession into demands that the Duke of York be excluded from it.⁴²⁷ The King's opposition to this plan resulted in the rapid dissolution of three Parliaments over these years and in consequence, a series of elections fought with increasing bitterness between two emerging political parties, the anti-Exclusionist Tories and the pro-Exclusionist Whigs. Yet in Cheshire, the first two elections were managed consensually and the nominees unopposed: it was only at the third election of 1681 that Catholicism surfaced as an issue in Cheshire politics, and then by no means the dominant one.

Charles was notified of a Catholic plot to assassinate him on 13 August 1678, and over the following weeks various investigations and security measures ensued, though the matter was not considered by the Privy Council until the end of September.⁴²⁸ Thereafter a wave of anti-popery rapidly gripped the nation.⁴²⁹ The city of Chester was in the van of this, quite possibly because the city's M.P. and Recorder, William Williams, was present at the meeting of the Privy Council on 30 September, and liaised effectively with the Mayor, William Harvey, to pre-empt any trouble in the city.⁴³⁰ Harvey evidently quickly conducted examinations into a report of 'Priests and Jesuits' in the city, for Williams's reply of 19 October conveys the Attorney-General's advice that he 'should examine Mr. Matthew Ellis for [their] discovery'. Within three weeks of this letter Harvey arrested five soldiers

⁴²⁷ Miller, *Popery and Politics*, pp. 154.

⁴²⁸ J. P. Kenyon, *The Popish Plot* (2nd edn, Harmondsworth, 1984), pp. 60-72.

⁴²⁹ Miller, *Popery and Politics*, pp. 159-160.

⁴³⁰ Kenyon, *Popish Plot*, pp. 82-83.

returning from the disbanded army against the French to their native Ireland without passes, for which he received ‘his Majesty’s approval of [his] zeal and circumspection’ via Secretary Williamson.⁴³¹ On 23 November Williams wrote again to Harvey, requesting a ‘complete and accurate return’ of all priests and Catholics in the city.⁴³² A list of twenty-three names in the city Quarter Sessions files – an unusually high number by Chester standards - suggests that Harvey was once again diligent in complying,⁴³³ The climate of tension in the city was such that the Corporation cancelled the traditional Christmas watch, owing to ‘the great danger the Kingdom is conceived to be in of an insurrection by the Roman Catholics’.⁴³⁴

Miller notes that this panic had largely subsided throughout the provinces by late December, but Christmastide 1678 saw attacks of a severity unequalled in Cheshire since Elizabethan times against the Wirral Catholic triumvirate of Massey, Stanley and Poole and in particular their household chaplains. An eighteenth-century history suggests that the raid on the Massey property was the result of a grudge against the family’s priest, John Plessington, who had opposed ‘a treaty of marriage between a Catholick lady of considerable fortune, and a Protestant gentleman’, and was accused by the bridegroom’s family (who are unnamed) of involvement in the Popish Plot.⁴³⁵ No evidence supporting an alternative explanation has survived, and it may be noted there were relatively few similar raids elsewhere in England. The nearest to Cheshire was at Tixall in Staffordshire, home of Lord Aston, whose steward had made allegations of a conspiracy to the local justices.⁴³⁶

⁴³¹ Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Report of Manuscripts belonging to the Corporation of Chester*, Appendix to Eighth Report (1881), p. 390.

⁴³² *Ibid.*, p. 391.

⁴³³ CALS, ZML/2, f. 270, mss. 3, 5, 14.

⁴³⁴ P. J. Challinor, ‘Restoration and Exclusion in the County of Cheshire’, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 64 (1982), pp. 360-385, p. 370.

⁴³⁵ C. H. Dodd, *The church history of England, from the year 1500, to the year 1688. Chiefly with regard to Catholics* (3 vols, Brussels, 1737-42), III, p. 292.

⁴³⁶ Kenyon, *Popish Plot*, pp. 158, 162.

Early on Christmas morning pursuivants raided Poole Hall and dragged the family's octogenarian chaplain, Humphrey Evans, from his bed.⁴³⁷ Evans, possibly on account of his age, was not arrested, but he was thrown downstairs, which no doubt hastened his death three weeks later.⁴³⁸ That same day, 14 January, Poole and Stanley were convicted for recusancy at the Middlewich Quarter Sessions and imprisoned pending the spring session of the Assizes: there were also '[c]ommitments also against' Michael Fitzwilliams, a member of the Stanley household, Massey, and two husbandmen from elsewhere in the county.⁴³⁹ There is no record of whether the Stanley property at Hooton was subjected to a similar incursion, but it may be noted that a 'Thomas Traps *presbyter*' was among the Stanley household presented at the ruridecanal visitations of April and September 1678, but not subsequently.⁴⁴⁰ It would seem possible that he was the Nicholas Trapps noted by Anstruther as fleeing to Paris in the aftermath of the Plot.⁴⁴¹

On 28 December the Massey seat of Puddington Hall was also raided, resulting in the arrest and ultimately the execution of John Plessington, the sole Catholic martyrdom in post-Reformation Cheshire.⁴⁴² Plessington had been presented on several occasions since taking up residence at Puddington around 1670, though not as a priest: in 1671 he was listed as a schoolmaster.⁴⁴³ No charges of his involvement in the plot were laid against him, but he was tried at Chester Castle on 12 May 1679 on a charge of returning to England after ordination overseas – under the now largely defunct statute of 1585 – and found guilty on the evidence

⁴³⁷ Peter Phillips, 'St John Plessington, Priest and Martyr', *RH* 28 (2007), pp. 424-433, p. 428.

⁴³⁸ *Ibid.* and Kenyon, *Popish Plot*, p. 235.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*; J. H. E. Bennett and J. C. Dewhurst (eds.), *Quarter Sessions Records with Other Records of the Justices of the Peace for the County Palatine of Chester, 1559 - 1760, Together With A Few Earlier Miscellaneous Records Deposited With the County Council, RSLC* 94 (1940), pp. 182-183.

⁴⁴⁰ CALS, EDV 1/52, f. 14v and EDV 1/53, f. 12.

⁴⁴¹ Anstruther, *Seminary Priests*, III, pp. 228-229.

⁴⁴² Phillips, 'St John Plessington', pp. 428-430 is the source for the information in this paragraph except where otherwise indicated.

⁴⁴³ NA, CHES 21/4, f. 103; CALS, EDV 1/38, f. 61, EDV 1/39, f. 43v, EDV 1/40, f. 75v, EDV 1/41, f. 47, EDV 1/44, f. 62v, EDV 1/46, f. 49v, EDV 1/47, f. 33v, EDV 1/48, f. 50, EDV 1/49, f. 39, EDV 1/51, f. 10v, EDV 1/52, f. 14 and EDV 1/53, f. 11v.

of three lapsed Catholics who testified to hearing him say mass.⁴⁴⁴ The justices granted him a reprieve from the draconian mandatory death sentence, but their decision was countermanded by Whitehall and he was executed on 19 July. His end was in the classic theatrical pattern of early modern Catholic martyrdoms.⁴⁴⁵ He was dragged on a hurdle to Gallows Hill at Boughton, outside the city walls, where he delivered a speech denying disloyalty and praying for the King, but affirming the truth of the Catholic faith, before commending his soul to God: ‘O Jesu, be to me a Jesus.’ It is unclear though whether he was quartered as sentenced, since he was measured for a coffin, and when his mortal remains were returned to Puddington, they were laid out on an oak table in the hall rather than being hung at the four corners of the property as specified.

Outside Chester and the southern Wirral, however, the plot seems to have had no significant impact. At the Quarter Sessions of October 1678, when as noted news of the plot had reached the county, only four Catholics were presented.⁴⁴⁶ Presentments rise at the sessions of the following January and April, and at the spring Assizes, but only to levels typical of the more tranquil 1660s and 1670s.⁴⁴⁷ Thereafter they fall away sharply, reinforcing Miller’s observation that ‘the Plot tended to die a natural death’, and remain desultory throughout the Exclusion Crisis of the next two years, as Figure 1.5 below demonstrates.⁴⁴⁸

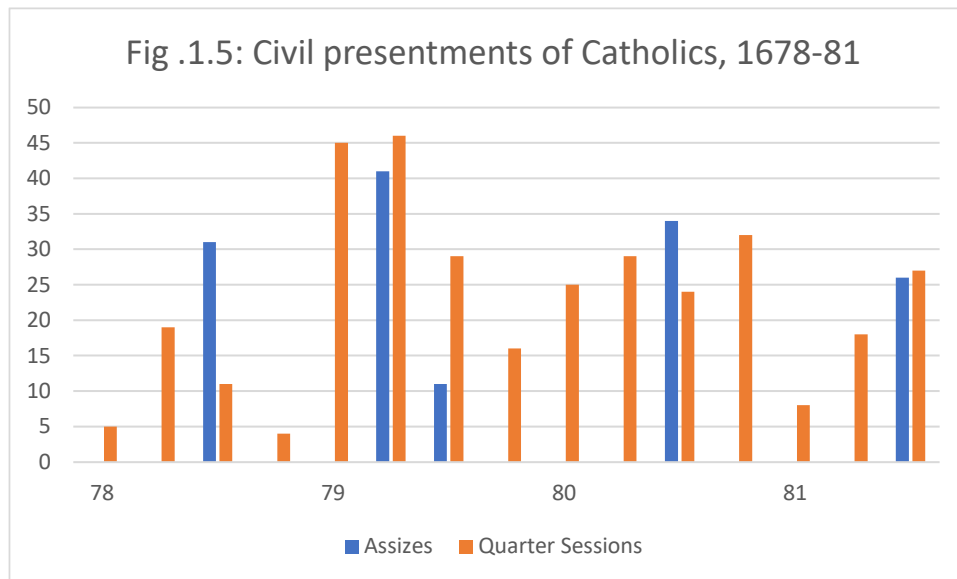
⁴⁴⁴ No record of presentment for Catholicism has been found for any of the three (Margaret Platt, George Massey and Robert Wood).

⁴⁴⁵ Peter Lake and Michael Questier, ‘Agency, Appropriation and Rhetoric under the Gallows: Puritans, Romanists and the State in Early Modern England’, *P&P* 153 (1996), pp. 64-107, esp. p. 68.

⁴⁴⁶ CALS, QJB 3/3, f. 248v.

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, fos 249v-250v, 251v-252; NA, CHES 21/5, fos 189-190.

⁴⁴⁸ CALS, QJB 3/3, fos 252v – 265v, passim; NA, CHES 21/5, fos 184-213, passim; Miller, *Popery and Politics*, p. 154. The annual totals reported in Challinor, ‘Politics in Cheshire’, p. 246, which suggest a sharp increase in Quarter Sessions presentment volumes from fifty-nine in 1678 to 213 in 1681 are distorted by the spikes at the January and April sessions of 1678-9, discussed above, and the October sessions of 1681, discussed below.



This sustained lull in anti-Catholic activity at a time when the succession of a Catholic heir was the dominant political issue seems counter-intuitive, but qualifying observations need to be made. Firstly, -as Southcombe and Tapsell have observed, '[Exclusion's] true strength was much augmented by the way in which other, broader issues increasingly latched on to it, like barnacles on the ship of state.'⁴⁴⁹ It was a cause which could sometimes even straddle the Catholic-Protestant divide: Earl Rivers, a Catholic albeit only nominally, was an Exclusionist, and his son, Lord Colchester, was a close friend of the Duke of Monmouth, who stayed with him at Rocksavage during his progress of the county in September 1682.⁴⁵⁰

Among the other factors which were swept into stances on Exclusion were the treatment of dissenters and the secular role of bishops, which in Cheshire informed the rivalry between the Whig Henry Booth, an outspoken advocate of comprehension, and the Tory magnate Lord Cholmondeley, a staunch defender of the 'Cavalier' alliance of church and state.⁴⁵¹ Whigs like Booth, however, not only supported some measure of toleration for dissent but themselves patronised conventicles and dissenting ministers, which may have

⁴⁴⁹ George Southcombe and Grant Tapsell, *Restoration Politics, Religion and Culture* (Basingstoke, 2010), p. 50.

⁴⁵⁰ Challinor, 'Restoration and Exclusion', p. 381; idem, 'Politics in Cheshire', pp. 102, 103.

⁴⁵¹ Southcombe and Tapsell., *Restoration Politics*, pp. 50-1; Challinor, 'Restoration and Exclusion', pp. 372, 376.

stayed their hand in actually enforcing religious conformity, at least up to April 1680, when Booth and six others were purged from the Cheshire bench.⁴⁵² In contrast the Tory Sir Philip Egerton, the only Cheshire MP to vote against the Exclusion Bill, seems to have been actively anti-Catholic. The Bunbury churchwardens' accounts from late 1678 contain an entry for 2s 6d 'sp[en]t on my selfe & horse & other Assistants in gathering & bringing in the Papists names to S[i]r Philip Egerton' and there are payments the following year for 'gathering the Recusants money', 'giving account of ye Recusants money at Coat brooke' and 'going to Coat broke foure times to give Account of the moneys gathered of ye Recusants and in going about to gather ye money.'⁴⁵³

In a further analogy, Southcombe and Tapsell also note that '[Exclusion] also acted like a giant magnet attracting the iron filings of a myriad of pre-existing local tensions', such as personal rivalries and competition for office.⁴⁵⁴ The Booth-Cholmondeley hostility is a case in point. When it was rumoured that the Tory Sir Robert Leicester had withdrawn from the election to the 1681 Parliament, Cholmondeley instructed his steward to order his tenants to cast their second votes for the second Whig candidate, Sir Robert Cotton, rather than Booth: as Challinor observes 'Cholmondeley's desire to humiliate the Booths transcended his concern to return men of moderate principles.'⁴⁵⁵

Popery, however, did feature in the election of 1681, the only one of that period to be contested, and one which exhibited an unusual degree of polarisation in the county, with only 3 per cent of the electorate splitting their two votes between Tory and Whig candidates.⁴⁵⁶ In a letter to the Earl of Conway, Booth alleged that '[a]ll the Papists voted for Sir Robert Leicester and Sir Philip Egerton' and cited an instance of a voter who switched his

⁴⁵² Challinor, *Politics in Cheshire*, p. 68.

⁴⁵³ CALS, P/40/13/1, unnumbered.

⁴⁵⁴ Southcombe and Tapsell, *Restoration Politics*, p. 54.

⁴⁵⁵ Challinor, 'Restoration and Exclusion', p. 377.

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 375, 379.

allegiance to Booth and Cotton at the poll because two Catholics arrived to cast their votes for the Tory candidates.⁴⁵⁷ But Booth was fiercely anti-papist (he described Catholicism as ‘not a religion, but an interest which endeavours our destruction’), and may have been overstating the case.⁴⁵⁸ Anti-Catholicism, as the Egerton case above shows, was a cross-party issue: following the election the defeated Tory faction drew up an address to their newly elected M.P.s instructing them to uphold the alliance of Crown and altar, and to ensure that the penal laws were enforced against both Papists and dissenters.⁴⁵⁹

Hence Challinor’s assertion that ‘[t]he Catholic issue certainly dominated the 1681 election in Cheshire’ would seem overstated.⁴⁶⁰ His argument is primarily based on a geographical analysis of voting patterns, which shows that support for Exclusion was concentrated in the areas adjoining the Catholic heartlands of Lancashire and Staffordshire: thus in the Macclesfield and Bucklow hundreds, both of which adjoin Lancashire, the Whig votes were respectively 95 and 82 per cent of the total, but they were only 13 per cent in Broxton.⁴⁶¹ But the south-eastern portion of Lancashire next to Bucklow and Macclesfield was the one area of that county where Catholicism was weak, and though Broxton did not adjoin an area of Catholic strength in Shropshire, it had its own internal Catholic citadels in Malpas and Tattenhall, and bordered Bunbury, Cheshire’s own Catholic heartland.⁴⁶² A rather more convincing explanation of this psephological pattern is that Macclesfield and Bucklow were the bailiwicks of the Booths (and of dissent), and Broxton that of Cholmondeley, who leant heavily upon his tenants to vote Tory.⁴⁶³

⁴⁵⁷ TNA, SP 29/415, f. 129

⁴⁵⁸ Challinor, ‘Restoration and Exclusion’, p. 384.

⁴⁵⁹ Harris, *Restoration*, p. 266.

⁴⁶⁰ Challinor, ‘Restoration and Exclusion’, p. 383.

⁴⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 384-385.

⁴⁶² Hilton, *Catholic Lancashire*, pp. 10-11, 13. See also chapter 2, sections 2.2.1 and 2.3.2 below.

⁴⁶³ Challinor, ‘Restoration and Exclusion’, pp. 376-377; CALS, EDV 1.36, fos 8-10 shows that sixteen of the thirty parishes which reported dissenting activity in the survey of 1669 were in the hundreds of Bucklow and Macclesfield.

Catholicism was, then, only one of a number of issues which were rolled together in the Exclusion Crisis, and at the local level by no means the predominant one, which perhaps goes some way towards explaining why it did not translate from words to deeds in raising recusancy presentments out of the doldrums of the previous two decades.

1.9 The Personal Rule and Tory reaction (1681-5)

Charles had grown increasingly frustrated with Whig demands for Exclusion in the three Parliaments of 1679-81, which he had dissolved at progressively shorter intervals, the Oxford Parliament of March 1681 lasting a mere week. Cushioned by healthy excise revenues, he was not to call a further Parliament, and sought to build support for his personal rule by a series of political interventions in the localities.⁴⁶⁴ In the shires, the Commissions of the Peace and the militia were remodelled to give a Tory predominance: in the towns, the same end was achieved by the re-issue of corporation charters. In Cheshire, the purge of the magistracy was far more thorough than in other counties: only two Whigs were still in office by December 1682, though the re-incorporation of Chester City did not complete until the opening days of the next reign.⁴⁶⁵

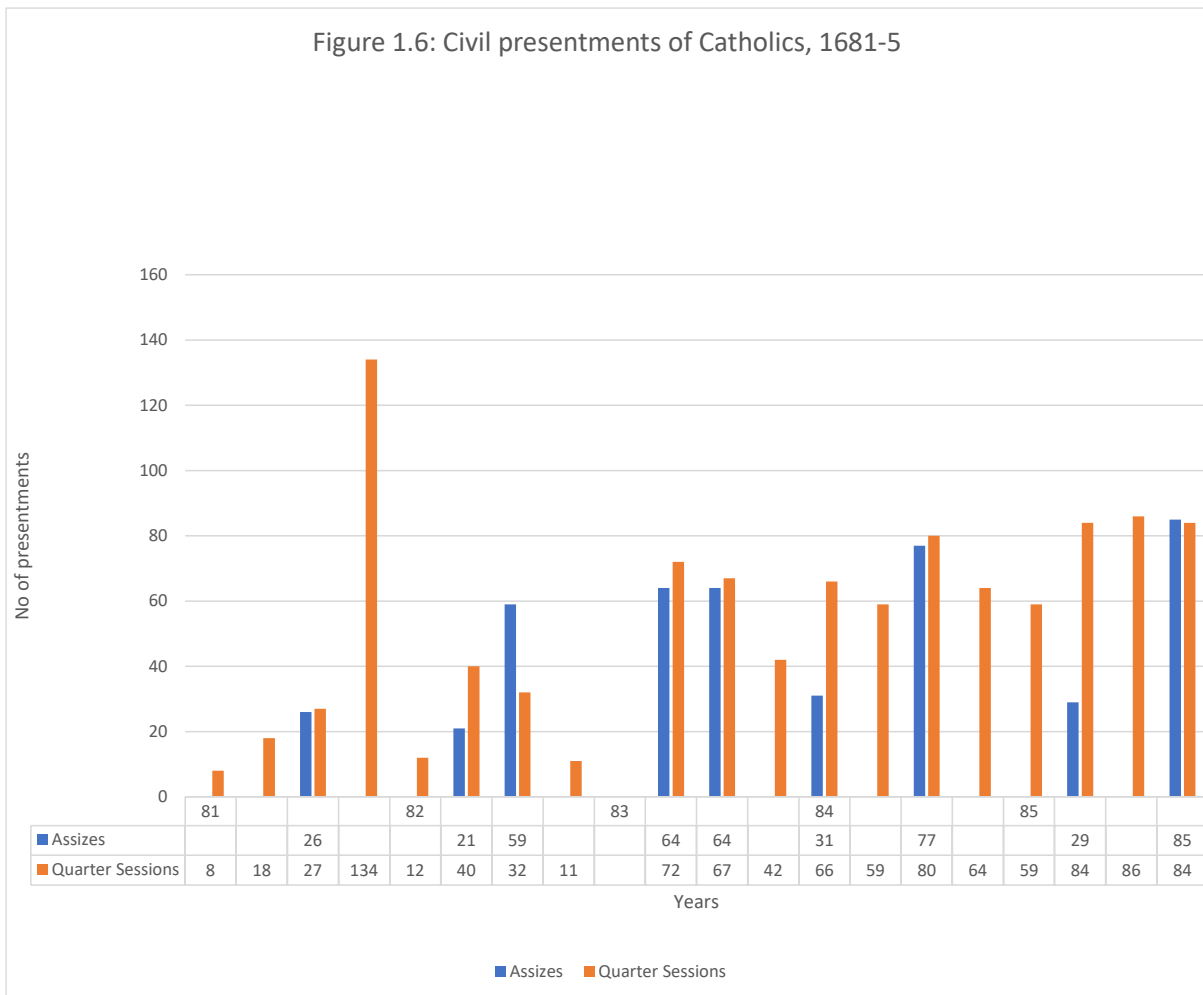
The historiography of these years focuses on the punitive treatment of dissenters, especially Quakers, by the dominant Tory regime. Miller noted a decline in presentments of Catholics in several counties after 1681, and more general studies of the period are expansive on the persecution of dissenters (also reflected in the Cheshire records) but say virtually nothing about Catholics.⁴⁶⁶ In Cheshire, however, these final years of the reign also saw a marked increase in proceedings against Catholics, as Figure 1.6 below shows.

⁴⁶⁴ Spurr, *Post-Reformation*, pp. 167,169.

⁴⁶⁵ Challinor, 'Cheshire politics', pp. 87-88, 129.

⁴⁶⁶ Miller, *Popery and Politics*, p. 191; Harris, *Restoration*, pp. 300-309; John Miller, *Cities divided: politics and religion in English provincial towns, 1660-1722* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 151-154. Grant Tapsell, *The Personal Rule of Charles II, 1681-85* (Woodbridge, 2007), pp. 64-91, pp. 65, 89 briefly touches on the subject, largely reprising the observations of Miller, *Popery and Politics*, ch. 9.

Figure 1.6: Civil presentments of Catholics, 1681-5



The relationship between the change in the political climate and the increase in presentment volumes is unclear, but a number of pertinent observations may be made. To start with specifics, the upsurges in October 1681 and April 1683 follow the purges of July 1681 and December 1682.⁴⁶⁷ The purges in Cheshire were more extreme than elsewhere, and thus may have triggered a more extreme reaction.⁴⁶⁸ The lull during 1682 may possibly be attributable to some initial resistance to the new policy: Challinor notes obstruction on the part both of George Booth, the protonotary for Cheshire, and a number of constables, the

⁴⁶⁷ Challinor, ‘Cheshire politics’, pp. 86-88.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid., pp. 87-88.

constable for the strongly Catholic township of Sutton Downes in Macclesfield being indicted on this count in September 1682.⁴⁶⁹

These specific instances, however, beg the broader question as to why a Tory regime in particular espoused this policy of persecution. Here it is relevant to note that the maintenance of the Anglican hegemony was central to the Tory agenda, and that this hegemony was seen as under threat from both dissent and Popery. As noted above, the Cheshire Tories' demands of February 1681 to their newly elected MPs included enforcement of the penal laws against both groups of delinquents.⁴⁷⁰ The same request was repeated in an address of the Grand Jury to the magistrates at Middlewich of January 1683, which opined that there was 'no [other] safe way of preserving the Government, both of church and state, in peace' and suggested that lists of such offenders be posted in every church.⁴⁷¹

Also relevant is a marked change in the pattern of presentments from October 1681 onwards. Hitherto Catholics had mostly been charged with recusancy, and were usually distinguished from dissenters in lists of presentments, but the norm became to present them all together, on a charge of absence from church for a period of weeks or months (normally the latter).⁴⁷² The reasons for this sudden variation in practice are unknown, but it would seem plausible that Popery and dissent were being seen holistically as one problem with one solution rather than as two, which is consistent with the Tory crown and altar policy.

Absence was a charge less vulnerable to challenge than was recusancy, requiring only proof of absence from the individual's parish church rather than from any church, which also may account for its increasing use in Cheshire from 1675 onwards.⁴⁷³ It was also one

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 97-98.

⁴⁷⁰ Harris, *Restoration*, p. 266.

⁴⁷¹ Challinor, 'Cheshire politics', p. 93.

⁴⁷² CALS, QJB 3/3, fos 266-285v and QJB 3/4, fos 232-243v, both passim.

⁴⁷³ NA, CHES 21/5, fos 153, 153v, 169, 169v, 200v, 201, 212v, 213; CALS, QJB 3/2, fos 252v, 253; *ibid.*, QJB 3/3, f. 234v onwards, passim. See also the sub-sections 'Recusants' and 'Absentees' of the section 'The evidence of Catholicism' in the chapter 'Introduction' above.

vulnerable to abuse. Williams observed a pattern in Wiltshire from 1675 onwards of recusants being presented for three weeks' absence, rather than one month's, and observed that this was a ploy of sympathetic constables and/or magistrates to reduce the offender's liability from £20 to 3/-: in some cases the original charges had been amended to that effect.⁴⁷⁴ The Cheshire records provide some limited evidence of presentments for three weeks' absence from 1680 onwards, and in 1682, noted above as a year of teething troubles for the revival of policing, some fifty of the eighty presentments at the Assize were for three weeks' absence, although in sixteen of these cases the individuals in question were also presented at the same sessions for absence of a month or more.⁴⁷⁵ In the following two years, however, the three weeks' charge was much less common – only twenty-two out of a total of 236 cases, suggesting that steps had been taken to close the loophole.⁴⁷⁶ The practice was also much less prevalent at the Quarter Sessions– only seventy four of 692 Quarter Sessions presentments over the period October 1681 to January 1684-5.⁴⁷⁷

Some progress was made during these years in tightening upon on the collection of recusancy fines, with the appointment of a team of regional receivers, but it seems to have been very limited in its scope.⁴⁷⁸ Although they are lengthy entries for Cheshire in each of the four Recusant Rolls for the years 1681-4, fines were collected in respect of only six of more than 160 individuals, and in all cases but one from the tenants of their sequestered lands.⁴⁷⁹ All of the unlucky six, with the exception of the yeoman John Wilson, were from prominent gentry families.

In the light of the well-attested evidence of the persecution of dissenters during this period, the relative severity with which Catholics were treated merits consideration. Figure

⁴⁷⁴ Williams, *Wiltshire*, pp. 85-86.

⁴⁷⁵ CALS, QJB 3/3, f. 258; NA, CHES 21/5, fos 212v and 218-228, passim.

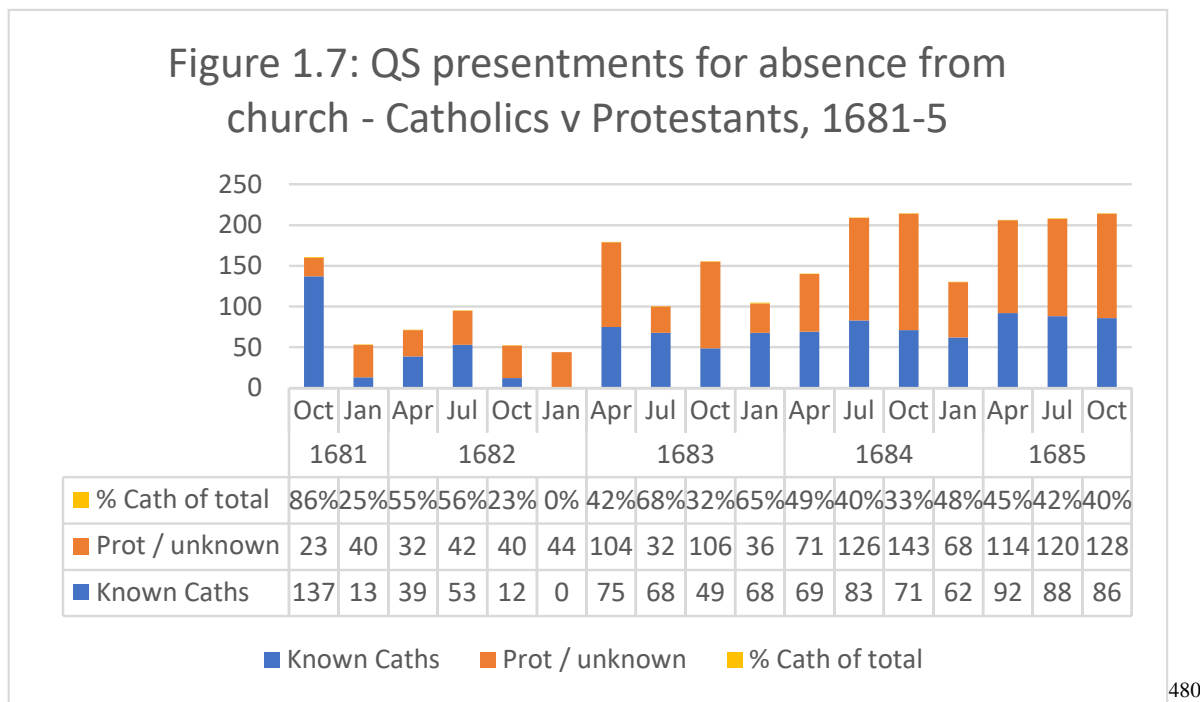
⁴⁷⁶ NA, CHES 21/5, fos 231-259, passim.

⁴⁷⁷ CALS, QJB 3/3, fos 266-285v, passim and QJB 3/4, fos 232v-244, passim.

⁴⁷⁸ Miller, *Popery and Politics*, p. 193.

⁴⁷⁹ NA, E377/76-79.

1.7 shows the volumes of Quarter Sessions presentees for absence from the two groups over this period.



480

In raw numerical terms, Catholics accounted for slightly less than half of presentees, but if cognisance is taken of their much smaller numbers in the general population, their treatment would seem to have been more severe.⁴⁸¹ Tapsell’s one line summary of Miller (‘Catholics were probably less molested than they had been for decades’) would seem somewhat inapplicable to Cheshire.⁴⁸² It should be remembered that Exclusion remained very much a live, if ultimately doomed issue during the personal rule, and Catholics could be collateral casualties of reprisals against Whig intrigues. In the wake of the Rye House Plot of 1683, in which leading Cheshire Whigs such as Booth were again implicated, the search for arms was

⁴⁸⁰ Known Catholics here are those who are recorded as such in other sources, with the exception of a small minority of those from Eastham parish whose familial names or residence on the Stanley and Poole estates are suggestive of Catholicism - only one case of a non-Catholic with these characteristics has been found. The figures shown have been deduplicated from the number of presentment charges recorded in the QS books to the number of individuals listed (many were presented on multiple charges at a single session), and thus are considerably lower than the figures cited in Challinor, *Cheshire politics*, p. 246.

⁴⁸¹ Spurr, *Post-Reformation*, p. 24 estimates that in the early seventeenth century the Catholic population was no more than 2 per cent, and Bossy, *Community*, p. 194 that it did not grow in the second half of the century. In contrast Spurr, *Post-Reformation*, estimates the dissenter population at between 4 and 10 per cent.

⁴⁸² Tapsell, *Personal Rule*, p. 65.

not limited to the properties of the twenty-six most prominent of them, as directed, but extended to the Catholic gentry of Wirral – Massey, Poole and Stanley.⁴⁸³

One final noteworthy feature of the latter part of the reign is a sharp decline in the numbers of Catholics presented at ruridecanal visitations. It is observable from 1675 onwards, and particularly marked after the Popish Plot, as Table 1.10 below illustrates. The totals listed are those from the twelve parishes which made the largest presentments of Catholics at visitations after 1660, and which collectively account for over 80 per cent (1,042 of 1,299) of the Catholics presented from the county.⁴⁸⁴

Total presentees	126	114	79	53	75	57	49	26	58	69	86	94	37	37	13	27	42
No parishes presenting	9	7	9	5	6	4	5	4	6	8	7	10	8	9	6	6	6
Parish average	14	16	9	11	13	14	10	7	10	9	12	9	5	4	2	5	7

Whilst a small number of these parishes notified the presence of Catholics but did not detail them (understandably when biannual visitations encountered no changes), and the increasing incapacity of bishop Pearson from 1678 onwards was possibly a contributory factor,⁴⁸⁵ the most striking feature of this analysis is one of non-presentment, either a return of ‘Nil,’ or more commonly the lack of any entries relating to Catholic recusancy or absence. All twelve parishes have such gaps in their records: Great Budworth, for example, presented no Catholics at all over the crisis years 1678 to 1681, and most significantly Bunbury, which had the county’s largest concentration of them, only in the last of these four years. The Massey bailiwick of Burton repeatedly submitted returns of ‘Nil’ at the last six visitations shown. The recurring entries for the same names either side of these gaps strongly suggest that the deliberate suppression of presentments by churchwardens became rife as the campaign

⁴⁸³ Challinor, ‘Cheshire politics’, pp. 96, 117-118.

⁴⁸⁴ Malpas, Tattenhall (Broxton hundred), Great Budworth (Bucklow), Bunbury, Little Budworth (Eddisbury), Acton, Nantwich (Nantwich), Macclesfield (Macclesfield), Astbury (Northwich), Burton, Eastham, Neston (Wirral).

⁴⁸⁵ Lander and Thacker, ‘Diocese of Chester’, p. 44 notes that Pearson did not conduct a triennial visitation after 1677, and by 1682 was unfit to travel anywhere.

against popery intensified.⁴⁸⁶ Such behaviour might be viewed as a popular expression of the ‘anti-anti-popery’ which Scott Sowerby has shown as influential in Restoration England.⁴⁸⁷

This lax policing of conformity by the rural deans does not appear to be part of a more generalised pattern. Archbishop Dolben’s primary visitation of the York province in 1684 identified 121 Catholics in the county.⁴⁸⁸ But it does mark the end of ecclesiastical campaigns against recusancy in the diocese. Two further visitations in the first half of James’s reign also yielded low numbers of Catholics, and Pearson’s successor, Thomas Cartwright (1686-9), did not conduct a visitation of his see. By the time the next bishop, Nicholas Stratford, arrived in 1690, the Revolution settlement had rendered any action to enforce church attendance impossible.

During the Tory hegemony of Charles’s final years there was, for the only time in the reign, a substantial and sustained attempt to police Catholicism, but that was conducted with probably only half the efficiency achieved in the first half of the century. The evident suppression of presentments to visitations during the last decade of the reign, as well as the lackadaisical returns of head constables, suggest that persecution of religious delinquency was becoming increasingly distasteful at grass roots level.

⁴⁸⁶ CALS, EDV 1.46, fos. 21, 43 and EDV 1.59, fos. 19, 37 show that all four presentees from Great Budworth at the first visitation of 1682 had been among the seven reported in spring 1675, as had seventeen of the twenty-six from Bunbury.

⁴⁸⁷ Scott Sowerby, ‘Opposition to Anti-Popery in Restoration England’, *JBS* 51 (2012), pp. 26-49.

⁴⁸⁸ BIY, V.1684-5, CB.2, fos 224-325v, *passim*.

1.10 Catholic rule (1685-88)

Charles II's sudden and untimely death in February 1685 saw the accession of the only Catholic monarch since Mary Tudor, and one whose reign was even more brief. Within less than four years James II's violations of the law in pursuit of Catholicising policies had united the political nation against him and prompted a request for the intervention of William, Prince of Orange, whose invasion drove the isolated King into French exile. Miller observes two principal phases in James's approach to the promotion of Catholicism – an attempt during 1685-6 to secure the compliance of the dominant Tory-Anglican faction whose opposition to Exclusion had secured his succession, followed by the courting of nonconformist support for toleration in the second half of the reign.⁴⁸⁹ As Harris has more recently pointed out, however, the transition in policy was a more gradual one, elements of both approaches being detectable throughout 1686-7.⁴⁹⁰

The focus of the following sub-section is to examine to what extent Cheshire's Catholics were impacted by, and responded to, this brief window of opportunity under Catholic rule, especially since the bishop during the latter half of the reign, Thomas Cartwright, was the principal supporter of James's initiatives on the episcopal bench. Its findings are consistent with Miller's observations that the response of the Catholic community generally was rather muted, for fear that any triumphalism might provoke severe retaliation when the middle-aged King was eventually succeeded by his Protestant daughter Mary, and that a similar long-term logic explains the absence of opposition from the Protestant majority for much of the reign.⁴⁹¹

⁴⁸⁹ Miller, *Popery and Politics*, chs. 10 and 11, esp. p. 200.

⁴⁹⁰ Tim Harris, *Revolution: The Great Crisis of the British Monarchy, 1685-1720* (London, 2006), p. 206.

⁴⁹¹ Miller, *Popery and Politics*, pp. 199, 206.

Throughout 1685 the status quo of the personal rule remained unchanged, and if anything was reinforced, in Cheshire. Two days before Charles's death a new charter for the city of Chester received the Great Seal, bringing to fruition the *quo warranto* of July 1683 and inaugurating a purge of the Whigs from the city council, with the result that the Tories Sir Thomas Grosvenor and Colonel Robert Werden were returned unopposed at the parliamentary election in March.⁴⁹² Similarly in the county, the Tories Thomas Cholmondeley and Sir Philip Egerton, who had been ousted as MPs during the Exclusion Crisis, were elected again, albeit in the face of Whig opposition which alleged obstruction of polling by the Tory sheriff.⁴⁹³ Though the Earl of Macclesfield and Lord Brandon appear to have participated in Monmouth's rebellion that summer, there is no firm evidence of support for him from other of the county's Whig faction: Roger Whitley observed that 'no considerable people will join with him' because his success would 'entail a perpetual war and armies upon us.'⁴⁹⁴

The prosecution of religious delinquents, both Catholic and Protestant, not only continued but intensified throughout the year, with over eighty presentments at each of the Quarter Sessions of April, July and October.⁴⁹⁵ Although from May onwards James began to stay proceedings against those who could certify their family's loyalism during the Civil War, this provision does not appear to have been exploited by eligible Cheshire gentry: the baronets Poole and Stanley, together with Richard Massey were presented on each of the three occasions.⁴⁹⁶ The presentments of these elite figures, however, exemplify a more general pattern of harassment of individuals previously targeted, rather than the more

⁴⁹² Challinor, 'Cheshire politics', pp. 126, 129-131.

⁴⁹³ John Morrill, 'Parliamentary Representation' in Brian Harris (ed.), VCH II, pp. 98-166, p. 118.

⁴⁹⁴ Challinor, 'Cheshire politics', pp. 136-137; Bodl. Lib., *The Diary of Roger Whitley*, quoted in Challinor, 'Cheshire politics', p. 136.

⁴⁹⁵ CALS, QJB3/4, fos. 244-252. Those individuals classified as Catholics were recorded as such on at least one other occasion.

⁴⁹⁶ Miller, *Popery and Politics*, p. 204; CALS, QJB 3/4, fos. 246, 246v, 247v, 250v.

thorough identification of further Catholics. The total of 308 known Catholics presented over the four sessions from January 1684-5 onwards was made up of only 105 names, an average of 2.95 presentments per head, compared to 2.12 in 1683.⁴⁹⁷

The first signs of James's policy of Catholicisation and of the opposition it was to provoke, however, surfaced during the parliamentary session of November 1685. Following Monmouth's rebellion James had failed to disband his expanded army, which contained a high proportion of Catholic officers (thereby contravening the Test Act), and also requested funding for its maintenance, which, Harris notes, 'provoked a furore in the predominantly Tory parliament'.⁴⁹⁸ Representative of this were two Cheshire gentlemen who represented the nearby Lancashire borough of Newton, Francis Cholmondeley of Vale Royal, who regarded the Test as 'a great guard and security to our church' and Thomas Legh of Lyme, who feared that from 'such a breach in the mounds of our church a spring-tide of Popery would have raged.' James's response exacerbated the situation: 'something of anger', Legh noted, 'was expressed when the words "You are prorogued" came out.'⁴⁹⁹

This evidence of the prevailing wind may well explain the drastic fall in the numbers of both Catholics (a mere ten) and Protestants presented for absence at the next Quarter Sessions in January 1685-6. On 24 February James issued a warrant 'staying all proceedings against loyal recusants until his pleasure "be further known"'.⁵⁰⁰ Thus although the same rump of Catholics were listed in the Quarter Sessions Files for the remaining sessions of 1686, they do not appear as presentees in the Quarter Sessions Books.⁵⁰¹ The following month he issued a general pardon for absence and attendance at unlawful conventicles - the first sign of his movement away from a Tory-Anglican power base.⁵⁰²

⁴⁹⁷ CALS, QJB3/3, fos. 277-285v and QJB 3/4, fos. 241v-252.

⁴⁹⁸ Harris, *Revolution*, p. 95.

⁴⁹⁹ JRL, Legh of Lyme MSS, quoted in Challinor, 'Cheshire politics', pp. 140-141.

⁵⁰⁰ Harris, *Revolution*, p. 197.

⁵⁰¹ CALS, QJF 114/1, fos 19, 20; *ibid.*, QJF 114/2, fos 4, 10; *ibid.*, QJF114/3.

⁵⁰² Harris, *Revolution*, p. 206.

Other than these suspensions of the penal laws, however, there were no major changes with popular repercussions during 1686, though via the collusive *Godden v Hales* case in June James sought to establish legal precedent for his intrusion of Catholics into the army, thus paving the way for the extension of this practice to other public offices the following year.⁵⁰³ The most significant example of this was the remodelling of the lieutenancies and Commissions of Peace. In October 1686 he set up a committee of the Privy Council, containing four Catholic peers, to review the Commissions with a view to the appointment of suitable Catholics.⁵⁰⁴ Cheshire was not included in the initial batch of new commissions issued the following February, but five Catholics were listed in the revised commission of August 1687: Lord Gerard of Gerards Bromley, William Massey, George Oldfield of Somerford, Sir James Poole and Sir Rowland Stanley.⁵⁰⁵

In August 1686, however, James had appointed the dean of Ripon, Thomas Cartwright, to succeed Bishop Pearson, who had died earlier that year. This encountered the great displeasure of the episcopate in general, Archbishop Dolben of York and several other bishops writing a letter objecting to the appointment of ‘the bold dean of Ripon’ to the Archbishop of Canterbury, William Sancroft.⁵⁰⁶ Over the previous decade Cartwright had published several sermons advertising his ultra-absolutist views, and Mullett speculates that the appointment, like that of the similarly minded John Arderne to the deanery of Chester in 1682, may have been to counterbalance the county’s fractious Whig faction.⁵⁰⁷

During his short episcopate Cartwright proved himself as James’s staunchest supporter from the bench of bishops, most notably during his sojourn in London in the spring

⁵⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp. 192-195.

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

⁵⁰⁵ NA, PC 2/71, quoted in Challinor, ‘Cheshire politics’, p. 144. Miller, *Popery and Politics*, p. 270 gives a figure of three appointments, presumably the recidivist recusants Massey, Poole and Stanley, but Anstruther, *Seminary Priests*, III, p. 98 records a priest among Gerard’s household in 1692, and CALS, QJB 3/3, fos. 249v, 266v Oldfield’s presentment for recusancy in January 1678-9 and for absence from church in October 1681. His wife, Mary, was repeated presented for recusancy during the 1670s.

⁵⁰⁶ Bodl. Lib., Tanner MS, cited in Lander and Thacker, ‘Diocese of Chester’, p. 44.

⁵⁰⁷ Michael Mullett, ‘Cartwright, Thomas (1634–1689)’, *ODNB* (online edition, 2004), accessed 31 July 2021.

and summer of 1687. He arrived in the capital on 7 April, just three days after James's most egregious act to date, the proclamation of the first Declaration of Indulgence, removing civil penalties from Catholics and dissenters, and for the first week of his stay was in the royal presence daily.⁵⁰⁸ The purpose of these meetings is not known, but it seems reasonable to assume from their frequency that the Declaration loomed large on the agenda. Later that month he attended meetings with Lord President Sunderland and Lord Chancellor Jeffreys and a small group of bishops of loyalist credentials to orchestrate congratulatory addresses to the Declaration, delivering his own address and those of other ecclesiastics to the King before leaving London in July.⁵⁰⁹ He attended meetings of the Ecclesiastical Commission which James had created the previous year to handle Anglican resistance to his religious policy from the universities, and when he returned to the capital in October James appointed him to the Ecclesiastical Commission and charged him with conducting a visitation to resolve its most controversial case, that of Magdalen College Oxford, which resulted in the deprivation of the majority of the fellows and their replacement with Catholics.⁵¹⁰ He met on several occasions with Fr Edward Petre, the King's confessor and a Privy Councillor, and John Leyburn, who the previous year had been created vicar-apostolic for England and Wales, the country's first Catholic bishop for over half a century, and who escorted Cartwright to the consecration of the papal nuncio in St James's Chapel.⁵¹¹ Finally, when a second Declaration of Indulgence was issued in April 1688, Chester was the only diocese to show any measure of compliance with the order to read it in church on two Sundays.⁵¹²

In his own diocese Cartwright's efforts for the royal cause were less apparent, though his cordiality towards Catholics is evident from his diary, which records no less than twenty-

⁵⁰⁸ Joseph Hunter (ed.), *The Diary of Thomas Cartwright, Bishop of Chester*, Camden Society (1843), pp. 43-46.

⁵⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 47-48, 50, 57, 61, 66.

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 48, 50, 83-84, 86-93.

⁵¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 44, 45-49, 51-55, 60-62, 64.

⁵¹² Harris, *Revolution*, p. 261.

eight social meetings with one or more of the Wirral Catholic gentry Massey, Poole and Stanley between his arrival in Chester in December 1686 and his departure for London four months later.⁵¹³ At some of these meetings the gentry were accompanied by their household chaplains, one of whom is recorded as meeting with him separately.⁵¹⁴ It seems likely that he was instrumental in securing the post of ‘customer of Chester’ (head of the city’s customs) for the son of William Molyneux, a prominent Catholic of south-west Lancashire, and he also lobbied Fr Petre on behalf of a kinsman of Sir Rowland Stanley.⁵¹⁵ Cartwright seems, however, to have compartmentalised his episcopal function from his roles as a royal servant and as a member of the county community: Mullett describes him as ‘a conscientious diocesan’ and Thacker notes that he attended daily prayers in the cathedral, confirmed extensively and presided over the consistory with regularity.⁵¹⁶ His behaviour after following his royal master into exile in December 1688 is consistent with this: at St. Germain he provided Anglican liturgy for non-Catholic Jacobites, which was a significant concession on the King’s part; and in Dublin in March 1689 he resisted efforts to convert him to Catholicism on his death bed.⁵¹⁷ He was, no doubt, an absolutist first, but an Anglican a close second.

Royal attempts to promote Catholic practice in Cheshire achieved limited success.

On 24 February 1686-7 James informed Sir Peter Shakerley, the Governor of Chester, that he had ‘thought fit to send Peter Gooden to Chester to say divine service for our Roman Catholic

⁵¹³ Hunter, *Cartwright Diary*, pp. 15, 17, 22, 23, 25, 27, 29-31, 33, 35, 38-40.

⁵¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 23, 26-28, 39. The priests were Babthorpe, Osbeston alias Kemp, and Latham. Anstruther, *Seminary Priests*, III, p. 130 records a Christopher Latham, who joined the English Mission in 1680 and was in Lancashire in 1697, and a gentleman named William Lathom is regularly presented from Puddington during the 1670s, but no external references have been found for the other two names. *Cartwright Diary*, pp. 28, 39 also records Babthorpe bringing ‘a paper of his thoughts on the question I put to him when he was with me’ and dining with Cartwright and other gentry independently of his master.

⁵¹⁵ Miller, *Popery and Politics*, pp. 221-222 notes Molyneux’s dismissal from this post after the Glorious Revolution. Hunter, *Cartwright Diary*, pp. 53, 66 record Lord Molyneux’s son ‘taking his leave’ of Cartwright on 7 May, and a ‘Mr. Molyneux’ being one of a number of men the bishop recommended to the King at Windsor on 10 July. See *ibid.*, p. 60 for Cartwright’s lobbying of Petre.

⁵¹⁶ Mullett, ‘Thomas Cartwright’; Lander and Thacker, ‘Diocese of Chester’, p. 45.

⁵¹⁷ Mullett, ‘Thomas Cartwright’.

subjects there and in the places adjacent’, and instructed him ‘that a convenient place be appointed for him to officiate in’.⁵¹⁸ As in other garrison towns, the provision made appears to have been minimal, for on his progress of the west midlands in August of that year, the King worshipped in the Shire Hall and Castle, and commanded Cartwright ‘to enquire out a chapel in the city’.⁵¹⁹ The worship there was probably also infrequent, since Gooden resided in a convent near Lancaster, which would have entailed an extensive missionary circuit.⁵²⁰ Equally, though Leyburn made a tour of eleven counties of the north and midlands, confirming at sixty-one locations over 20,000 Catholics who had been deprived of episcopal ministrations for over half a century, and *en route* stayed two nights with Cartwright in his palace and at Sir Thomas Grosvenor’s house in nearby Eaton, his register shows no confirmations taking place in Cheshire.⁵²¹

The remodelling of the Peace Commission was equally unsuccessful: Poole and Stanley attended Quarter Sessions only once each, and the other three J.P.s not at all.⁵²² The inclusion of Oldfield, a minor gentleman whose family had never held office previously, is suggestive of the difficulty the regime was having in identifying suitable candidates. It is thus unsurprising that Cheshire was not included in the second remodelling of late 1687, although the probable reason for this was the lack of a county lieutenant to conduct the preliminary ‘Three Questions’ exercise: the Earl of Derby had been dismissed in the summer of 1687 and was not replaced by the Catholic Marquis of Powis until February 1688. Powis, who was not a stakeholder in the county, is not known to have visited it.⁵²³

⁵¹⁸ TNA, SP 44/57, f. 158; Anstruther, *Seminary Priests*, III, p. 79 records that Gooden was a Catholic priest from near Lancaster.

⁵¹⁹ Hunter, *Cartwright Diary*, pp. 74-75.

⁵²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 71; Miller, *Popery and Politics*, pp. 243-244.

⁵²¹ Hunter, *Cartwright Diary*, pp. 80-82; J. A. Hilton, A. J. Mitchinson, B. Murray and P. Wells (eds), *Bishop Leyburn’s Confirmation of Register of 1687* (Wigan, 1997), pp. 303-306 shows that eighteen of these confirmations, involving over 10,000 confirmands, took place in the Lancashire portion of Cartwright’s diocese.

⁵²² Challinor, ‘Cheshire politics’, p. 144n.

⁵²³ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

When James visited Chester in August 1687 in the course of his progress of the west midlands (the first time a monarch had set foot in the county in peacetime since 1618), the opposition of the county community was apparent. Ormerod records that he ‘closetted several gentlemen both of the city and county, in order to prevail upon them to approve of the repeal of the penal laws and test-act, but met with little encouragement in that affair.’⁵²⁴ Sir Thomas Grosvenor rejected his inducement of a peerage, and Governor Shakerley’s royal reprimand for his failure to arrange a congratulatory address for the Declaration suggests that he was similarly unsupportive.⁵²⁵ Amongst the Cheshire Whigs, only Lord Brandon, son of the Earl of Macclesfield, and the Recorder of Chester Sir William Williams, both of them *politiques* who had fiercely opposed James but had become indebted to him for earlier acts of clemency, promoted his policy.⁵²⁶ These two cases of leniency would seem particularly striking examples of the King’s mid-reign change of policy towards the Whigs and dissent.

There is unfortunately no direct evidence of the local response to the pivotal events of June 1688 – the birth of a royal heir and the trial and acquittal of the Seven Bishops – which triggered the request for Orange’s intervention, though Challinor speculates that the fall in the number of Tory magistrates attending Quarter Sessions thereafter may be indicative of hardening opposition.⁵²⁷ In Chester, following the issue of a further charter in September, which purged a number of leading Tories from office, the remainder allied with the reinstated Whigs and ‘discouraged of petitioning for the old charter’.⁵²⁸ Cross-party opposition to the regime reached a critical point the following month, after Derby’s restoration to the

⁵²⁴ Ormerod, *Cheshire*, I, p. 211.

⁵²⁵ *Ibid.*, III, p. 451; Hunter, *Cartwright Diary*, p. 75.

⁵²⁶ Challinor, ‘Cheshire politics’, pp. 149-150. Brandon had been sentenced to death for his participation in Monmouth’s rebellion but kept as a prisoner in the Tower. After his pardon in August 1687 he promoted James’s campaign for repeal of the penal laws and Test Act. The former Exclusionist Williams incurred a £10,000 fine for licensing a libel against the regime, but through the intercession of the Earl of Rochester was rehabilitated, knighted and appointed Solicitor General, in which capacity he prosecuted the Seven Bishops.

⁵²⁷ Challinor, ‘Cheshire politics’, p. 147.

⁵²⁸ *Whitley Diary*, quoted in Challinor, ‘Cheshire politics’, p. 148.

lieutenancy as part of James's reversal of policy.⁵²⁹ One of the Earl's first acts was to meet with Delamere and plan a joint strategy for supporting William, who was by then (November 1) in transit from the Netherlands. When Delamere assembled his army of friends and tenants on Bowdon Downs on 16 November, at least three prominent Tories were present.⁵³⁰

The invasion prompted a spate of anti-Catholic rioting nationwide, particularly in urban areas, which was exacerbated in December by the break-up of James's army and the return of Irish soldiers to their homeland.⁵³¹ In Chester, somewhat paradoxically given its importance as a port for Ireland, disturbances came rather from the recruiting of an army. In September James had charged William Molyneux, the Catholic Lord-Lieutenant of Lancashire, to raise a regiment for his field army, which was to be armed out of the garrison at Chester.⁵³² By mid-November the regiment, most of them untrained Lancashire Catholics, had assembled, and under the command of Colonel Henry Gage marched towards Chester, unrestrained by Derby, who appears to have been preoccupied with the safety of his family and remained on his estate at Knowsley, near Liverpool.⁵³³ It would seem that passions were already running high in the city, for on 21 November Governor Shakerley threatened 'to send the great Shott and ye Bombs, and Currasses against [the citizens]' to keep them loyal to the Crown.⁵³⁴ Thus when Gage's recruits arrived in Chester on the night of 27 November, preceded by rumours that 'they threatened in several places [...] to burn some houses in this country', there was 'a sudden cry t[ha]t the Papists were come to murder them [...] many of the citizens fell to arms [...] the streets full of rabble and very great disorder'.⁵³⁵ No doubt Whitley's account contains more than an element of truth, but the incident was a storm in a

⁵²⁹ TNA, SP 44/165, f. 119.

⁵³⁰ Challinor, 'Cheshire politics', pp. 152-154. The Tory attendees were Lord Cholmondeley, John Egerton of Oulton and Thomas Warburton of Winnington.

⁵³¹ Harris, *Revolution*, pp. 290-303; Miller, *Popery and Politics*, pp. 259-261.

⁵³² TNA, SP 44/56, f. 443; idem, SP 44/165, f. 105.

⁵³³ Challinor, 'Cheshire politics', pp. 154-156.

⁵³⁴ BL, Add. MS, 38695, f. 86.

⁵³⁵ *Whitley Diary* and BL Add. MS 36913 f. 300, quoted in Challinor, 'Cheshire politics', p. 156.

tea cup: the troops were unarmed, and apparently so demoralised that they allowed children to take the contents of their pockets.⁵³⁶

James's reign was too brief to have any significant impact on Cheshire's Catholics beyond the short-term relaxation in the penal laws. Other innovations came late in the reign and were not exploited: the apparent apathy of the Catholic gentry to their appointments to the magistracy is consistent with the national picture of an underwhelming response to the first Declaration of Indulgence, which attracted a total of only two congratulatory addresses nationwide delivered in the name of English Catholics.⁵³⁷ In the longer term, however, James's policy had significance, albeit unintended, in uniting the political nation against him and thence making some concession of the toleration demanded by the Whigs and dissenters inevitable. This had collateral consequences for the Catholic community, as the following section will demonstrate.

After the Revolution (1689 - 1723)

Although Catholicism was centre stage in the politics of the Restoration era, it has at most a walk-on part in general histories of the period after the Glorious Revolution. According to Geoffrey Holmes:

As long as the laws excluding Catholics both from office and from Parliament and subjecting them to double taxes were enforced, few Englishmen cared, except at odd moments of crisis, that the rest of the battery of anti-Recusant acts on the statute book were tacitly ignored.⁵³⁸

Similarly, Steve Pincus suggests that the lot of Catholics improved under a Whig regime: 'the ideological commitments of the Williamite episcopate profoundly changed the nature of the

⁵³⁶ Miller, *Cities divided*, p. 240.

⁵³⁷ Harris, *Revolution*, pp. 216-217.

⁵³⁸ Geoffrey Holmes, *Religion and Party in late Stuart England* (London, 1975), p. 9.

Catholic experience.⁵³⁹ The limited specialist studies concur: Bossy, in a collection of articles to commemorate the tercentenary of the Revolution, observes that ‘the Toleration Act effectively abolished the offence of recusancy, by making church attendance unenforceable’, whereas Jonathan Israel, in the same volume, notes that William III’s alliances with the Emperor and other Catholic powers against Louis XIV obliged him to extend *de facto* toleration to Catholics.⁵⁴⁰

Yet Colin Haydon’s demonstration of the persistence of anti-Catholicism through the eighteenth century suggests that this picture may require some qualification in detail.⁵⁴¹ Firstly and perhaps most importantly, the presence of the King across the water ensured that Jacobitism was a significant factor in British politics for over half a century after 1688.⁵⁴² It was, admittedly, a cross-confessional cause, but one attracted a disproportionate degree of Catholic support: Monod estimates that 75 per cent of the prisoners taken at the battle of Preston which ended the ’15 rebellion were Catholics.⁵⁴³ What were the repercussions of Jacobitism on the Catholic community? Secondly, during William’s reign the ‘battery’ of anti-Catholic legislation was augmented with numerous additional measures, some of them a re-enactment of Elizabethan measures, and equally draconian.⁵⁴⁴ How frequent were Holmes’s ‘odd moments of crisis’ when these statutes were exercised, and with what degree of effectiveness? Lastly, previous sections of this chapter have shown that the effectiveness of financial penalties for recusancy was limited. Was the double imposition of the Land Tax on Catholics and non-jurors any more successful in this regard? This final section of the chronological analysis will explore the light the Cheshire records throw on these three questions.

⁵³⁹ Steve Pincus, *1688: The First Modern Revolution* (Yale, 2009), p. 433.

⁵⁴⁰ John Bossy, ‘English Catholics after 1688’ in Ole Peter Grell, Jonathan Israel and Nicholas Tyacke (eds), *From Persecution to Toleration: The Glorious Revolution and Religion in England* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 369-388, p. 329; Jonathan Israel, ‘William III and Toleration’, in *ibid.*, pp. 129-170, p. 129.

⁵⁴¹ Haydon, *Anti-Catholicism*, esp. pp. 7-8.

⁵⁴² Glickman, *Catholic Community*, p. 7.

⁵⁴³ Paul Monod, *Jacobitism and the English people, 1688-1788* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 322.

⁵⁴⁴ Allan Mitchinson (ed.), *The Return of the Papists for the Diocese of Chester, 1705* (Wigan, 1986), p. vii provides a concise summary of this legislation.

Tensions after the events of November and December 1688 persisted rather longer than those surrounding the Popish Plot a decade earlier, as a result of James's presence in Ireland with French troops from March 1688-9 onwards. Within days of James's landing at Kinsale the Earl of Shrewsbury, the Secretary of State for the North, instructed the mayors of several west coast ports to apprehend 'all such Irish papists as shall be found making their escapes to Ireland', and in June Brandon, who had once more transferred his dynastic allegiance and been rewarded with the lieutenancy of Lancashire, informed Shrewsbury that to defend the north-west against invasion 'I can raise 20,000 men at a short warning, and I hope in a little time to have 10,000 of them well armed.'⁵⁴⁵ Lying as it did on a major route for forces to and from Ireland, Chester was in the thick of these tensions. Thomas Tobin, a correspondent of Lady Throckmorton, informed her in June 1689 that he and other papists in an army assembled there had been stripped, brought before the Mayor, turned out of the city and assaulted by a mob.⁵⁴⁶

Writing again to Shrewsbury in 1690 to inform him of further precautions taken against 'the present design of invasion' Brandon noted that '[a]ll the young gentlemen amongst the papists have absented themselves: [...] I fear that this design is laid so deep that all the care and conduct imaginable will not prevent a great deal of mischief'.⁵⁴⁷ As Glickman observes, in the aftermath of December 1688 activists within the Catholic community opted for the Stuarts by either exile or rebellion: they 'had either left the shores, or had been made into subversives'.⁵⁴⁸ Although the expatriate community at St Germain was considerable, comprising some 220 families by 1690, it originated mainly from the south and midlands: none of the thirty-six recorded in a list of 1689 hailed from Cheshire, and recusancy presentments

⁵⁴⁵ TNA, SP 44/97, f. 45 and SP 32/1, f. 199.

⁵⁴⁶ TNA, SP 32/1, f. 156.

⁵⁴⁷ TNA, CSPD William and Mary, 1, p. 151.

⁵⁴⁸ Glickman, *Catholic Community*, p. 25.

of the early 1690s indicate that the county's leading Catholics elected to stay put.⁵⁴⁹ The relative newcomers to the county Gerard and Bellasis, who had kept a low profile during the Restoration period, do not feature in other sources, and probably remained quiescent, but there is evidence to suggest that the Wirral gentry – William Massey, Sir James Poole and possibly Sir Rowland Stanley - actively embraced the Jacobite cause during the early 1690s.⁵⁵⁰ All three had been officers in Gage's army of Lancashire volunteers which descended upon Chester in November 1688.⁵⁵¹

In March 1690 Shrewsbury instructed Sir John Morgan, the Governor of Chester, to imprison Poole on a charge on a charge of high treason and seize his papers.⁵⁵² Shrewsbury's letter does not state the particulars of the offence, but it would seem likely that it relates to a consignment of arms sent to him from London. Poole had made repeated enquiries in Chester the previous December about a parcel from the capital, which were reported to the authorities by a Chester mercer. The parcel was impounded on arrival and found to contain six pistols and bullet moulds, two dozen flints and a pair of jack boots.⁵⁵³ Thereafter Poole seems to have more circumspect. In July 1694, when seven Lancashire gentry (plus Stanley) were arrested in response to allegations of a conspiracy with the French to assassinate William and restore James, a search of his house yielded nothing incriminating.⁵⁵⁴ After the Assassination Plot of February 1695-6, however, he went to ground, as did many other prominent Jacobites, which is suggestive of his ongoing involvement in the cause.⁵⁵⁵

Morgan's letter of 1690 informing Shrewsbury of Poole's arrest also noted that Massey had recently purchased a number of horses, 'some of them of considerable value', and two

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 23, 53; TNA, CSPD William and Mary, 1, pp. 375-6; CALS, QSF 120/3, fos 24, 25 and 122/4, f. 20d.

⁵⁵⁰ See chapter 2 below for the history of the Gerard and Bellasis families.

⁵⁵¹ Challinor, 'Cheshire politics', p. 150.

⁵⁵² TNA, SP 44/97, f. 297.

⁵⁵³ CALS, DAR/G/42, Wright to Crewe, 12 December 1689.

⁵⁵⁴ TNA, SP32/5, f. 213; Geoff Baker, 'Northern Catholics and the Manchester Jacobite Trials of 1694: "A Refined Piece of Villainy"?'', *NH* 50 (2013), pp. 257-271, p. 257.

⁵⁵⁵ CALS, DCH/X/9B, 13 March 1695-6.

months later Massey is listed alongside numerous Lancashire Catholic gentry in a proclamation calling for the individuals named 'who have listed themselves in several regiments under the pretence of a commission from the late King James to surrender themselves.'⁵⁵⁶ His house was also searched in response to the Lancashire plot rumours, and nine new saddles were discovered there, hidden under feathers and straw, though his reported absence abroad may have precluded further pursuit of the matter.⁵⁵⁷ Finally, papers sent to him from Ireland in 1695 were intercepted and confiscated, suggesting that they contained material of interest to the authorities as well as Massey, and Drogheda's troops came to arrest him, though again he 'was from home.'⁵⁵⁸ If he is to be believed, he was subject to regular surveillance and harassment. In the letter to Shrewsbury of June 1695 where he complains of the seizure of the papers other grievances include:

[M]y usage has been unspeakably severe these six weeks last past, officers (or so pretended), soldiers and seamen lying continually in my park or warren, destroying both, daily molesting the houses, besides incredible rudeness in searching (under pretence) for arms. Two of my protestant servants were extremely hurt and abused without the least provocation. [...] parties out of the blue regiment, Lord Drogheda's [Drogheda's] carried away all manner of goods, even to my poor servants' clothes, and the greatest part of the beds [...] I sent a servant on Monday to the said lord commander at Chester, who gave him up to his men for ill-treatment; the horse he rode is still in their hands.[...] I have just heard that near twenty soldiers are sent to quarter at Soddington, and have carried off my best horses.⁵⁵⁹

Massey had made similar complaints about Drogheda's troops and sailors in 1689.⁵⁶⁰

Specific evidence of Stanley's involvement in Jacobite plots is more ambiguous, though like Poole he went to ground after the Assassination Plot of February 1696.⁵⁶¹ The severity of his treatment on a number of occasions suggests that he was perceived as a greater threat than either Poole or Massey. When the defeat of the Anglo-Dutch navy off Beachy Head the day

⁵⁵⁶ TNA, CSPD William and Mary, 2, p. 22.

⁵⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 5, p. 232.

⁵⁵⁸ TNA, SP 32/14, f. 159.

⁵⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶⁰ TNA, SP 32/1, f. 196.

⁵⁶¹ CALS, DCH/X/9B, 13 March 1695-6.

after William's victory at the Boyne in July 1690 replaced fears of an Irish invasion with those of a French one, he and twelve prominent Protestant Jacobites from the county were imprisoned in Chester Castle.⁵⁶² The grounds for these arrests are unclear: they would appear to have been an atypically severe reaction from the local Whig magistrates, one of whom noted reflected some years later that 'having so many malcontents [...] we did more in Cheshire than in other counties'.⁵⁶³ Stanley was again taken into custody there following the search of his house in the Lancashire plot investigations, and thence to the Tower of London for examination, before his trial with seven Lancastrian Catholic gentry at Manchester in October 1694.⁵⁶⁴ The case against the eight collapsed, however, and they were quickly acquitted. The Crown's principal witness, John Lunt, a former highwayman who appears to have been in collusion with a Catholic priest turned pursuivant, failed to identify Stanley from among the accused.⁵⁶⁵ But as Baker has recently observed, the fact that the specific charges were unsubstantiated does not eliminate the possibility of a conspiracy of some sort.⁵⁶⁶ The discovery of Massey's saddles underpins Baker's point, as do the papers discovered at Standish Hall in Lancashire (home of another of the accused) in 1757, which contain correspondence with St Germain about preparations for an invasion and blank commissions from James.⁵⁶⁷

After the Assassination Plot of 1696 reports of conspiracies died down until the end of Anne's reign, both nationally and locally: Szechi notes that during this period Scotland became the focus of St Germain's designs, culminating in the abortive landing of 1708.⁵⁶⁸ In England expressions of Jacobitism turned from plots to words, or at most unfocused popular disturbances, though such activities could involve an equally draconian response. In 1699

⁵⁶² Historical Manuscripts Commission, Appendix Part 4 (London, 1894), p. 244..

⁵⁶³ CALS, DAR/B/73, Crewe Papers, 10 March 1700.

⁵⁶⁴ TNA, SP 32/5, f. 213; *ibid.*, CSPD William and Mary, 6, p. 281.

⁵⁶⁵ Baker, 'Jacobite Trials', pp. 258, 260; Challinor, 'Cheshire politics', p. 169.

⁵⁶⁶ Baker, 'Jacobite Trials', pp. 265-266.

⁵⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 262-266.

⁵⁶⁸ Monod, *Jacobitism*, p. 315; Daniel Szechi, 'Jacobite Politics in the Age of Anne', *Parliamentary History* 28 (2009), pp. 41-58, pp. 52-57.

Stanley was once again arrested for ‘treasonable practices’ and again committed to the Tower, but on this occasion the charge was one of entering into wagers about the late king’s restoration. He was quickly released, but not before his neighbour William Glegg had been brought to London to be examined on oath.⁵⁶⁹ In April 1704 Sir Charles Hedges, Secretary of State for the North, instructed the Attorney General that William Stanley – probably Rowland’s son – and two companions, one of them almost certainly a Catholic, were to be prosecuted for a riot in Chester.⁵⁷⁰ The Mayor of Chester pleaded procedural difficulties, but Hedges was insistent that the three men should be tried in the Crown Mote for ‘for riot and for drinking and forcing John Jones to drink a health to the pretended prince of Wales by name of James III.’⁵⁷¹ Harmless high jinks perhaps, but ones illustrating the sensitivity of the times: as Garry Bennett noted, Jacobitism often metamorphosed into ‘a catalyst for other forms of dissent and resistance.’⁵⁷²

Such disturbances revived and were widespread around the time of George I’s accession, but may, as Oates has observed, be as much expressions of economic dislocation after the war of the Spanish Succession and hostility to the Hanoverian Whig regime as expressions of genuine Jacobitism.⁵⁷³ None the less this climate of unrest led to three new pieces of anti-Catholic legislation, the first of which specifically targeted Jacobites by automatically conferring recusant status for refusal of the oath of supremacy when tendered by

⁵⁶⁹ TNA, SP 44/349, f. 106 and SP 44/101, fos 53, 55, 57; Narcissus Luttrell, *A Brief Historical Relation of State Affairs from September 1678 to April 1714* (6 vols., Cambridge, 1857), IV, pp. 550, 552. Glickman, *Catholic Community*, p. 125, referencing Luttrell, gives this date of this episode as 1692, but both the date and his references would appear to be transcription errors.

⁵⁷⁰ TNA, SP 105 f. 59. The names of the others accused strongly suggest Wirral origins, from townships close to the Stanley’s home in Eastham. The Mr Chantrell was probably Darcey, the latest in a line of mere gentry of Woodchurch, who had been staunchly recusant since Jacobean times. Mitchinson, *Returns of Papists 1705*, p. 75v lists both Stanley and Chantrell. The religious affinities of the third man, a Mr Hockenull, are not known, but he is likely to be of the family who had been Catholics before the Civil War, and related to the Hocknell branch who had been amongst the first Elizabethan recusants. See CALS, EDV 1.14, f. 38; idem, ZCR 63; TNA, CHES 21/3, fos 134v, 154; Wark, *Cheshire*, pp. 152-153.

⁵⁷¹ TNA, SP 34/4, fos 12, 30.

⁵⁷² G. V. Bennett, ‘Reviewed Work(s): Ideology and Conspiracy: Aspects of Jacobitism, 1689-1759 by Eveline Cruickshanks; France and the Jacobite Rising of 1745 by F. J. McLynn’, *EHR* 99 (1984), pp. 396-399, p. 399.

⁵⁷³ Jonathan Oates, ‘Jacobitism and Popular Disturbances in Northern England, 1714–1719’, *NH* 41 (2004), pp. 111-128, p. 113.

two magistrates, as per the Act of 1689 (the second and third are discussed below). This prompted the Privy Council in July 1715 to issue instructions to the lords-lieutenant for the enforcement of the recusancy laws and the tendering of oaths of allegiance to Catholics, who were to be searched and their arms and horses seized if they failed to comply.⁵⁷⁴ It would seem doubtful that this order was executed in Cheshire: Peter Shakerley, a Cheshire JP, protested to Lord-Lieutenant Cholmondeley that it ‘would create Great Disturbances in the Minds of those who doe and would live Peaceably and without Offence’, and as late as November, when the rebels were on the march in the north, was still reluctant to take action, believing that ‘mild and gentle methods will not more effectually preserve the peace of the county [...] than more rigid and severe methods.’⁵⁷⁵

There were a number of expressions of discontent in Cheshire at the time of the 1715 rising. In October, a Whig celebration in Chester of the anniversary of George’s coronation ended in a riot when a Jacobite accepted a drink but refused to toast the King.⁵⁷⁶ In Mobberley a ‘fat lusty man in a white wig’ who had been ‘[c]oncerned in ‘ye late Rebellions Riots and Tumults’ was arrested: he ‘[c]ryed down with Rumpe at least five or six times’ and denounced his captors as ‘Olivers Whelps King Killers and Sequestrateing Rascalls’.⁵⁷⁷ Ten prominent Jacobite gentry of Cheshire apparently debated rising, but at a meeting at Ashley Hall decided by a casting vote not to do so, and instead had their portraits painted to commemorate the occasion.⁵⁷⁸ Nevertheless Shakerley’s judgement was probably warranted: there is no evidence that any Catholics were involved in these activities.

As noted above, however, the participants in the rebellion were predominantly Catholic. Originating in Scotland, they were augmented on their route through the border counties to

⁵⁷⁴ Idem, ‘Responses in the North of England to the Jacobite Rebellion of 1715’, *NH* 43 (2006), pp. 77-95, p. 84.

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁶ Oates, ‘Popular Disturbances’, p. 127.

⁵⁷⁷ CALS, QSF 143/4, f. 32.

⁵⁷⁸ J. H. E. Bennett, ‘Cheshire and “The Fifteen”’, *JCAS* new series 21 (1915), pp. 30-46, p. 30.

Lancashire, where they encountered the King's forces and surrendered after a siege at Preston.⁵⁷⁹ Only two natives of Cheshire were taken prisoner at Preston - a servant from Stockport and a chapman from Prestbury, neither with any known Catholic credentials - but a participant who escaped was William Massey, son of the Williamite dissident.⁵⁸⁰ The legend that he swam his horse three miles across the Mersey in retreat from Preston and that it died on his doorstep may well be apocryphal, suggesting as it does a somewhat indirect crossing of the river, but he was arrested after his return to Puddington and imprisoned in Chester Castle, where he died, probably in squalor, three months later, thus ending one of the principal Catholic family lines of the county.⁵⁸¹

In the wake of the rebellion the government took steps to put all three of the new measures (described above) into operation. On 9 December 1715 two justices of Bucklow hundred, in response to a Privy Council directive, issued an order that their Petty Constables should summon non-juror Catholics to take the oath, impound their arms and ammunition, and apprehend any 'engaged or concerned in any traitorous or illegal designs', singling out nine individuals for particular attention.⁵⁸² A month earlier, seven men from Nantwich had been reported for refusing the oath, amongst them the Catholics John Brayne, who later complied, and Laurence Hill, who appears not to have done.⁵⁸³

The second of the three anti-Catholic measure established a commission 'to enquire of the Estates of certain Traytors and Popish Recusants, and of Estates given to superstitious Uses, in order to raise money out of them severally for the use of the Publick' and the third 'oblige[d] Papists to Register their Names and Real Estates', its objective being two-thirds sequestration of estates not already forfeit: it may also have been an attempt to resurrect the dormant Act of

⁵⁷⁹ Oates, 'Northern Responses', pp. 77-78.

⁵⁸⁰ NA, KB 8/66, f. 48; Ormerod, *Cheshire*, II, p. 309.

⁵⁸¹ Bowes, 'Masseys'. p. 42; Ormerod, *Cheshire*, II, pp. 308-309; Bennett, "Fifteen", p. 41.

⁵⁸² CALS, QJF 143/4, f. 6.

⁵⁸³ *Ibid.*, fos 9, 112.

1700 which debarred Papists from inheriting or purchasing land.⁵⁸⁴ The Commissioners for Forfeited Estates were appointed in January 1716, and the following October wrote to the Clerk of the Peace for Cheshire requesting information to assist them in progressing the forfeiture and registration measures.⁵⁸⁵ Their enquiries into traitors and superstitious uses did not lead to any forfeitures in Cheshire, though the presence of Massey's will among their papers suggests that his estate was under consideration, but was relieved because his heir was his infant godson, a grandson of Sir Rowland Stanley.⁵⁸⁶

Although the Toleration Act of 1689 which granted freedom of worship to Protestant dissenters specifically excluded Catholics from its scope, it did have the collateral effect of rendering the recusancy laws inoperable, as per Bossy's observation above. To demonstrate absence from the parish church was nugatory when it was no longer a legal requirement to attend: as a Wiltshire lawyer opined, 'I cannot tell how you can prove such a total neglect [...] for, if you should only lay his not coming to church [...] he might confess the ar[ti]cles without transgressing the Law.'⁵⁸⁷ Presentments at the Cheshire Assizes for recusancy and/or absence (the two are usually conflated), though in mid-double figures during 1690, ceased by the end of the following year.⁵⁸⁸ The last Recusant Roll, covering the first two years of the new reign, was compiled at Michaelmas 1690, and like its immediate predecessor of 1686, contains no rotulet for Cheshire.⁵⁸⁹ The last presentment of known Catholics at Quarter Sessions for absence from church was that of the Savage family of High Legh in October 1690, though

⁵⁸⁴ 1 Geo 1 caps 13, 50, and 55; Patrick Purcell, 'The Jacobite Rising of 1715 and the English Catholics', *EHR* 44 (1929), pp. 416-432, p. 432.

⁵⁸⁵ Purcell, '1715 rising', p. 116; CALS, QDR 18.

⁵⁸⁶ NA, FEC 1/780.

⁵⁸⁷ Williams, *Wiltshire*, p. 79.

⁵⁸⁸ NA, CHES 21/5, fos 301v-320.

⁵⁸⁹ NA, E377/80 and E377/81.

between 1693 and 1700 there were a further thirty-seven absence presentments of individuals whose religious proclivities are unknown.⁵⁹⁰

The offence of recusancy was not, however, abolished, but rather redefined by a further measure of 1689.⁵⁹¹ As during the Civil War and interregnum, a test of ‘constructive recusancy’ was introduced: the legislation introduced new oaths of supremacy and allegiance, and for office holders, reaffirmed the anti-transubstantiation declaration of the 1678 Test Act.⁵⁹² A further statute of the same year empowered two justices to tender this declaration at random.⁵⁹³ How far down the social scale it was applied is unclear, but it would seem likely that it was restricted to property owners: the lists of signatories, who subscribed progressively down to 1714, are substantial, but fall far short of the near universal application of the last of the oaths of the period in 1723.⁵⁹⁴

The primary objective of this legislation was one of national security in time of war and potential French invasion, and in particular of suspected Jacobite conspiracies.⁵⁹⁵ Though the supremacy oath also targeted the many Protestants like Peter Leigh of Lyme who refused to swear allegiance to William as King *de jure*, it was the Catholic community who were seen as the principal source of the Jacobite threats (not unreasonably, in the light of the activities of Massey, Poole and Stanley).⁵⁹⁶ Thus the High Constables’ and Grand Jury’s lists of presentments of recusants in the Quarter Sessions Files continued throughout William’s reign

⁵⁹⁰ CALS, QJB 3/4, fos 262v for the Savages, *ibid* 269v, 271 and QJB 3/5, unfoliated, entries for January 1696-7, April 1697 and January 1699-1700 for the remaining thirty-seven cases. Two further cases of Catholic absentees feature in the Quarter Sessions Files (CALS, QJF 123/2, f. 9) but are not reflected in the Quarter Sessions Books, suggesting that they did not proceed.

⁵⁹¹ 1 Will and Mary c. 8.

⁵⁹² Williams, *Wiltshire*, p. 44.

⁵⁹³ 1 Will and Mary c. 9.

⁵⁹⁴ CALS, QDR1; Edward Vallance, ‘Women, Politics and the 1723 Oaths of Allegiance to George I’, *HJ* 59 (2016), pp. 975-999, p. 976.

⁵⁹⁵ Paul Hopkins, ‘Sham Plots and Real Plots in the 1690s’ in Eveline Cruickshanks (ed.), *Ideology and Conspiracy: Aspects of Jacobitism 1689-1759* (Edinburgh, 1982), pp. 89-110, p. 89.

⁵⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 90; Irene Cassidy, ‘LEGH, Peter (1669-1744), of Lyme, Cheshire’ in B. Henning (ed.), *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1660-1690* at <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1660-1690/member/legh-peter-1669-1744>, accessed 13 July 2019.

(to 1702), even exceeding the previous peak of 1685 in 1693 and 1694, although none of these are reflected as indictments and convictions in the Quarter Sessions Books.⁵⁹⁷

	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	7	7
	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	0	0
Hundred	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0	1
Broxton	7	39	40	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bucklow	32	0	0	0	25	3	0	0	4	0
Eddisbury	87	71	78	11	6	3	0	1	2	0
Macclesfield	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nantwich	6	1	2	2	0	0	0	2	3	0
Northwich	8	4	12	6	17	0	0	0	0	0
Wirral	66	246	258	50	32	18	0	61	26	4
	206	361	390	73	80	24	0	64	35	4
<i>Wirral %age</i>	32%	68%	66%	68%	40%	75%		95%	74%	100%
<p>Note: figures are the total number of presentments (as opposed to individuals presented) over the year commencing 25 March</p>										

The geographical distribution of these presentments underpins the linkage to Jacobitism: as Table 1.11 above shows, the vast majority were from the hundred of Wirral, where the three leading Catholic Jacobite suspects (Massey, Poole and Stanley) resided.⁵⁹⁸

Of the remaining Williamite anti-Catholic legislation, little need be said at this point. The discussion of Jacobitism above has shown the impact of the prohibitions on the storage of arms and the keeping of horses of more than £5 in value, and the issue of double taxation will be discussed in the final part of this section.⁵⁹⁹ The remaining measures – most notably the draconian ‘Act for the further preventing of the Growth of Popery’ of 1700, which introduced a penalty of life imprisonment for the saying of Mass, the administration of the sacraments and Catholic schoolmastering, and precluded Catholics from purchasing or inheriting land – were

⁵⁹⁷ CALS, QJF 117/3 – 129/4, *passim*. The peak volumes of 1693-4 are contained in volumes 122/1 - 122/3.

⁵⁹⁸ The Jacobite credentials of these three gentlemen are discussed above.

⁵⁹⁹ 1 Will and Mary c. 15.

allowed to lie dormant on the statute book.⁶⁰⁰ Mitchinson speculates that they were introduced as a potential lever for use in diplomatic negotiations.⁶⁰¹

As previously noted, ecclesiastical proceedings against recusants at visitations were already in sharp decline before James's reign, and die altogether after the Revolution.⁶⁰² Though Nicholas Stratford, the Williamite bishop of Chester (1689-1707), had published discourses on the errors of Catholicism and the papal supremacy during James's reign, he was, like the vast majority of the Williamite episcopate, a tolerationist, who preferred to convert Catholics rather than persecute them.⁶⁰³ The sole reference to Catholicism in the articles of his primary visitation, published in 1691, is indicative of this change of approach: '[d]oth [your Minister] endeavour to reclaim all Popish Recusants if any such be inhabiting within your Parish to the true Religion established in the Church of England?'⁶⁰⁴ Though there were occasional presentments at visitations for absence from church during his episcopate, only two can be positively identified as relating to Catholics.⁶⁰⁵

The climate for Catholics during Queen Anne's reign was much milder, with no presentments either civil or ecclesiastical being recorded. In this context the 1706 returns of papists seem somewhat incongruous. The most likely explanation is that they were an expression of concern about the lapse of the recusancy laws. The immediate trigger was a petition from 'The Gentry and Clergy of the South Parts of Lancashire', presented to the House

⁶⁰⁰ 11 and 12 Will III c. 4.

⁶⁰¹ Mitchinson, *1705 Returns*, p. vii.

⁶⁰² CALS, EDV 1/65 – 1/77 inclusive.

⁶⁰³ Nicholas Stratford, *A discourse concerning the necessity of reformation with respect to the errors and corruptions of the Church of Rome* (London, 1685), at <https://www.proquest.com/books/necessity-reformation-with-respect-errors/docview/2240876993/se-2?accountid=8630>, accessed 20 November 2021; idem, *A discourse of the Pope's supremacy. in answer to a treatise intituled, St. Peter's supremacy faithfully discuss'd* (London, 1688) at <https://www.proquest.com/books/discourse-popes-supremacy-answer-treatise/docview/2248501452/se-2?accountid=8630>, accessed 20 November 2021; Pincus, *1688*, pp. 425-434.

⁶⁰⁴ Nicholas Stratford, *Articles to be enquired of and answered unto by the church-wardens and side-men, in the primary visitation of the Right Reverend Father in God, Nicholas Lord Bishop of Chester* (Chester, 1691), p. 4 at <https://www.proquest.com/books/bishop-chesters-charge-his-primary-visitation-at/docview/2248588592/se-2?accountid=8630>, accessed 6 May 2019.

⁶⁰⁵ CALS, EDV 1/70, f. 3 and EDV 1/75, f. 4v show that Richard Jump of Neston was presented for absence in 1699 and again in 1705.

of Lords by Stratford in February 1706, and complaining about the growth of Popery. A year earlier the House had debated ‘the most effectual ways to prevent the Growth of Popery’ and had presented an address to the Queen requesting two returns of papists, by the JPs and bishops respectively. This had received only a holding response from the Queen, but the Lancashire petition provided the Lords with the opportunity to enquire into its outcome. When informed that it was not on record, the Lords presented a further address, which received an equally non-committal reply, prompting the Lords to publish the two documents. The subsequent gestation of the return, which was apparently completed by the Church (it is organised by deaneries within dioceses), is not known, but the final versions of the returns survive in the library of the House of Lords.⁶⁰⁶

The Chester returns are something of a curate’s egg. Those for Chester City, which report a total of sixty-five Catholics, represent the first realistic survey of Catholics there since Elizabethan times, but those for the rest of the county, amounting to only forty-five, would seem to have been compiled in an extremely cursory manner. The figures for Wirral are well below Williamite levels, and there are no returns at all for the Broxton hundred, which included Malpas and Tattenhall, nor any from Bunbury, nor from the growing community in Macclesfield, discussed in the following chapter.⁶⁰⁷ This impression of gross under-reporting in 1706 is confirmed by comparison with a similar survey conducted in 1717, which identified 419 Catholics in the county. The circumstances of this later survey, discussed in Chapter 2, are not known – it survives only as a series of parish totals included for purposes of comparison in a late eighteenth-century summary of the returns of papists of 1767 – but its timing suggests that it was related to a series of anti-Catholic measures implemented in the aftermath of the 1715 Jacobite rebellion.⁶⁰⁸

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid., pp. vii-ix., 1-3.

⁶⁰⁷ Ibid., pp. 1-3.

⁶⁰⁸ CALS, EDA 6/5.

The implementation of the first two Georgian anti-Catholic measures impacted only Jacobites within Cheshire and were discussed earlier in this section. The registration of papists' estates, however, was more far-reaching. It commenced in 1717 – the survey of that year would thus seem to be preparatory - and continued until 1759.⁶⁰⁹ By 1723 forty-one Cheshire Catholics had registered, together with a further twenty-one from elsewhere who had estates in the county. The requirement to register was not confined to the wealthy: John Potts of Whiston, Staffordshire, for example, had a property on a reserved rent that was valued at only £1 per annum.⁶¹⁰ It also appears that a charge was made for registration, ranging from 3d in Potts's case to £3 for Sir Rowland Stanley.⁶¹¹ The take-up of the registration process by propertied Catholics over the first six years of its operation may be described as reasonable but patchy. The four leading gentry families (Stanley, Poole, Bellasis, Gerard/Fleetwood) all registered their lands, as did the Earl of Shrewsbury, who held extensive estates in the county, but further down the social scale compliance was variable.⁶¹² A survey of 1723 to determine the apportionment of a special tax levied on Catholics that year (discussed below) valued the estates of thirty-nine Catholics, but only twenty-three of them had so far registered.⁶¹³

The projected confiscation in the end did not proceed, but the information gathered may have assisted in the formulation of the final anti-Catholic measure of the early Georgian years, the Catholic Taxation Act of 1723.⁶¹⁴ In 1722 an invasion plot centred around Francis Atterbury, the Jacobite Bishop of Rochester, was discovered. Catholic involvement in this was minimal, but Walpole used the plot as a pretext to push the Act through Parliament by a narrow majority. Supported by a requirement to subscribe to an almost universal tendering of the oath

⁶⁰⁹ Bennett and Dewhurst, *Quarter Sessions Records*, p. 2.

⁶¹⁰ CALS, QDR 17, unnumbered.

⁶¹¹ CALS, QDR 18, unnumbered.

⁶¹² Ormerod, *Cheshire*, I, p. 482 records that the Gerard/ Dutton estates in Cheshire were willed by Charles, the sixth and last Lord Gerard of Abbot Bromley, to his sister, the Hon. Francis Fleetwood, who inherited them on his death in 1707.

⁶¹³ CALS, QDR 4, unnumbered.

⁶¹⁴ Purcell, '1715 rising', p. 132.

of supremacy, to Catholics and Protestants alike (the Cheshire signatories run to four volumes), it imposed a one-off levy of £100,000 on the Catholic and non-juror population, of which the Cheshire share was £1,509 10s 9d.⁶¹⁵ The implementation of this exercise has relevance for the consideration of the Land Tax in the following paragraphs, and discussion of it may be deferred until that topic has been introduced.

The cessation of the Recusant Roll system in 1690 may have relieved Catholics of one financial burden, which was at best intermittent, only for the introduction of the Land Tax in 1693 to replace it with one which, on paper at least, was not only draconian, but also efficient. As with the subsidies of the Caroline period, Catholics were subjected to double payment of this tax (as also were non-jurors) and remained so until this surcharge was abolished in 1794.⁶¹⁶ Historians both of taxation and of Catholicism have for the most part have been disinclined to investigate this phenomenon further: Reginald Ward devoted a mere paragraph of his debut monograph on the tax to this aspect, noting that it was ‘especially invidious’ and that ‘[m]any non-jurors, even Catholics, escaped the full penalties of the Act’ whereas Bossy observes that it was ‘organized [...] a great deal more successfully’ than the subsidies which were its precursor, and ‘was a considerable burden for perhaps twenty-five years, after which declining assessments, administrative inertia and devolution to tenants deprived it of its bite.’⁶¹⁷

These glass half empty versus glass half full assessments illustrate the reasons for the historiographical vacuum: the surviving land tax assessments are too few, and contain insufficient data, to permit systematic analysis of the degree of efficiency with which the taxation penalty was implemented. The one historian to address the question holistically, Donald Ginter, gets little further than articulating the methodological difficulties involved, and

⁶¹⁵ NA, E369/125, f. 136.

⁶¹⁶ Donald Ginter, *A Measure of Wealth: The English Land Tax in Historical Analysis* (Montreal, 1992), p. 64.

⁶¹⁷ W. R. Ward, *The English Land Tax in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1953), pp. 32-3; Bossy, ‘Catholics after 1688’, p. 372.

his sources are taken mostly from the 1780s, when the available evidence increases significantly.⁶¹⁸

At the high level, both Ward's view and Bossy's would seem true to an extent. In support of Ward's perspective, it may be noted that the responsibility of assessing the tax liability of individual Catholics (and Protestants) lay with the high constables or their nominees, and thus were susceptible to some degree of avoidance, just as recusancy presentments had been.⁶¹⁹ So long as the township quotas (derived from central government apportionments to the counties via allocations to the hundreds), were achieved, it would seem unlikely that any questions would have been asked.⁶²⁰ Bossy's notion of an initially severe but progressively diminishing burden reflects firstly, that the standard rate of the tax during the 1690s was four shillings in the pound, making it a very severe imposition on those who paid it twofold, and secondly that the quotas introduced in 1697 were effectively frozen, which caused their real value to be eroded over time.⁶²¹ The problem is one of assessing whereabouts on this continuum of severity to leniency the application of the letter of the law typically fell, and here the scant surviving local sources shed no light. The correspondence of Sir John Egerton of Oulton, who was the Land Tax Commissioner for Eddisbury hundred from the tax's inception down to 1734, contain no references to double taxation, and none of sixty-three township assessments surviving from the period 1692 to 1704 identify Catholics in the individual allocations.⁶²² No other contemporary local sources have been found. The only hint of a possible answer is to be found in the evidence of the Catholic Taxation Act of 1723, discussed above.

⁶¹⁸ Ginter, *Land Tax*, pp. 52-75.

⁶¹⁹ Ward, *Land Tax*, p. 4.

⁶²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

⁶²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 7; Michael Turner, 'The Land Tax, Land, and Property: Old Debates and New Horizons' in *idem* and Dennis Mills (eds), *Land and Property: The English Land Tax 1692-1832* (Gloucester, 1986), pp. 1-18, p. 1.

⁶²² CALS, DEO/194/4; *ibid.*, DAR/A/62.

As noted above, Cheshire's share of the tax was £ 1,509. Cruickshanks observes that the apportionment was predicated upon a rate of 6/- for every pound of land value, equating to a total valuation of around £5,000.⁶²³ When, however, returns of Catholics and their land values were received from the hundreds, the sum of the valuations was only £2,500: thus to meet the county share, those taxed would have to pay at the rate of 12/- in the pound.⁶²⁴ The flow of revenue into the Exchequer could be a slow process – the accounts for Staffordshire and Wiltshire, for example, were not finalised until January 1728-9 – but Cheshire was one of the first counties to settle, on 1 January 1725-6.⁶²⁵ It would seem unlikely that such prompt payment could have been achieved if many of the county's Catholics were paying the special tax on top of the double land tax (14/- per £), let alone if they were effectively paying both taxes double (£ per £).

It is somewhat ironic that the old anti-Popish myth that Catholics were traitors to the state at long last acquired some substance, in the form of Jacobitism, at the very point in history when their routine persecution was abandoned. The vast majority of Catholics were, as they had long protested, willing to swear allegiance to the King of England, but for an indeterminate number it was the one in St Germain (or from 1717 onwards, Rome) rather than the one in London. In Cheshire, only the three magnates of Wirral are known to have engaged in treasonable activities, although the refusals of the oath in 1715 suggest a substratum of persistent Stuart sentiment among plebeian Catholics. As a result Catholics continued to be harassed, though no longer persecuted, for a generation after the Revolution, through oaths, abortive Quarter Sessions presentments, occasional censuses, and after 1717 registration of property. The period mirrors the reign of Charles I and the Commonwealth, in that Catholics were allowed to

⁶²³ Eveline Cruickshanks, 'Walpole's Tax on Catholics', *RH* 28 (2006), pp. 95-102, p. 100.

⁶²⁴ CALS, QDR 4, unnumbered. A calculation totalling £6,000, which may be the basis of the county quota, is also be found among the papers in this item.

⁶²⁵ NA, E369/125, fos 136, 138, 140v.

practice their religion freely provided they paid for the privilege through the double Land Tax and, in 1723, the Catholic Taxation Act.

Conclusion - the efficiency and severity of persecution

This final section will seek to address two overarching questions. Firstly, how efficient were the authorities in identifying and prosecuting Catholics over the course of the Long Reformation? Secondly, how great were the privations of those Catholics who were subjected to the force of the law?

It is impossible to give anything like an accurate answer to the first question. Our knowledge of early modern English Catholics is overwhelmingly derived from court proceedings against them, and as with criminality in any era, the unknown proportion cannot be computed from the known. Many breaches doubtless went unreported, either through the tolerance or indolence of the unpaid police force (churchwardens and village constables). Doubtless pressure to suppress presentments was applied to these officials by influential elite figures, whilst at the other end of the social scale, poor recusants may have avoided presentment because of the impossibility of extracting fines from them. All that these court records can disclose is the relative strength of persecution at a particular location at a particular point in time.

An indicative measurement of the efficiency of policing may, however, be derived by comparing the results of each presentment against the known recusant population at that date. The known recusant population may be derived by adding to the presentment total those individuals who escaped presentment on that occasion, but who were presented both previously and subsequently: this may be reasonably regarded as evidence of a persistent Catholic identity over the duration of their delinquency, intervening intervals of conformity notwithstanding. It is, admittedly, a minimal estimate, which excludes the unquantified number who were never presented, but is none the less informative.

Fig 1.8: Assize presentments as proportion of known Catholics, 1591-1700

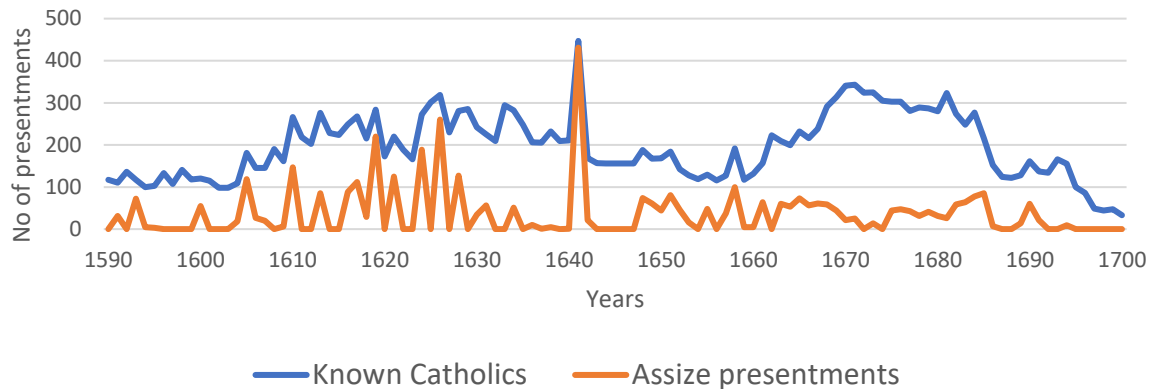


Table 1.12 : Data points for Fig. 1.8

Year	A Known recusants	B Recusants presented	% B of A	Year	A Known recusants	B Recusants presented	% B of A	Year	A Known recusants	B Recusants presented	% B of A
1590	117	0	0%	1624	272	189	69%	1658	192	100	52%
1591	110	31	28%	1625	301	0	0%	1659	117	5	4%
1592	136	0	0%	1626	319	260	82%	1660	132	5	4%
1593	117	72	62%	1627	230	0	0%	1661	157	64	41%
1594	100	5	5%	1628	281	127	45%	1662	223	0	0%
1595	103	3	3%	1629	285	0	0%	1663	209	60	29%
1596	133	0	0%	1630	242	34	14%	1664	199	53	27%
1597	107	0	0%	1631	225	56	25%	1665	232	73	31%
1598	141	0	0%	1632	209	0	0%	1666	216	56	26%
1599	118	0	0%	1633	294	0	0%	1667	238	61	26%
1600	120	55	46%	1634	282	51	18%	1668	291	59	20%
1601	115	0	0%	1635	248	0	0%	1669	313	44	14%
1602	98	0	0%	1636	206	10	5%	1670	341	21	6%
1603	98	0	0%	1637	205	1	0%	1671	343	25	7%
1604	109	18	17%	1638	232	5	2%	1672	324	0	0%
1605	181	119	66%	1639	209	0	0%	1673	325	14	4%
1606	145	27	19%	1640	211	1	0%	1674	305	0	0%
1607	145	20	14%	1641	447	431	96%	1675	303	44	15%
1608	190	0	0%	1642	169	21	12%	1676	303	47	16%
1609	161	6	4%	1643	157	0	0%	1677	281	43	15%
1610	266	147	55%	1644	156	0	0%	1678	289	31	11%
1611	218	0	0%	1645	156	0	0%	1679	287	41	14%
1612	202	0	0%	1646	156	0	0%	1680	280	31	11%
1613	276	85	31%	1647	156	0	0%	1681	323	26	8%
1614	228	0	0%	1648	188	74	39%	1682	274	59	22%
1615	224	0	0%	1649	167	61	37%	1683	248	64	26%
1616	249	88	35%	1650	168	44	26%	1684	277	78	28%
1617	268	112	42%	1651	184	81	44%	1685	216	85	39%
1618	215	29	13%	1652	142	46	32%	1686	152	7	5%
1619	284	220	77%	1653	128	16	13%	1687	124	0	0%
1620	173	0	0%	1654	119	0	0%	1688	122	0	0%
1621	220	125	57%	1655	129	48	37%	1689	128	14	11%
1622	189	0	0%	1656	116	0	0%	1690	161	60	37%
1623	166	0	0%	1657	127	37	29%	1691	137	21	15%

The **known recusants** for a particular year are here defined as those who were presented that year, together with those who escaped presentment that year but were presented **both previously and subsequently**, at either Assizes, ecclesiastical visitations or Quarter Sessions.

Recusants presented are those who appeared at one or other of the two Assizes session that year. The total given is from the session which reported the higher total, not the aggregate of the two.

Figure 1.8 on the previous page plots the number of recusants presented at Assize over the period 1590-1691 (the lower, orange line) against the known recusant population that year (the upper, blue line).⁶²⁶ In only nine of these years (1593, 1605, 1610, 1619, 1621, 1624, 1626, 1641 and 1658, highlighted in **bold** in Table 1.12 above) were presentments more than half of the known recusant population, and in four of these the Churchillian paradigm of ‘lies, damn lies and statistics’ is applicable. 1593 (first successful Assize prosecution), 1605 (Gunpowder Plot), 1610 (assassination of Henri IV) and 1658 (Act against Popish Recusants) are easily contextualised from the analysis in the preceding sections, but between 1619 and 1624 the known population was understated as a result of the unrealistically low visitation presentments of the later Jacobean years.⁶²⁷ Even the zenith of presentments in 1641 is likely to be somewhat overstated in terms of its efficiency, partly because of the lack of corroborative data from visitations after 1635, but also because in six of the seven hundreds of the county, less than two-thirds of parishes submitted returns, despite the exercise being mandated by Parliament.⁶²⁸

The peaks of the pre-Civil War period show persecution to have been episodic rather than sustained, the majority of peaks being followed by a trough in which no presentments were recorded, although the suspension of the penal laws in the early 1620s and the dearth of prosecutions during the composition initiative of the 1630s are contributory factors here.⁶²⁹ During the interregnum, the frequency of presentment became more regular, and remained so thereafter, but typically at levels of less than a quarter of the known population, reflecting

⁶²⁶ 1691 was the last year recusants were presented at the Chester Assizes.

⁶²⁷ See 1.3 above.

⁶²⁸ CALS, QJF 69/4, mss 15-70, passim.

⁶²⁹ See 1.3 and 1.4 above.

both the greater regularity of presentments and also their limitation to a subset of well-known suspects.⁶³⁰

Over the century analysed, the presentment rate for recusancy is extremely low – an average of only 24 per cent for each of the seventy-five years over the period in which presentments took place - even though the analysis is restricted to individuals with a previous track record of Catholicism, of whom the authorities should have been aware.

The evidence of church papists is scant, but such as exists suggests that the policing of them at visitations in the pre-Civil War period was even more inefficient.⁶³¹ Over 90 per cent of the non-communicants recorded in Cheshire over the period 1590-1641 (926 of 999) were presented on one occasion only, and of the remaining seventy-three, only a handful are repeatedly presented for more than a decade.⁶³² These 999 non-communicants, moreover, are barely half of the total of 1,734 recusants recorded over the same period, whereas the reports of contemporaries, endorsed by Alex Walsham's more recent researches, suggest that church papists formed the silent majority of the Catholic population.⁶³³ The inference from these conflicting figures is that only a small proportion of these semi-conformists were identified by the visitors.

As a result of the limited sanctions available to the ecclesiastical authorities, this minority typically escaped with no more than a direction to reform their offending behaviour at the following Easter communion. Recusants were theoretically subject to draconian fines of £20 per month, but over the period 1590-1641 only 89 of the 1,734 are recorded as paying anything at all, invariably in the form of distraints of lands or goods, or of charges on the

⁶³⁰ See 1.6 and 1.7 above.

⁶³¹ As noted in section 0.44 of the introduction, the proliferation of dissenting sects during the interregnum precludes determination of the religious affinities of non-communicants after the Restoration.

⁶³² BIY, 1590-1, CB.2, 1595-6, CB.3, 1629-30, CB.3 and 1633, CB.2; CALS, EDV 1.10 – 1.32.

⁶³³ Ibid. plus NA, CHES 21/1, f. 156v ff, CHES 21/2, CHES 21/3 (all passim), CHES 21/4, fos 19v, 47, 95; CALS, ZCR 63/2/7/1.

rents of their tenants, and all of these considerably lesser amounts.⁶³⁴ These charges appear in the Recusant Rolls on average every third or fourth year over the period, and so at typically £15 - £20 for gentry recusants were probably not a cause of major hardship, though those of a few pounds may have been more of an imposition on some of the humbler sort.⁶³⁵ During the 1650s it would seem that the regularity with which fines were imposed increased the burden, but still on a minority, and after the Restoration only a handful were charged, all of them in the period 1681-4.⁶³⁶ The impact of the 1693 double Land Tax cannot be quantified, but it seems reasonable to infer that such impacts as it may have had were mitigated by inflation over the first thirty years of its operation.⁶³⁷

The greatest suffering inflicted on the post-Reformation Catholic population would seem to have been that of the last two Elizabethan decades. In the absence of a robust process to extract the fines sanctioned by law, the authorities' only recourse was to imprison the culprits. Some forty-two were imprisoned in Chester Castle or the Northgate during this period, most of them for a period of several months, although six were held for most than a decade.⁶³⁸ And whilst they seem to have had some liberty whilst there to practice the faith which was the cause of their incarceration, one of them, John Hocknell, met his end on his gaoler's pitchfork.⁶³⁹

Hocknell's fate, and that of the martyr John Plessington almost a century later, prompts consideration of the fortress mentality in which at least some Catholics must have lived their lives. Clearly such events had long shelf lives. On his progress to Chester in 1687, eight years after Plessington's martyrdom, King James II visited the site of his execution and was at pains to point out that 'I procured him a Reprieve, which came soon

⁶³⁴ NA, E377/01 – E377/47.

⁶³⁵ Ibid. records payments into the Exchequer in only fourteen of forty-nine years.

⁶³⁶ See sections 1.6 and 1.9 above.

⁶³⁷ See section 1.11 above.

⁶³⁸ See section 1.2 above.

⁶³⁹ Wark, *Cheshire*, p. 72.

enough to have sav'd his life, but [the Villains] conceal'd it [til the Execution was over.],⁶⁴⁰

Perhaps such memories reminded James's Catholic subjects that the liberty he was then offering could easily be replaced with similar severities.

⁶⁴⁰ UCLSC, UC/P1/B2, f. 12. I am very grateful to Professor Michael Questier for this reference and photographs of the document.

Chapter 2

The Demography of the Catholic Community, 1560-1720

Quantification featured heavily in the traditional historiography of early modern Catholicism. Writing in 1938, Magee was keen to talk up the Elizabethan numbers up to around half of the population, and the pre-Civil War ones to a third, and in the mid-1970s Bossy devoted a chapter of his *English Catholic Community* to reverse engineering the size of the Catholic population from the relatively solid eighteenth-century statistics back to the twilight of the surveys of 1603.⁶⁴¹ Post-revisionist scholarship, however, in pointing to the fluidity of early modern religious identities, challenges the validity of such exercises, which are based not upon the relative objectivity of censuses, but rather upon the vagaries of thoroughness in civil and ecclesiastical presentments, which, as the previous chapter demonstrated, are considerable.⁶⁴²

Yet though debased, the currency of counting Catholics is not entirely valueless, as Bill Sheils's 1999 article on the Catholics of Jacobean Yorkshire illustrates. Using the criteria of household, gender and age to analyse the Archbishop of York's 1615 visitation return (admittedly a particularly rich source), he has fleshed out the statistical skeleton to highlight probable aspects of the lived experience.⁶⁴³ He notes, for example, patterns of behavioural difference between pockets of recusant clusters and areas when the Catholic population is scattered more thinly.⁶⁴⁴ Similar analyses will be used in this chapter to tease out two key characteristics of early modern English Catholicism - the relative strengths of

⁶⁴¹ Brian Magee, *The English Recusants* (London, 1938), pp. xxiv,xxv; Bossy, *Community*, pp. 182-194.

⁶⁴² Walsham, *Church Papists* and Michael Questier, 'Conformity, Catholicism and the Law' in Peter Lake and idem, *Conformity and Orthodoxy in the English Church c. 1560-1660* (Woodbridge, 2000), pp. 237-261. are good examples of this strain in post-revisionist scholarship.

⁶⁴³ Bill Sheils, 'Household, Age and Gender among Jacobean Yorkshire Recusants', in Marie Rowlands (ed.), *Catholics of Parish and Town 1558-1778* (CRS, 1999), pp. 131-152. Sheils's source unusually contains for some recusants their ages and the duration of their delinquency.

⁶⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, eg pp. 138, 142, 149.

recusancy and church papistry, and the mix of seigneurial and plebeian Catholicism. Moreover, while presentments of Catholics do fluctuate in line with policing initiatives, patterns of consistency do emerge when they are viewed over decades, and changes in these long-term patterns can be indicative of demographic developments which merit contextualisation.

Hence this chapter will consider the demographic evidence of Cestrian Catholicism over three discrete periods: firstly, the formative years 1560-90, for which the evidence is scant and impressionistic; secondly the half century before the Civil War, from which the evidence is sufficiently substantial to permit statistical analysis; and lastly, the post-Restoration years. The first section will seek to determine to what extent a distinct Catholic presence emerged in Cheshire over the first post-Reformation generation: the latter two will identify and characterise its subsequent geographical distribution, and will use the local evidence to interrogate Bossy's model, hitherto unchallenged, of substantial growth in the Catholic population up to the Civil War, followed by at best stasis, and possibly some decline.⁶⁴⁵ The final section of the chapter will attempt to characterise the socio-economic mix of the Catholic community over the *longue durée*.

2.1 The formative years, 1560-1590

The surviving evidence of this first post-Reformation generation is, as Chapter 1.1 demonstrated, too slight to admit of meaningful demographic breakdown. The principal research question posed in the following section regards the degree to which the foundations of future Catholic growth were laid down during these years.

⁶⁴⁵ Bossy, *Community*, pp. 193-194.

2.1.1 *The 1560s and 1570s*

Evidence of religious delinquency in Cheshire from the first two Elizabethan decades is very scant. Only fragments of the visitation books from the period 1562-5 survive, and no other visitation returns before those of Archbishop Sandys in 1578, and the records of the Ecclesiastical Commission for the diocese have the same chronological limitations.⁶⁴⁶ Some cases of absence from church are recorded in the book of the Chester City Quarter Sessions for the 1560s and 1570s, but none in those of the wider county before 1581.⁶⁴⁷ The files of the York High Commission are extant from 1571 onwards, but their lack of information about the parishes and dioceses of the presentees militates against the reliable extraction of relevant cases.⁶⁴⁸

The analysis in Chapter 1, section 1.1 above demonstrates that only two significant demographic observations may be gleaned from this limited data: firstly, that a small number of parishes across the county were slow to implement church reordering and liturgical change (a common phenomenon of the 1560s)⁶⁴⁹; and secondly, that there may have been a core of absentees, some of them future recusants, in Chester City in the early Elizabethan period. What is perhaps surprising, given F. X. Walker's observation that in these early years withdrawal from church attendance was rare and that non-communication was the most common form of Catholic conscientious objection, is that there is only one case of a non-communicant in these pre-1578 sources.⁶⁵⁰ The very early date of the surviving ecclesiastical sources may, however, predate the emergence of this mode of delinquency. As non-communication was not a civil offence, it does not feature in Quarter Sessions Books.

⁶⁴⁶ CCALS, EDV 1.2b-1.6b; *ibid.*, EDA 12.2; BIY, V.1578-9 CB.3.

⁶⁴⁷ CALS, ZM and QJB series respectively.

⁶⁴⁸ BIY, HC.AB, 6.

⁶⁴⁹ Wark, *Cheshire*, p. 7 notes delays in the removal of rood lofts and other artefacts at Church Lawton and Bromborough, and the persistence of ringing for the dead on All Saints night at Sandbach.

⁶⁵⁰ CALS, EDA 12.2, f. 72.

The prevalence of the practice of non-communication is, however, certainly apparent in Sandys's metropolitical visitation book of 1578, the only substantial surviving source from these two decades. Here forty-eight of the seventy-nine individuals presented for religious delinquency were non-communicants.⁶⁵¹ The visitation also underpins the findings from the earlier sources. The retention of pre-Reformation artefacts and liturgical practices is a recurring theme: vestments at Grappenhall; prayers for the dead at Tilston; churchyard crosses in eight parishes; and a litany of delinquencies at Holy Trinity Chester and Weaverham, discussed below.⁶⁵² Almost half of the absentees from church and non-communicants (thirty-eight) were from the City of Chester, and almost two-thirds (fifty-one) from the Chester deanery.⁶⁵³

The preponderance of Chester data in the pre-1578 cases is unsurprising given that the City Quarter Sessions are the principal source of data for most of the preceding two decades, but its continuation in the 1578 books suggests that the visitors may have been satisfied to focus on the cathedral city and not look as zealously in the wider county. Less than one-third of the presentees, moreover, reoccur in the record, suggesting that what we are seeing here is a snapshot of conservative traditionalism in a period of flux, in which the Protestant establishment was gradually eroding attachment to the old faith, rather than early cases of post-Reformation Catholicism.⁶⁵⁴ The examples from the two most delinquent parishes, Holy Trinity Chester and Weaverham, illuminate this process.

At Holy Trinity, Chester we see a community in transition, led by a parson who 'useth more circumstances at the bidding of fasting daies and holiedaies than nedeth after the popishe manner' and a parish clerk who despite 'being oftentimes forbidden ringeth his

⁶⁵¹ BIY, V.1578-9, CB.3, fos 6, 9v-11, 12, 15v, 16v, 17v, 18v, 19, 20, 21, 22-23.

⁶⁵² Wark, *Cheshire*, p. 18.

⁶⁵³ BIY, V.1578-9, CB.3, fos 10, 10v, 17v, 18v-20, 21-23.

⁶⁵⁴ Wark, *Cheshire*, pp. 138-140, 142, 148-151, 153, 155, 159-160, 166-170, 172, 175-176 contain prosopographies of the twenty-five presentees with a subsequent track record of Catholicism.

peales at the funeralle of the dead' and a congregation displaying a variety of religious identities, some seemingly inconsistent. The lawyer John Fisher had been fined for absence in 1576 and would be again in 1579, and thus would seem a clear cut case of the hard line separatist. Yet both the recidivist absentee, Fulk Aldersey, with more than a decade of intermittent one shilling fines from the magistrates behind him, and another reported absentee, Francis Bamwell, one of a group who are 'suspected of popery and mainteyne their errors openly in talke' will conform on their own terms. They may 'refuse to co(mmun)icate oneles they have singing breade' (the traditional wafer form), but stop short of the classic church-papist posture of refusing the communion outright. And they were not alone: there were four other devotees of the communion wafer and another three suspected papists.⁶⁵⁵

Rural Weaverham in the centre of the county provides a similar example of idiosyncrasy. It has been cited by both Haigh and Walsham as a classical example of traditional survivalism, untouched in any respect by twenty years of reformation, with a full one page litany of delinquencies in fabric, fittings and practice.⁶⁵⁶ Here again '[t]hey refuse to communicate with usuall breade. None come to the Communion iii times a yeare', the inference being, however, that they would fulfil the Easter obligation if it was presented to them in the traditional wafer form.⁶⁵⁷ But the situation here reflects laxity of the part of an incumbent who was later presented twice, in 1590 and 1592, for negligence and drunkenness, rather than principled opposition.⁶⁵⁸ Though absenteeism would seem to have been rife, that was because 'they frequent alehouses in service tyme.' The parish's attachment to the traditional festive culture of 'Morris Daunces and rish bearing used in the churche', coupled with over thirty years of clerical neglect, would seem to make it as much a case study of

⁶⁵⁵ Jbid, ff. 19v-20; CCALS, ZMB19, M1567-8, f. 73v; *ibid.*, ZMB21, ff. 241, 246; *ibid.* ZMB22, 1578-9 ff. 66. The ZMB references record the civil actions against Aldersey and Fisher.

⁶⁵⁶ BIY, V.1578-9 CB.3, ff. 29v-30; Haigh, 'Church of England', pp. 237-238; Walsham, *Church Papists*, p. 16.

⁶⁵⁷ BIY, V.1578-9 CB.3, f. 30.

⁶⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, V.1590-1, CB.3, quoted in Wark, *Cheshire*, p. 80; CCALS, EDV 1.10, f. 70v.

Haigh's parish Anglicanism, deCatholicised but as yet unProtestantised, as one of survivalism.⁶⁵⁹

Neither of these parishes, nor any of the others cited in this visitation or previously in the records of the 1560s for the maintenance of pre-Reformation practices, proved subsequently to be a centre of post-Reformation Catholicism. Personal indicators of conservative traditionalism, such as the possession of rosaries and Latin Primers, and the continuance of rites for the dead, are relatively frequent in the pre-1580 records, but thereafter diminish to a trickle, as the generation reared in the Henrician variant of Catholicism died off.⁶⁶⁰

The sources of the 1560s and 1570s shows only very limited correlation with those of the 1580s onwards. Some prominent later recidivists appear here, notably the Wirral gentry Hocknell, Hough and Whitmore, but the subsequent geographical distribution of Catholicism in the county is not pre-figured. In particular there are no cases from Bunbury, and only one from Malpas, which were to be bastions of recusancy in the latter half of Elizabeth's reign.⁶⁶¹ As will be seen, however, other evidence from these decades helps to contextualise the development of a distinctly post-Reformation style and distribution of Catholicism after 1580.

⁶⁵⁹ Haigh, 'Church of England', p. 253.

⁶⁶⁰ BIY, V.1578-9, ff. 8v, 19-20; CCALS, EDV 1.7, f. 13. Eight individuals were presented on such charges at the 1578 visitation, but only one in the course of the three visitations of the 1580s, for 'praying to the xii apostles.'

⁶⁶¹ Wark, *Cheshire*, pp. 152, 153, 169-170 provides prosopographies of Hocknell, Hough and Whitmore.

2.1.2 The 1580s

Following the introduction of anti-recusancy legislation in 1581, Catholics appear regularly before the county Quarter Sessions and, from 1584, the Assizes.⁶⁶² In these civil records the pattern of geographical distribution that was to persist through the early modern era begins to emerge, though not its scale.

Table 2.1: Major civil presentments by hundred by session, 1581-8*					
Deanery	1581-3	1582-1	1584-1	1587-1	1587-2
Court	QS	QS	QS	AZ	AZ
Parish					
Broxton	5	23	12	14	11
Malpas	5	21	10	9	8
other	0	2	2	5	3
Bucklow	0	0	0	0	0
Eddisbury	4	5	2	4	7
Bunbury	3	5	2	4	6
other	1	0	0	0	1
Macclesfield	0	4	0	0	0
Nantwich	6	2	0	0	1
Northwich	2	1	0	0	1
Wirral	7	9	3	3	6
Totals	24	44	17	21	26
		1582-1	1583-4		1588
Chester City (all QS)		4	3		7

* The year suffixes in the headings are the session numbers. There were four Quarter Sessions and two sessions of the Assize each year, the cycle commencing in April / May. Figures exclude presentees from outside the county or of unknown origin.

Sources : Wark, *Cheshire* (for QS), NA, CHES 21/1 (for Assize)

As Table 2.1 above shows, Catholic delinquency is principally to be found in a ribbon running down the county's western fringe, from the Wirral peninsula in the north through the county town of Chester, reaching its greatest concentration in the south-western parishes of Malpas and neighbouring Bunbury. To understand the reasons for this distribution, we need to revisit fragments of evidence from the preceding two decades.

⁶⁶² CALS, QJB and NA, CHES 21 series.

A probable differentiator in both Bunbury and Malpas was the long-term presence of recusant pre-Reformation clergy.⁶⁶³ John Bushell had been a chantry priest of the collegiate church at Bunbury, and was reported as living in the parish in Downham's return to the Privy Council of 1577.⁶⁶⁴ The Malpas parish register records the burial of 'an Ould priest from Cholmley' in 1574, and John Maddocks, described in a state paper of 1585 as 'an olde poore fellow and malicious, but no Seminarye' was certainly resident in the parish in 1582, when he was involved in the celebration of a mass in a farmhouse there, and probably for a long time before.⁶⁶⁵ A priest of that name was the Henrician curate of the neighbouring parish of Tilston, and may well subsequently have been the eponymous village schoolmaster of Malpas who refused the oath of allegiance in 1563.⁶⁶⁶

The Quarter Sessions figures for 1581 (in Table 2.1 above) also show a cluster of absentees in the Nantwich hundred, to the south and east of Bunbury, and there had been a batch of non-communicants in Nantwich at the visitation of 1578, the only cluster in the survey outside the cathedral city.⁶⁶⁷ These also may reflect the presence of the area of another recusant priest, Thomas Houghton. Ordained in the last year of Mary's reign, Houghton served curacies at Marbury, in the extreme south of the county, and then at Warmingham, to the north of Nantwich, until the mid 1560s.⁶⁶⁸ At the Provincial Visitation of 1578 he was presented as an absentee and non-communicant from the parish of Wrenbury, 'where he doth make his most abode', suggesting that he was perhaps operating a mass

⁶⁶³ There may well have been other recusant clergy who remained close to their erstwhile cures, record of whom has not survived. Haigh, *Lancashire*, pp. 214, 334 notes a gap from 1561 to 1569 and sporadic subsequent entries in the institutions act book for Chester diocese (CCALS, EDA1), which severely limits the evidence of early Elizabethan deprivations or resignations of conservative clergy, and hence the pool of recusant clerics. Cox, 'Reformation responses', pp. 333-4 notes one of them, Randle Antrobus of Great Budworth, but he was reported to be inactive by 1570, and died in 1576.

⁶⁶⁴ NA, SP 12/118 f. 49, reproduced in *Miscellanea*, CRS 22 (1921); Wark, *Cheshire*, p. 133.

⁶⁶⁵ CALS, P21/3607/1/1, f. 28v; *ibid.*, QSF 12/1, no. 1, f. 1; NA, SP 12/195, f. 129v.

⁶⁶⁶ CALS, EDV 1.3, f. 23; Cox, 'Reformation Responses', p. 335.

⁶⁶⁷ BIY, V.1578-9 CB.3, f. 10v.

⁶⁶⁸ Cox, 'Reformation Responses', p. 334.

circuit in the Nantwich hundred.⁶⁶⁹ Equally, the sharp and sustained decline in the Nantwich presentments at the spring sessions of 1582 may be a consequence of Houghton's arrest the previous year.⁶⁷⁰

Thus the surviving evidence from south-west Cheshire would seem to illustrate Haigh's assertion of the importance of pre-Reformation clergy in keeping the old faith alive and laying foundations on which the seminary priests could subsequently build.⁶⁷¹ In Bunbury, however, seigneurial patronage may also have been a factor in the formation of a Catholic community. The parish's Easter Books for 1590, detailing the payments due for each household in each of the constituent thirteen townships, show that the largest liabilities were incurred by three elite families with a significant Catholic membership.⁶⁷² Of these, the Spurstows of Spurstow would seem the likeliest source of protection: Philip Spurstow and his nephews Peter and Richard all appeared in national lists of leading recusants by 1586, and thirty-four of the thirty-eight presentees from Bunbury up to 1590 hailed from Spurstow and its neighbouring townships.⁶⁷³ In contrast, the octogenarian Lady Beeston was the only presentee from Beeston township in those years: the remaining presentees of the period were the obdurate recusant Lady Mary Egerton, her successor George Egerton, and one yeoman, all of Ridley.⁶⁷⁴ The deaths of Philip Spurstow in 1586 and of Peter a decade later would also explain why Bunbury's subsequent Catholicism seems to lack seigneurial leadership.⁶⁷⁵

⁶⁶⁹ BIY, V.1578-9 CB.3, f. 10.

⁶⁷⁰ Wark, *Cheshire*, p. 176.

⁶⁷¹ Haigh, 'Continuity', esp. pp. 191-192.

⁶⁷² CALS, DCR/27/3, unnumbered. Of the four householders with the highest dues, three - Lady Egerton of Ridley (13/-), Sir George Beeston (6/7d) and either Peter or Richard Spurstowe of Spurstow (5/1d) - were all either recusants themselves or, in the case of Sir George, had a recusant wife.⁶⁷² See Wark, *Cheshire*, pp. 140, 148, 164-165 for prosopographies of these individuals.

⁶⁷³ Wark, *Cheshire*, pp. 164-165 for the Spurstows. The neighbouring townships were Alpraham, Bunbury, Calveley, Tilstone Fearnall and Tiverton. See *ibid.*, pp. 139, 142-145, 150, 154, 156-158, 160, 163-165, 167, 171, 174 for the prosopographies of the presentees from these townships.

⁶⁷⁴ See *ibid.*, pp. 140, 147-148, 166 for prosopographies of these individuals.

⁶⁷⁵ Ormerod, *Cheshire*, II, p. 158; NA, E377/05, m. 28.

Plebeian dominance seems certainly to have been the case in neighbouring Malpas. Here we are fortunate to have the sources to enable the construction of a Geertzian ‘thick description’ from the examinations of those charged with attending the masses there that were intercepted by the authorities in 1582 and 1586.⁶⁷⁶ Several indicators may be noted. Firstly, both of the masses took place in the houses of local yeomen (in the case of that of 1582, which had twenty-two attendees, in a hay loft), and the enquiries of 1582 revealed that a similar celebration had taken place nearby two years earlier. Secondly, all the congregation was of the middling and humbler sort, predominantly formed from the local farming community, together with the village blacksmith and a couple of servants: the local Catholic elite families, the Dods of Edge, the Golbornes of Overton and the Breretons of Shocklach, were all conspicuous by their absence. These families were recusant in the distaff side only, and their religious practices may have been more circumspect and closeted. Thirdly, the coincidence of the 1582 and 1586 masses both taking place on the Tuesday of Holy Week is unlikely to have been simply that: rather it would seem that both occasions were the fulfilment of the annual Easter obligation to be shriven and receive the Sacrament, which given the scarcity of priestly manpower might have of necessity to be shifted over a long timeframe straddling the festival itself to ensure the coverage of scattered communities. The venues for the three masses – Randle Probin’s house in 1580, Roger Yardley’s in 1582, and then that of Randle’s son Edward – have the whiff of the responsibility for hosting an annual event rotating among the more prominent of the local yeomanry.

In contrast to these examples from the southern end of the shire, it would seem that a concentration of Catholic gentry was the key determinant of the survival of Catholicism in the Wirral peninsula, in the extreme north-east of the county. The recusant triumvirate of

⁶⁷⁶ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (2nd. edn, New York, 2000), pp. 412-453. Geertz coined the term ‘thick description’ to denote a particularly rich and detailed piece of ethnography, such as he was able to produce for a cockfight in Bali. Howard Barlow, ‘A “lewd company” at prayer: plebeian Catholics in Elizabethan Cheshire’, *THSLC* 167 (2018), pp. 18-45 contains detailed source references for this paragraph.

John Whitmore of Thurstaston and William Hough of Leighton, at either end of the Dee bank of the peninsula, and of John Hocknell of Prenton on the Mersey bank, was troubling the authorities at an early stage. Hough, Whitmore and their respective wives account for four of the eight names on Downham's derisory return of 1576, and all are marked 'obstinate', in contrast to two of the other four, both women, who are deemed 'conformable'.⁶⁷⁷ In Downham's slightly longer return of the following year, which the two men head, they are joined by Hocknell.⁶⁷⁸ And to this trio should be added the church papist families of Massey and Stanley, at the southern end of each bank respectively: these will be discussed at greater length in the following sub-section of this chapter.

In 1581 all three men were imprisoned in Chester Castle, and spent most of the remainder of their lives in custody.⁶⁷⁹ Hough and Hocknell were transferred to the New Fleet prison in Salford around the end of that year. Hough died there in 1585, when Hocknell was transferred to the London Fleet and was at liberty on recognizances: in 1589 he was charged with the dissemination of a false prophecy relating to the Queen and returned to Chester Castle, where he died the following year from an injury inflicted by his jailer with a pitchfork.⁶⁸⁰ And whilst Whitmore's initial incarceration in the Castle was brief, he was a permanent inmate from 1584 to 1597.⁶⁸¹ All three men had their lands sequestrated, Hough in 1584, Hocknell in 1585, and Whitmore in 1587.⁶⁸²

Wark posited that the severe treatment meted out to this trio may have had a deterrent effect upon their clients, inhibiting the spread of recusancy in their respective bailiwicks. He concluded that 'the importance of the gentry in the development of recusancy is less obvious in the Wirral than in the south-west', pointing out that over the Elizabethan period as a whole

⁶⁷⁷ BL, Harley MS 360, f. 68.

⁶⁷⁸ NA, SP 12/118 f. 49, reproduced in *Miscellanea*, CRS 22 (1921), pp. 68-69.

⁶⁷⁹ Wark, *Cheshire*, p. 27.

⁶⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 152-153.

⁶⁸¹ NA, CHES 21/1, ff. 114v-187v *passim*.

⁶⁸² NA, E377/1, reproduced in Mary Calthorp (ed.), *Recusant Roll No. 1, 1592-3*, CRS 18 (1916), pp. 20-21.

recusants from half a dozen elite families there outnumbered all of those from the lower orders.⁶⁸³ The figures for Wirral in Table 2.1 are in fact higher than those for other areas of the county (other than Malpas), and include nine plebeian recusants, four from the Hocknell bailiwick of Woodchurch, another from nearby Bebington, and four more from West Kirby and neighbouring Thurstaston, seat of John Whitmore, as well as the two gentlemen and their spouses.⁶⁸⁴ Paul Booth has, moreover, noted that Wirral presentments at Quarter Sessions generally (not just for Catholic offences) are proportionately fewer than those from the rest of the county (a phenomenon which he posits as reflective of the influence of the Catholic Massey-Stanley axis on the bench).⁶⁸⁵ Given this observation, together with the Jacobean flowering of recusancy in Eastham, where the Stanleys and Pooles resided (see 2.2.1 below), the figures would seem to suggest emerging plebeian Catholic strength. Seigneurial support would seem to have been critical to the survival of Catholicism in Wirral, although given the particularly early evidence of delinquency there, only two years after the first missionary returned to England in 1574, the support of unknown recusant clergy must also have been a factor.

The final area of Catholic presence during the 1580s, Chester, was as the county town the epicentre of the other geographies discussed. By the mid-1580s, the jail in Chester Castle was serving a focal point for recusancy, if not before: the presence there from 1577 to 1581 of the heavyweight John Culpage, who had been appointed to confer with the Protestant martyr John Bradford during Mary's reign, may have been influential.⁶⁸⁶ When the seminary priest Thomas Holford was imprisoned there in 1585, at least fifteen people, including members of the jailer's family and visitors to the prison, attended one of the three masses he

⁶⁸³ Wark, *Cheshire*, p. 133.

⁶⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 139, 143, 149, 152-153, 156-158, 168-169 for prosopographies of the thirteen.

⁶⁸⁵ Paul Booth (ed.), *Select Documents for Local and Family Historians in the Chester Quarter Sessions Files* (2 vols., unpublished, date not recorded), p. 2. I am very grateful to Dr. Booth for a copy of this private document.

⁶⁸⁶ Wark, *Cheshire*, pp. 174-175.

is known to have celebrated there.⁶⁸⁷ Holford's relations with his captors were cordial, and three years later John Whitmore seems to have benefited from similar laxity, intruding a priest into the prison to say mass.⁶⁸⁸

Evidence of the presence of Catholic clergy during this period, particularly seminary priests, is very slight, but such as there is suggests that a number felt it worth their while to at least include the city in their circuits. In 1592 the enquiries of the Ecclesiastical Commission for Chester City established that four had been in the vicinity of the city within the previous three or four years, including Whitmore's visitor.⁶⁸⁹ As the north's principal port for Ireland, Chester was subject to a high volume of through traffic: emigrant would-be seminarians were intercepted there on three occasions in the 1590s.⁶⁹⁰ In addition, rural Catholic gentry like the Masseys of Waverton probably maintained town houses in the city.⁶⁹¹

Chester's Catholic population was more substantial than the fifteen presentments reflected in Table 2.1 might suggest: the reported congregation at Holford's mass in the prison alone numbers as many, though all of them avoided indictment.⁶⁹² In addition to these, Fulk Aldersey appeared before the Ecclesiastical Commission in 1581; Robert Browne, the jailer's son and a convert of Holford's, was imprisoned in the Northgate for recusancy for several years; and Ralph Langton was interrogated in connection with Hocknell's 'treasonable words'.⁶⁹³ Given the traffic through and population turnover in the city, the Catholic presence in Chester is hardly surprising, though the resultant ease of hiding there means that the record understates it.

⁶⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 61.

⁶⁸⁸ Ibid., pp. 61-62, 71.

⁶⁸⁹ Ibid., pp. 99-100.

⁶⁹⁰ Ibid., pp. 108-114.

⁶⁹¹ Ibid., p. 90. The inclusion of Margaret Massey of Waverton within the scope of the Chester City High Commission's enquiries in 1592 is suggestive of this.

⁶⁹² Ibid., pp. 138, 139, 141, 156, 161, 168, 170, 172 provides prosopographies of the ten individuals presented.

⁶⁹³ Ibid., pp. 138, 142, 155.

2.1.3 *Church papists*

The above discussion has largely been concerned with the early recusants of the 1580s: what of their conformist contemporaries, the church papists? Their prominence in the visitation return of 1578 has been noted above, and other circumstantial evidence indicates that church papists outnumbered recusants, at least among the gentry.

A state paper of the early 1580s relating to Cheshire contains '[t]he names of the gentlemen whose houses are greatlie infected with popery and not loked unto.'⁶⁹⁴ Of the thirteen names listed, Wark correctly observes that only three – Hugh Bromley of Malpas, who regularly appears in the record from the survey of 1577 onwards, Lady Egerton of Ridley, presented in 1581, and Richard Massey of Aldford, who was imprisoned in 1584 - were recusant.⁶⁹⁵ The evidence cited in the report, however, points to four church papists among the others. It notes that Sir Randolph Brereton of Shocklach 'himself, his house and family never come at the church, and yet, notwithstanding, at the assizes time with the Justices, and at Sermons' – a stratagem which Haigh observed amongst the Catholics of the Fylde - and John Massey of nearby Coddington 'hath not communycated all this Quene's tyme.' Sir Piers Legh is an example of the head of the household ticking the conformist box alone: he 'never communycateth' whereas 'his famylie greatlie corrupted, come not at Churche.' In contrast the family of George Massey of Puddington all towed the church papist party line: 'neither he or they doe at any tyme communicate.'

The language of the paper ('grevously infected', 'vehemently infected', 'greatlie corrupted') points to an anti-Catholic bias on the author's part, as does the logic of its second part, '[t]he names of suche Justices of Peace not knowen to be of any religion, and therefore suspected to be Papistes.' Yet the author is careful not to overstate his case, and other

⁶⁹⁴ NA, SP 15/27/2, f. 170.

⁶⁹⁵ Wark, *Cheshire*, p. 50.

circumstantial evidence points to the substance of his charges. The recusancy of Brereton's wife, a Throckmorton of Coughton, led to his dismissal from the Commission of the Peace in 1587.⁶⁹⁶ It was the Massey bailiwick of Coddington that still had its rood loft intact in 1592, when Massey's wife Mary was presented for recusancy.⁶⁹⁷ Legh was married to a daughter of the Lancashire Catholic Tyldesley family: of their sons, one probably become a seminary priest, another emigrated to Rome as a Catholic, and a third was on Burghley's radar for recusancy.⁶⁹⁸ And the Massey of Puddington household, though technically conformist, certainly had their own domestic worship facilities by 1598, when George's younger brother and his wife were presented for non-communication at their parish church of Backford: his response was that he 'receyved at Potington, his brother's house.'⁶⁹⁹

Strong circumstantial evidence of Catholicism in other sources for four of the remaining six gentry listed should be noted, though the references in the document to their absence from church point to undetected recusancy rather than church papistry. The family of William Davenport of Bramhall were reported here and separately as fugitives in Westmorland: his wife was recusant in 1591, and it is possible that two of their sons trained as priests abroad.⁷⁰⁰ Mary, the wife of William Tatton of Northenden, had been included in Downham's 1576 list of eight leading recusants, and the son of John Dutton of Dutton had been educated abroad, possibly in Rome, as the document states.⁷⁰¹ Roland Dutton of Hatton's mother was a Townshend, a prominent Lancashire Catholic family, his sister Alice Starkey was subsequently recusant, and his house had been raided by the authorities in 1581 in a search for the Jesuit ringleader Edmund Campion.⁷⁰² None of the patriarchs of these four

⁶⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 179.

⁶⁹⁷ CCALS, EDV 1.10, ff. 22v, 53.

⁶⁹⁸ Wark, *Cheshire*, p. 180.

⁶⁹⁹ CCALS, EDV 1.12a, f. 29v.

⁷⁰⁰ NA, SP 12/27 f. 94; *ibid.*, CHES 21/1, f. 156v; Wark, *Cheshire*, p. 175.

⁷⁰¹ BL, Harley MS 360, f. 68; NA, SP 12/27 f. 94.

⁷⁰² Wark, *Cheshire*, pp. 23-24, 179-180.

families, however, were ever presented before the authorities. No evidence survives to substantiate the inclusion of the remaining two names on the list.⁷⁰³

As noted in the last section, Massey and Sir Rowland Stanley were influential among the Wirral magistrates, and the latter appears amongst the seven Justices listed in the second part of the document. Though Stanley's Protestant credentials remained unblemished until his death at the age of ninety-six in 1613, the unquestionable Catholicism of his immediate family would seem to call them into question (his eldest son surrendered the Netherlands town of Deventer to the Spanish in 1587, and two others became Jesuits).⁷⁰⁴ Stanley's pre-Reformation formative years (he was in his forties when Elizabeth came to the throne) would also seem suggestive of Catholic sympathies, as would John Hocknell's confiding in him the 'false prophecies' (that Mary Tudor had a male heir) for which the latter was imprisoned in 1589.⁷⁰⁵ Stanley quickly disassociated himself from the incident: he would appear to have been a wily operator, which perhaps explains his clean track record. Other justices listed as suspect were Stanley's neighbour, John Poole, and the Vice-Chamberlain of Chester, William Glaseour: though there is no contemporary evidence against them, we may note that like the Masseys and Stanleys, the Pooles moved into recusancy in the early Stuart years, and that the Glaseours were delinquent on the distaff side from the 1590s onwards.⁷⁰⁶ Similarly, another two of the seven justices, both named Thomas Leigh, were sons respectively of Alice Starkey of Oulton, whose family emerged into recusancy in the 1590s, and of the obdurately recusant Lady Egerton. Equally, though, this may be no more than a case of guilt by association. No known evidence, however, substantiates the inclusion of the last two justices.⁷⁰⁷

⁷⁰³ Manley of Poulton and Massey of Sale.

⁷⁰⁴ Albert Loomie, *The Spanish Elizabethans: The English Exiles at the Court of Philip II* (New York, 1963), p. 141; Wark, *Cheshire*, p. 177.

⁷⁰⁵ Wark, *Cheshire*, pp. 72, 182.

⁷⁰⁶ See section 2.2.1 below.

⁷⁰⁷ Sir Richard Buckley and Thomas Vernon of Haslington.

2.1.4 The decline of conservative traditionalism?

Another mid-Elizabethan survey source is similarly indicative of a Catholic penumbra amongst the county's gentry. Too much weight should not perhaps not be placed upon the slightly earlier 'Note of the disposition of the gentlemen of Cheshire, how they are affected in religion' of around 1579-80, with its subjective, multiple choice classification of 'well-affected', 'neutral', 'weak', 'cold' and 'recusant', though three points merit note.⁷⁰⁸ Firstly, the granularity is distributed to the right of the continuum, with no gradations separating 'well-affected' and 'neutral', suggesting perhaps a perception of limited Protestant penetration. And secondly, whilst the 'recusant' category is small, containing only three of the eighty-three names listed – the diehards Hough, Hocknell and John Whitmore, who were shortly to be imprisoned - the 'cold' category is six times the size (eighteen).

Lastly, though, the survey can be read in the context of other similar exercises, both earlier and later, as a snapshot of the erosion of a vaguer traditionalist allegiance, such as McCulloch observed amongst the Catholic gentry of Suffolk, which shrank from a widespread group of conservatives in the late 1560s down to a recusant rump by 1590.⁷⁰⁹ Downham's report to the Privy Council of 1564 on the allegiances of the city and county justices, who can reasonably be regarded as a representative subset of the gentry class overall, identified almost half of them as hostile to the Elizabethan settlement, whereas this survey places only a quarter of a larger group of gentry (twenty-one of eighty-three) in the 'cold' or 'recusant' categories.⁷¹⁰ In a further listing of justices from 1587, less than a sixth (six of thirty-eight) are differentiated by the absence of a marginal annotation. The significance of

⁷⁰⁸ NA, SP 12/165, f. 77, quoted verbatim in *Cheshire Sheaf*, 3rd series, 5 (1903), pp. 113-114.

⁷⁰⁹ Diarmuid MacCulloch, 'Catholic and Puritan in Elizabethan Suffolk: A country community polarises', *Archiv für Reformationgeschichte* 72 (1981), pp. 232-289, pp. 248-250.

⁷¹⁰ Mary Bateson (ed.), 'Letters from the Bishops to the Privy Council, 1564', pp. 73-76.

this not stated, though the known Catholic affiliations of four of the six exceptions (Massey, Stanley, Poole and Beeston) point to religion as the distinguishing factor.⁷¹¹

Examination of individual cases would, however, substantially qualify the above interpretation. Only six of the seventeen ‘unfavourables’ on the 1564 list have any track record of religious delinquency: William Aldersey of Chester, who features consistently in the record from his listing by Downham in 1577 through to his death around 1590; Davenport of Bramhall, Dutton of Dutton, Leigh of Lyme and Massey of Puddington all discussed above; and Tatton of Wythenshawe, whose spouse is regularly presented up to 1591.⁷¹² Similarly, only five of the eighteen ‘cold’ individuals on the 1579-80 list showed any evidence of Catholic inclinations: Massey of Coddington, Massey of Puddington, Stanley and Tatton, all discussed above, together with Thomas Starkey of Stretton, who was presented as a non-communicant for two years at the visitation of 1592.⁷¹³ There is no significant evidence to substantiate the inclusion of Sir John Savage, whose grandson was to be the most prominent Catholic of Caroline Cheshire, in the ‘cold’ list.⁷¹⁴

The fact that all the families noted in this section, from both the 1564 and 1579-80 lists, retained their Catholic credentials down to 1590, suggests that there is no significant evidence of a loosely conservative group of gentry shrinking to a smaller, more hard-line one, as the Suffolk gentry did, though the dearth of data from the first two Elizabethan decades precludes a definitive judgement. Of those who featured in Downham’s returns of 1576 and 1577, two disappeared from the record by the early 1580s, but the remainder and/or their

⁷¹¹ BL, Lansdowne 53/86 f. 180. The other two exceptions are Richard Cotton and George Delves.

⁷¹² Wark, *Cheshire*, p. 159.

⁷¹³ CCALS, EDV 1.10, f. 62v.

⁷¹⁴ Wark, *Cheshire*, p. 23 notes a document of 1580 which lists a Savage among nine Cheshire men whose children were being educated abroad, but as Savage’s family were by then grown up and his eldest surviving grandson was only two years old it would seem highly unlikely that it refers to him; NA, Salisbury MSS, IV, 970, p. 428 notes that in 1593 his daughter married a notorious Lancashire recusant. Lyn Boothman and Richard Hyde-Parker (eds), *Savage Fortune: an aristocratic family in the early seventeenth century* (Woodbridge, 2006), p. xvii state that the family were Catholic in Elizabethan times but acknowledge the lack of supporting evidence. Wark, *Cheshire*, p. 52 concisely summarises the weight of evidence to the contrary.

heirs and successors remain steadfast into the 1590s and in most cases beyond.⁷¹⁵ Such evidence there is of traditionalism in decline comes from two sources, both predominantly plebeian: firstly, the high proportion (two-thirds) of the presentees at the visitation of 1578 who do not recur in the record, especially in Chester; and secondly, the drastic reduction in the volume of presentments for pre-Reformation practices, both as noted at 2.1.1 above.

To conclude this consideration of the early and mid-Elizabethan years, what can be deduced from the evidence discussed above is that by the 1580s a distinctively post-Reformation Catholic presence had emerged in Cheshire. Among them there was a core with track records of presentment for recusancy, but there were probably at least equal numbers, both of undetected recusants and semi-conformist church papists, which were each of at least equal size to the identified recusant population. There is relatively little evidence of the gentry delinquents of the 1560s and 1570s falling away from the old faith during the 1580s, but rather more of the lower orders abandoning conservative traditionalism.

⁷¹⁵ BIY, V.1578-9, CB.3, f. 21 and CCALS, QSF 12/1, no. 10 are the final references in court records for Anne Grosvenor of Eaton and John Birtles of Prestbury respectively, the latter resulting in Birtles's conformity. Wark, *Cheshire*, pp.152-153, 159, 168-170 gives prosopographies for the remaining gentry and their wives (Hocknell, Hough and Whitmore, discussed above, and Richard Massey of Waverton, together with Hough's son-in-law and heir William Whitmore).

2.2 The Catholic population of Cheshire, 1590-1640

Whereas the limited surviving records of the first three Elizabethan decades give at best a one-dimensional view of post-Reformation Catholicism in Cheshire, from 1590 onwards, the evidence abounds. There is a run of episcopal and/or provincial visitation books at roughly three-yearly intervals through to 1634, apart from a small gap in the mid-1610s for which only badly damaged fragments survive, and these are complemented by a continuous series of Crown Books, documenting the biannual activities of the Assize.⁷¹⁶ The volume of this information – over 5,500 cases involving over 2,500 individuals – necessitates multi-faceted statistical analysis to discern patterns and trends in the data, which then require contextualising. But the caveat cannot be too strongly reiterated – the figures from these and other sources such as the Recusant Rolls cannot be treated as censuses. They are crime statistics, with all the limitations of variable efficiency that the volunteer-led policing of the early modern era entailed.

2.2.1 Geographical distribution

Catholic offenders were presented from eighty-five of the county's 100 parishes and free chapelries over the period 1590-1641, and recusants from sixty-six of these.⁷¹⁷ As in the earlier Elizabethan years, these presentments were preponderantly from the west of the county, although some eastwards spread is evident. Wark noted that only twenty-four of the 302 recusants of the Elizabethan period (8 per cent) were located to the east of the river Weaver, which bisects the county, running south-eastwards from Runcorn on the river Mersey to Northwich and then due south to Nantwich.⁷¹⁸ Over the eighty-year period to 1641 this proportion increased to 12.7 per cent (211 of 1,662), and if non-recusant Catholics (not

⁷¹⁶ BIY, V series; CCALS, EDV series; NA, CHES21 series.

⁷¹⁷ BIY V series; CCALS EDV series; NA CHES 21 series, CHES 29/334, E377/10; Dunn, *Ancient Parishes*, pp. 21-34.

⁷¹⁸ Wark, *Cheshire*, p. 132.

enumerated by Wark) are included, to 19 per cent (511 of 2,678). The parochial clusters from the northern hundred of Bucklow and the eastern one of Northwich in Table 2.2 below illustrate this trend. The pattern of concentration in the western hundreds of Broxton, Eddisbury and Wirral and the city of Chester persisted, with these four areas accounting for over two-thirds (1,693) over the known Catholics, but it was accompanied by another trend of gradual outward diffusion from the south-western heartland.

Fig. 2.1
Known
Catholics by
hundred,
1592

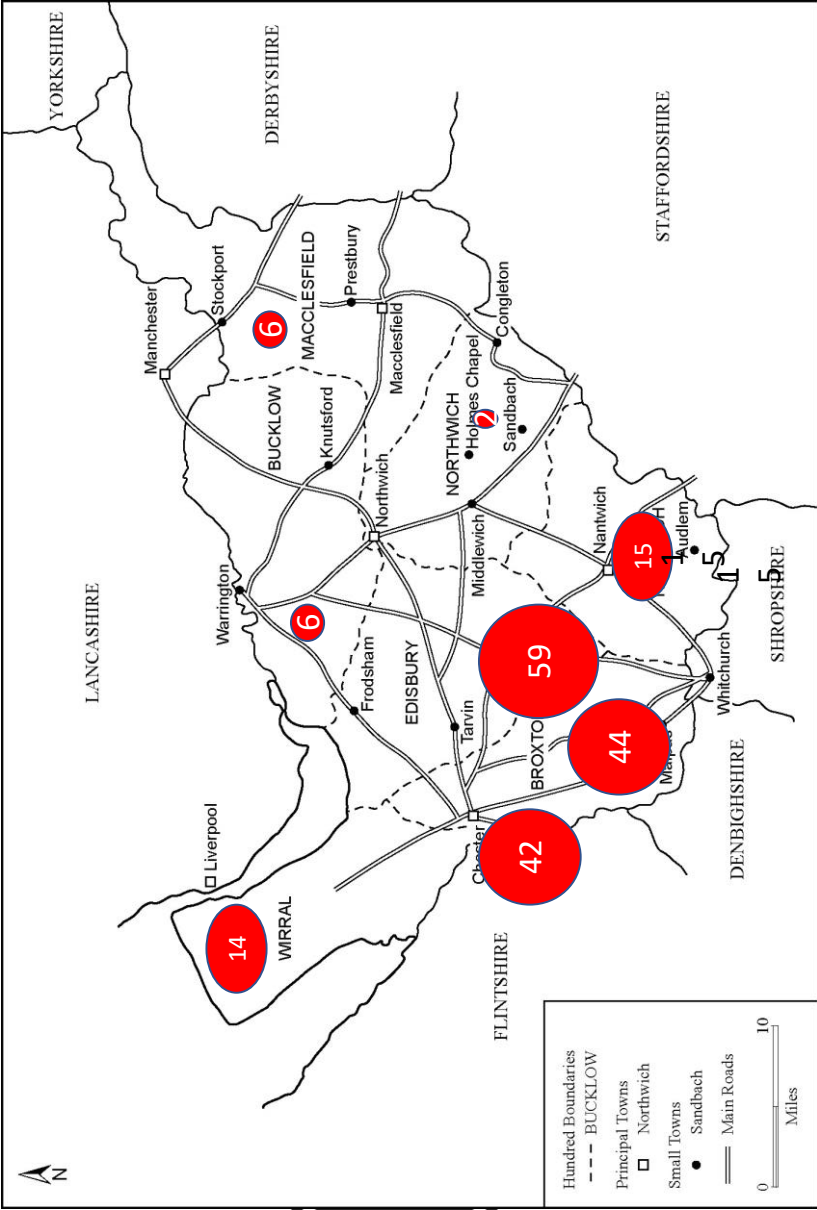


Fig. 2.2
Known
Catholics by
hundred,
1641

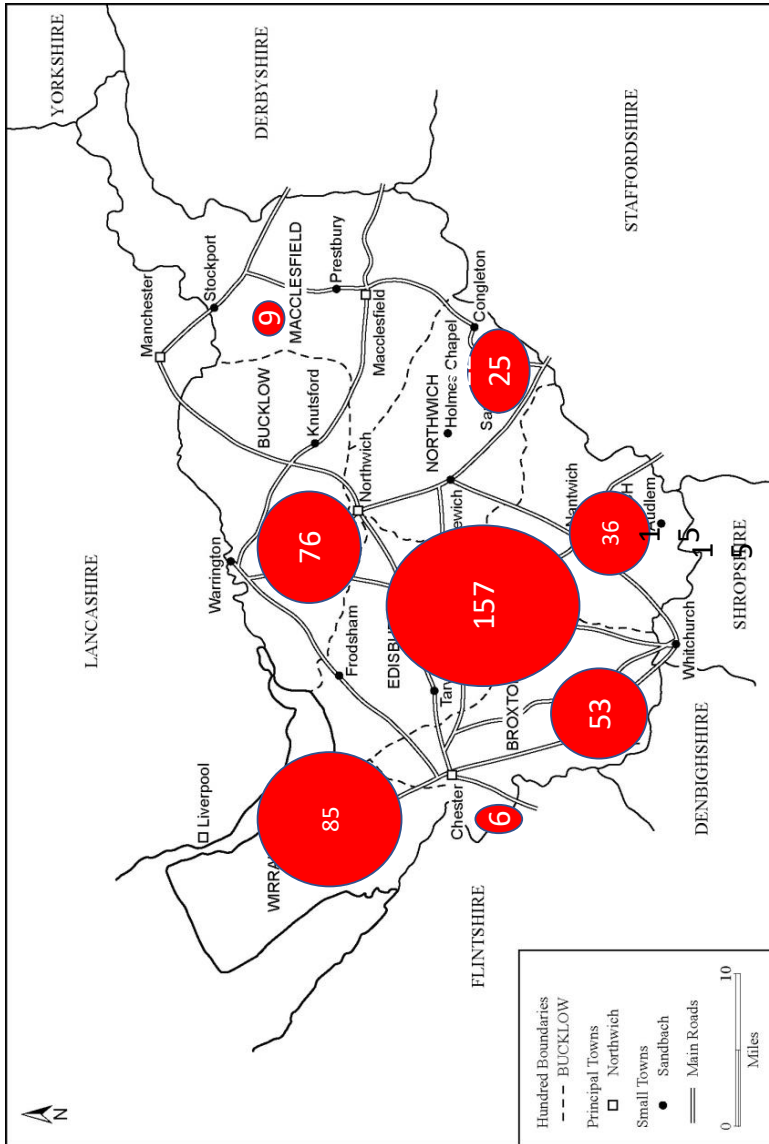


Table 2.2: Parishes with more than 20 Catholics over the period 1590-1641				
<i>Hundred</i>	<i>Parish</i>	<i>Catholics 1590-1640</i>	<i>Recusants 1590-1640</i>	<i>&age recs. of Caths.</i>
Broxton	Malpas	137	130	95%
	Tattenhall	71	32	45%
	Waverton	42	9	21%
Bucklow	Rostherne	50	25	50%
	Daresbury	38	32	84%
	Great Budworth	36	24	67%
	Runcorn	31	30	97%
	Grappenhall	24	13	54%
	Bowdon	23	10	43%
Chester	Chester	284	65	23%
Eddisbury	Bunbury	517	499	97%
	Over	62	50	81%
	Tarporley	59	47	80%
	Little Budworth	43	40	93%
	Whitegate	23	12	52%
	Tarvin	20	11	55%
Macclesfield	Stockport	22	4	18%
	Mottram	19	12	63%
Nantwich	Acton	73	61	84%
	Nantwich	70	13	19%
	Marbury	47	39	83%
	Audlem	21	9	43%
Northwich	Astbury	72	39	54%
	Witton	35	7	20%
	Middlewich	29	11	38%
	Davenham	21	9	43%
Wirral	Eastham	130	121	93%
	Neston	56	48	86%
	Burton	29	28	97%
	West Kirby	26	13	50%
	Thurstaston	25	21	84%
	Backford	21	15	71%
Note:	Figures for Chester cover all parishes.			

The epicentre of this spread is Bunbury in Eddisbury hundred, which contained 18.7 per cent of the county's Catholics of this period, almost as many as all the parishes east of the Weaver combined, and over twice as many recusants. Its neighbouring parishes are prominent in the list: Tarporley to the north; Over to the north-east (both also Eddisbury); Acton (Nantwich) to the south-east; Malpas to the south-west; and Tattenhall and Waverton to the north-west (all Broxton hundred). And a concentric circle radiates out further, albeit with a diluted recusant element: from Over to Little Budworth and Whitegate (both Eddisbury), Davenham and Middlewich (both Northwich); from Acton to Nantwich (Nantwich); and from Malpas to Marbury (also Nantwich) in the extreme south.⁷¹⁹

The likelihood that the early Catholicism of Bunbury was planted by a recusant priest was noted above, and its predominantly plebeian characteristics remained unchanged in the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean periods, exemplified in the case of the Cheswis family. The widow Alice Cheswis was imprisoned in Chester Castle for recusancy from 1584 to 1597, along with her yeoman sons Richard and William: four of William's children, possibly six, were presented from 1610 onwards, and in 1641 his grandson Edward.⁷²⁰ In total at least nineteen Cheswises from Bunbury were presented as recusants over this period.⁷²¹ In contrast presentments from the Egerton bailiwick of Ridley remained confined to friends and family and the odd household retainer, and Sir Hugh Beeston remained outwardly conformist through to his death in 1626, his outing as a Catholic in the House of Commons two years earlier notwithstanding, though his spouse accrued a conviction for recusancy in 1610.⁷²²

⁷¹⁹ See Dunn, *Ancient Parishes*, map annex.

⁷²⁰ Wark, *Cheshire*, p. 144, for the three prisoners. William's children were Anne (first presentment at NA, CHES 21/2, f. 64v, parentage at NA, CHES 21/3, f. 63), Robert (CHES 21/3, f. 6), Richard (*ibid.*, f. 63) and Agnes (*ibid.*, f. 103v). *Ibid.*, fos 34 and 63v conflict as to whether Thomas and Alice were the children of William or of his son Robert, who was the father of Edward (CALs, QJB 2/6, f. 13v).

⁷²¹ The other Cheswises listed in the record for Bunbury were Jane or Anne, wife of William (CALs, EDV 1.10, f. 92), Elen, widow (NA, CHES 21/2, f. 23), Joan, spinster (*ibid.*, f. 28v), Amy (*ibid.*, f. 89v), Elizabeth, wife of Robert (NA, CHES 21/3, f. 103v), Elen, spinster (*ibid.*, f. 137v), Alice, wife of Thomas (*ibid.*, f. 183), Mary, daughter of Thomas (BIY, V.1633, f. 506) and William (CALs, QJB 2/6, f. 16). Three other possibilities cannot be deduplicated.

⁷²² NA, CHES 21/2, fos. 64, 76; CALs, P40/1/1, f. 169; Bodleian MS Rawl., D1, 100, f. 52.

Greater seigneurial support may, however, have been forthcoming from the 1620s onwards: his granddaughter and heiress Bridget, the dowager Lady Somerset, appears regularly in the records from 1624 onwards, when she was presented at the Assizes alongside a group of seven plebeian Catholics from Beeston ‘all dwelling in Sir Hugh Beeston’s house.’⁷²³ The Bunbury parish register for March 1640-1 also records the burial of an anonymous ‘recusant from the lodge in Peckforton, known to be a popish priest’: his residence halfway between the two elite Catholic households of the parish suggests a degree of independence from whichever was his patron, rather than a household chaplaincy.⁷²⁴

The evidence of the masses celebrated in neighbouring Malpas during the 1580s indicate that its Catholicism was sustained by the efforts of missionary priests, notably from over the Welsh border, and during that decade its volume of presentments exceeded that of Bunbury (see Table 2.1 above).⁷²⁵ Though Malpas remained a major bastion of Catholicism down to the Civil War, it did not see anything like the subsequent growth in numbers enjoyed by its neighbour (see Table 2.2).⁷²⁶ Its lack of seigneurial protection, discussed at 2.1.2 above, coupled with the shrinkage of the Welsh mission at the end of the sixteenth century, would seem a possible explanation.⁷²⁷

Elsewhere in the parishes adjoining Bunbury, clusters of recusants emerged in the early Jacobean years in Acton parish, particularly in the township of Faddiley.⁷²⁸ Here again a seigneurial element was absent (Faddiley was the bailiwick of the moderate Puritan Sir Richard Wilbraham of Woodhey).⁷²⁹ In Tattenhall Randolph Wilson, who straddled the gentry-yeomanry divide, was the most prominent figure from the final Elizabethan years

⁷²³ NA, CHES 21/3, f. 103.

⁷²⁴ CALS, P40/1/1, p. 184; Dunn, *Ancient Parishes*, map annex.

⁷²⁵ Barlow, *Lewd company*, pp. 29-30.

⁷²⁶ CCALS, QJB 2/6, fos. 10v, 11, 13v, 14v. See Figures 1.1 and 1.2 in Chapter 1 for a list of Elizabethan prisoners.

⁷²⁷ Mullett, *Catholics in Britain and Ireland*, p. 32.

⁷²⁸ NA, CHES 21/2, fos. 35, 38.

⁷²⁹ *Ibid.*; Ormerod, *Cheshire*, III, pp. 196-199; *Morrill*, Cheshire, p. 47.

through to the 1630s, but no other delinquents were identified as gentry.⁷³⁰ The pattern is similar in Tarporley: the yeoman John Young appeared in the recusant lists regularly from 1605 onwards, but from 1628 was presented separately alongside a handful of the county elite (among them Stanley, Poole of Poole and Egerton of Ridley) twice yearly at the Assizes.⁷³¹

But in contrast to these numerous examples of plebeian Catholicism in the south-western quadrant of the county there are two communities which appear to have developed around the leadership of the gentry, the Starkeys of Over and the Pooles of Marbury. John Starkey and his wife, the aforementioned Alice nee Dutton, were presented for absence and non-communication from the late 1590s onwards, and Alice for recusancy from 1610, though the male heir line avoided the greater charge until the 1620s, when the next two generations appeared at the Assize alongside with their household priest and schoolmaster.⁷³² The family seem to have been instrumental in the Catholic revival of the neighbouring parishes: their son Hugh was noted as a papist when he led the defence of Little Budworth's festive culture at Petertide 1596, and he and his wife were the first Catholic presentees from Whitegate parish, at the visitation of 1601, though humbler families like the Handys, the Darlingtones and the Billingtons (the last of whom provided Hugh's accomplice in 1596) sustained the tradition after Hugh's early death.⁷³³

In Marbury on the Shropshire border, William Poole and his brother Richard were the proto-recusants at the Assize of 1591, and remained active into the 1620s, by which time the

⁷³⁰ CCALS, EDV 1.12b, f. 43v describes Wilson as a gentleman but NA, CHES 21/2, f. 63v as a yeoman. His final appearance in the record is at EDV 5.3, unnumbered.

⁷³¹ NA, CHES 21/2, f. 28v; *ibid.*, CHES 21/3, fos. 173v, 179, 188, 193, 199, 208v, 216v, 227, 237, 246, 254v, 264v, 275v, 287, 318v, 341, 352v.

⁷³² BIY, V.1595-6 CB.2, f. 15; CCALS, EDV 1.12a, f. 60v; NA, CHES 21/2, f. 64v; CCALS, EDV 1.17, fos. 82v, 83; *ibid.*, EDV 1.19, f. 26 and EDV 1.22, f. 22; NA, CHES 21/3, fos. 104v, 113. Ormerod, *Cheshire*, II, p. 103-105 notes that the succession passed to John's youngest son Henry.

⁷³³ Steve Hindle, 'Custom, Festival and Protest in Early Modern England: The Little Budworth Wakes, St. Peter's Day, 1596', *Rural History* 2 (1995), pp. 155-178, p. 168; CCALS, EDV 1.12b, f. 73. Ormerod, *Cheshire*, p. 105 states that Hugh died in 1588, although the above evidence coupled with NA, CHES 21/2, f. 28 points to a date after 1605.

next generation of Pooles had picked up the baton: in 1641 some of them are to be found in neighbouring Audlem parish.⁷³⁴ At the visitation of 1595 the brothers were joined by William's wife and two household servants, but only by a more socially inclusive group of presentees from 1605 onwards.⁷³⁵ Both here and in the Starkey bailiwicks, Sheils's observation on the Jacobean East Riding of Yorkshire, that '[t]he story was not so much of withdrawal into a seigneurial sect as one of outreach from secure bases' would seem to apply.⁷³⁶

A similar albeit delayed and faltering pattern is observable further north in the Wirral parish of Eastham, which over the period was second only to Bunbury in its Catholic numbers. In 1592 its presentees comprised Lady Elizabeth Stanley, wife of the betrayer of Deventer, her daughter and granddaughter, and another gentry wife.⁷³⁷ Presentments remained gentry dominated through to 1613, when five non-gentry appear; in 1625-6, when Elizabeth Stanley's grandson William returned from his twenty year exile with her in the Netherlands, and both he and John Poole are recusant, there are twenty-one non-gentry; and in 1641 thirty-two.⁷³⁸ The expansion of Eastham's Catholic population in the 1620s may be attributable to the residence at Hooton in those years of Humphrey Leach, an influential convert Jesuit priest who is known to have reclaimed for Rome a young schismatic who himself subsequently became a priest.⁷³⁹

Leach may well also have ministered in Puddington, several miles west on the other side of the peninsula, since his house is noted as 'owned by one Massie', though there is no parallel evidence of successful evangelisation.⁷⁴⁰ Only half a dozen recusants and one non-

⁷³⁴ NA, CHES 21/1, f. 156v and CHES 21/2, f. 64; CCALS, EDV 1.26, f. 38v

⁷³⁵ BIY, V.1595-6 CB.2, f. 10; NA, CHES 21/2, fos. 23, 28v; CCALS, EDV 1.14, f. 55.

⁷³⁶ Sheils, 'Jacobean Recusants', p. 148.

⁷³⁷ CCALS, EDV 1.10, fos. 38v, 39.

⁷³⁸ NA, CHES 21/2, f. 89v, CHES 21/3, fos. 134, 134v; CCALS, ZCR63/2/7/1..

⁷³⁹ Anstruther, *Seminary Priests*, II, p. 188; Henry Foley (ed.), *Records of the English Province of the Society of Jesus: Historic Facts Illustrative of the Labours and Sufferings of its Members in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (7 vols, London, 1875-1909), I, p.647 for the prosopography of John Gardiner.

⁷⁴⁰ Foley, *Society of Jesus*, II, pp. 182-183.

communicant were presented from Burton parish before Leach's death in 1629, amongst whom were Lady Katherine Massey, her schoolmaster, and two of her household servants.⁷⁴¹ Lady Katherine was from the staunchly Catholic Herbert family of Montgomeryshire, and the Masseys began to emerge from their church papist penumbra upon her marriage to Sir William, nephew and heir of Sir George.⁷⁴² A popular ballad of 1615 describes the journey of a hare from north Wales, fording the Dee at Puddington, circling the gentry households of Wirral, each of which it satirises, and ending up in Chester, where it dies of exhaustion. It noted that:

Ore Burton Hill to Puddington Halle
There she would be bold to calle,
And she hoped that she might pass
For he was at service and she was at mass.⁷⁴³

The Catholicism of Puddington, however, remained that of the gentry household through to 1641, when twelve recusants from the township were presented at the Assizes, eight of them from the Massey family.⁷⁴⁴ At Leighton in the neighbouring parish of Neston, presentments were confined to the seigneurial household after William Hough was succeeded by his church papist son-in-law William Whitmore in 1585. This remained the case after Whitmore's emergence into recusancy in 1605, though there was a batch of eleven non-gentry presentments in April 1613.⁷⁴⁵ Popular presentments thereafter were in low single figures, though cognizance should be taken of the excursion by the constable of Ness to the shrine of St Winefride at Holywell at St. Jamestide 1617, 'accompanied with most of the inhabitants of Shotwick, Rabie, Puddington and Little Neston to the number near unto twoe hundred.' Many of them, of course, were probably only there for the festive culture (two fiddlers

⁷⁴¹ NA, CHES 21/2, f. 89v and CHES 21/3, f. 51; CCALS, EDV 1.24, f. 16 and EDV 1.26, f. 32.

⁷⁴² Ormerod, *Cheshire*, II, p. 309; Virginia Bowes, 'The Masseys and the Reformation 'A, in Paul Booth (ed.), *Burton in Wirral: A History* (Burton (Wirral), 1984), pp. 39-48, p. 43; NA, CHES 21/2, f. 64v.

⁷⁴³ Reproduced in *Cheshire Sheaf*, 3rd series, I (1896), p. 10.

⁷⁴⁴ CCALS, ZCR63/2/7/1.

⁷⁴⁵ Wark, *Cheshire*, p.168; NA, CHES 21/2, fos. 89, 89v.

accompanied the party), though the lengthy trip up the Welsh bank of the Dee that the outing involved suggests rather more than just a knees up.⁷⁴⁶ The incident points to the existence of hidden plebeian Catholic population in south-west Wirral, an impression reinforced by the prohibited appointment of a probable Catholic to the office of constable.

There is, however, no evidence of growth in the two other early centres of recusancy at the estuarial end of the peninsula. Though Margaret Hocknell remained steadfast after her husband's death at the hands of his jailer, she disappeared off the radar after 1598, and the family tradition with her. The yeoman Chantrell family of Noctorum, who remained steadfast Catholics into the eighteenth century, are the only persistent recusants from Woodchurch parish in the early Stuart period, and in neighbouring Bebington a small group centred around the Bennett family of Poulton Lancelyn (fl. 1619-41) was visible during the Caroline years.⁷⁴⁷ The recusancy of the Whitmores of Thurstaston continued unabated through the period and into the third generation, and there was a distaff side offshoot in neighbouring West Kirby from 1624 onwards, but presentments from these two parishes were overwhelmingly confined to the family and its retainers.⁷⁴⁸ The same is true of the church papist household of the Glasiers at Backford, at the southern end of the peninsula.⁷⁴⁹ Mary

⁷⁴⁶ Hindle, 'Budworth Wakes', p. 164.

⁷⁴⁷ BIY, V. 1590-1 CB.2 f. 87 and V.1595-6 CB.3, f.6; NA, CHES 29/334, m. 17; CCALS, EDV 1.10, f. 41 and EDV 1.12a, f. 29. For the Chantrells, the first reference is NA, CHES 21/2, f. 63 of 1610, and the family recur in the record at least through to 1717, when Darcey Chantrell is registered as a papist (see Bennett and Dewhurst, *Quarter Sessions Records*, p. 2. For the Bennetts, William, the paterfamilias, appears firstly in 1619 (NA, CHES 21/3, f. 62) and finally in 1659-60, when he is discharged from sequestration (NA, SP28/218).

⁷⁴⁸ Wark, *Cheshire*, pp. 169-70, provides prosopographies for John Whitmore the elder and younger, which are consistent with Ormerod, *Cheshire*, II, p. 278. F.C. Beazley, 'The Parish of Thurstaston', THSLC 75 (1924), pp. 1-177, pp. 62-65 suggests, however, that these two are the same man, who lived until 1617. CCALS, EDV 1.12b, f. 55, which records the presentment in 1601 of a John Whitmore '*et Jana eius ux*' supports Beazley's assertion: the elder John's last wife was Jane Primrose, and his son was not married until 1604, and then to Lucy Roper, granddaughter of Sir Thomas More. NA, CHES 21/2, f. 102 and CALS, ZCR63/2/7/1 show the younger John as recusant from 1613 to 1641, and NA, CHES 21/3, fos. 134, 281v that his son Valentine was recusant from 1626 to 1634. The terminal references for the Whitmore household at West Kirby are NA, CHES 21/3, f. 114v and CALS, ZCR63/2/7/1. NA, CHES 21/3, f. 281v and CALS, ZCR63/2/7/1 record the only two plebeian presentees from each of the two parishes during the periods specified who are not known to have been part of the Whitmore households.

⁷⁴⁹ NA, CHES 21/3, f. 114v records the only presentment from the male heir line in this family, that of Thomas Glasier in 1624 for failing to have his child baptised.

Glasier, the wife of a Mayor of Chester, was persistently delinquent from 1598 onwards and her daughter-in-law Elizabeth from 1624, but only in 1634 and 1641 were there small clusters of presentees who cannot definitively be associated with their household.⁷⁵⁰

From the northern hundred of Bucklow there was only one recusant presented in the Elizabethan years, but in 1641 the number had grown to seventy-two.⁷⁵¹ It would seem likely that the sole Elizabethan presentee, Matilda Kelsall of Daresbury, represented the tip of an iceberg in that parish: at the visitation of 1604 she was joined by four others, amongst them Maude Sutton, described as an ‘olde recusant’ despite it being her first presentment, and at the Assizes of December 1605 eleven recusants were presented from Daresbury.⁷⁵² There is no evidence here of elite leadership, and presentments subsequently declined from this peak down to only three in 1641.⁷⁵³ In neighbouring Grappenhall a small cluster of plebeian Catholics also emerged in the early Jacobean years, but in 1641 it consisted of little more than the family of the recidivist widow Alice Wright (fl. 1619-41).⁷⁵⁴ And although seven of the eight presentees from the township of Over Whitley in 1641 were first offenders, their Catholicism is likely to have been of longer duration: six of them were from the yeoman Bennett family, whose paterfamilias, Thomas, had been presented for recusancy at the Assizes in 1619.⁷⁵⁵

Elite leadership would seem to have been the main factor behind the overt growth in the Catholicism of Bucklow, and it was a late flowering plant. In Runcorn parish a handful of recusants were regularly presented at visitations from 1625 onwards, though interestingly

⁷⁵⁰ CALS, EDV 1.12a, f. 29 and *ibid.*, EDV 1.32, f. 50v record the first and last presentments of Mary Glasier, and NA, CHES 21/3, f. 114v and CHES 21/4, f. 121v those of Elizabeth. CCALS, EDV 1.32, f. 50 and CALS, ZCR63/2/7/1 show possible presentees from outside the household.

⁷⁵¹ BIY, V.1590-1, CB.2, f. 82v and V.1595-6, f. 16; CCALS, EDV 1.12a, f. 46 and EDV 1.12b, f. 86; NA, E377/8; CALS, QJB 2/6, fos 8-9, 18v-20v.

⁷⁵² CALS, EDV 1.13, f. 27v; NA, CHES 21/2, f. 28.

⁷⁵³ CALS, QJB 2/6, f. 20. This excludes the twelve from the parochialexclave of Thelwall, discussed below.

⁷⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, EDV 1.13, f. 25 and EDV 1.14, f. 48v; CALS, QJB 2/6, f. 20v.

⁷⁵⁵ NA, CHES 21/3, f. 32v; CALS, QJB 2/6, fos 19, 19v.

none at civil courts before 1641.⁷⁵⁶ On that occasion a group of twenty were headed by John Savage, Earl Rivers, head of the leading family of the shire, and the group was differentiated from the remaining presentees at the preliminary Quarter Sessions of January 1641, when their cases were deferred to the King's bench.⁷⁵⁷ This suggests seigneurial protection, as does the emergence in the parish of recusancy shortly after Savage's public avowal of Catholicism in 1622, and its apparent immunity from civil prosecution for over fifteen years.⁷⁵⁸

Twelve recusants from the township of Thelwall, an exclave of Daresbury parish, were the second largest contingent from Bucklow at Quarter Sessions in 1641, although these were probably the first presentments from this location.⁷⁵⁹ This group would also appear to be seigneurially led: amongst them was Sir Edward Moore, a recent baronet of Nova Scotia, who had moved to Cheshire from Nottinghamshire on inheriting the estates there of his physician uncle, together with three others of his family.⁷⁶⁰ Moore's mother was a Vawdrey of Hale, a Bucklow gentry family which appeared regularly in presentments from 1625 onwards, and the Vawdreys were joined in the 1641 list by their neighbours from Bowdon parish, the Hicks of Baguley: two plebeians accompanied the Hicks contingent, but none the Vawdreys.⁷⁶¹ In Rostherne parish a spike of twenty-six recusants and non-communicant absentees emerged at Harsnett's metropolitical visitation of 1629-30, headed by Sir Ralph Leicester: most of these disappeared from the record thereafter, only the fisherman Thomas Allen reappearing alongside four first-time offenders presented from the township of High Legh in 1641.⁷⁶² The dominant pattern in Bucklow seems to be one of gentry example

⁷⁵⁶ CALS, EDV 1.26, f. 69, EDV 1.29, f. 19v and EDV 1.32, fos. 3, 92v; BIY, V.1629-30, fos. 161v, 162.

⁷⁵⁷ CALS, QJB 2/6, fos 8-9.

⁷⁵⁸ Glyn Redworth, *The Prince and the Infanta: The Cultural Politics of the Spanish Match* (New Haven, 2003), p. 43.

⁷⁵⁹ Dunn, *Ancient Parishes*, p. 27 notes that Thelwall was a detached portion of Daresbury parish. There are no previous references to it in the lists of religious delinquents in either the Crown Books or in visitation registers, although township information is not frequently provided in these sources.

⁷⁶⁰ CALS, QJB 2/6, fos 19v, 20; *Cheshire Sheaf*, 3rd series, VIII (1910), p. 27.

⁷⁶¹ CCALS, EDV 1.26, f. 65; CALS, QJB 2/6, fos 18v,19; *Cheshire Sheaf*, 3rd series, VIII (1910), p. 27.

⁷⁶² BIY, V.1629-30 CB, fos. 158, 163, 163v; CALS, QJB 2/6, f. 19.

emboldening sympathetically-minded plebeians to embrace Catholicism during the Caroline period.

In the north-eastern hundred of Macclesfield, the only discernible cluster of Catholics, and a small one at that, was in the Pennine extremity of Mottram. Here the yeoman family of Booth was presented regularly throughout the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods, and subsequently the womenfolk of the gentry family of Hollinworth, although presentments never exceed three in number.⁷⁶³ Fragments of data in the record, however, suggest that the apparent conformity of this remote hundred may simply reflect recalcitrant policing, at least of the elite. Sir Henry Arderne of Harden was presented for recusancy between 1619 and 1622, and was mentioned in a Star Chamber case of 1621 as having conveyed mines he owned in order to escape forfeiture.⁷⁶⁴ In 1630 the widow Anne Warren of Poynton compounded for recusancy, as four years later did Sir Edward Warren, the head of the family.⁷⁶⁵ Lastly, the Elizabethan recusancy of Margaret Davenport of Bramhall has been noted at 2.1.3 above, and her successor Elizabeth was charged with same offence fifty years later.⁷⁶⁶ These families all intermarried in the early seventeenth century, and the Davenports with the Suttons of Sutton (Macclesfield parish),⁷⁶⁷ from where a community of plebeian recusants was presented regularly after the Restoration.⁷⁶⁸ It is thus quite possible that these families constituted a clandestine Catholic network of the elite in the pre-Civil War years.

Finally, in the south-eastern hundred of Northwich, there was a grouping of Catholics in the parish of Astbury. The presentment of two dozen individuals there in 1598, most of them non-communicants, may perhaps be discounted as an isolated occurrence attributable to

⁷⁶³ Wark, *Cheshire*, pp. 141, 146; CCALS, EDV 1.13, f. 54, EDV 1.14, f. 78v, EDV 1.15, 64v and EDV 1.26, f. 86v; NA, CHES 21/3, f. 182; BIY, V.1629-30, f. 139v and V.1633, CB.2, f. 543; CALS, QJB 2/5, f. 238v and QJB 2/6, f. 9.

⁷⁶⁴ CALS, EDV 1.22, f.60 and EDV 1.24, f. 53; NA, CHES 21/3, f. 64; *ibid.*, calendar for STAC 8/174/16. I am grateful to Professor Richard Cust for this last reference.

⁷⁶⁵ Talbot (ed.), 'Book of Compositions', p. 351; NA, E351/433.

⁷⁶⁶ CALS, QJB 2/6, f. 9.

⁷⁶⁷ Ormerod, *Cheshire*, III, pp. 344, 401.

⁷⁶⁸ See section 2.3.2 below.

Lady Egerton's presence there in her final years, but from 1622 onwards there were regular presentments of between five and ten recusants at each visitation.⁷⁶⁹ There is nothing to suggest a seigneurially-led community: these delinquents may well have been concentrated in the market town of Congleton, which presented eight recusants at the January 1640-1 Quarter Sessions.⁷⁷⁰

In the other market towns of the county the recusant population seems to have been negligible: over the fifty year period there were only thirteen in Nantwich, the county's second town; eleven in Middlewich, half of them from the Howell family; seven in Northwich (Witton parish); in Stockport only Arderne, the two Davenport wives, and one other; and just three in Macclesfield.⁷⁷¹ Even in Chester, which was much larger than any of these, recusants seem to have been in a minority among Catholics: only nine were presented at the City Quarter Sessions over the crisis years 1640-2, though this is fairly typical of the limited civil evidence available from the county town over the seventeenth century.⁷⁷² But the evidence of the visitation books (reflected in Table 2.2 above) would suggest that here, as in the other urban areas, the prevalent mode of conscientious objection was church papistry, a phenomenon which is the subject of the following section.

⁷⁶⁹ CALS, EDV 1.12a, f. 56, EDV 1.24, f. 92, EDV 1.26, f. 61, and EDV 1.28, f. 16; BIY, V.1629-30 CB, f. 187v.

⁷⁷⁰ CALS, QJB 2/6, fos 7, 7v.

⁷⁷¹ See Table 2.2 a

⁷⁷² CALS, ZQSF77/1, nos. 8, 51, 53, 54, ZQSF77/2, no. 63, ZQSF77/4, nos. 184,185.

2.2.2 *Recusants and church papists*

In the Catholic fastnesses, the phenomenon of the non-communicating church papist was extremely rare. In Malpas all religious delinquents were recusants until 1633, when five non-communicants, all one time offenders, were presented to Archbishop Neile's metropolitanical visitation.⁷⁷³ It would seem that the message of the anonymous missionary priest to the mass attendees of 1582 'to forsake this service and the churche and to come home and cleave unto the Masse and the annycient catholike Church', together with his exclusion of two of the attendees for attendance at Protestant services, had been well internalised and passed down through the generations.⁷⁷⁴ In Bunbury the only significant deviation from strict recusancy is a batch of presentments for non-communication in 1601 (discussed below).⁷⁷⁵ In nearby Little Budworth, at Runcorn during the Savage years, at Eastham, home of the Stanleys and Pooles, and across the Wirral in the Massey's parish of Burton, recusants account for over 90 per cent of the Catholic population across the period.⁷⁷⁶ It would seem that in parishes with a substantial Catholic presence *esprit de corps* and seigneurial example helped to sustain strict recusancy.

In the circle of parishes around Bunbury and Malpas the frequency of non-communication increases, though the recusant element remains predominant, accounting for over 80 per cent of Catholics in Tarporley, Over, Acton, and Marbury, though an isolated spike of non-communicants in Tattenhall in 1614 reduces the overall recusant element there to less than half across the period.⁷⁷⁷ But outside the heartlands and their immediate hinterland the recusant element decreases sharply, proportionately to distance. In the county overall, it is 64 per cent of the total (1,671 of 2,616), but in the eastern hundreds of

⁷⁷³ BIY, V.1633, CB.2, f. 529. Summary figures here and elsewhere in this section are taken from CCALS, EDV series, nos. 1.10 – 1.32, and BIY V series, except where otherwise indicated.

⁷⁷⁴ Barlow, 'Lewd company', p. 25.

⁷⁷⁵ CALS, EDV 1.12b, fos. 64v, 65.

⁷⁷⁶ See Table 2.2 above.

⁷⁷⁷ CALS, EDV 1.19, fos 21-22.

Northwich and Macclesfield, with their sparser Catholic populations, the figures fall to 41 per cent (73 of 177) and 34 per cent respectively (17 of 50).⁷⁷⁸ And as noted, the proportion is even lower in the towns, Middlewich (38 per cent) excepted: 23 per cent in Chester; 20 per cent in Northwich; 19 per cent in Nantwich; and 18 per cent in Stockport.⁷⁷⁹

These figures would suggest that geography, or more specifically proximity to Catholic clusters, was a determinant of the mode of conscientious objection, the choice between recusancy and church papistry, though equally clearly the two stances coexisted in many communities. The figures are based, however, on head counts rather than the more granular measure of presentment volumes: thus the recusant figures above reflect all who were presented at some time or other for recusancy, even if only once. Does this distort the picture? The answer would seem to be no. In the first place, at the overall county level, recusancy presentments amount to 61 per cent of the total of recusancy and non-communication presentments combined, negligibly different from the proportion derived from head counts in the previous paragraph.⁷⁸⁰ More importantly, however, examples of individuals alternating between the two stances are extremely rare: only two instances have been found. The gentlewoman Katherine Dod of Shocklach was presented twice for recusancy in the early 1590s, but as a non-communicant at the visitations of 1598 and 1601.⁷⁸¹ She was subsequently presented for recusancy at the Assizes of December 1605; as a non-communicant at the visitations of 1611 and 1614; again for recusancy at the Assizes of 1617 and 1619; and in the latter year she made her last appearance before the visitors as an absentee.⁷⁸² Her gender would seem to make her an unlikely church papist, practising token

⁷⁷⁸ NB these figures do not reconcile to those in Table 2.2, which does not show parishes with less than twenty recusants over the period 1590-1640,

⁷⁷⁹ See Table 2.2 above.

⁷⁸⁰ This calculation excludes the relatively small figures for those who were both absentees and non-communicants, who might arguably be included in either category.

⁷⁸¹ BIY, 1590-1 CB.2, f. 86; NA, CHES 29/334, m. 17; CALS, EDV 1.12a, f. 43v and EDV 1.12b, f. 43v.

⁷⁸² NA, CHES 21/2, f. 27v and CHES 21/3, fos. 12v, 33; CALS, EDV 1.17, f. 44, EDV 1.19, f. 20 and EDV 1.22, f. 7v.

conformity to protect the family assets: more likely it reflects nervousness on the part of her church papist spouse, who appeared alongside her in 1611 and 1614.⁷⁸³

The second and more questionable case is that of the fifteen parishioners of Bunbury presented at the visitation of 1601 as absentees and non-communicants for a year, all bar four of whom were recidivists (as the four were to become).⁷⁸⁴ But there were no recusancy presentments from Bunbury parish at that year, and indeed only one at all the visitations between 1611 and 1628, despite civil presentments which regularly ran into three figures.⁷⁸⁵ These patterns would suggest perhaps that the ecclesiastical authorities were satisfied that the problem of the Bunbury Catholics was being dealt with more than adequately by the civil arm: four of the presentees had had property distrained on multiple occasions since 1593, and four others had received a year's recusancy fine at the previous year's Assize.⁷⁸⁶ The accompanying charge of absence would, however, suggest these cases do not represent a retreat into church papistry, but are simply anomalies in the presentment process, perhaps reflecting a lack of the technical evidence to support a recusancy charge.⁷⁸⁷

The absence of any significant evidence of individuals reverting from recusancy into conformity does not, however, challenge Walsham's assertion of the prevalence of the practice: it is simply that movement away from recusancy to church papistry is not visible from the Cheshire evidence.⁷⁸⁸ In many cases which by their nature do not feature in the record, conformity may have been total, or at least enough of a semblance to be convincing.

⁷⁸³ CCALS, EDV 1.17, f. 44 and EDV 1.19, f 20.

⁷⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, EDV 1.12b, f. 64v. Wark, *Cheshire*, pp. 142-143, 154, 156, 158-159, 164, 167, 171-172 provides prosopographies for the fifteen covering the period up to 1601. For evidence of the recidivism of the four first offenders of 1601, see for their final presentments CALS, EDV 1.15, f. 84v (Mason and Joan Wilson), NA, CHES 21/3, fos 34, 154 (Burrows and Massey).

⁷⁸⁵ CCALS, EDV 1.12b, fos 64v, 65, EDV 1.17, fos 53v-54v, EDV 1.19, fos 40v-42, EDV 1.22, fos 29-30v, EDV 1.24, fos 72v-74v, EDV 1.26, fos 49-50v (which contains the one recusancy case at f. 49), and EDV 1.28, fos 7v, 8.

⁷⁸⁶ NA, E377/2, r. 3a, and E377/5, E377/6, and E377/8 (all unnumbered).

⁷⁸⁷ See Introduction chapter above, sub-section 0.42.

⁷⁸⁸ Walsham, *Church Papists*, p. 76.

Individuals like Sir William Massey, whose Catholicism was an open secret after he was imprisoned for refusing to take the Oath of Allegiance in 1618 but who was not named as a recusant until 1631, no doubt exercised sufficient influence to avoid presentment.⁷⁸⁹ The reverse trajectory, from token conformity into recusancy, is by contrast much better documented, most prominently amongst the elite. Thus William Whitmore, the successor to Hough of Leighton, was presented as a non-communicant in 1590, 1598 and 1601, and only emerged into recusancy in 1605, together with Hugh Starkey of Whitegate, who had a track record of lesser charges from 1601 onwards.⁷⁹⁰ John Poole of Poole became recusant in 1625, albeit without any previous presentments on lesser counts, and was joined that year by his Eastham neighbour William Stanley, returning from the Netherlands to take up his inheritance from Sir Rowland, who had died thirteen years earlier.⁷⁹¹ As stated above, William Massey of Puddington was recusant in 1631 (though an absentee and non-communicant three years later), and finally the Savage brothers at Runcorn and Beeston were presented as recusants for the first time in 1640-1, although their father had professed his Catholicism in 1622, and Thomas had been presented as an absentee at the metropolitical visitation of 1633.⁷⁹² But this trend away from church papistry into recusancy over the early Stuart period, though dominant, was not universal: in Waverton, the Dutton successors of Richard Massey were non-communicants from 1611 onwards, and the younger William Whitmore's conformity after his father's death in 1620 was unblemished, the recusancy of his household notwithstanding.⁷⁹³

⁷⁸⁹ NA, CHES 21/3, fos 18v, 221.

⁷⁹⁰ BIY, V.1590-1 CB.2, f. 86; CALS, EDV 1.12a, f. 31, EDV 1.12b, fos. 56, 73; EDV 1.13, f. 32 and EDV 1.14, f. 69v; NA, CHES 21/2, fos. 27v, 28.

⁷⁹¹ CALS, EDV 1.26, f. 37v; NA, CHES 21/3, f. 134; Loomie, *Spanish Elizabethans*, p. 180.

⁷⁹² NA, CHES 21/3, f. 221; CALS, EDV 1.32, f. 38 and QJB 2/6, fos. 8, 13v; Redworth, *Prince and Infanta*, p. 43; BIY, V.1633, CB.2, f. 505v.

⁷⁹³ CALS, EDV 1.17, f. 30, EDV 1.19, f. 10, EDV 1.24, f. 3v; NA, CHES 21/3, fos. 51, 63v, 114v, 135, 154, 204v, 222 and 281v; CALS, EDV 1.26, f. 31, EDV 1.29, f. 7v, EDV 1.32, f. 41 and ZCR63/2/7/1; BIY, V.1629-30, CB, f. 204v and V.1633, CB.2, f. 456v.

Table 2.3: Recusant and non-communicant presentments at visitations, 1590-1634

	1590	1592	1595	1596	1598	1601	1604	1605/ 1608	1611	1614	1619	1622	1625	1628	1629	1630	1633	1634	
Recusancy	75	53	19	101	55	28	47	61	108	19	0	7	38	125	97	195	61	204	240
Non-communication	33	35	16	0	89	80	26	83	58	92	56	29	52	27	22	43	8	43	20

The case of Katherine Dod above, with its semi-conformity in the final Elizabethan years and again after 1610, mirrors in miniature the trajectory of church papistry over the period, shown in Table 2.3 above.⁷⁹⁴ As previously noted, non-communicant church papists had been a substantial subset of the Catholic community from 1578 onwards, but at the visitation of 1598 they became a majority and three years later were massively preponderant, outnumbering recusants by a factor of almost three to one, although the absence of any recusancy presentments from Bunbury that year no doubt magnifies the discrepancy.⁷⁹⁵ At the visitation of 1604 recusants once again outnumbered non-communicants, though evidence of the haemorrhage into recusancy that historians like Haigh have observed at the opening of the new reign is not evident in the low figures for either group in Cheshire.⁷⁹⁶ Non-communicant numbers surged again after 1610, but then settled and remained relatively stable through James's final decade.⁷⁹⁷ After Charles's accession they exhibit a steep decline of which there is no subsequent evidence of reversal, despite what the extremely thorough metropolitical visitations of 1629 and 1633 might suggest.⁷⁹⁸

These non-communicant figures also bear no inverse correlation to the more volatile recusancy statistics (i.e. are not suggestive of migration between recusancy and church papistry), at least not before 1625, when the latter started to exhibit marked growth. They

⁷⁹⁴ As above, figures for those who are both absentees and non-communicants are not included in this table.

⁷⁹⁵ CALS, EDV 1.12a and EDV 1.12b.

⁷⁹⁶ Ibid, EDV 1.13; Haigh, *Lancashire*, p. 331.

⁷⁹⁷ CALS, EDV series nos. 1.17, 1.19, 1.22, 1.24.

⁷⁹⁸ Ibid., nos. 1.26, 1.28, 1.29, 1.30, 1.31b, 1.32; BIY, V.162-30, CB and V.1633, CB.2.

suggest, however, that Bossy was correct in his observation of a marked decline in church papistry from around 1620 onwards, although his suggestion that they were ‘a virtually extinct race in 1641’ is perhaps a little aggressive.⁷⁹⁹ William Whitmore the younger remained the odd man out in his household then, and the presentments of that year from the elite families of Dod, Davenport and Glasier were also confined to the distaff side.⁸⁰⁰ The Committee for Compounding’s treatment of Earl Rivers and his brother as delinquents only (i.e. not papists) also suggests that they reverted to their erstwhile church papistry after their sole presentment for recusancy in 1641.⁸⁰¹ Church papists were evidently sufficiently substantial a force to warrant John Earle’s satirical portrayal of them in 1628, and an alternative explanation for the fall in their numbers merits consideration.⁸⁰²

After the conclusion of the peace with Spain in 1604, the church papist constituency may slowly have come to be regarded as much less than a threat to national security than hitherto. Certainly James viewed them that way, as his assurance to Northumberland indicates: ‘[a]s for the catholics, I will neither persecute any that will be quiet and give but an outward obedience to the law’.⁸⁰³ Unlike recusants, however, church papists were not a potential milch cow for a financially challenged regime, certainly not after the legislation of 1606 had proved inoperable.⁸⁰⁴ When under Charles *de facto* toleration of recusancy became possible through the payment of compositions, and recusancy cases at Assize became very infrequent, the pursuit of these lesser offenders through ecclesiastical discipline may well have seemed anomalous, as well as nugatory, given the absence of meaningful penalties.

⁷⁹⁹ John Bossy, ‘The English Catholic Community 1603-1625’, in Smith, A. G. R. (ed.), *The Reign of James VI and I* (London, 1973), pp. 91-105, p. 103; idem, *Community*, p. 187.

⁸⁰⁰ CALS, ZCR63/2/7/1.

⁸⁰¹ Everett Green, *Committee for Compounding*, II, pp. 914 and III, p. 1949; CALS, QJB 2/6, fos 8, 13v.

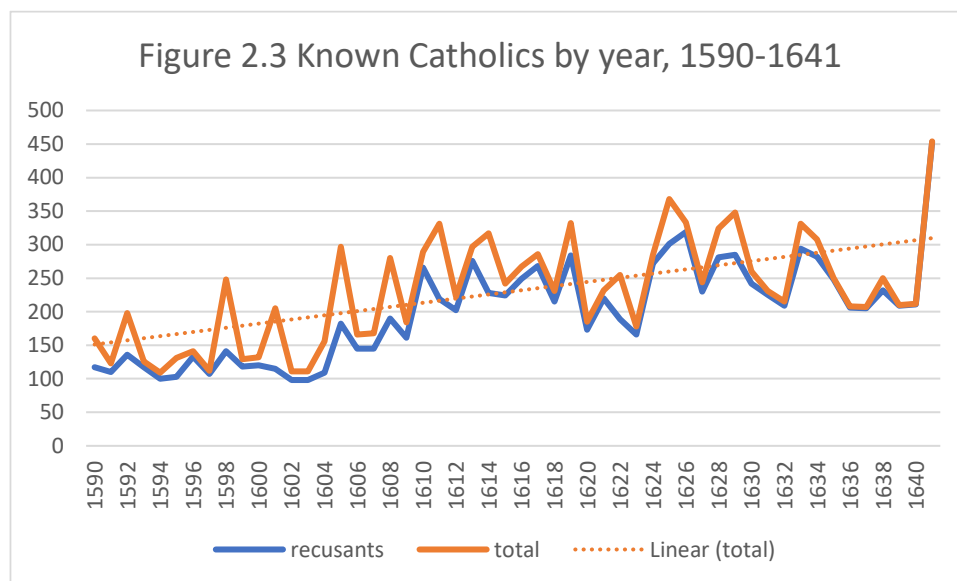
⁸⁰² John Earle, *Earle’s Microcosmography* (location unknown, 1628), quoted in Walsham, *Church Papists*, p. 96.

⁸⁰³ Dures, *English Catholicism*, p. 40; Okines, ‘Gunpowder Plot’, p. 291.

⁸⁰⁴ 3 Jac. I, c. 4, § I; Walsham, *Church Papists*, pp. 88-89.

2.2.3 The growth of the Catholic population

The evidence in section 2.2.1 above of the expansion of the Catholic footprint in Cheshire over the half-century before the Civil War, from a strip along the western rim to the centre of the county, is suggestive of significant growth in numbers. This observation is consistent with the steady growth in presentment volumes shown in Tables 2.2 – 2.4 above, and also with Bossy’s estimate of a 50 per cent increase in the number of Catholics in England overall between 1603 and 1641.⁸⁰⁵ In fact, the evidence of what I have termed persistent Catholic identity, derived from the start and end years of each individual Catholic’s delinquency (and used in Chapter 1 to measure the efficiency with which Catholicism was policed) points a greater increase, as Table 2.4 below demonstrates.



The dotted trend line shown (linear), which is derived from the upper orange graph (total Catholics, as against the recusant subset shown in the blue graph), extrapolates a doubling over the period 1590-1641 (from around 150 to a little over 300). It might be argued that this also understates the growth, since the dip in the main two graphs in the late 1630s is attributable to the lack of data for those years (no visitations and very few Assize presentments). The end point of the graph (454) is actually nearer to three times the start

⁸⁰⁵ Bossy, *Community*, p. 193.

point (160), and moreover, even that does not cover all the county's Catholics. As a civil source, the Quarter Sessions records for January 1640-1 do not contain evidence of church papists, nor does the handful of presentments from the city of Chester that year seem anything like realistic.⁸⁰⁶ A third of the county's parishes did not provide any returns of recusants – not even an '*omnia bene*' – to that meeting of the Quarter Sessions.⁸⁰⁷ Finally, out of the fifty-nine papists from the county who were listed in the records of the Committee for Compounding from 1647 and 1648, twelve had not been presented in 1641, which is also suggestive of omissions in the earlier exercise.⁸⁰⁸

The range of estimates of growth that could be extrapolated from the information above – an increase of anything from 50 to 300 per cent or more - demonstrates the futility of attempting the exercise and using what are essentially crime statistics as census data. All that may be said with confidence is that all the indications point to a significant though unquantifiable growth in the Catholic population over the first half of the seventeenth century.

This was also a period of rapid growth in the wider population – Phillips and Smith cite figures for England of 3 and 5.1 million respectively for the years 1563 and 1664 (ie 70 per cent growth) – which prompts consideration of the contribution of that trend to the increase in the numbers of Catholics in Cheshire.⁸⁰⁹ They estimate that the population of Cheshire grew at a somewhat slower rate, from 60,339 to 94,170 in 1664, a rise of 56 per

⁸⁰⁶ CALS, ZQJF 77, fos. 8, 51, 53, 54, 63.

⁸⁰⁷ Ibid., QJF 69/4, mss. 15-70, passim. The parishes which supplied no returns were Aldford, Christleton, Coddington, Eccleston, Farndon, Guilden Sutton, Handley, Plemstall, Pulford, Shocklach, Tilston, Waverton (all Broxton hundred), Ashton upon Mersey, Lymm, Mobberley (Bucklow), Ince, Tarvin, Weaverham (Eddisbury), Barthomley, Coppenthal, Wistaston (Nantwich) and Sandbach (Northwich). No records survive for Wirral hundred, which did not submit returns in time for the January sessions. All parishes in Macclesfield hundred provided returns.

⁸⁰⁸ Everett Greene, *Committee for Compounding*, I, pp. 60-61, 100-101, 103-104, 106-107, 112-113, 120-124. Those who were not presented in 1641 were James Poole (Wirral hundred), Sir Arthur Aston, Randle Billington, Thomas Crew, Thomas Farrar, Ralph Massey, Randle Wooley (Eddisbury), Ralph Dod, Frances Maddocks and Mary Probin (Broxton), John Ashton (Bucklow) and Richard Hankinson (Northwich).

⁸⁰⁹ Phillips and Smith, *Lancashire and Cheshire*, p. 5.

cent, but observe that the rate of growth was uneven, both chronologically and geographically.⁸¹⁰ Mortality statistics suggest that overall growth was confined to the periods 1563–1590, 1625-1650 and 1660-1664.⁸¹¹ The strongly conformist deanery of Macclesfield also experienced abnormally high growth of 222 per cent (four times the average for the county) over the century under consideration.⁸¹²

Modelling of this information, assuming that growth was linear over the three periods of increase, and separating out Macclesfield, with its atypically high growth but negligible Catholic population, paints a rather different picture of population growth in the west and centre of the county, shown in Table 2.4 below.

Table 2.4		
Cheshire - growth in population, 1563-1664		
Year	inc Macc	exc Macc
1563	60,339	53,827
1590-1625		<i>63,181</i>
1641		<i>68,723</i>
1650-1660		<i>71,619</i>
1664	94,170	73,227

Note: figures in bold taken from Phillips and Smith, *Lancashire and Cheshire*, p.7. Italicised figures extrapolated from these.

Growth in the general population of the county outside Macclesfield hundred was less than 9 per cent over the period 1590-1641, all of it taking place after 1625. In Bunbury, growth was admittedly 29 per cent between 1590 and 1664, but still well below the rates for the county and the nation as a whole. Phillips and Smith cite the parish as an example of notably late growth.⁸¹³ Growth in the overall population played a rather smaller part in the growth in Catholic numbers than might at first sight be expected.

⁸¹⁰ Ibid., p. 7.

⁸¹¹ Ibid., pp. 10-12.

⁸¹² Ibid., p. 7.

⁸¹³ CALS, DCR/27/3; NA, E179/84/145, fos 88-92; Phillips and Smith, *Lancashire and Cheshire*, p.11. The Easter Book of 1590 records tithes due from 277 households within the eleven townships which were within Eddisbury hundred, and the 1664 Hearth Tax returns lists 357 households. It would seem likely, however, that

And as the conclusion to Chapter 1 demonstrated, there is no evidence of improvements in the policing of Catholicism over the period which might account for the greater number that are visible. The peak of 1640-1 stands as an apparent beacon of efficiency, but as argued earlier in this section, there are a number of reasons for doubting the comprehensiveness of its coverage.

Thus far, the observations of this sub-section are largely negative. There was undoubtedly a significant growth in Catholic numbers over the first half of the seventeenth century, but its extent defies estimation, and possible explanations of it have been discounted. What more positive evidence is there to characterise this phenomenon?

The picture would seem to be one of genuine organic growth. On the one hand, this may simply be individuals of residual Catholic inclination slowly coming out of the closet in an era when the possibility of imprisonment waned, and the worst outcome in most cases was a fine that almost certainly would never be paid. Hence in the early Stuart years we see examples of numerous of the gentry cautiously paddling in the shallow waters of church papistry before taking the plunge into recusancy. On the other hand, there would also seem to be vigorous evangelisation at work, as the spread of the Catholic footprint into the centre of the county, and the record of the Jesuit Humphrey Leach both suggest. The most powerful locus of evangelisation, however was in the family household – witness the generations of Masseys and Stanleys among the elite, and the Cheswises, Maddocks and Probins among the yeomanry of Bunbury and Malpas. These themes of religious and family life will be returned to, and elaborated, in the final chapter of this thesis.

both of these totals are understated. Sue Wright, 'A Guide to Easter Books and Related Parish Listings', *Local Population Studies* 42 (1989), pp. 18-31, p. 26 cautions of the difficulty of keeping these records up to date in large scattered rural parishes, of which Bunbury was a prime example, whilst Kevin Schurer and Tom Arkell 'Part I – Hearth Tax and Compton census: introducing the documents' in idem (eds), *Surveying the People: the interpretation and use of document sources for the study of population in the later seventeenth century* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 31-37, p. 33 note a tendency for multiple dwellings with a common landlord to be consolidated into a single entry in Hearth Tax returns..

2.3 Changes after 1640

2.3.1 *The decline of the Catholic population*

Bossy posited that the post-Reformation Catholic population of England grew steadily to 1640, but was thereafter at best static at least until 1700, with growth recommencing thereafter in the more stable congregations and emerging urban communities of the eighteenth century.⁸¹⁴ His evidence for longer-term growth – comparison of the 1767 returns of papists with a 1640-1 compilation of Caroline recusancy statistics – qualified as it is by reasonable estimating assumptions and weightings, and other statistics from the 1770s - would seem as robust as is achievable given the dearth of other comparable, nation-wide data.⁸¹⁵ His projection of the late seventeenth century population, however, is much cruder – it amounts to no more than adding the number of Catholics from the Compton Census of 1676 (11,871, presumed to be communicants) to the number of confirmands from Bishop Leyburn's confirmation tour of 1687 (20,859, presumed to be non-communicants) and doubling the total to allow for geographies not reflected in the two sets of records.⁸¹⁶ An obvious flaw in this logic is the assumption that the two sub-totals are discrete and subject to meaningful aggregation. The 1687 lists, as their mere volume suggests, include many mature adults who had had no previous access to the sacrament of confirmation, but it would seem implausible that in the exigencies of a missionary situation that this had previously precluded them from receiving the Holy Communion.⁸¹⁷ Bossy's figure of 60,000, however, does appear to be a currency accepted by other historians.⁸¹⁸ Does the bottom-up evidence of a county study shed any light upon this problem?

⁸¹⁴ Bossy, *Community*, pp. 189, 194.

⁸¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp 184-188.

⁸¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 188-189.

⁸¹⁷ Hilton et al., *Confirmation Register*, p. 3.

⁸¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 4; Glickman, 'Church and Catholic community', p. 218.

Usage of Cheshire data for this purpose is problematic, in that there is evidence neither of the Compton Census being conducted in the county, nor of Leyburn confirming there.⁸¹⁹ The 1706 returns of papists, as section 1.11 above argued, seem too patchy in their coverage to provide a meaningful point of comparison with the list of recusants from January 1640-1. The more substantial returns from 1717 would seem fit for this purpose, though as they survive only as a series of parish totals, rather than as lists of names, so we cannot be certain what they represent - householders only, or the entire population.⁸²⁰ Both their order of magnitude and the evidence of the 1706 survey (like that of 1717, a diocesan rather than a county exercise) suggest the latter, and this working assumption is validated in the geographical analysis of hundred and parish totals in the following section.⁸²¹

Prima facie the 1641 and 1717 totals are very close – 437 and 394 respectively – and would seem to validate Bossy’s hypothesis of stasis. They are not, however, the comparison of like with like. The 1641 figures reflect only the hundreds of the county, whereas those for 1717 also include seventy-two individuals from the city of Chester, a statistic which correlates with the city total of sixty-five in the 1706 returns.⁸²² The overall trend of the period between 1640 and 1720 would thus seem to be one of significant decline (in excess of 25 per cent) in the Catholic population of the county. Analysis of presentment numbers, however, suggests that the fall in numbers was concentrated in the latter half of the period, after 1680. The numbers of first-time presentments by decade show suggest that Catholicism in Cheshire was as vital over Charles II’s first two decades as it had been before the Civil War, as Table 2.5 below shows.

⁸¹⁹ Anne Whiteman (ed.), *The Compton Census of 1676: A Critical Edition* (London, 1986), p. 631; Hilton et al., *Confirmation Register*, p. 306.

⁸²⁰ CALS, EDA 6/5.

⁸²¹ *Ibid.*; Mitchinson, *1705 Returns*, p. ix.

⁸²² CALS, QJB 2/6, fos 7-20 contains the 1640-1 returns, except for those from the Wirral hundred, which are in CALS, ZCR63/2/7/1, unpaginated.

1630s	1640s	1650s	1660s	1670s
302	298	148	349	331

Beyond 1680 such measurement becomes meaningless, for several successive reasons: the generic presentments for absence during the years of Charles's personal rule make it impossible to quantify the numbers of first-time Catholic presentees with any degree of accuracy: presentments dried up altogether under James: when they resumed under William they were largely confined to the Wirral, for reasons of national security; and from Anne's reign we have only the understated returns of 1706. It is dangerous to infer population decline from what may be no more than a decline in persecution. Interpretation of the 1717 return is thus problematised by a lack of contextual data, which is compounded by a lack of detail within the return itself. To shed further light on this situation it is necessary to interpret the substantial local variations, both of growth and of decay, between the 1641 and 1717 figures in the context both of post-Restoration presentments and of the 1767 returns, which show modest overall growth (548) against both of the earlier totals.⁸²³ That is the subject of the following section.

⁸²³ CALS, EDA 6/5.

Fig. 2.4
Known
Catholics by
hundred,
1681

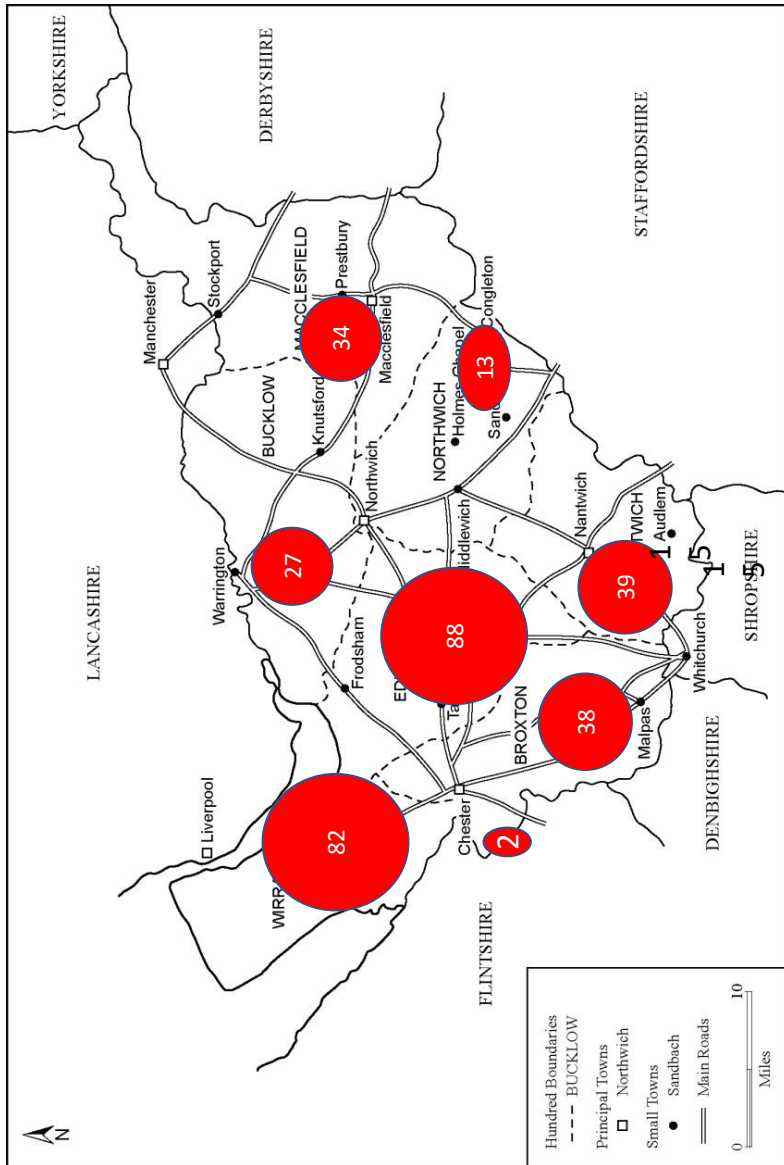
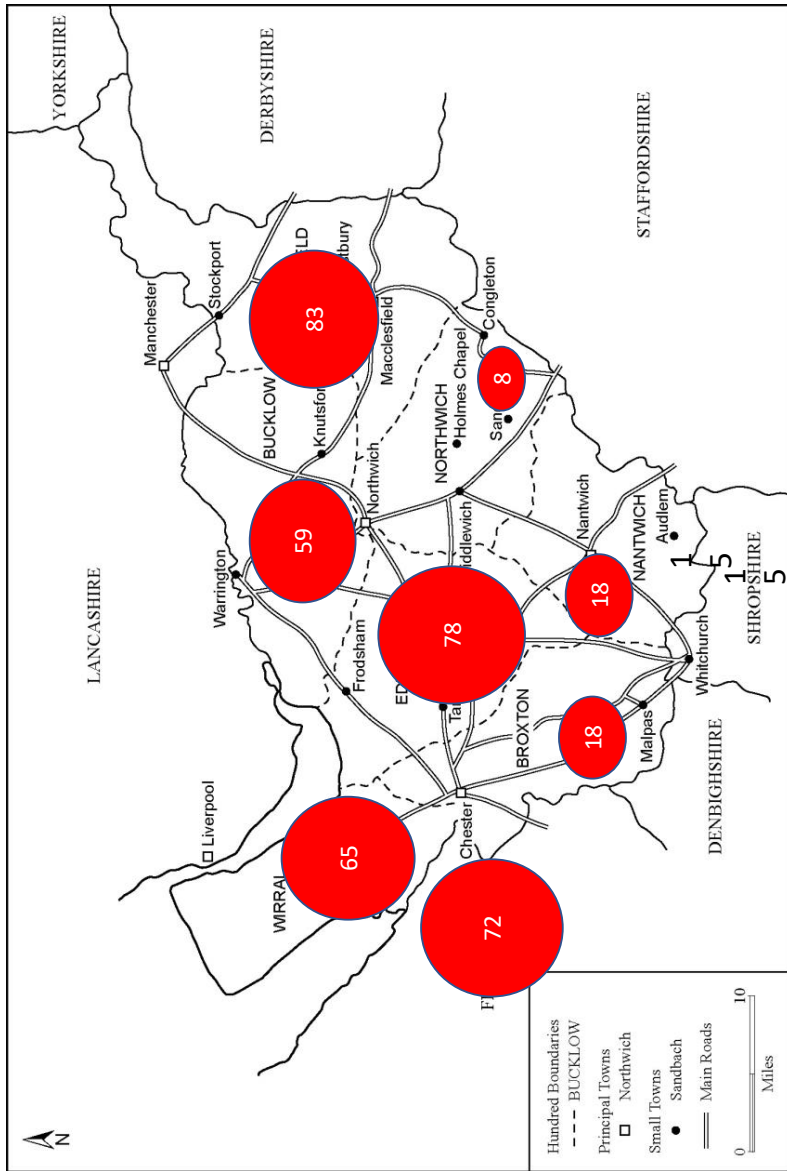


Fig. 2.5
Known
Catholics by
hundred,
1717



2.3.2 Geographical variations

After 1640 the footprint of Catholicism in Cheshire showed minimal expansion, together with a degree of contraction. Only six parishes in the county which had not reported any Catholics in or before 1640-1 did so to the bishop's survey of 1717, and of those four had only one each.⁸²⁴ In contrast, twenty parishes which featured in the 1640-1 returns, four of them having seven or more Catholics at that time, reported none at all in 1717.⁸²⁵ In fact in the pre-1640 areas of Catholic strength the decline is considerably in excess of the average of 25 per cent suggested in the previous section, as Table 2.6 below demonstrates:

There are only two, though striking, exceptions to the overall picture of decline, in the city of Chester and the hundred of Macclesfield.

Table 2.6: Parish returns, 1641 v1717

Hundred	1641	1717	%age decline
Chester City	6	72	1100%
Bucklow	74	52	-30%
Broxton	52	18	-65%
Eddisbury	151	78	-48%
Macclesfield	9	83	822%
Northwich	22	8	-64%
Nantwich	36	18	-50%
Wirral	87	65	-25%
TOTALS	437	394	-10%

To deal with these two exceptions first, it would seem unlikely that the substantial body of Catholics in Chester was an eighteenth-century flowering: it was rather a longstanding phenomenon which had been masked by particularly desultory policing. As noted above, the city had contained a large element of the county's Catholic population in

⁸²⁴ Tarvin (4), Plemstall (2), Eccleston, Ince, Lymm and Weaverham (1 each).

⁸²⁵ Aston (reported 3 in 1640-1), Bebington (3), Bidston (1), Bowdon (9), Burton (13), Church Minshull (1), Daresbury (15), Davenham (9), Dodington (1), Grappenhall (7), Lower Peover (2), Mottram (3), Over (8), Stockport (2), Thurstaston (3), West Kirby (3), Witton (2), Wrenbury (2) and Wybunbury (1).

Elizabethan times, but surprisingly few are noted thereafter. In the two feverish years before the Civil War only half a dozen were presented at the City Quarter Sessions, and only twenty-three at the time of the Popish Plot, a third of them outsiders to the county who had houses in the city, like the Earl of Shrewsbury.⁸²⁶ On the other hand there were evidently sufficient Catholics in Chester in 1654 for a Jesuit to take up residence there.⁸²⁷ The 1706 returns show a buoyant socio-economic mix of gentry, professionals, and artisans, and those of 1717 and 1767 reflect subsequent growth.⁸²⁸

The ninefold increase in Macclesfield hundred does, however, reflect genuine growth, albeit very localised, in the township of Sutton, from where visitation presentments of Catholics were made in increasing numbers from 1670 onwards.⁸²⁹ Consolidation of prosopographies to assess persistent Catholic identity (as discussed at 2.2.3 above) suggests there were in excess of thirty a decade later, and in 1717 eighty-three were reported.⁸³⁰ This may be a late example of seigneurial Catholicism, though the evidence is scant. There is a hint of household Catholicism in the presentment of Francis Mellor of 'Foxbank-in-Sutton' at the Quarter Sessions of January 1641, but though Mellor reappeared in the record with his wife and another denizen of Sutton during the 1660s, there is no firm evidence of an elite presence to explain the haemorrhage of Catholics there during the 1670s.⁸³¹ It would seem plausible that the *seigneur* during this period, James Davenport (1611-88) was a church papist, who provided some measure of protection to the Catholics on his estate (none were civilly prosecuted before 1682).⁸³² His daughter and sole heiress Anne and her husband Sir

⁸²⁶ CALS, ZQSF 77, fos 8, 51, 53, 54, 64; *ibid.*, ZML/2 82/2, f. 270, mss. 3, 5, 14.

⁸²⁷ Sturman, *Chester*, p. 15.

⁸²⁸ Mitchinson, *1705 Returns*, p. 1: CALS, EDA 6/5, f. 1.

⁸²⁹ CALS, EDV 1.35, f.111, EDV 1.38, f. 39, EDV 1.40, f. 65v, EDV 1.43, f. 29, EDV 1.46, f. 34, EDV 1.50, f. 42v, EDV 1.52, f. 43.

⁸³⁰ *Ibid.*, EDA 6/5, f. 4.

⁸³¹ *Ibid.*, QJB 2/6, f. 18v and QJB 3/1, f. 283v; NA, CHES 21/4, f. 426, CHES 21/5, fos 36v, 49.

⁸³² J. P. Earwaker, *East Cheshire: Past and Present; or A History of the Hundred of Macclesfield in the County Palatine of Chester, from Original Records* (2 vols., location unknown, 1880), II, pp. 442, 444; CALS, QJB 3/3, f. 276.

Rowland Bellasis would certainly seem to have been staunch Catholics, judging from the profession of two of their daughters as nuns of Pontoise in 1681 and 1690, but it would seem improbable that they lived at Sutton in Sir James's lifetime.⁸³³ Rowland took up his late wife's inheritance after James's death, and was presented as a recusant at the Quarter Sessions of January 1694-5.⁸³⁴ He was a grandson of the first Viscount Fauconberg of Henknowle, in the North Riding of Yorkshire.⁸³⁵ In 1700, a year after Rowland's death, his Protestant elder brother, a son-in-law of Cromwell, died without issue and the viscounty passed to Rowland's son Thomas.⁸³⁶ His son, also Thomas, was one of three elite Catholics who in 1722 met Sir Robert Walpole to plead for some relaxation of the penal laws.⁸³⁷

Outside this enclave, however, the Macclesfield hundred remained as stalwartly conformist as ever, as did the neighbouring hundred of Northwich. Here though, as before the Civil War, the large parish of Astbury in the south-east was an exception. Eighteen Catholics from the parish were presented at the visitation of Michaelmas 1670, some from the market town of Congleton, others from Smallwood, the estate of the Brooke family, into which the persistently recusant Magdalen Vawdrey of Hale had married during the 1640s.⁸³⁸ After 1680, when their numbers are in decline (only six were reported in 1717)⁸³⁹, most presentments were from the estate of Somerford Radnor, seat of the Oldfield family, whose

⁸³³ *Who were the Nuns? A Prosopographical study of the English Convents in exile 1600-1800*, at [Who were the nuns? \(qmul.ac.uk\)](http://www.qmul.ac.uk/~nuns/), UIDS OB006, OB008, accessed 14 September 2021. Ibid., OB006 records that the elder daughter was born in York in 1663, and OB008 that the younger was born at Smithills, Rowland's family home in Lancashire, in 1670. Earwaker, *East Cheshire*, II, p. 442 states that Anne was buried in Bolton in 1677.

⁸³⁴ CALS, QJF 122/4, m. 20d.

⁸³⁵ [Belasyse.GED \(qmul.ac.uk\)](http://www.qmul.ac.uk/~nuns/), accessed 14 September 2021.

⁸³⁶ Earwaker, *East Cheshire*, II, p. 442

⁸³⁷ Glickman, *English Catholic Community*, p. 147.

⁸³⁸ CALS, EDV 1.37, f.23; BIY, V.1662-3, CB.2, fos 48. 54v provides a representative picture of the clusters of Catholics in the parish. CALS, QJB 2/6, f. 18v and NA, CHES 21/4, f. 165v respectively report a Magdalen Vawdrey of Hale in 1641 and a Magdalen, spouse of James Brooke of Smallwood in 1648. The presence thereafter of Vawdreys at Smallwood (for example, NA, CHES 21/4, f. 396) suggests that the two Magdalens are one and the same.

⁸³⁹ EDA 6/5, fos 3, 3v

paterfamilias Somerford appears to have been a church papist.⁸⁴⁰ In the early eighteenth century this property was sold to the Protestant Shakerley family.⁸⁴¹

The most striking decline was in the south-western hundreds of Eddisbury and Broxton, whose Catholicism was mostly of an independent plebeian strain. This would appear to be a development of the period after the Glorious Revolution: during the Restoration years measurements of Catholic identity from these parishes remained close to the levels of the 1630s, as Table 2.7 above demonstrates:⁸⁴² Numbers held up reasonably in Bunbury and Malpas in the 1717 returns, though in the other parishes a sharp decline seems to have been underway. In Bunbury the presence of a resident priest, recorded in 1691 and again in 1741, may have served as a bulwark against erosion.⁸⁴³ The 1767 figures for all six parishes shown (the main areas of seventeenth century Catholic strength) point to a long-term downward trend: no Catholics at all were reported in the Broxton hundred, which included Malpas and Tattenhall, and precious few in Eddisbury.

⁸⁴⁰ Ormerod, *Cheshire*, III, pp. 32-33. The chatelaine, Mary Oldfield, was regularly presented between 1662 and 1696 (BIY, V.1662-3, CB.2, f. 48; CALS, QJF 124/2, m. 27): the latter source is a representative example of presentments after the Glorious Revolution).

⁸⁴¹ Ormerod, *Cheshire*, III, p. 32.

⁸⁴² The eighteenth-century figures are taken from Mitchinson, *1705 Returns*, pp. 1-3 and CALS, EDA 6/5, rather than computed from consolidated prosopographies.

⁸⁴³ Anstruther, *Seminary Priests*, III, p. 87 and IV, p. 34.

In the neighbouring hundred of Nantwich, to the south-east, the decline was principally due to the disappearance of Catholicism from Marbury, on the Shropshire border, where in 1641 thirteen Catholics were reported: in 1685 the gentleman Thomas Poole, around whose family the community there had clustered for nearly a century, was presented for the final time, on his own.⁸⁴⁴ In Nantwich itself, and also at Audlem, adjoining Marbury, small cells of Catholics emerged during the Restoration years, and persisted into the eighteenth century, albeit with reduced numbers.⁸⁴⁵ Only in Acton, adjoining Bunbury, was the 1717 figure of ten Catholics equivalent to seventeenth-century levels, and that too declined subsequently.⁸⁴⁶

In Bucklow hundred, in the north of the county, a similar diminution of rural Catholicism may be observed. Only from the parishes of Great Budworth and its neighbours Aston and Rostherne were there significant presentments after the Restoration, and in the latter two they each came largely from a single yeoman family, the Ashtons and the Savages respectively, and had been eroded by the early eighteenth century.⁸⁴⁷ The large parish of Great Budworth was the only one to sustain a Catholic presence over time: it presented ten Catholics in 1640-1, and ten again in 1717.⁸⁴⁸ Here a significant factor may have been the presence of the Gerards, an aristocratic family from Staffordshire who had intermarried with and inherited the estates of the Duttons of Duttons, who had been recusants under Elizabeth.⁸⁴⁹ Quite when they took up residence there is unclear, though probably before 1683, when Charles II's appointment of Digby Gerard to the Commission of the Peace provoked outrage on account of his suspected Catholicism.⁸⁵⁰ Digby was probably a church

⁸⁴⁴ CALS, QJB 2/6, fos 11v, 12; *ibid.*, QJB 2/5, f. 251v.

⁸⁴⁵ CALS, QJB 3/2, f. 223; NA, CHES 21/5, f. 169; Mitchinson, *1705 Returns*, p. 3; CALS, EDA 6.5, f. 3.

⁸⁴⁶ CALS, QJB 2/6, fos 11v-13; *ibid.*, EDA 6/5, fos 2v, 3.

⁸⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, EDV 1.35, fos 140, 131v and EDV 1.44, f. 56v; *ibid.* EDA 6/5, 4v.

⁸⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, QJB 2/6, fos 19, 19v; CALS, EDA 6/5, f. 4v..

⁸⁴⁹ Ormerod, *Cheshire*, I, p. 483.

⁸⁵⁰ Challinor, 'Cheshire politics', pp. 88-89.

papist (there is no evidence of his presentment for religious delinquency), but his heir Charles and his wife were presented for recusancy during the 1690s, and a priest was resident at Dutton Lodge in 1692.⁸⁵¹ The pattern of decline in the rural north of the county was, however, counterbalanced by an increase in the 1717 returns in the presentments from Frodsham and Runcorn to fourteen and thirty-nine respectively, more than twice the seventeenth century peaks.⁸⁵² The factors underlying this growth are unclear: the fact that both parishes reported no Catholics in 1767 suggests that they were not cases of proto-industrialisation, and it would seem doubtful that they represent a temporary influx of Irish labour for the early eighteenth century improvements to the navigability of the River Weaver, given that these did not receive Parliamentary approval until 1721.⁸⁵³

The hundred of Wirral was the least impacted by decline. The 1717 presentment of thirty from the parish of Eastham, which contained the seats of both the Stanley and Poole families, is typical of seventeenth-century levels, and that of eighteen from Neston shows significant recovery from the fall in numbers during the 1670s, following the death of Darcy Savage and the departure of his daughter and heiress to north Wales, and there was a community of a dozen Catholics at nearby Shotwick.⁸⁵⁴ The accuracy of the null return of 1717 from Burton may be doubted: it is typical of visitation figures from the parish from the 1680s onwards, despite the presence there of the Masseys, and needs to be viewed in the context of the 1767 figure of thirty-five.⁸⁵⁵ Hodson notes that masses were said regularly in all of these places, one assumes by the household priests of the local gentry, although unfortunately he does not cite any references to support this assertion.⁸⁵⁶ Such decline as

⁸⁵¹ CALS, QJF 120/3, m. 25, QJF 123/4, m. 13, QJF 124/2, m. 24, QJF 124/3, m. 13; Anstruther, *Seminary Priests*, III, p. 98.

⁸⁵² CALS, QJB 2/6, fos 8-9, 18, 18v; *ibid.*, EDA 6/5, fos 4v, 5.

⁸⁵³ *Ibid.*, EDA 6/5, fos 4v, 5; Howard Hodson, *Cheshire 1660-1780: Restoration to Industrial Revolution* (Chester, 1978), pp. 131-132.

⁸⁵⁴ EDA 6/5., fos 1v, 2. See 2.3.3 below for details of the Savages.

⁸⁵⁵ EDA 6/5, fos 1v, 2.

⁸⁵⁶ Hodson, *Cheshire*, p. 43.

may be noted is further to the north-west of the peninsula, away from these areas of seigneurial influence.⁸⁵⁷

2.3.3 *The decline of the Catholic gentry*

It is perhaps surprising that the decline in the Catholic population was not greater, given the massive diminution of Catholicism amongst the gentry. Seventeen of the leading 184 families of the county were represented in the recusancy presentments of 1640-1.⁸⁵⁸ The absence of individual names from the 1717 returns precludes the citation of an equivalent figure, though it may be noted that the successors of only three of the seventeen (Bellasis (Davenport in 1641), Stanley and Poole), together with the Gerard newcomers, registered their estates as papists between 1717 and 1723.⁸⁵⁹ There were two main factors involved in this falling away – firstly apostasy from the faith, and secondly transference of estates on either inheritance, marriage or extinction of the line.

The Savages of Rocksavage were the most notable apostates. The family's early Stuart Catholicism derived from Thomas Savage's marriage to the East Anglian heiress Elizabeth d'Arcy and fizzled out over the next three generations. Their son, the second Earl Rivers (d. 1654) seems to have been essentially a church papist: he was denounced as such in the Parliament in 1646, was only ever presented for recusancy once, in the exceptional presentment of January 1640-1, and features as a delinquent only (as opposed to a delinquent

⁸⁵⁷ CALS, ZCR 63/2/7/1, unpaginated, shows a total of ten Catholics in the parishes of Bebington, Bidston and Woodchurch in 1641, but EDA 6/5, fos 1v, 2 only two (in Woodchurch) in 1717.

⁸⁵⁸ CALS, ZCR63/2/22 contains an early seventeenth-century ranking of the 184 leading Cheshire families. Those which feature in the Quarter Sessions / Assize presentments of recusants from 1640-1 are Savage of Rocksavage (ranked 1), Egerton of Ridley (12), Davenport of Bramhall (20), Stanley of Hooton (28), Poole of Poole (31), Delves of Doddington (32), Massey of Puddington (35), Beeston of Beeston (46, estates passed to Savage/Whitmores 1626), Starkey of Darley (59), Glasier of Lea (67), Whitmore of Leighton (68), Dod of Edge (76), Hollinworth of Mottram (90), Vawdrey of Hale (116), Masterton of Nantwich (125) and Wickstead of Marbury (155). To these should be added Moore of Thelwall, a baronet of Nova Scotia who moved to the county from Nottinghamshire in the 1630s.

⁸⁵⁹ CALS, QDR17/1, reproduced in Bennett and Dewhurst, *Quarter Sessions Records*, pp. 27-28.

and papist) in the records of the Committee for Compounding.⁸⁶⁰ The Catholicism of his heir, Thomas (1628-94) was described in a 1661 survey of JPs as ‘marginal or circumspect’: Aveling notes that he ‘had not been seen at Mass within living memory’.⁸⁶¹ The biography of the fourth earl, Richard (1654-1712), shows no indicators of Catholicism.⁸⁶² Both he and his father were notorious rakes, and as noted in Chapter 1, prominent Exclusionists.⁸⁶³ On Richard’s death without a male heir the earldom passed to a cousin who was a Catholic priest, but he lived in France and the Low Countries after abjuring the oath of allegiance he had taken on inheriting, and on his death in 1737 the title became extinct.⁸⁶⁴

Most of the other cases of apparent apostasy were a gradual withering in the distaff side of church papist families. The Dod ladies of Edge, Malpas made no further appearances in the record after 1641, though at Backford the spinster Elizabeth Glasier was presented down to 1672.⁸⁶⁵ In the Pennine extremity of Mottram Prudence Hollinworth was untroubled for a generation after her presentment of 1640-1, but featured in visitations between 1669 and 1671, which was also the year of Magdalen Brooke’s final presentment.⁸⁶⁶ Amongst elite families who were recusant in the male line, the Vawdreys disappear from the record in the 1660s and the Wicksteads of Marbury after 1680.⁸⁶⁷ More prominent earlier in the century, though not enumerated in Davenport’s ranking of 1611, were the Whitmores of Thurstaston. Valentine, the paterfamilias during the 1640s and 1650s, was not presented for recusancy after 1634: in 1646 he married a daughter of the local Protestant Glegg family and two years later surrendered to his brother-in-law what remained of his estates after sequestration for

⁸⁶⁰ J. Vicars, *Parliamentary Chronicles*, quoted in Newman, ‘Roman Catholic Royalists’, p. 397; CALS, QJB 2/6, f. 8; Everett Green, *Committee for Compounding*, II, pp. 914-915.

⁸⁶¹ Miller, *Popery and Politics*, p. 66; Aveling, *Handle and Axe*, p. 185.

⁸⁶² John B. Hattendorf, ‘Savage, Richard, fourth Earl Rivers (c. 1654–1712)’, ODNB (2008).

⁸⁶³ *Ibid.*; Aveling, *Handle and Axe*, p. 218.

⁸⁶⁴ Anstruther, *Seminary Priests*, III, pp. 98-99.

⁸⁶⁵ CALS, QJB 3/2, f. 230v. Her spinster status is recorded at NA, CHES 21/5, f. 79.

⁸⁶⁶ CALS, EDV 1.35, fos 101v, 110, EDV 1.37, f. 33, EDV 1.38, f. 42 and EDV 1.39, fos 21, 30.

⁸⁶⁷ CALS, QJB 3/2, f. 214v; NA, CHES 21/5, f. 200v.

delinquency⁸⁶⁸ Subsequently only two Whitmore recusants from Thurstaston have been found. The first, in 1651, may be a posthumous presentment of Valentine's stepmother Elen, who was buried there the previous year: the second, also Elen, flourished in the early 1680s and does not appear to have been a close relative.⁸⁶⁹ In the south of the county, the Catholicism of the elite appears to have been a brief transient of the mid-century: Thomas Masterson of Nantwich and George Delves of Hatherton were each presented only once, in 1641 and 1648 respectively.⁸⁷⁰ George's Catholicism probably derived from his wife Mary, of the proto-recusant family of Eldershawe, physicians of Audlem. A Mary Eldershawe had been presented between 1617 and 1619, and Mary Delves was presented between 1641 and her death in 1652.⁸⁷¹

The Catholicism of the cadet branches of the Savage family seems to have been more robust than that of the heir line. In 1626 Thomas and Elizabeth's second son, also Thomas, married Bridget, daughter of William Whitmore of Leighton, Neston and already dowager Lady Somerset and the heiress of Sir Hugh Beeston of Beeston, where the couple settled.⁸⁷² After the hall at Beeston was damaged during the siege of the castle there during the Civil War, Bridget and her children resettled at her Leighton inheritance.⁸⁷³ She and her son Darcy appear regularly in presentments down to the latter's death in 1670, but Darcy's daughter and heiress, also Bridget, then moved to north Wales on her marriage to Sir Thomas Mostyn of Talacre.⁸⁷⁴ Though Mostyn himself was Protestant, Bridget appears to have retained the

⁸⁶⁸ CALS, EDV 1.32, f. 45; Beazley, 'Thurstaston', pp. 67-68, 71-72.

⁸⁶⁹ NA, CHES 21/4, f. 247v; CALS, EDV 1.57, f. 8; *ibid.*, QJB 3/3, fos 279v-284v and QJB 3/4, fos 233-250v, both *passim*; Beazley, 'Thurstaston', pp. 61, 67.

⁸⁷⁰ CALS, QJB 2/6, f. 12v; CHES 21/4, fos 165v.

⁸⁷¹ NA, CHES 21/3, fos 14v, 33 and CHES 21/4, fos 165v and 248; Ormerod, *Cheshire*, III, p. 268.

⁸⁷² See above.

⁸⁷³ Ormerod, *Cheshire*, II, p. 145.

⁸⁷⁴ NA CHES 21/4, fos 166v-412 and CHES 21/5, fos 8v-103, both *passim*; Ormerod, *Cheshire*, II, p. 145.

family faith and there are instances of Catholicism in this bi-confessional family into the eighteenth century.⁸⁷⁵

Another instance of property passing out of the county is that of the Egertons of Ridley, whose Catholicism appears to have been confined to a cadet or possibly illegitimate branch.⁸⁷⁶ In 1665 Thomas Egerton of Allerton, Yorkshire succeeded to what remained of the estate after his elder brother's gaming debts had been settled.⁸⁷⁷ The Starkey estates at Oulton were another example of alienation, though they remained in local gentry ownership: after the death of Sir John Starkey in 1684 they were transferred to his Protestant Egerton neighbours by an heir.⁸⁷⁸ Similarly after incurring heavy delinquency fines during the interregnum John Moore sold his estates in Thelwall to a local yeoman in 1661 and returned to his native Nottinghamshire.⁸⁷⁹ The final case of the Masseys of Puddington is one of extinction of the line, though as noted in the previous chapter, the bequest of the estate to his Stanley godson kept it in Catholic hands for a further century.⁸⁸⁰

2.4 Socio-economic breakdowns

The Assize data generally records the occupations of men and the marital status of females, although in some cases the former information would appear unreliable: at the Assizes of September 1616, for example, virtually all non-gentry males were listed as yeomen, including some known from other sources to be household servants.⁸⁸¹ The provision of such data in

⁸⁷⁵ Philip Jenkins, 'Anti-Popery on the Welsh Marches in the Seventeenth Century', *HJ* 23 (1980), pp. 275-293, p. 290.

⁸⁷⁶ Ormerod, *Cheshire*, II, pp. 160-162; Wark, *Cheshire*, pp. 147-148. George, who maintained the family's Catholicism, does not appear in Ormerod's pedigree, but Ormerod notes that an illegitimate son of her husband Sir Ralph became Viscount Berkeley, chancellor of England, so generous provision for another bastard is conceivable.

⁸⁷⁷ Ormerod, *Cheshire*, II, pp. 161-162.

⁸⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 103, 105.

⁸⁷⁹ *Cheshire Sheaf*, 3rd series, VIII (1910), pp. 19, 27.

⁸⁸⁰ Ormerod, *Cheshire*, II, pp. 229-231, 308-309.

⁸⁸¹ NA, CHES 21/2, fos. 124v-125v.

the visitation books is much more sporadic, except in the attribution of gentry status, though marital data about female recusants (generally including the husband's Christian name, which facilitates the identification of Catholic households) is considerably more common than occupational. Hence recusants may be characterised more fully than church papists and other delinquents who were outside the scope of the civil courts. Both sources intermittently record the familial links of sons and daughters, enabling some limited observations to be made about age and the life-cycle.

2.4.1 Gender and marital status

Over the 144 years (1562-1706) for which detailed returns of Catholics are available, women only slightly exceeded men in the Catholic population of the period, at 1,991 (52 per cent) of the 3,814 of those whose gender is ascertainable from the record. This differential varies little over the period – a 4.9 per cent gap before the Civil War against 3.2 per cent after 1660 – and is in itself unremarkable. What is more surprising is that there were much wider differentials at the level of individual parishes. Generally speaking, the parishes with a substantial male preponderance have smaller Catholic populations and do not exhibit continuity of Catholicism over decades. The northern parish of Grappenhall, for example, presented fifteen men and eight women over the Jacobean and Caroline years, but none thereafter. The neighbouring parish of Rostherne was the largest instance of male preponderance, presenting fifty men and twenty-five women over the course of the seventeenth century, but nearly four-fifths of these were presented on one occasion only. Little meaningful may be deduced from such an example.

In contrast, the parishes with the largest Catholic populations have a predominance of females: in Bunbury across the period of the study they exceed males in a ratio of 3:2 (439 v 279), as they do in pre-Civil War Malpas (93 v 61). In all of the five parishes with the largest

Catholic populations before the Civil War, Catholic women outnumber Catholic men.⁸⁸² Sheils observed a similar phenomenon in Jacobean Yorkshire, and suggested that the need to maintain the institutions of the parish and the charitable community may have been a contributing factor: the pool of mature, active males suitable to take up community roles may have caused churchwardens and village constables to turn a blind eye to the delinquencies of prominent local figures for fear of reducing the pool further.⁸⁸³ Sheils' case for this is much strengthened by his evidence of the age of the presentees and of the duration of their delinquency, and in particular by the discrepancy between the numbers of men and women presented in middle age and the years before (their thirties and forties). In the absence of such information, this study can only note that circumstantial information from Bunbury, the principal Catholic community of post-Reformation Cheshire, points to a contrary conclusion. There is no certain evidence of a Catholic serving as churchwarden there (perhaps unsurprisingly, given that recusancy was overwhelmingly the stance adopted by Catholics there), and only one of a Catholic serving as a township constable – John Wilson of Wardle in 1611. Sheils' theory would seem to presuppose that the Catholic minority was sufficiently numerous for their exclusion to have been significant – as was the case in Wardle, where there were only eleven households shown in the Easter Book of 1590.⁸⁸⁴ But even in Bunbury Catholics were not that numerous for this to have been a frequent problem: comparison of the 1590 Easter Book with the metropolitanical visitation of the same year shows Catholics in less than 10 per cent of its 315 households.⁸⁸⁵ It may also be noted that sixty of the 109 married women presented from Bunbury between 1590 and 1641 were presented alongside their husbands at least once in their recusant careers, suggesting perhaps that such concealment was not that prevalent. The argument advanced by Walsham, that the middling

⁸⁸² Bunbury, Malpas, Eastham, Acton and Tattenhall.

⁸⁸³ Sheils, 'Jacobean Recusants', p. 142.

⁸⁸⁴ CALS, DCR 27/3, unnumbered.

⁸⁸⁵ *Ibid.*; BIY, 1590. CB.2, fos 80-114, *passim*.

sort were less cushioned than the elite against recusancy penalties, would seem more convincing. She cites as a case of such plebeian church papistry that of Owen Wilbraham, the blacksmith of Malpas, whose wife, sister and daughters were regularly presented for recusancy between 1590 and 1622, though his own name appears in the record only as a familial identifier.⁸⁸⁶ Owen may have been mindful of the authorities' pursuit of his father in the wake of the mass of 1582 and decided that conformity was the better part of valour.⁸⁸⁷

Marital status is known for 892 of 1,180 women (75.5 per cent). This excludes the forty-one servants, for whom marital status is much less frequently recorded: amongst these six are known to have been spinsters, and given the widespread practice of sending adolescents into service it is reasonable to assume that the majority of the female servant community were spinsters. Of the remaining 892, 302 were spinsters, 465 married women, and 125 widows.⁸⁸⁸ Given the late age of marriage of the era, these figures would seem not unrepresentative of the population overall, though the detection of duplicates between single and married women is problematic, given that virtually all of the marriages would have been clandestine. The only point that is perhaps surprising is that so many women changed their religious allegiances (or at least, the outward expression of them) in their widowhood, which, like the overall age profile these figures suggest, is perhaps indicative of the vitality of Catholicism during this period.

⁸⁸⁶ Walsham, *Church Papists*, p. 78.

⁸⁸⁷ Wark, *Cheshire*, pp. 44-45.

⁸⁸⁸ These figures reflect the start of the start point of each individual's delinquency: thus at any given time the numbers of married women would have been lower and those of widows correspondingly higher.

	1590-1641		1660-1706	
	No	%age split	No	%age split
Single	310	34%	72	20%
Married*	480	52%	242	66%
Widowed*	132	14%	54	15%
Sub-total known	922	100%	368	100%
Unknown	357		218	
* at the time of first presentment				

A rather more striking change is, however, notable in the marital status of female Catholics after 1660. There was a sharp decrease in the numbers of spinsters and a corresponding increase in the numbers of married women, with the proportion of widows remaining unchanged (see Table 2.8 above). It is suggestive of an ageing community, which is perhaps a further indicator of decline.

2.4.2 Occupations and social status

As table 2.9 below shows, social or occupational data is available, or can be inferred from familial connections, for 822 of the known 2,619 denizens of Cheshire who were active Catholics at some time in the period 1590 to 1641. The absence of such information for over two-thirds of the Catholic population thus necessitates caution in the interpretation of the available data, and the observations that may reasonably be made are limited.

	Males	Females	Total	
Aristocracy	4	6	10	
Gentry	151	133	288	inc non-armigerous
Agrarian	186	122	314	yeomen, husbandmen
Professional	11	5	17	
Trade / craft	38	31	72	inc retail
Servants	26	44	82	
Labourers	23	12	37	
Unknown	701	923	1797	
Priests	2	0	2	
	1142	1276	2619	
less unknown	441	353	822	

In the first place, the preponderance of the gentry in the Catholic population, well in excess of their numbers in the wider community, would seem credible: it is consistent with the wider historiographical consensus, and as noted above elite status is the most reliably documented characteristic in the sources.⁸⁸⁹ Of the 288 gentry presented, slightly over half (153) were from the senior armigerous families: these represented thirty-one of the 184 families (16 per cent) listed in the early seventeenth century ranking of the elite of the county attributed to Sir William Davenport, although the delinquency of some, like the Gleggs of Wirral and the Grosvenors of Eaton in the 1590s, the Dones of Utkinton at the turn of the century and a generation later the Leicesters of Tabley, was a brief excursion by a single individual,⁸⁹⁰ Twelve of these thirty families, however, were recusant in the male heir line, for the most part with consistency over a period.⁸⁹¹ And amongst the top echelons of the elite

⁸⁸⁹ Aveling, *Handle and Axe*, p. 142.

⁸⁹⁰ CCALS, ZCR63/2/22; *ibid*, EDV 1.10, f. 42 and, EDV 1.12b, f. 34; BIY, V.1629-30 CB, f. 182; Wark, *Cheshire*, p. 151.

⁸⁹¹ Arderne (1619-22), Beeston (church papist from 1590 and recusant under Savages 1640-1), Egerton (1590-1641), Masterton of Nantwich (1640-1), Massey of Puddington (1631-41, church papist from 1610), Massey of Waverton (1577-1601, thereafter church papist under Duttons), Poole of Poole (1625-41, church papist from 1610), Savage of Rocksavage (1640-1, overtly Catholic from 1622), Stanley of Hooton (1625-41, female line recusancy from 1592, church papist from 1604), Sraekey (1611-41, church papist from 1598), Vawdrey (1640-1, church papist 1605, 1629), Wickstead of Marbury (1640-1). To these should be added Sir Edward Moore bart., resident in the county from c.1637 and hence not included in the Davenport list (1640-1).

the Catholic presence is even greater: fourteen of the thirty appear in the top fifty in the ranking, split equally between recusant and church papist households.⁸⁹²

Table 2.10 Occupations of active male Catholics pre- / post- Civil War				
	1590-1641		1660-1706	
	No	%age split	No	%age split
Aristocracy	4	1%	1	1%
Gentry	152	34%	42	23%
Yeomen / husbandmen	187	42%	65	36%
Professional (inc priests)	10	2%	3	2%
Craftsmen / traders	38	9%	38	21%
Servants	27	6%	21	12%
Labourers	24	5%	10	6%
Sub-total known	442	100%	180	100%
Unknown	708		369	

In the light of the discussion above, the decline in the gentry's predominance after 1660 is unsurprising, though it remains disproportionately large in relation to their numbers in wider society, pointing to a residual hold on the hearts and minds of the 'mere' gentry. But too much should not be made of this: the classification of gentry in the early modern period was a notoriously porous one, as the designation of individuals such as John Gregson of Puddington and Thomas Moores of Hooton as both gentlemen and servants in different records indicates.⁸⁹³

An inference from the table above that the elite numbers were only slightly exceeded by those of the agrarian group, however, should be eschewed. In excess of 80 per cent of the Catholic population was rural (in that respect, it is typical of the population overall), and the balance of probability is that the majority of these earned their living from the land: thus the bulk of the unknown category were probably agrarian workers and their families. In Bunbury,

⁸⁹² The recusant families are Arderne (ranking 44), Beeston (46), Egerton (12), Massey of Puddington (36), Poole (31), Savage (1) and Stanley (28). The church papists are Brereton of Shocklach (16), Davenport of Bramhall (20), Delves (32), Dutton of Dutton (10), Dutton of Hatton (34), Leicester of Tabley (37) and Tatton (29).

⁸⁹³ CALS, QJB 3/3, fos 245v, 268v; NA, CHES 21/5, f. 224v.

for example, a statistically valid sample size, where occupational data is available for 131 of the 187 males presented over the period, ninety-one (70 per cent) are classified either as yeomen or husbandmen and a further ten (8 per cent) as labourers. This preponderance of yeomen and husbandmen over labourers would also seem suspect, though it should be noted that the categorisation was a somewhat subjective one: individuals frequently move up and down the categories at successive presentments, like the variously named John Perie, Payne or Pavie of Rushton, Tarporley, whose occupation is equally variable: in 1605 a husbandman, in 1607 a tailor, and in 1610 a yeoman, and subsequently as a labourer.⁸⁹⁴

As for the remainder, twelve (9 per cent) are of the elite, seven (5 per cent) their servants, and the remaining nine in specialist trades, some of them (skinner, smith, wheelwright, cooper) wholly or partially agriculturally related. This sample is reasonably representative of the rural areas of the county overall, with tailors (six) being the most common occupation among the remaining sixteen rural craftsmen. Retailers are confined to the towns of Chester and Nantwich, with the exception of Roger Brock, one of the innkeepers of Bunbury.⁸⁹⁵ The small professional group is a combination of doctors and one lawyer in the county town, schoolmasters in elite households, and the physician and long-term recidivist of Audlem, Richard Eldershawe (fl. 1581-1625).

The increase in the proportion (as opposed to the absolute numbers) of servants amongst the Catholic population would not seem to be symptomatic of growing affluence outside the ranks of the gentry. The employers of all of those shown are recorded, and all but two are of the established upper gentry – the Savages, Stanleys, Pooles, Masseys, and in the early eighteenth century, the Fitzherberts, a family from Swinnerton, Derbyshire who had

⁸⁹⁴ NA, CHES 21/2, fos. 28, 41v, 63.

⁸⁹⁵ J. H. E. Bennett and J. C. Dewhurst, (eds), *Quarter Sessions Records 1559-1760*, Lancashire and Cheshire Record Society 94 (1940), pp. 93-94.

settled in Chester.⁸⁹⁶ The two exceptions were in the households of the Chantrells of Neston and Woodchurch, an upwardly mobile Wirral yeoman family often classified amongst the gentry. But no doubt there were others who were not recorded as servants: such evidence as survives is subject to the vagaries of early modern recording.

Similarly, a ratio of one servant to three or four of the elite would seem counter-intuitive, especially given that many prosperous yeomen families, like the Cheswises and Masseys of Bunbury and the Aires and Maddocks of Malpas, also kept servants.⁸⁹⁷ Again, a significant proportion of the unknowns from the parishes with an elite presence were probably servants, like the two dozen non-communicants who emerged in Astbury after Lady Egerton moved there, and disappeared as suddenly after her death the following year, or the sixteen from Runcorn whose cases were deferred along with those of the Savages at the Quarter Sessions of January 1641.⁸⁹⁸ It may be noted, however, that the majority of the known Catholic servants can be linked to known Catholic households, suggesting a tendency for Catholic masters to employ their co-religionists. The households of the two branches of the Whitmores (Thurstaston and Neston), the Masseys of Puddington, the Beestons of Beeston and the Egertons of Ridley all exhibit this pattern, as do those of the yeomanry noted above.

Similar caution is needed with regard to the apparent growth in the numbers of craftsmen and traders. The vast majority of these were in rural locations where it was not uncommon to pursue multiple occupations, perhaps seasonally, in order to make ends meet. Around a quarter of this group are variously referred to as yeomen, husbandmen and labourers as well as practitioners of their specialist trade.⁸⁹⁹ In some cases, like millers and

⁸⁹⁶ Sturman, *Chester*, p. 14.

⁸⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, CHES 21/3, fos. 34v, 103v, 104; BIY, V.1590-1, CB.2, f. 84v; CCALS, EDV 1.26, f. 21.

⁸⁹⁸ CCALS, EDV 1.12a, f. 56; *ibid.*, QJB 2/6, fos. 8-9.

⁸⁹⁹ See Appendix F.

coopers, who were surprisingly numerous, this was agriculturally related: others, like tailors and shoemakers, probably operated within a limited retail market.⁹⁰⁰

The socio-economic structure of the Catholic community would seem to mirror that of wider society, with one significant exception – the very poorest are conspicuous by their absence, although as Hilton has observed, that is a feature of the archive in general : ‘even Quarter Sessions records tend to ignore anyone below the admittedly low rank of labourer.’⁹⁰¹ The only such case identified is the beggar Elizabeth Rindle, who applied for bail from her imprisonment in Chester Castle at the Quarter Sessions of June 1607.

Given that the geographical distribution of Catholicism remained largely unchanged after side of the Civil War, and that the Catholic community’s numbers were at best static, significant variations in socio-economic make up would seem unlikely, and such trends as Table 2.10 suggests need to be treated with caution, particularly as occupational data is available for less than 40 per cent of pre-1640 males, and not many more of their pre-war predecessors.⁹⁰²

Given the incompleteness of the data, more granular analysis of these county-wide totals is inadvisable. Perhaps the only robust and significant inference that can be made from this analysis of occupational data is Catholicism was strongest amongst those of some degree of prosperity. Over 80 per cent of the cases reflected in Table 2.10 above may be described as either of independent means or self-employed. Judith Hurwich made the same observation of Warwickshire Catholics during this period, and also noted that their strength, in contrast to

⁹⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁹⁰¹ Tony Hilton, ‘The Catholic Poor: Paupers and Vagabonds 1580-1780’ in , in Marie Rowlands (ed.), *Catholics of Parish and Town 1558-1778* (CRS, 1999), pp. 115-128, p. 116.

⁹⁰² Some names in the sources are illegible, hence the discrepancy between the gender totals and the grand total.

that of Dissenters, was concentrated in rural rather than urban areas.⁹⁰³ This latter characteristic was largely also true of Cheshire Catholics, though the growth in numbers in Chester and Macclesfield at the end of the period, noted above, points towards an emerging shift towards the towns.

Conclusion

Demographic evidence of the first two Elizabethan decades is very scant and unrepresentative of what was to follow, but the evidence of civil prosecutions shows that by the mid-1580s the foundations of the post-Reformation Catholic community had been laid in the western end of the county. In the Wirral peninsula, a cluster of recusant gentry families appears to have been the crucial enabler: in the south-west parishes of Bunbury and Malpas, the support of recusant clergy, aided and abetted in Malpas by missionary priests from over the Welsh border; and between these two areas, in Chester, the concentration of recusants in the prison at Chester Castle and the city's functions as a route centre, port and county town provided focal points for the emerging recusant population, whilst at least in the earlier part of the period conservatively minded clergy catered for the traditionally inclined. During this period at least a degree of conformity predominated amongst the elites who were antipathetic to the Elizabethan settlement, and recusancy was the exception rather than the norm amongst the Catholicly minded. There is some evidence of the withering of this elite resistance, but it is not particularly pronounced.

The evidence of Catholic delinquency expands greatly after 1590 and indicates that between the last Elizabethan decade and the outbreak of the Civil War the county's Catholic population at least doubled, though the general rapid population growth of the period played little part in this. The early bastions, with the possible exception of Chester, consolidated

⁹⁰³ Hurwich, 'Dissent and Catholicism', pp. 33, 37.

their numbers, whilst Catholicism spread eastwards from the south-western heartlands into the north and centre of the county. In many of these places the gentry's gradual embrace of recusancy, sometimes preceded by a visible period of church papistry, would appear to have been critical, though in the south-western heartlands and their immediate hinterland the leadership of the emerging community seems in many places to have rested with the middling sort. In the Puritan east of the county, however, Catholicism gained limited traction.

During the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean years, the token conformity of non-communicant church papistry was the prevalent mode of Catholic conscientious objection. From 1605 onwards the balance began to tilt towards recusancy, with most of the prominent elite families making that switch over the following generation, and from the accession of Charles onwards church papistry appears to have been a dwindling minority phenomenon. There is negligible evidence to support the view of church papistry as a port in a storm, to which recusants had recourse during periods of persecution, nor conversely is there any of a haemorrhage into recusancy in the early Jacobean years which some historians have noted. Where the religious trajectory of an individual or family included periods of both church papistry and recusancy, the former was invariably a prelude to the latter, virtually never reversed (except of course by total conformity, which is rarely visible). The two stances also appear to have been geographically conditioned, recusancy being massively predominant in the heartlands, and church papistry in the areas where the Catholic presence was more dilute.

The Catholic community which emerged in the half century before the Civil War was a microcosm of wider society, its only distinguishing feature a gentry element several times greater than their greater numbers in the community, and at its greatest strength in the highest echelons. The excess of women over men amongst Catholics was very slight, and certainly no more than has been observed more widely in religious groupings.

The balance of the evidence – the reduced numbers in the heartlands of the south-west, the substantial shrinkage of the Catholic gentry, and the indication of an ageing demographic group - suggests that in the later Stuart period the Catholic population of Cheshire was in decline, albeit a decline mitigated by a strong presence in the county town and by growth in the emerging urban centre of Macclesfield. It is, however, important to caveat this finding both with the observation that after 1685 the sources of evidence reduce in volume, and also that from 1660 onwards the difficulty of interpreting them increases. Whereas in the early Stuart period an inference that non-communication signified Catholicism was reasonable, that was no longer the case in the pluralist Restoration environment, and it becomes almost impossible to chart the fortunes of church papistry. The cases of the Gerards and Oldfields, suggest, however, that Bossy's report of the death of the practice before the Civil War was very greatly exaggerated.⁹⁰⁴ For these reasons, the comparisons of pre-Civil War statistics with their lower post Restoration equivalents are not those of like with like.

⁹⁰⁴ Bossy, *English Catholic Community*, p. 187.

Chapter 3

The Quality of Catholic Life

Much water and a proportionate quantity of printer's ink have gone under the bridge, changing the historiographical consensus since John Bossy's 1975 characterisation of the post-Reformation English Catholic community as essentially insular and sectarian, 'a branch of the English nonconforming tradition.'⁹⁰⁵ In 2006 Michael Questier demonstrated the extent of the Browne family's engagement with the key issues of Elizabethan and early Stuart England, a point echoed three years later in Marshall and Scott's observation on the Throckmortons of Coughton that 'in no sense did they inhabit a recusant bubble', whilst looking further down the social scale Bill Sheils has suggested that 'getting on and getting along' – prosperity and co-existence – were the principal drivers of Catholic-Protestant relations in the early modern era.⁹⁰⁶

The difference between Bossy's view and those of these present-day historians is less stark than this summary at first sight suggests and is rather a matter of focus and emphasis. As Questier noted, Bossy's objective was to explore the internal dynamics of the Catholic community, to the exclusion of its external touchpoints.⁹⁰⁷ But the survival, and the intermittent flourishing, of a proscribed community over more than a century and a half is suggestive of the development of two contrary impulses – social practices which underpinned a distinctive confessional identity, coupled with other behaviours which achieved a *modus vivendi* with the wider non-Catholic world. In different times and places, and in different aspects of daily living, early modern Catholics survived through adopting differing positions on this continuum between separation and integration.

⁹⁰⁵ Bossy, *Community*, p. 7.

⁹⁰⁶ Questier, *Catholicism and Community* pp. 6, 8-9; Marshall and Scott, 'Introduction', p. 6; Sheils, "'Getting on" and "getting along"', p. 68.

⁹⁰⁷ Questier, *Catholicism and Community*, p. 3.

This final part of the thesis will explore these varying stances as manifested in the major activities of daily existence, and thereby seek to demonstrate the quality of Catholic life. Two key chapters of Bossy's *The English Catholic Community* each point to areas in which the drivers towards separation were dominant. The first of these, entitled 'Separation: Types of Religious Behaviour' concerns the elements of devotional practice which were to greater or lesser degree the focus of legal proscription.⁹⁰⁸ More recently Alexandra Walsham and Lisa McClain have enriched the understanding of this area by demonstrating how Tridentine norms were creatively and successfully adapted to meet the exigencies of the missionary situation.⁹⁰⁹ Bossy's following chapter, entitled 'Congregation: The Role of the Gentry' deals with the contribution of major Catholic families in sustaining both religious and cultural practices within the household, and reinforcing them by marriage alliances. Its focus on the elite has subsequently been qualified by Sheils's work on plebeian Catholicism, whilst its portrayal of the matriarchal household has been substantially elaborated by the rise of gender history, on which Brindley's recent doctoral thesis on female Catholic piety in the diocese of Chester is of particular relevance to this study.⁹¹⁰ These two areas, religious practice and family life, are respectively the subjects of the first two major sections of this chapter.

The final section considers Catholic engagement with the wider community. It firstly builds on the discussion in the previous sections of what might be termed a 'support infrastructure' by looking at possible networks between Catholics in Cheshire and those in the surrounding counties, whose Catholicism was ostensibly much stronger. Whilst an

⁹⁰⁸ Bossy, *Community*, pp. 108-148.

⁹⁰⁹ Alexandra Walsham, 'Translating Trent? English Catholicism and the Counter-Reformation', *Historical Research* 78 (2005), pp. 288-310; idem, , 'Beads, books and bare ruined choirs: transmutations of Catholic ritual life in Protestant England', in B. Kaplan, R. Moore, H. van Nierop and J. Pollman (eds), *Catholic Communities in Protestant States: Britain and the Netherlands c. 1570-1720* (Manchester, 2009), pp. 103-122; McClain, *Lest We Be Damned*.

⁹¹⁰ Bossy, *Community*, pp. 149-181; Sheils, 'Egton Chapelry'; idem, 'Jacobean Recusants'; Christina Michelle Brindley, 'Images of Female Piety and the Development of Post-Reformation Catholicism in the Diocese of Chester, c. 1558 – c. 1625' (unpublished Ph.D thesis, Manchester Metropolitan University, 2014).

extensive sub-industry dealing with the continental exiles and their links back to England has grown up in recent years, networks within the homeland lack holistic treatment: for understandable reasons of scope control, most local studies, including Wark's of Cheshire, have tended to confine themselves resolutely to the boundaries of their chosen counties (Questier's study of the Brownes is a significant exception to this rule).⁹¹¹ Discussion of these intra-confessional networks is followed by an exploration of the extent to which Cheshire's Catholics, both elite and plebeian, were integrated into wider Protestant society. Specific consideration of Catholic involvement in the resistance to Puritan attempts to suppress the traditional festive culture within the county, building upon evidence from Steve Hindle's 1995 article on the struggle for the Cheshire wakes, concludes the chapter.⁹¹²

The qualitative evidence of Catholic life in early modern Cheshire is much less abundant than the summary entries in visitation registers and in the Crown Books of Assize which are the principal sources for the previous chapters. The papers of the Savage and Whitmore families, which are the principal sources for the county's Catholic elite of the period, have relatively little to say about the families' religious proclivities, though that in itself is not without significance.⁹¹³ Brindley's recent doctoral thesis, noted above, exhibits the same limitation of evidence: although its scope covers both Lancashire and Cheshire, its focus is overwhelmingly Lancastrian, with only a handful of Cestrian examples.⁹¹⁴ Such a picture of Cheshire Catholicism as may be constructed, therefore, is an impressionistic one, relying heavily on inferences from fragments of information in official records, contextualised with parallels in the wider secondary literature.

⁹¹¹ Marie Rowlands, 'Introduction', in idem (ed.), *Catholics of Parish and Town 1558-1778* (CRS, 1999), pp. 3-9, p. 5; Questier, 'Catholicism and Community'. Katy Gibbons, *English Catholic Exiles in late sixteenth-century Paris* (Woodbridge, 2011) is an example of the literature on the expatriate communities.

⁹¹² Hindle, 'Little Budworth Wakes'.

⁹¹³ Boothman and Hyde-Parker (eds), *Savage Fortune*; University of Bangor, Mostyn MSS.

⁹¹⁴ Brindley, 'Images of female piety'.

3.1 Devotional practices

Bossy identified three stages, to some degree sequential, in the ritual separation of English Catholics after the Reformation: in the cycle of feast and fast; in public worship; and in the rites of passage.⁹¹⁵ The first of these may be treated summarily here, since the Cheshire archive provides no examples to supplement existing knowledge. Catholic fasting and abstinence were not prohibited by either canon or civil law, and indeed varied only in frequency from the practice of the established Church of England, which in places continued to mandate them during Lent: in 1605 the churchwardens of the mid-Cheshire parish of Davenham appeared before Bishop Lloyd's primary visitation because they 'haue eaten flesh in tyme of Lent'.⁹¹⁶

The latter two areas were, in contrast, of interest to the authorities, and the evidence of each will be discussed later in this section of the chapter. Both, however, to greater or lesser extent involved sacramental acts, whose fulfilment was dependent upon the ministry of a priest (though as Walsham and in particular McClain have demonstrated, creative solutions were devised to circumvent the scarcity of clerical manpower).⁹¹⁷ Hence it is pertinent to contextualise these discussions against the backcloth of priestly availability and ministry, which is the subject of the next sub-section.

⁹¹⁵ Bossy, *Community*, pp. 108-148.

⁹¹⁶ CALS, EDV 1.14, f. 67^v. Kenneth Fincham (ed.), *Visitation Articles and Injunctions of the early Stuart Church* (2 vols., Woodbridge, 1994-1998), I, p.22 shows that Bishop Montague of Bath and Wells included the killing, sale and consumption of meat during Lent in his visitation articles of 1609.

⁹¹⁷ Walsham, 'Beads, books and bare ruined choirs', pp. 107, 111-112; idem, 'Translating Trent?', pp. 307-309; McClain, *Lest We Be Damned*, pp. 47, 109-139.

3.1.1 *The clergy and their ministry*

What may be said with confidence of clerical manpower at the national level is that its availability increased substantially between 1580 and 1641. Dures noted that by the former date some 100 priests had been sent on the English mission, and allowance also needs to be made for the dwindling number of pre-Reformation clergy who were still active then.⁹¹⁸

Bossy estimates that the clerical pool had increased to around 300 by 1603, and to 750 by 1641.⁹¹⁹ To refine these figures for contextualisation of the fragmentary evidence for Cheshire, cognisance needs to be taken of the uneven distribution of this manpower, with a preponderance towards the south-east. Haigh's extrapolation from Anstruther's prosopographies is that in 1580 only 20 per cent of the missionaries were serving in the north of England, in 1603 38 per cent and 1635 somewhere between 25 and 35 per cent, giving figures of 20, 114 and approximately 230 for the region at these three dates.⁹²⁰ Given the strength of Catholicism in the counties further north, it is reasonable to suppose that Cheshire's share of this pool was in each case a fairly small one.⁹²¹

Turning to the Cheshire evidence, the presence of several pre-Reformation clergy who were active around the start of this period is recorded: John Morwen, chaplain to Lady Egerton at Bunbury, and probably also John Bushell, the former chantry priest of the collegiate church there; Thomas Houghton in the Nantwich deanery; William Worthington, chaplain and ostensibly butler to Lady Warburton at Congleton; John Maddocks at Malpas; and possibly Richard Bannister at Runcorn.⁹²² John Culpage of Manchester and Richard

⁹¹⁸ Dures, *English Catholicism*, p. 21.

⁹¹⁹ Bossy, *Community*, pp. 216-217.

⁹²⁰ Haigh, 'Monopoly to minority', pp. 133-134. Haigh's figures for 1635 (35 per cent of secular clergy, 25 per cent of Jesuits have been used to apportion Bossy's for 1641 (500 seculars, 250 regulars, including Benedictines.)

⁹²¹ Bossy, *Community*, pp. 404-405.

⁹²² Wark, *Cheshire*, pp. 174-178. Bushell's active status is inferred from his inclusion in a list of recusants of 1577; Maddocks may have been semi-retired, given his limited participation in the mass at Agden in 1582: nothing is known of Bannister other than his presence in Runcorn in 1586.

Sutton were imprisoned with Houghton in Chester Castle at the start of the 1580s, and given the reports of masses celebrated there later in that decade, it is quite possible that they were active there.⁹²³ It would seem likely that these recusant clergy outnumbered the missionaries at this stage, given the evidence of their distribution above: of the latter, only one Baret, who was reported to be at the house of the Wirral recusant John Whitmore in 1581, the anonymous itinerant celebrant of the mass at Agden at Passiontide 1582, and a Welsh priest named Benet, who celebrated another mass there around the same time, survive in the record from this period.⁹²⁴ It would seem from the above, though, that the emerging Catholic areas of the county enjoyed some clerical provision at this juncture, although it is uncertain to what extent it was reserved to the service of the elite.

By the mid-1580s, however, the pre-Reformation clergy ceased to feature in the record, and although eight seminary priests are known to have ministered in and around Chester during the years 1587-1592, it would seem likely that pastoral provision became less stable, because of the high clerical attrition of the period and the resultant brevity of the average ministry.⁹²⁵ Haigh calculated that 30 per cent of the missionaries sent to England in the 1580s were executed, and four of the first six seminaries who hailed from Cheshire (all ordained by 1585) ended their ministries in this way, a fifth also being sentenced to death but subsequently purchasing a pardon.⁹²⁶ Of the next batch, active between 1587 and 1591, Christopher Thules can have been in the county for at most a year, possibly only weeks, when he was arrested with two of the others, Jones and Salisbury, and John Butler, alias Bannister, had been on the English mission for just over two years before his arraignment at the Assizes

⁹²³ Ibid., pp. 61, 71, 174-177.

⁹²⁴ Ibid., pp. 37; Barlow, 'Lewd company', pp. 29-30.

⁹²⁵ Ibid., pp. 96, 174-177, for Butler, Cowper, Davies, Hanmer, Stone, and Thules. Of Thules's two colleagues nothing is known apart from their putative surnames, Jones and Salisbury.

⁹²⁶ Haigh, 'Revisionism', p. 402; Wark, pp. 174, 175, 177 for Brereton (a tenuous inclusion in the list) and for Crocket, Holford, Shert and Willcocks, who were executed: Anstruther, *Seminary Priests*, I, pp. 92-93, 170, 310, 381 for Coxie, and for the ordination dates of the previous four.

of May 1591.⁹²⁷ There were no doubt more active seminary priests than are known of: the Chester evidence is privileged largely by the survival of the proceedings of the Ecclesiastical Commission of 1592 for the city, whereas the equivalent county documentation is lost.⁹²⁸

There are no further indicators of clerical manpower levels until after ecclesiastical governance was implemented in the 1620s. In 1625 an archdeaconry of secular priests from Cheshire and Staffordshire was established under the leadership of a priest from the latter county, and a meeting of that body in 1631 recorded that five clergy were then active in Cheshire.⁹²⁹ This figure requires augmentation to reflect a presence from the rival Jesuit organisation, the College of St Aloysius, established in 1622 to cover the north-west of the country down to Staffordshire, and numbering around twenty priests between 1635 and 1655. Jesuits were active at five locations in the county at some time during the seventeenth century, but only one of them, Hooton, is mentioned before the Civil War.⁹³⁰ Since there were no Benedictines in Cheshire before 1700, a total clerical workforce of about six or seven in the Caroline years seems likely.⁹³¹

Whilst this may at first sight appear to be no more than reversion to the mid-Elizabethan status quo after a period of recession, and conflicts with the evidence of substantial growth over the nation as a whole, it needs to be remembered that the position at either end of this sixty-year period reflects a state of relative stability, following an intervening period of flux (of indeterminate duration). Moreover, this estimate of Caroline numbers is consistent with Bossy's top down estimates. He posited a national Catholic population of around 40,000 in 1603, rising to 60,000 by 1641, which on the basis of his

⁹²⁷ Anstruther, *Seminary Priests*, I, pp. 59, 354.

⁹²⁸ Wark, *Cheshire*, p. 174.

⁹²⁹ Lander, 'Roman Catholicism', p. 90.

⁹³⁰ Foley, *Jesuits*, II, pp. 1, 2, 182, 183

⁹³¹ A search of the Monks in Motion database <https://www.dur.ac.uk/mim/> identified six Benedictines who were professed before 1700 and originated from Cheshire, but none who served in the county, although one of the six, Thomas Minshull, is recorded as on a mission at Hawarden, over the Welsh border in Flintshire, from 1617 onwards.

estimates of clerical numbers (300 and 750 respectively, as noted above) equates to clergy to laity ratios of 1:133 for 1603 and 1:80 for 1641.⁹³² As Chapter 2 demonstrated, the known Catholic population in 1641 was around 450, and the true Catholic population, if allowance is made for under-reporting, somewhat higher, perhaps 700: thus a clerical workforce of six or seven would equate to a clergy to laity ratio somewhere between the national averages for 1603 and 1641. Bossy also considered the question of numbers, both of clergy and laity, from the different perspective of the supply side, and posited a further model which underpins his demand driven one above: that on average a priest would have a flock of slightly less than twenty families, each of around five souls. This would make it feasible for him to traverse a mission circuit around their households on a monthly basis, staying overnight with each, a *modus operandi* which, Bossy notes, many itinerant priests adopted. But Bossy is careful to stress that this is no more than an average, reflecting both unemployed clergy and dedicated domestic chaplains at one end of the spectrum, and priests with much larger plebeian flocks at the other.⁹³³

It would seem unlikely that this ideal pastoral model was typical of Cheshire, for two reasons. Firstly, even itinerant priests based outside gentry households do not seem to have been constantly on the road. Ambrose Barlow, for example, ministered exclusively to the poor of central Lancashire in the early Caroline years (he was martyred in 1641) and is an example of a priest who operated a monthly cycle of ministry, but he spent only one week each month traversing the outlying areas of his large quasi-parish on foot.⁹³⁴ Secondly and more specifically, the three Cheshire clergy whose locations are known were all clients of the gentry. In 1624 William Breedsweeke, ‘a seminarie priest’ was presented at both the spring and autumn Assizes alongside the Starkeys of Over, and for several years before his death in

⁹³² Bossy, *Community*, pp. 188,191-193.

⁹³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 190-191.

⁹³⁴ Bossy, *Community*, p. 252.

1629 the Jesuit Humphrey Leach lived at Hooton, bailiwick of the Stanleys, in a house owned by a Mr. Massey, which hints at shared pastoral services with the eponymous family at Puddington Hall, several miles away on the other side of the Wirral peninsula.⁹³⁵ The third, '[a] recusant from the lodge at Peckforton, known to be a popish priest' is known only from the Bunbury parish register, which records his burial in March 1640-1.⁹³⁶ The reference to the lodge suggests seigneurial dependency, probably on the cadet branch of the Savages at Beeston, but possibly on the Egertons at Ridley: these two townships border Peckforton to the north and south.⁹³⁷

Bossy noted, however, that itinerant clergy were the norm rather than the exception in the mid-Jacobean years, and only dwindled towards the end of the seventeenth century, and Walsham has challenged Haigh's paradigm of popular Catholicism dwindling through priestly neglect, pointing to the creative strategies for evangelisation that the seminary priests and the Jesuits in particular devised and in particular invoking the parallel of the rural missions which were a prominent feature of post-Reformation Europe.⁹³⁸ The substantial growth in reported plebeian recusant numbers over the early Stuart period, which was particularly marked in the parishes where these three known priests were based and those that bordered them (see Table 3.1 below), would seem to suggest that they were not exclusively chaplains to the gentry, but conducted an outreach ministry which resulted in conversions. One example of such conversion survives in Jesuit papers: the lapsed Catholic John Gardiner of Manley was reconciled to the Church by Humphrey Leach and went on to become a priest himself, confessing on his admission to the Venerable English College in Lent 1627 that he had 'lived in heresy until last Candlemas.'⁹³⁹

⁹³⁵ NA, CHES 21/3, fos. 104^v, 113; Foley, *Jesuits*, II, pp. 180, 183.

⁹³⁶ CALS, P40/1/1, f. 184.

⁹³⁷ Dunn, *Ancient Parishes*, map annex.

⁹³⁸ Bossy, *Community*, pp. 251-254; Walsham, 'Translating Trent?', pp. 300-307.

⁹³⁹ Foley, *Jesuits*, I, p. 647.

Table 3.1 : Numbers of Catholics in parishes with resident clergy, 1624-41

<i>Parish</i>	<i>Hundred</i>	<i>1581-1603</i>	<i>1624-1641</i>	<i>Neighbouring parish*</i>	<i>1559-1603</i>	<i>1624-1641</i>
Bunbury	Eddisbury	98	260	Acton	8	38
				Malpas	58	69
				Tarporley	2	34
				Tattenhall	4	21
Burton	Wirral	0	24	Neston	9	24
Eastham	Wirral	7	103	Backford	4	18
Over	Middlewich	12	43	Little Budworth	0	35
				Whitegate	3	12

* The parishes with the strongest geographical affinities are shown alongside each other here: Eastham also borders Neston, and Over Tarporley. Other adjacent parishes with few or no Catholics (eg Stoak and Bromborough, which border Eastham) are not listed.

Thus it would appear likely that large tracts of the Catholic heartlands, in Eddisbury hundred and in south Wirral, enjoyed priestly visits with moderate regularity during the early Stuart period. The same is probably true of Chester, where two suspected priests were presented at the city Quarter Sessions in 1641, and where there was a Jesuit presence in 1654.⁹⁴⁰ It may be noted, however, that whereas Bunbury exhibited more than fourfold growth in recusant numbers in the early Stuart period, neighbouring Malpas showed very little growth (see Table 3.1 above), and a lack of priestly provision may be a factor here as much the absence of seigneurial leadership noted in Chapter 2. Malpas's early recusancy in the 1580s was supported by clergy from over the border in Wales, which suffered severe clerical deprivation after the turn of the century: there were sixteen priests in the principality in the Elizabethan period, but only four in 1604.⁹⁴¹

The evidence from the post-Restoration period suggests a reduction in clerical manpower from pre-Civil War levels, which is consistent with the evidence in the previous chapter of contraction in the Catholic community: in 1692 only two clergy, a secular who was

⁹⁴⁰ CALS, ZQSF77, nos.121, 153-154; Sturmer, *Chester*, pp. 15-16.

⁹⁴¹ Barlow, 'Lewd company', p. 30; Mullett, *Britain and Ireland*, p. 32.

sent to Bunbury the previous year, and a Jesuit at Dutton Lodge, home of the Gerards, were recorded as active in the county.⁹⁴² As chapter 1 showed, the households of the three leading Wirral gentry (Massey, Poole and Stanley) had contained domestic chaplains at the time of the Popish Plot, and also during Cartwright's episcopate in the following decade.⁹⁴³ There is no evidence that the Bellasis family enjoyed similar privileges in Macclesfield: the fact that in 1741 a priest came from Manchester to serve the congregation in Sutton would suggest otherwise.⁹⁴⁴ Settled, quasi-parochial ministry was, as Bossy suggests, predominantly a phenomenon of the eighteenth century, and the only evidence of it from Cheshire during the period of this study is that from Bunbury.⁹⁴⁵ The appointment of a further priest there in 1740, albeit a brief one (he died from alcoholism two years later) is suggestive of an ongoing clerical presence in that heartland area.⁹⁴⁶

Clerical coverage elsewhere in the county can only be a matter of speculation. On the one hand it is difficult to imagine that the Savages of Rocksavage, the foremost aristocratic family of the shire, would have been content with occasional visits from itinerant missionaries, and the group of sixteen presented alongside them at the Quarter Sessions of January 1640-1 may well include a priest in disguise: on the other, it would seem equally unlikely that the few scattered plebeian Catholics of the Macclesfield hundred received any regular priestly ministry before the Civil War, and as Sheils notes of similarly isolated Catholics in Jacobean Yorkshire, it is hard to envisage any meaningful form of Catholic life for those of them who did not even enjoy the presence of co-religionists in the same household.⁹⁴⁷ An explanation

⁹⁴² J. S. Hansom (ed.), 'Particulars of Priests in England and Wales, 1692' in *Miscellanea*, CRS 7 (1911), pp. 106-114, p.108; Anstruther, *Seminary Priests*, III, pp. 87, 98.

⁹⁴³ See Chapter 1, sections 1.8 and 1.10 above.

⁹⁴⁴ Lander, 'Roman Catholicism', p. 91.

⁹⁴⁵ Bossy, *Community*, pp. 129, 135, 261.

⁹⁴⁶ Anstruther, *Seminary Priests*, IV, p. 34.

⁹⁴⁷ CCALS, QJB2/6, fos. 8-9; Sheils, 'Jacobean Recusants', pp. 138-139.

may, however, lie in the devotional practices devised by the missionaries to mitigate the infrequency of their visits, which are discussed in the following section.

3.1.2 Worship and personal devotion

The principal purpose of the cyclical priestly mission circuits discussed above was the offering of the mass, the central, self-defining action of the Catholic community, in which the sacrifice of Calvary is re-presented and the Eucharistic offering of bread and wine transformed into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. Bossy noted the typical pattern of such visits: the priest would arrive in the evening, stay overnight with the host family, and celebrate mass early in the morning, before proceeding on to his next call, either on horseback or on foot.⁹⁴⁸ The importance of these relatively infrequent occasions to the faithful may be gauged both by the numbers who gathered for some of them – twenty-two from a two- to three-mile radius at the mass in a farmhouse at Agden, Malpas, at Passiontide 1582, for example – and by the draconian legislation the government implemented to prevent them.⁹⁴⁹ The Act of 1581 which introduced the £20 fine for recusancy enacted penalties of a fine of 100 marks and a year's imprisonment upon those who were willingly present at one.⁹⁵⁰ It is thus unsurprising that the evidence of masses being celebrated is even more scarce than that of the priests who said them. Instances of eleven masses said in Cheshire over the century and a half in the scope of this study have been identified, and all date from the period 1580 to 1591.⁹⁵¹

⁹⁴⁸ Bossy, *Community*, p. 252.

⁹⁴⁹ Barlow, 'Lewd company', pp. 26-27.

⁹⁵⁰ 23 Eliz, c. 1.

⁹⁵¹ Barlow, 'Lewd company', pp. 24-26; Wark, *Cheshire*, pp. 61, 71, 93, 101. The temporal clustering of this evidence in the archive would seem to be in significant measure due to the circumstances in which they were discovered. Four of them took place in the gaol at Chester Castle, which even given the laxity of Elizabethan prisons, would seem a particularly conspicuous venue, and a further three were uncovered by the very thorough enquiries of the Ecclesiastical Commission of 1592 for Chester City. The intelligence which led to masses being discovered at farmhouses in Malpas in 1582 and 1586 is not evident from the record of the subsequent Quarter Sessions proceedings, but the coincidence of location suggests that the authorities there were vigilant, at least after the first occasion, during the investigation of which a further two instances of masses came to light. The

Extensive details survive of the mass said in a farmhouse at Malpas in April 1582, in depositions which were taken from ten of the attendees, which corroborate and elaborate Bossy's description above.⁹⁵² The celebrant arrived the previous evening, 'in Aparaeill not like a prest [b]ut more lyke a playne whomely man', bringing his chalice and vestments 'in a Boodget', and dined with his host Roger Yardley, a local yeoman.⁹⁵³ His name is not recorded, but he is described as 'abowt xxx yeres of age', indicating that he was a seminary priest, and as a 'strawandger', who was unfamiliar with the locality.⁹⁵⁴ He was escorted to his destination by a notorious recusant of Whitchurch, a market town several miles to the south-east, and told Yardley the following day that 'he wold goo to Oswestree', another Shropshire market town rather further to the south-west, which suggests his itinerary and the distances involved.

The liturgy, which took place in a 'loofte or heyghe Seller', began extremely early: one of the attendees testified to arriving with another 'about iij of the clock that morning', and finding two others already there, and another that she arrived 'beffore sonne Rysyng'. It was also extremely lengthy, comprising confessions, matins, mass, the distribution of 'holy water and holy Bread' and finally a sermon: according to the latecomer Ales Nevet, the mass had not commenced when she arrived 'about ix of clock'. These elaborate proceedings, coupled with the presence of a second, pre-Reformation, priest from nearby, John Maddocks,

survival of this evidence may also reflect the heightened religio-political climate of the 1580s and early 1590s. The lack of parallel Stuart examples from Cheshire, particularly from the mid-1620s and pre-Civil War periods, is, however, surprising, and may reflect the generally low-level of anti-popish agitation in the county. On the other hand, it is possible that the authorities simply allowed this aspect of the legislation to fall into disuse, since it was evidently difficult to police: of the eleven instances noted above, only the Malpas mass of 1582 resulted in a successful prosecution, and even that was limited, with nine of the seventeen accused failing to answer their charges. Routine presentments for recusancy were an easier option, and, for a cash-constrained regime, a more lucrative one.

⁹⁵² Barlow, 'Lewd company' provides detailed references for the material in this and the following paragraph (except where otherwise indicated), together with a transcript of the examinations of the attendees.

⁹⁵³ *The Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (eleventh edition (revised), 2008) notes that the word 'budget' derives from the Latin and Old French for a small leather bag. Such transportation of the equipment for the mass may not have been universal: Walsham, 'Beads, books and bare ruined choirs', p. 105 notes that casuistry literature of the period permitted the celebration of mass without vestments and using tin chalices.

⁹⁵⁴ The priest's age precludes the possibility that he was a Marian recusant priest.

suggests that this was something of a special event. It took place ‘upon Teusday in the passion weeke’, and another mass in the locality discovered by the authorities, four years later, on ‘the Tuesday after polme sonday’: the coincidence of the two events taking place at the same point in the liturgical calendar suggests that both may have arranged to fulfil the annual obligation upon Catholics to be shriven of their sins and receive Holy Communion at Eastertide. The testimony of the host, Roger Yardley, also suggests that this was an infrequent event: he admits to being present at another mass in a farmhouse two years earlier, and refers to another unspecified occasion ‘where one benet a priest of Wales did shrive this examynant and most or all of the company afor said, & that said masse to them & ministered to them all the old Sacrament’.

The masses which are known to have taken place in Chester later in the decade were admittedly closer in occurrence, but for particular reasons. Three of the four held in the prison, which appear to have attracted a congregation from the wider community, were celebrated by the seminary priest Thomas Holford during his brief incarceration there in 1585.⁹⁵⁵ The enquiries of the Ecclesiastical Commission into one of the masses of 1591 identified as the celebrant ‘an old man that came from Christleton’, a nearby village where the other two masses of that year took place.⁹⁵⁶

No doubt this handful of masses recorded do not even represent the tip of the iceberg of clerical activity. None the less the overwhelming weight of the historiographical evidence is that clerical availability was insufficient for supply to meet demand. So how did the faithful adjust to the absence of this critical ritual act? Walsham suggests a ‘path of mental contemplation’, which McClain characterises as focusing on ‘the physical, crucified Christ rather than the Christ embodied in the host’ and ‘spiritual rather than corporal reception of

⁹⁵⁵ Wark, *Cheshire*, p. 61. The other known celebration in the Castle prison took place three years later: see *ibid.*, p. 71.

⁹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 93, 101.

the sacraments'. Both authors point to the concomitant examination of conscience and act of contrition in the absence of formal sacramental confession to a priest.⁹⁵⁷ An important mechanism for this was provided by the confraternities of the rosary founded by several early missionaries: Dillon has shown that Garnet's book of 1593 *The Society of the Rosary* provided for not only such self-shriving but also the benefits of indulgences, as well as a structure for communal worship in the absence of a priest.⁹⁵⁸

Walsham also suggests that such flexible adaptation of Tridentine standards to the exigencies of the missionary environment increased lay empowerment in matters spiritual.⁹⁵⁹ She points to four facilitators of domestic devotion: printed materials, noting the effectiveness with which the missionaries deployed this medium as 'domme preachers' in their absence; sacramentals such as crucifixes, *agni dei* and rosaries, which the missionaries imported in volume from the continent; relics; and the mental reconfiguration of the physical environment, and in particular the home, as sacred space.⁹⁶⁰

To what extent the very limited evidence of private devotional practice in the Cheshire archives represents such missionary initiatives as opposed to traditionalist survivals may be doubted: its volume diminishes progressively from the 1560s onwards and, with one much later exception, disappears altogether after 1600. There are three cases from the 1560s and 1570s concerning printed materials, in each case Latin primers: Walsham's suggestions that such artefacts were used by the illiterate either as mnemonics to trigger specific prayers, or as icons of devotion in themselves, would seem the most likely explanation of their use,

⁹⁵⁷ Walsham, 'Beads, books and bare ruined choirs', p. 105; McClain, *Lest We Be Damned*, pp. 109-139, esp. pp. 110, 119, 123-126.

⁹⁵⁸ Anne Dillon, 'Praying by Number: The Confraternity of the Rosary and the English Catholic Community, c.1580-1700', *History* 88 (2003), pp. 451-471, pp. 468-470.

⁹⁵⁹ Walsham, 'Translating Trent?', p. 308.

⁹⁶⁰ For each of these examples respectively, see idem, "'Domme Preachers'? Post - Reformation English Catholicism and the Culture of Print', *P&P* 168 (2000), pp. 72-123; idem, 'Translating Trent?', p. 305; idem, 'Beads, books and bare ruined choirs', p. 107; *ibid.*, p. 117.

given that the owners included a ‘but pore’ draper’s wife and a baker.⁹⁶¹ Between 1562 and 1595 there were also two cases of the possession of images, and three of ‘papisticall’ or ‘popish reliques’.⁹⁶² The former may have been statues, or pictures, of the Virgin Mary, though alternative objects of devotion are equally possible: John Sutton of Davenham was presented to the visitation of 1588 for ‘praying to the xii apostles.’⁹⁶³ The description of the latter items as ‘reliques’ seems somewhat all-embracing, and the possibility they were sacramentals rather than relics *per se* is perhaps more credible: the ‘reliques’ identified in the house of the Davyes of Chester in 1595, for example, comprised a supaltary and a number of ‘popish bokes’.⁹⁶⁴

McClain also points to the appropriation of prisons as sacred space, and the Cheshire archive provides a distinctive example, over and above the instances of masses celebrated there. The niece of one of the prisoners, who was interrogated by the Ecclesiastical Commission of 1592 about a mass in John Whitmore’s room there four years earlier, testified to having ‘diverse times’ heard services said there by Ralph Worsley, another prisoner, who was a lawyer and presumably had sufficient Latin for the purpose.⁹⁶⁵

The final and rather later example would seem *prima facie* to be another example of the appropriation of public space as sacred space, but this time in the unusual setting of an inn. In 1638 a Bunbury innkeeper, Richard Brocke was presented at the Quarter Sessions for displaying a crucifix in the public area of his premises, an act akin to the use of woodcuts and tapestries of Biblical scenes as wall-coverings, which Watt noted as common in many

⁹⁶¹ CALS, EDA 12.2, fos 81v, 132; BIY, V.1578-9, CB.3, f. 19 ; Walsham, “‘Domme Preachers’?”, pp. 118, 120. The draper’s wife, Margaret Aldersey, was presented before the Ecclesiastical Commission twice on this count, in 1562 and 1570: she and her husband were described as ‘but pore’ in Downham’s 1577 return of recusants to the Privy Council (SP12/118, f.49, reproduced verbatim at *Miscellanea*, CRS 22 (1921), pp. 68-69.

⁹⁶² CCALS, EDA 12.2, f. 81v; *ibid.*, EDV 1.10, f. 21v; TNA, E134, Eliz 25, Trinity, 5, MS 5; BIY, V.1595-6, CB.3, f. 2v.

⁹⁶³ CALS, EDV 1.8, f. 13.

⁹⁶⁴ Brindley, ‘Images of female piety’, p. 152. A supaltary is a portable altar stone, required for the celebration of mass.

⁹⁶⁵ McClain, *Lest We Be Damned*, pp. 62-70; Wark, *Cheshire*, p. 71.

taverns. This, however, would seem to be an act of defiance of the influential Puritan lobby in the village rather than the provision of a focus of devotion for Brocke and/or his clientele, who may reasonably be assumed to have been substantially Catholic (there were seven inns in the parish to choose from). Brocke does not appear to have been a particularly devout Catholic: he was never presented for any other Catholic offences (although his wife was persistently recusant, and the possibility that she was the instigator cannot be discounted). The Brockes were, however, assertive individuals: twenty years earlier either this Richard or an eponymous predecessor had been in trouble for bear-baiting, and in retaliation had reported the Puritan head constable, John Witter, for his non-conformity. All in all, this incident is best read as a preliminary skirmish in a culture war which was brewing, and which resulted in the closure of six of the seven hostelries shortly afterwards.⁹⁶⁶

The evidence of Catholic devotional practice is thus extremely limited both in volume and in chronological coverage, but would seem to point to a richness and variety of Catholic life which is consistent with and complementary to the abundant examples of persistent recusancy which Assize and visitation presentments of recusants reveal. In the early post-Reformation period from which this evidence largely comes, the development of the communities and networks which were to sustain Catholicism into the next century were already visible, amongst the yeomen, husbandmen and labourers of Malpas, with the prisoners in Chester Castle, and the inhabitants of the villages around Chester City.⁹⁶⁷

⁹⁶⁶ Bennett and Dewhurst, *Quarter Sessions Records*, pp. 93-94; Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety 1550-1640* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 194-196; Hindle, 'Little Budworth Wakes', pp. 164-166.

⁹⁶⁷ Wark, *Cheshire*, pp. 71, 93 records Anne Dewsbury, the prisoner's niece, providing victuals to several of the prisoners, and the presence at one of the masses at Christleton of Katherine Whitmore, the wife of a tailor from the neighbouring village of Guilden Sutton.

3.1.3 *Rites of passage*

The three major life cycle events of birth, marriage and death were each points at which Catholics asserted their identity and separated from the wider community: as Bossy observed, ‘they may be felt of special importance in a threatened community whose continuing existence they protect.’⁹⁶⁸ As such, such rites could attract the attention of the authorities, either by their omission or commission. Catholics might be presented before the visitors for failure to have a child baptised at the parish church, or to marry there, whereas instances of Catholic burials invariably involve the illicit and clandestine use of the churchyard, and occasionally of the church itself. Neither of the first two offences is conclusive evidence of Catholicism, whereas burial of the Catholic dead, which is sometimes recorded in parish registers, is less equivocal. In the civil arena, the legislation of 1606 introduced a fine of £100 for clandestine Catholic baptism or marriage, together with a loss of dowry for the latter: the very limited historiographical attention these clauses of the act have received perhaps suggests they were something of a dead letter, although the associated prohibition on the burial of excommunicated recusants in consecrated ground had significant repercussions, discussed below.⁹⁶⁹

In general terms, the Cheshire evidence supports the historiographical consensus that Catholics normatively practised separation in these three life cycle events. In Bunbury, whose parish registers survive for the period 1598 to 1700, only 155 of the 703 known Catholics from those years (22 per cent) potentially feature there, and the frequent recurrence of the same names in the registers suggests that the true figure is likely to be considerably lower. Moreover, the majority of matches are on burials, which were frequently recorded as

⁹⁶⁸ Bossy, *Community*, p. 132.

⁹⁶⁹ Bossy, *Community*, p. 136-139, and Aveling, ‘The Marriages of Catholic Recusants, 1559-1642’, *JEH* 14 (1963), pp. 68-83 are, as discussed in the following section, the only items of historiography which deal with the issue of post-Reformation Catholic marriages. No literature has been found which deals specifically with Catholic baptisms,

clandestine recusant activities.⁹⁷⁰ In neighbouring Malpas the level of potential matches of offenders against the registers over the period 1559-1641 is comparable, at thirty-three of 159 (21 per cent), though precise quantification is even more difficult here than in Bunbury: the parish's proximity to the Welsh border is reflected in the ubiquity of family names such as Maddocks and Probin, which occur across the generations on both sides of the confessional divide.⁹⁷¹ In this earlier sample, however, Elizabethan examples of all three rites are recorded amongst prominent Catholics, illustrating Bossy's observation that separation in the rites of passage was slow to emerge: in the case of burial, where delinquency is most evident, Marshall notes that the burial of Catholics was not contentious until Elizabeth's final years.⁹⁷²

Whilst, however, separation in the rites of passage appears to have been normative amongst the majority of Catholics, there was one significant exception to this pattern: a degree of conformity is visible amongst the gentry. The following analysis of each of these three life-cycle events in turn demonstrates both the norm and the exceptions to it.

3.1.3.1 Marriage

Of the three rites of passage, marriage will be considered first, since it contextualises the evidence for baptism: it is rather more significant as an indicator of social practice whether Catholics had their children christened in the parish church, rather than whether they themselves had been christened there, for two reasons. Firstly, as noted above, separation in these rites was slow to emerge.⁹⁷³ The parish register statistics from Malpas, discussed in the previous paragraph, illustrate this latter point: eleven of the thirteen possible Catholic

⁹⁷⁰ CALS, P40/1/1-2, *passim*. The total of 703 Catholics is derived from all sources, principally civil and ecclesiastical presentments.

⁹⁷¹ CALS, P21/3607/1/1-2, *passim*.

⁹⁷² Bossy, *Community*, pp. 109, 132; Peter Marshall, 'Confessionalisation and Community in the Burial of English Catholics, c. 1570-1700' in Nadine Lewycky and Adam Morton (eds.), *Getting Along?: Religious Identities and Confessional Relations in Early Modern England: Essays in honour of Professor W. S. Sheils* (Farnham, 2012), pp. 57-75, p. 72.

⁹⁷³ Bossy, *Community*, p. 132; Aveling, 'The Marriages of Catholic Recusants, 1559-1642', *JEH* 14 (1963), pp. 68-83, p. 69.

marriages found from before the Civil War date from the Elizabethan years, and of these eleven nine are from the 1560s and 1570s.⁹⁷⁴ Secondly, as section 3.1 demonstrated, the growth in Catholic numbers in the early Stuart years was particularly pronounced in parishes in and around where priests were based, suggesting that a significant proportion of Catholics there were their converts, who perhaps may not have been Catholics at the time of their marriage.

The historiography of recusant marriage is thin, consisting of an article by Aveling on cases of clandestine marriage which appeared before the York Consistory and High Commission, and four pages in Bossy's seminal monograph, half of the latter devoted to the impact of Hardwicke's Marriage Act of 1753.⁹⁷⁵ The literature on early modern marriage in wider Protestant society, and indeed in continental Europe, is, however, important in contextualising the practice.⁹⁷⁶ Prior to the Reformation canon lawyers held that two individuals who were free to marry (for example, not already married, or prohibited by ties of consanguinity) could contract a valid sacramental marriage simply by formal declarations in the present tense (*per verba de praesenti*) that they took each other as man and wife, without the presence of either a priest or witnesses.⁹⁷⁷ By the late sixteenth century, however, such informal arrangements were out of kilter both with accepted social conventions, and with the controlling agendas of confessional churches, both Catholic and Protestant. The Tridentine decree *Tametsi*, mandating that marriages should be solemnised publicly before the parish priest, was mirrored in Cranmer's abortive *Reformatio legum* and in Convocation's attempts

⁹⁷⁴ Ibid., P21/3607/1/1, f. 1v-48v, passim, for the examples for the 1560s and 1570s: Randle Lawton, Thomas Lloyd (1561), John and Elizabeth Cane (1562), Edward and Joan Probin (1563), Joan Wilbraham (1572) and John and Matilda Maddocks (1577). The later examples are Margaret Dod (1581), John Probin (1602), an unnamed son of William Probin (1635) and John Massy (1640), the last two of these recorded in P21/3607/1/2.

⁹⁷⁵ Bossy, *Community*, pp. 136-140; J. C. H. Aveling, 'The Marriages of Catholic Recusants, 1559-1642', *JEH* 14 (1963), pp. 68-83.

⁹⁷⁶ Martin Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England, 1570-1640* (Cambridge, 1987), esp. pp. 212-218; David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death: Ritual, Religion and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 234-376, esp. pp. 316-335; John Bossy, *Christianity in the West 1400-1700* (Oxford, 1985), pp. 19-26.

⁹⁷⁷ Aveling, 'Marriages', p. 68.

in the revised canons of 1597 and 1604 to tighten up wedding procedures and in particular the granting of licences.⁹⁷⁸ None the less *per verba de praesenti* remained in force in the unreformed canon law of the Church of England, although such clandestine marriages were vulnerable to civil complications of legitimacy and inheritance.⁹⁷⁹

This embedded tradition, together with the Church's campaign against it, goes some way towards explaining the frequency of presentments for irregular marriage or cohabitation in the visitation books of the period, though Cressy estimates that the volume of these was fairly low as a proportion of marriages overall, at least before the Restoration, when the volumes of defective marriages doubled.⁹⁸⁰ The hiatus in ecclesiastical discipline of the 1640s and 1650s, coupled with the profusion of dissent during that period, had left the restored Church's authority severely weakened, and a tendency towards private marriages emerged even amongst those who were in other respect conformists.⁹⁸¹ Such unions were, however, contracted predominantly because of either bridal pregnancy in an era of late marriage, or parental or societal opposition, and there does not seem to have been a great focus on those undertaken by Catholics who rejected the ministrations of a heretical Church.⁹⁸²

Of the thirteen references to irregular marriages in Fincham's sample of Jacobean visitation articles, only two make any specific reference to Catholics.⁹⁸³ No hint of religious motivation has been identified in scrutiny of the cases in the Cheshire visitation books for the period from 1592 to the Civil War.⁹⁸⁴ From the Catholic citadel of Bunbury, there were only two visitation presentments for clandestine marriage over those years, both in 1614, one of

⁹⁷⁸ Ingram, *Church Courts*, pp. 125-126, 132-135.

⁹⁷⁹ Aveling, 'Marriages', pp. 68-69.

⁹⁸⁰ Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*, pp. 320, 334.

⁹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 332.

⁹⁸² Ingram, *Church Courts*, pp. 214-215.

⁹⁸³ Fincham, *Visitation Articles*, I, pp. 124, 165.

⁹⁸⁴ CALS, EDV 1.10 to EDV 1.32 inclusive.

which may feature a Catholic.⁹⁸⁵ Additionally eight couples from Bunbury were presented for cohabitation between 1608 and 1622, but none of the presentees can be reliably identified as a Catholic.⁹⁸⁶ After the Restoration, when episcopal visitations resumed and clandestine marriage was high on the visitors' agenda, only four cases from across the county involving Catholics have been found.⁹⁸⁷ In only one of these cases was there any further action by the visitors.⁹⁸⁸

Examination of the Bunbury parish registers, on the other hand, suggests that clandestine marriage was almost universal amongst Catholics. Only seven instances of brides and grooms who can with confidence be matched against the consolidated presentment lists from 1598 to 1700 are recorded there, and of these four date from 1578 or earlier, again underpinning Bossy's assertion that separation in the rites of passage developed only gradually.⁹⁸⁹ Of the remaining three, Alice Burrowes, who married in 1594, had a conformist husband, and three of their children were subsequently baptised in the parish church.⁹⁹⁰ Robert and Margaret Hickson of Haughton were conformist at the time of their marriage in 1620, only becoming recusant in 1624, by which time they were living at Ridley, probably as part of the Egerton entourage.⁹⁹¹ The final case, that of Edward and Anne Massey, dates from 1657, and is problematic, given that Edward was persistently recusant from 1651 to 1686, and their son's baptism in 1660 is also recorded in the registers.⁹⁹² A possible

⁹⁸⁵ Ibid., EDV 1.15, f. 84v, and EDV 1.19, f. 42; TNA, CHES 21/2, f. 75v. John Bryndly senior and junior were presented for recusancy at the visitation of 1608, and at the Assizes 1610. John junior may be one of the presentees of 1614.

⁹⁸⁶ CALS, EDV 1.15, f. 85, EDV 1.19, f. 42, EDV 1.22, f. 30 and EDV 1.24, f. 73v. The only possible match on name against the list of Catholic presentees from the parish is Margaret Brotherton in 1619 (EDV 1.19), but this seems improbable given that TNA, CHES 21/2, f. 125v reported the eponymous recidivist recusant as the wife of John when she was presented at the Assizes in 1616.

⁹⁸⁷ CALS, EDV 1.38, f. 17; DV 1.55, f. 29; EDV 1.59, f. 16v; EDV 1.64, f. 24.

⁹⁸⁸ Ibid., EDV 1.55, f. 29.

⁹⁸⁹ CALS, P40/1/1, f. 65 (Ralph and Jane Burrowes, 1566), f. 66 (Margaret Robinson nee Fisher, 1571), f. 68 (Ralph and Joan Bushell, 1574), and f.71 (Ralph and Elizabeth Cooke, 1578). See Wark, *Cheshire*, pp. for the presentment histories of these individuals. A further six individuals from the period 1563-1622 were matched on name, but with missing or conflicting supporting data (e.g. township), which precludes their inclusion here.

⁹⁹⁰ Ibid., f. 79.

⁹⁹¹ Ibid., f. 85.

⁹⁹² Ibid., P40/1/2, fos. 4v, 32.

explanation is that the couple availed themselves of the civil marriage and registration legislation of 1653, which were approved by the Chapter of the Catholic clergy and remained in force until the Restoration.

The same pattern of early Elizabethan conformity may be detected in Malpas, where at least two (possibly more) couples who attended the mass of 1582 appear in the marriage registers for 1562 and 1563, but the latest marriage of a known Catholic that may be reliably discerned from the registers is that of Margaret Dod of Edge to her eponymous cousin Randolph in 1581.⁹⁹³ Some spouses, of course, may have been married in other parishes – Frances’s analysis of life-cycle events has demonstrated in her case studies of Daresbury and Malpas that 20 per cent of the parties to marriage lived more than five miles from each other.⁹⁹⁴

Margaret Dod was, however, of the elite, whose practice in the rites of passage tended to diverge from that of the *hoi polloi*. A Hugh Beeston appears in the Bunbury marriage register for 1579, though equation of him with the knight of Bunbury is problematised by the naming of his bride as Margaret Aston, rather than Margaret Worth, nee Downes, as stated by Ormerod.⁹⁹⁵ The most conspicuous example of such elite conformity is to be found in Chamberlain’s letter of 1602 to Dudley Carleton, reporting the marriage of Thomas Savage to Elizabeth Darcy, suggesting that it was conducted publicly by the rites of the Church of England.⁹⁹⁶ Against such examples, however, some of those cited by Aveling illustrate a tendency for marriage amongst the elite to be solemnised in a domestic environment.⁹⁹⁷

⁹⁹³ CALS, P21/3607/1/1. As noted above, the two couples who appear to have married in the parish church during the 1560s are John and Elizabeth Cane of Wigland, and Edward and Joan Probin of Wichaugh. Other attendees of the 1582 mass (Randle Lawton and Thomas Lloyd, both in 1561) may also have done so, but the absence of township information to corroborate these names precludes that conclusion. Margaret Dod was not reported as a recusant until 1596: see Talbot (ed.), ‘A Book of Recusants’, p. 68; Wark, *Cheshire*, p. 147.

⁹⁹⁴ Catherine Frances, ‘Aspects of the Life Course; A Case Study of Cheshire c.1570-c.1700 (unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Cambridge, 2000).

⁹⁹⁵ CALS, P40/1/1, f. 71; Ormerod, *Cheshire*, II, p. 145.

⁹⁹⁶ Boothman and Hyde-Parker, *Savage Fortune*, pp. xvii-xviii.

⁹⁹⁷ Aveling, ‘Marriages’, pp. 72-73.

Aveling's case studies further show the involvement of a priest to have been normative, and there would seem no reason to doubt that this was the case across the social spectrum, as it was with Protestant clandestine marriages, and indeed with Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.⁹⁹⁸ The Tridentine decree *Tametsi*, noted above, was never promulgated in England, which caused the secular clergy in particular some chagrin, and it might reasonably be expected that some of them sought to implement its provisions on an *ad hoc* basis.⁹⁹⁹ Given the shortage of clergy discussed in 3.1 above, however, it would seem equally likely that there was often a significant lapse of time between the vows *per verba de praesenti* and the priestly ministrations, one rather longer than the twenty-four hours that Aveling noted in the case of the Sheffield-Tyrwhitt wedding of the 1580s.¹⁰⁰⁰

3.1.3.2 Baptism

The literature on Catholic baptism in early modern England is even more slight than that on marriage: it still awaits the service that Aveling provided for the latter rite over half a century ago. Bossy devoted little over two pages to the topic, Cressy's magisterial study of the rites of passage focuses on the Protestant norms to the virtual exclusion of the Catholic exceptions, and Coster's initial monograph on baptism is confined to the aspect of kinship and godparentage.¹⁰⁰¹ Fortunately, however, the primary sources are somewhat more informative here than in the case of marriage.

The baptismal arrangements of Catholics are a recurrent theme in early Stuart visitation articles, but not a dominant one. Fincham's edition of sample Jacobean visitation articles contains twenty-seven references to either 'baptism deferred or not performed' or

⁹⁹⁸ Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*, pp. 322-323.

⁹⁹⁹ Bossy, *Community*, p. 137.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Aveling, 'Marriages', p. 72.

¹⁰⁰¹ Bossy, *Community*, pp. 133-135; Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*; Will Coster, *Baptism and Spiritual Kinship in Early Modern England* (Aldershot, 2002).

‘baptism privately’, but only four of these refer explicitly to Catholic baptism, though six others allude to it indirectly, for example by such phrases as ‘bring[ing] strange ministers into their owne houses to baptise their children privately according to their owne fantasies.’¹⁰⁰²

Table 3.2: Presentments of Baptismal Offences at Visitations and Assizes, 1590-1635																			
1590	1592	1595	1598	1601	1604	1605	1608	1611	1614	1619	1621	1622	1624	1625	1628	1629	1630	1633	1635
MV		MV									AZ		AZ			MV		MV	
4	1	0	5	1	6	4	5	3	2	0	3	0	2	1	0	2	0	4	5

MV notes a metropolitical visitation, AZ Assize presentments. All remaining figures are for episcopal visitations.

The actual visitations of the Cheshire parishes tell a similar story. Forty-three baptismal offences are recorded in the visitation books for the period 1590 to 1635, and there were a further five presentments at the Assizes.¹⁰⁰³ As Table 3.2 above indicates, these are evenly distributed over the period, suggesting again that this was a regular but not major concern of the authorities: in only three cases was any resultant action recorded.¹⁰⁰⁴ It may be noted, however, that there was a lull in such presentments during the early years of Bridgeman’s episcopate (1619 onwards), which may explain why several prosecutions were mounted in the Assizes. All bar six of the presentees have track records of recusancy or non-communication, suggesting on the balance of probability that some of the remainder were also Catholics, though Judith Maltby has noted an instance of parents from Tarporley going outside the parish to ensure that the ceremony was performed according to the Prayer Book rubrics.¹⁰⁰⁵ The presentments in 1590 of Richard Kyrkes of Chester and of William Walles and Richard Boscell of Wybunbury may also fall into this category, and similar ‘font-

¹⁰⁰² Fincham, *Visitation Articles*, I, p. 217 contains a list of references. The explicit ones are at pp. 72, 124, 159 and 208, the allusions at pp. 38, 42, 58, 111, 175 and 196.

¹⁰⁰³ BIY, V.1590-1, CB.2, fos 89, 94, 108; V. 1629-30, CB, f. 154; V.1633, CB.2, fos 396, 429v, 504v; CALS, EDV 1.10, f. 94; EDV 1.12a, fos 64v (4 instances), 68v; EDV 1.12b, f. 64; EDV 1.13, fos 4v, 17v, 25, 41v; EDV 1.14, fos 20v, 23, 50v, 55v; EDV 1.15, fos 81v, 84 (4 instances); EDV 1.17, fos 46, 54 (2 instances); EDV 1.19, f. 40v (2 instances); EDV 1.26, f. 49; EDV 1.32, fos 24 (2 instances), 48 (3 instances), 74v; NA, CHES 21/3, fos 51, 104v, 114v.

¹⁰⁰⁴ CALS, EDV 1.13, f. 4v, EDV 1.15, f. 81v and EDV 1.32, f. 24

¹⁰⁰⁵ Maltby, *Prayer Book and People*, p. 53.

gadding' by Puritans hostile to the 'popish' practice of signing the child with the Cross may be imagined.¹⁰⁰⁶

Cressy observes a proliferation of clandestine baptism after the Restoration which paralleled that of clandestine marriage, and for the same reasons – disruption of ecclesiastical policing during the interregnum, the explosion of sectarianism, and a tendency towards private arrangements.¹⁰⁰⁷ The Cheshire visitation registers, however, suggest that concern about baptismal offences did not significantly change from pre-Civil War levels – a constant theme, but not a prominent one. Over the period 1662 to 1686 nineteen presentments of known Catholics for failing to have their children baptised have been found, and a further three cases of baptism by a Catholic priest.¹⁰⁰⁸

Fourteen of the sixty-five presentments of Catholics for baptismal offences over the period of this study unsurprisingly come from Bunbury, the parish with the largest Catholic population.¹⁰⁰⁹ These, however, evidently represent no more than the tip of the iceberg, for like clandestine marriage, clandestine baptism seems to have been normative amongst Bunbury Catholics, at least after 1598, from which point complete registers are available.¹⁰¹⁰ 520 Catholics from the parish were presented for the first time for Catholic offences between 1614 and 1701, and thus could in theory have been born during or after 1598, but of these the names of only nineteen can be confidently matched against the baptismal registers, and the limited pools both of surnames (and also Christian names) within this relatively closed rural

¹⁰⁰⁶ BIY, V.1590-1, CB.2, fos. 94, 108. The other three presentments where there is no other evidence to suggest Catholicism are at CALS, EDV 1.14, fos 20v, 50v and EDV 1.17, f. 54, though the last of these (Thomas Wood) was from Bunbury parish.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*, pp. 181-182.

¹⁰⁰⁸ The presentments for non-baptism are at CALS, EDV 1.34, f. 17v; EDV 1.35, ff. 53, 154v; EDV 1.38, f. 16v; EDV 1.43, f. 10; EDV 1.44, f. 14; EDV 1.45, f. 5; EDV 1.46, f. 49v; EDV 1.50, f. 13v (3 instances); EDV 1.54, f. 16 (3 instances); EDV 1.57, f. 25v; EDV 1.63, f. 44 (2 instances); EDV 1.64, f. 34v (2 instances). The presentments for Catholic baptism are at CALS, EDV 135, f. 44 (2 instances) and EDV 1.43, f. 7.

¹⁰⁰⁹ BIY, V.1633, CB.2, f. 50?; CALS, EDV 1.10, f. 94; EDV 1.12a, f. 64v (3 instances); EDV 1.13, f. 41v; EDV 1.15, f. 84 (4 instances); EDV 1.17, f. 54; EDV 1.19, f. 40v (2 instances); EDV 1.26, f. 49.

¹⁰¹⁰ Only thirty-five entries from the baptismal registers for this period 1559 to 1598 survive, as against 2,530 covering the timeframe 1598 to 1653 and 2,775 from the period 1653-1701 (figures taken from Elsworth, *Bunbury Registers*.)

community precludes any degree of certainty and the true total is likely to be even less.¹⁰¹¹ Only four of the nineteen can be identified as the offspring of recusants: all date from the early Stuart years, and their births seem to coincide with periods of parental conformity, either temporary or permanent. Alice Palin of Haughton was baptised in 1609, a year after her father Henry's final presentment, which was for failing to have his child baptised: three siblings, none of whom feature in the parish registers, appeared alongside her and their mother at their first presentment at the visitation of 1634.¹⁰¹² George Buckley, also of Haughton, was similarly charged in 1611, but did not offend again for a further eight years, during which his daughters Dorothy and Mary were baptised, in 1615 and 1617 respectively.¹⁰¹³ John Wilson of Wardle, seemingly the third of that ilk, was not presented for recusancy after 1626, and his daughter Mary was baptised two years later.¹⁰¹⁴ Mary herself never troubled the scorers before her death in 1667, when the burial register records her as a recusant.¹⁰¹⁵ Given the evidence at 2.4.1 above that around 10 per cent of Bunbury's population of around 1,500 was Catholic, the conclusion must be that Catholics almost universally eschewed baptism in the parish church, which is consistent with the parish's stalwart recusancy, demonstrated at Table 2.2 in the previous chapter.

In Malpas, whose registers from 1559 onwards have survived intact, the gradual movement towards separation from church baptism may be observed over the Elizabethan period. What may be said with confidence is that four future recusants, three of them the children of recusants, were baptised in the 1570s, but only one thereafter. Moving from the

¹⁰¹¹ This calculation is based on the assumption that children under sixteen years of age would not have been presented.

¹⁰¹² CALS, EDV 1.15, f. 84 and EDV 1.32, f. 13v; *ibid.*, P40/1/1, f. 10.

¹⁰¹³ *Ibid.*, EDV 1.17, f. 54; *ibid.*, P40/1/1, fos 16,17. The unbaptised child was probably his son Joseph, who was repeatedly presented for recusancy from 1628 onwards (see NA, CHES 21/3, f. 183).

¹⁰¹⁴ NA, CHES 21/3, f. 154; CALS, P40/1/1, f. 30. A John Wilson of Wardle compounded for himself, his son and his wife in 1630 (see Talbot (ed.), 'Book of Compositions', p. 336) but on grounds of age this would seem to have been this John's father, together with his brother Thomas, both of whom were persistently recusant thereafter (see NA, E377/41). John junior died in 1631 (see CALS, P40/1/1, f. 174).

¹⁰¹⁵ CALS, P40/1/2, f. 47v.

realm of the probable to that of the possible, fifteen sixteenth-century examples may be identified, all but two of them before 1580, but only two from the seventeenth century.¹⁰¹⁶

It would seem likely that the practice of clandestine baptism, which the above examples suggest quickly became normative among the Catholic population, was lay administered, for example by a midwife. The perceived urgency of baptism (normally, within a week of birth) in an era of high infant mortality, coupled with scarcity of clerical manpower, would suggest that this practice was the rule rather than the exception. For Catholics in particular, that sense of urgency would have been intensified by the belief that babies who died unbaptised would be consigned to the *limbus infantium*, rather than being received into the fullness of God's glory in heaven. McClain notes that the influential Lancashire priest Laurence Vaux accordingly sanctioned baptism *in extremis* by the laity, and that midwives sometimes administered it, although she conversely also cites the case of a Lancashire midwife who roamed the countryside in search of a priest.¹⁰¹⁷ In five of the sixty-five presentments in the visitation books, however, baptism by a Catholic priest is suspected, and in the case of Richard Dutton of Tattenhall in 1634, and in three post-Restoration examples, the charge is unequivocal.¹⁰¹⁸

As in the case of marriage, baptismal arrangements amongst the elite exhibit a mixture of separation and conformity. In the former category, William Poole of Marbury was presented for failure to have his children baptised at the visitations of 1595, 1598 and 1605, and his wife at that of 1601. Thomas Glasier of Lea and his wife were indicted on the same charge at the Assizes in 1624, and William Stanley of Hooton was presented alongside some of the lower orders of Eastham at the 1634 visitation, at which Peter Dutton of Waverton was

¹⁰¹⁶ Ibid., P21/3607/1/1-2, passim; John Probin (1602), an unnamed son of William Probin (1635) and John Massy (1640).

¹⁰¹⁷ McClain, *Lest We Be Damned*.

¹⁰¹⁸ CALS, EDV 1.13, f. 25, EDV 1.15, f. 84 (4 instances); EDV 1.32, f. 74v; EDV 1.34, f. 44 (2 instances); EDV 1.43, f. 7.

also charged with private baptism.¹⁰¹⁹ Examples of conformists in this matter include the Starkey family, who routinely took their infants to either Over or Little Budworth for baptism even after their early seventeenth emergence into recusancy, and the baronet of Nova Scotia, Sir Edward Moore of Thelwall, whose eldest daughter was baptised in the neighbouring parish church at Grappenhall in 1637, but the most conspicuous example is again Sir Thomas Savage.¹⁰²⁰ Eight of his nineteen children were baptised at either All Saints' Isleworth, three at St Olave's Hart Street, close to the family's London home, and a further four at Long Melford, his wife's family home in Suffolk.¹⁰²¹ The location of the Savage heir John's baptism in 1604 is unknown, but the presence of the Calvinist Henry Prince of Wales as godfather would seem again to imply baptism within the established Church.¹⁰²² There is, however, some indication that such conformity was eschewed by the much reduced pool of Catholic elite later in the century: in 1677, and again in 1679, Sir Rowland Stanley and Sir James Poole were presented before the ruridecanal visitors for not having had their children baptised, and on the first occasion their wives were also mentioned for failing to be churched.¹⁰²³

3.1.3.3 *Burial*

Whereas in the cases of births and marriages the separation of Catholics from the wider community was of their own choosing, in the matter of funerals they seem to have sought recourse to the parish church but were often denied the option, particularly after the legislation of 1606 precluded the burial of excommunicate Catholics in consecrated

¹⁰¹⁹ BIY, V.1595-6, CB.3, f. 10; CALS, EDV 1.12a, f. 68v, EDV 1.12b, f.64, EDV 1.14, f. 55v and EDV 1.32, fos 24, 48; TNA, CHES 21/3, f. 114v.

¹⁰²⁰ Ormerod, *Cheshire*, II, p. 105; *Cheshire Sheaf* (3rd. series), VIII, p. 27.

¹⁰²¹ Boothman and Hyde-Parker, *Savage Fortune*, pp. xxx.

¹⁰²² *Ibid.*, p. xxii.

¹⁰²³ CALS, EDV 1.50, f. 13v and EDV 1.54, f. 16.

ground.¹⁰²⁴ Whilst baptism in the home was a possibility (and even a necessity, if the child was severely ill), and marriage could take place in a woodland grove, burial required a permanent resting place for the departed, and in the churchyard, alongside their ancestors, was the only option that was both practicable and acceptable.¹⁰²⁵ Thus generations of the Cheswis family of Bunbury are totally absent from the parish's baptismal and marriage registers, but in 1625-6 Richard Cheswis, who had suffered fourteen years imprisonment for his faith under Elizabeth, was buried clandestinely in the churchyard.¹⁰²⁶ Catholics were torn between what Marshall terms the 'rightful enjoyment of a Catholic patrimony' – their desire to be buried in alongside their forefathers in the Catholic churches of their youth – and the 'temptations of conformity and schism'.¹⁰²⁷

The conflict that exclusion sometimes generated has left a richer corpus of source material on funerals than on the other rites of passage, and consequently has attracted greater historiographical attention, most notably from Peter Marshall, cited above. He notes that the negotiation of an accommodation was a protracted process, which took the best part of a century to stabilise.¹⁰²⁸ In this development three stages may be discerned, which were characterised respectively by *laissez-faire* in the late sixteenth century, contention in the early seventeenth, and coexistence subsequently.

In the initial period, equating roughly to Elizabeth's reign, there is little evidence of contention over the burial of Catholics, and none from Cheshire, which is consistent with Marshall's observation that it does not feature in any visitation articles before 1601.¹⁰²⁹ The focus of the church authorities, at least down to the 1580s, was rather on curtailing the

¹⁰²⁴ 3 Jas I, c. 5

¹⁰²⁵ Peter Marshall, 'Confessionalisation and Community in the Burial of English Catholics, c. 1570-1700' in Nadine Lewycky and Adam Morton (eds.), *Getting Along?: Religious Identities and Confessional Relations in Early Modern England: Essays in honour of Professor W. S. Sheils* (Farnham, 2012), pp. 57-75, esp. p. 57.

¹⁰²⁶ CALS, P40/1/1, f. 167.

¹⁰²⁷ Marshall, 'Confessionalisation and Community', p. 72.

¹⁰²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 73-74.

¹⁰²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

various and widespread ancillary activities which symptomized the persistence of a belief in purgatory, and in the ability of the survivors to mitigate the sufferings there of the deceased.¹⁰³⁰ Thus at the York metropolitan visitation of 1578 to Tilston, near Malpas, it was reported that ‘Rafe Lethe useth praier for the deade and willeth the people to praie and saie a pater n[oste]r and de profundis for the dead when the people do rest with the dead corps’, and at Holy Trinity, Chester that ‘Randall Griffeth their parishe clerke being oftentimes forbydden ringeth his peales at the funeralle of the dead than is decent.’¹⁰³¹ The use of bells at the beginning of November (All Saints and All Souls) to commemorate all the faithful departed was a particular target: at the same visitation, in Weaverham ‘[t]he people will not be staied from ringing the bells on all s[ain]ts daie’, and in Middlewich ‘there is to much ringing for the deade.’¹⁰³² At Sandbach in 1564 three men were fined a three shilling contribution to the cost of a copy of Erasmus’s *Paraphrases* for the same offence, and a year later one Thomas Starkey, of unknown provenance, was imprisoned in Chester Castle for this ‘said offence and other causes’.¹⁰³³ The interpretation of such instances is debatable. Marshall equivocates as to whether they represent ‘a post-Reformation Catholicism in the process of confessional formation’ or ‘an instinctive conservatism, deeply rooted in the social custom of local communities’, although their occurrence in parishes none of which were significant centres of subsequent recusancy would seem to point to the predominance of the latter driver.¹⁰³⁴

In the last Elizabethan decade signs of contention over the burial of excommunicate recusants, which characterised the second stage of post-Reformation confessional relations, began to emerge. The earliest instance of such conflict cited by Marshall is one of burial ‘by

¹⁰³⁰ Idem, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 126-132.

¹⁰³¹ BIY, 1578-9, CB.3, fos 7, 19v.

¹⁰³² Ibid., fos 30, 31.

¹⁰³³ CALS, EDA 12.2, fos 86v, 103v.

¹⁰³⁴ Marshall, *Beliefs*, p. 127.

forcible meanes' in Yorkshire in 1595: the first example discovered from Cheshire comes from the Bunbury parish register for 1600:

William Cooke of Tilston dying & excommunicate for recusancy was buried by his neighbours without any religious rites or ceremonies, etc.¹⁰³⁵

Here the issue would seem to be Cooke's excommunication, which by canon law would have precluded his burial even prior to the 1606 legislation. Randle Aldersey, an equally if not more obdurate recusant, was buried apparently non-controversially at Bunbury several months earlier, but in the visitation book of 1592, which records the blanket excommunication of all recusants presented from the parish, the 'ex' annotation against his name has been struck out.¹⁰³⁶ Similarly, George Garnet was buried in Bunbury in 1592, but presumably prior to the visitation, to which he was reported as '*mortuus*'.¹⁰³⁷

Following the legislation of 1606 instances of clandestine burial become more common. The burial of excommunicates features in diocesan visitation articles generally from 1607 onwards, and that of recusants specifically from 1610, after Bancroft issued guidelines to all bishops in the aftermath of the Commons' agitation following the assassination of Henri IV.¹⁰³⁸ That being said, Jacobean and Caroline visitations in Cheshire failed to record any examples.

Four cases are recorded in the burial registers of Malpas between 1607 and 1624, and all, like Cooke's, record that the deceased was buried by friends and/or neighbours, rather than by clergy.¹⁰³⁹ The first of these, that of Edward Probin, took place 'when they ministers & the churchwardens [...] were at Namptwich at the Archbishop of York his

¹⁰³⁵ CALS, P 40/1/1, f. 146; Marshall, 'Confessionalisation and Community', p. 60. Ibid., pp. 65, 71 notes two earlier cases, of a prisoner in York in 1587, and of a priest in Winchester in 1589, but these are atypical.

¹⁰³⁶ CALS, P 40/1/1, f. 146; *ibid.*, EDV 1.10, fos 91v-93v. Ibid., EDV 1.12a, f. 64v also records Aldersey's presentment, but none for Cooke, at the visitation of 1598.

¹⁰³⁷ CALS, P 40/1/1; *ibid.*, EDV 1.10, f. 92.

¹⁰³⁸ Fincham, *Visitation Articles*, I, pp. 90, 95. Ibid., pp. 220 and 225 provide lists of all references to the burial of excommunicates and popish recusants respectively.

¹⁰³⁹ CALS, P21/3607/1/1, fos 164-174v and P21/3607/1/2, fos 1-77.

visitation’: the last, of the ‘unrepentant papist’ Elizabeth Dytoe was ‘by her friends in the night nihil’, that is, without ecclesiastical rites.¹⁰⁴⁰ There were no further similar examples from Bunbury until 1617, but over the following decade there were no fewer than twenty-eight.¹⁰⁴¹ The example entry for Cooke, given above, is representative of the remainder. All but one of the deceased are described as recusants, and the absence of any ecclesiastical rites or ceremonies is noted in all cases except three, for one of which, that of Elizabeth Buckley in 1619, an episcopal licence was obtained. Slightly under half of the dead (twelve) are also recorded as excommunicates, though this is probably no more than a semantic matter, since most of the remainder would have been excommunicated automatically if, as was typical, they failed to appear and answer a charge of recusancy. Burial by friends, family or neighbours is explicitly stated in only four of the cases, but as with baptism, may reasonably be assumed to have been normative, given the shortage of priests and the urgency of disposing of the mortal remains. Finally, burial by night is stated in all but three cases: that of Katherine Chawner in 1623 was by day, but the other two cases (Buckley and the excommunicate Henry Walley, the only one of the deceased not described as a recusant) are silent as to the time of interment.

Such practices, though obviously commonplace, do not, however, seem to have been universal amongst Bunbury Catholics in this period. In the decade after the 1606 Act three burials were recorded of individuals whose names and townships match against recusant presentment lists, but without any note of religious delinquency, and there were at least five and possibly as many as ten similar cases in the following decade, in parallel with the recusant burials noted above.¹⁰⁴² Six of these eight individuals had, however, not featured in

¹⁰⁴⁰ David Hayns, ‘“Partakers of the Afflictions of the Gospel”: The Sufferings of Roman Catholics, Quakers and Presbyterians in Post-Reformation Malpas, 1582 to c.1720’, *Cheshire History* 56 (2017), pp. 77-105, p. 89.

¹⁰⁴¹ CALS, P40/1/1, fos 156-170.

¹⁰⁴² CALS, P40/1/1, fos 153, 155, 156, 159, 160, 164 and 170: William Wooley (buried 1612), Robert Longton (1614), Lady Margaret Beeston (1616), James Longton, John Longton, Elizabeth Huxley (all 1619), Richard Longton (1623) and Sir Richard Egerton (1627-8).

any presentments for at least five years before their deaths, so this phenomenon may in part be due to conformity, however token.¹⁰⁴³ It would appear that the law against the burial of excommunicates was observed with a degree of rigour in Bunbury and Malpas, though the frequency with which clandestine burials were recorded between 1617 and 1627 suggests that the authorities may have turned a blind eye to nocturnal breaches. It is questionable to what degree it was enforced elsewhere. Tarporley parish, immediately to the north of Bunbury, reported thirty recusants between 1607 and 1627, but only one recusant burial is recorded there.¹⁰⁴⁴ At Holy Trinity, Chester there were only two recusant burials amongst the 787 recorded between 1598 and 1633. Like the majority of those from Bunbury, both were nocturnal, the granting of episcopal licences notwithstanding.¹⁰⁴⁵

Once again, the behaviour of the elite varies in this matter. John Follyhurst of Copenhall may have received a Catholic funeral, judging from his widow Jane's conviction for recusancy in 1610 and her presentment at the visitation of 1611 'for burning of chandles over her husbands corpes and making a crosse with towells.'¹⁰⁴⁶ And whereas George Egerton of Ridley was buried clandestinely at Bunbury in 1624, the funeral certificate of his church papist neighbour Sir Hugh Beeston two years later records that his final resting place was 'in his own tomb' in Bunbury parish church.¹⁰⁴⁷ Those of the recusants John Poole of Poole in 1613 and the elder William Whitmore of Leighton in 1620 testify to their receiving similar honours at Eastham and Neston respectively.¹⁰⁴⁸ As both McCulloch and Cust have independently observed, Catholic gentry often retained a proprietorial interest in the parish

¹⁰⁴³ NA, CHES 21/3, fos 21v, 33 records James Longton's last presentment in 1618 and Elizabeth Huxley's the following year.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Clifford Bratt (ed.)

¹⁰⁴⁵ Will Coster, 'A microcosm of community: burial, space and society in Chester, 1598 to 1633' in idem and Andrew Spicer (eds), *Sacred space in early modern Europe* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 124-143, pp. 126, 136.

¹⁰⁴⁶ NA, CHES 21/2, f. 64; CALS, EDV 1.17, f. 58.

¹⁰⁴⁷ CALS, P40/1/1, f. 166, 169; John Paul Rylands (ed.), 'Cheshire and Lancashire Funeral Certificates: AD 1600-1678', *Royal Society of Lancashire and Cheshire* 6 (1882), pp. 13-14.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Rylands, 'Funeral Certificates', pp. 159-160, 185-186.

churches within their bailiwicks.¹⁰⁴⁹ Once again, however, the Savages exhibit the most conspicuous example of conformity in this matter: Sir Thomas Savage died in London in November 1635, but his mortal remains were transported to Macclesfield parish church for a full heraldic funeral two months later.¹⁰⁵⁰ It should, however, be noted that Savage avoided any presentment for recusancy (and hence excommunication) throughout his life.

It is also true that by the date of his death the times were changing. Marshall observes that the final stage in the development of Catholic funeral practice, in which contention yielded place to leniency, occurred during the Caroline era: likewise Bossy notes that ‘Anglican resistance to Catholic burial seems to have collapsed before the Civil War broke out.’¹⁰⁵¹

One reason for this which both these historians suggest may be the greater frequency with which episcopal licences were issued during this period, particularly after Wentworth introduced his composition scheme in the north.¹⁰⁵² Whatever the reason, it may be noted that Catholic burials continued at Bunbury after 1627, though seemingly routinely: a further fifty cases are recorded in the registers for the period 1628 to 1676, but simply with the note ‘recusant’, ‘papist’, ‘popish recusant’ or ‘excommunicate recusant’, without any indication that the funeral was clandestine.¹⁰⁵³ The 1630s and early 1640s were something of a transitional period, when some funerals were recorded this way and others, even that of the veteran recusant William Cheswis in 1632, seemingly do not merit comment.¹⁰⁵⁴ One burial in particular, that in 1640 of ‘a recusant from the Lodge in Peckforton, known to be a popish priest’ suggests a degree of ecumenical tolerance which, as Marshall observes, was for many incumbents a bridge too far.¹⁰⁵⁵ During the Commonwealth and the first decade of the

¹⁰⁴⁹ McCulloch, ‘Catholic and Puritan’, pp. 251-252; Richard Cust, ‘Catholicism, Antiquarianism and Gentry Honour: The Writings of Sir Thomas Shirley’, *MH* 23 (1998), pp. 40-70, p. 52.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Boothman and Hyde-Parker, *Savage Fortune*, pp. lii-liv, 69-75.

¹⁰⁵¹ Marshall, ‘Confessionalisation and Community’, p. 73; Bossy, *Community*, p. 142.

¹⁰⁵² Marshall, ‘Confessionalisation and Community’, p. 64; Bossy, *Community*, p. 142.

¹⁰⁵³ CALS, P40/1/1, fos. 170-192; *ibid.*, P40/1/2, fos. 41-52.

¹⁰⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, P40/1/1, f. 176.

¹⁰⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, f. 184; Marshall, ‘Confessionalisation and Community’, p. 67.

Restoration, however, all Catholic burials were explicitly noted in the registers, as Table 3.3 below indicates. It is doubtful whether this in any way represents a legal constraint, as eleven of the thirty-one described as recusants or papists in the burial registers between 1656 and 1676 had no previous track records of presentment.¹⁰⁵⁶

Table 3.3: Burials of Bunbury Recusants, 1600-1700											
	1600-09	1610-19	1620-29	1630-39	1640-49	1650-59	1660-09	1670-79	1680-89	1690-1700	Total
Known Catholic, noted as such in registers	1	8	21	4	15	6	16	8		6	85
Known Catholic but not noted in register	1	6	3	1			3	11	9	9	43
Possible Catholic, evidence uncertain	1		4	6	6			2	3	5	27
Total for decade	3	14	28	11	21	6	19	21	12	20	155

From 1670 onwards the identification of Catholics in burial registers of Bunbury ceased to be standard practice and ended altogether after 1676.¹⁰⁵⁷ The practice revived briefly between 1696 and 1700, when six of the deceased were described as ‘papist’, ‘Roman Catholic’ or ‘Romane’, but this may simply reflect that fact that there was by this time there was a Catholic priest in the parish who was conducting these funerals.¹⁰⁵⁸ In Malpas, where the recording of Catholic burials had recommenced in the 1660s after a forty year lull, it also ceases after 1676.¹⁰⁵⁹ This simultaneous end of recording in the two parishes may be linked to the wider tailing off of ecclesiastical discipline of Catholics at this time which was observed in Chapter 1.¹⁰⁶⁰

The evidence of these burial records from Bunbury and Malpas needs wider contextualisation, however, in two respects. Firstly, the practice does not appear to be mirrored outside these Catholic citadels, as the dearth of examples from Tarporley and Holy Trinity Chester show. Burial registers of the period from two other parishes of Catholic strength survive, that of Astbury up to 1641, and that of Acton from 1653 onwards, but neither mentions the burial of Catholics. Secondly, despite what the statistics in Table 3.3

¹⁰⁵⁶ CALS, P40/1/2, fos 41-52.

¹⁰⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, fos 48v-52.

¹⁰⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, fos 61-62.

¹⁰⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶⁰ See section 1.9.

suggest, those Bunbury Catholics who received a churchyard burial would seem to be in the minority. At most 155, probably slightly less, feature in the registers for that period, against over 700 who are known from those years from other records.¹⁰⁶¹ There is no evidence at all of any disputes over funerals emerging, as would seem to have been inevitable at some point, if generations of faithful Catholics had been forced to dispose of the mortal remains of their forebears in a farmer's field at best, or as Marshall noted in one case, a ditch.¹⁰⁶² Overall, the conclusion from these two contextual observations must be that the authorities either turned something of a blind eye to clandestine burials, or exhibited typical levels of early modern administrative inefficiency in intercepting and recording it.

The Cheshire evidence casts light upon the historiographical orthodoxy that post-Reformation English Catholics separated in the rites of passage, by exemplifying the gradual emergence of this phenomenon over the course of the Elizabethan period in Malpas, and by demonstrating its extent thereafter – normative amongst the humbler sort, judging from the Bunbury examples, but rather less so amongst the elite. In the cases of baptism and marriage, where individuals had the agency to conform or not to conform, separation was an option almost universally exercised amongst the lower orders. There was little disincentive: few cases of Catholics marrying clandestinely were reported, and though there were rather more cases of clandestine baptism, the extent of any subsequent action by the visitors was negligible in respect of either rite.

In the case of burials, the situation was more complex. Catholics actively wanted to be buried in the church or churchyard, but for the first quarter of the seventeenth century, were precluded from that privilege by their excommunicate status, and hence resorted to

¹⁰⁶¹ See Appendix E.

¹⁰⁶² Marshall, 'Confessionalisation and Community', p. 60.

illegal clandestine activities to secure it. The policing of the situation seems to have been left to local volunteers – churchwardens and perhaps township constables, who were probably unwilling to leave their beds at night for the purpose – and not monitored at any higher level, for example through triennial visitations. The system proved unenforceable, and local officials confined themselves to recording it retrospectively, if indeed they did anything at all.

3.2 Home and family

When Bossy analysed the geographical distribution of post-Reformation English Catholicism in the *English Catholic Community*, he did so in terms of the dominant gentry families of each county.¹⁰⁶³ Whilst the work of subsequent historians, in particular Sheils, has uncovered the vitality of plebeian Catholicism and provided a corrective to this elite centred model, it remains true that many of the Catholic bastions were dependent up the leadership and patronage of local gentry, as Chapter 2 has demonstrated. The following section will therefore explore the histories of the major Catholic families of Cheshire to characterise the means by which they sustained a distinctly Catholic identity, focusing on **four** major areas: the role of marriage alliances in consolidating Catholic dynasties; parental influence in transmitting the faith to their children; the education of the young; and the evidence of religious vocations among them. It will also consider similar characteristics in plebeian families in so far as the evidence permits.

3.2.1 *Endogamous marriages*

In his influential study *The Crisis of the Aristocracy*, published in 1965, Lawrence Stone observed that '[a]fter about 1570 the great Catholic families began increasingly that practice of religious apartheid that was to cut them off from the main stream of the English landed classes', a judgement reinforced a decade later by Bossy's portrayal of the post-Reformation Catholic community as 'a branch of the English nonconforming tradition.'¹⁰⁶⁴ Whilst Questier's more recent case study of the Sussex Montagus has nuanced that interpretation, pointing to 'the interaction of the Catholic community with the outside world', a view echoed at the gentry level by Marshall and Scott's assertion that 'in no sense did the Throckmortons

¹⁰⁶³ Bossy, *Community*, pp.77-107.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy 1558-1641* (Oxford, 1965), p. 614; Bossy, *Community*, p. 7.

inhabit a “recusant bubble”,’ in a core sense Stone’s concept of ‘religious apartheid’ holds true.¹⁰⁶⁵ Richard Cust, in a case study of the Leicestershire gentleman Sir Thomas Shirley, noted that Stone’s judgement ‘was most apparent in their selection of marriage partners and the trusts they formed to protect their property.’¹⁰⁶⁶ This section positions this last assessment against the evidence from Cheshire.

To the elites of the early modern period, the choice of marital partners for their offspring, especially their heirs, was extremely important in the survival (and religious integrity) of their line, and in consolidating their position in county society and if possible enhancing it.¹⁰⁶⁷ The ascent of the Savages themselves, from knights of the shire to an earldom within a generation of the elder Thomas’s marriage to Elizabeth Darcy in 1602, is a prime example of such upward mobility.¹⁰⁶⁸ Whether this marriage was intra-confessional may be doubted: despite the assertion of Boothman and Hyde-Parker that Thomas’s father and grandfather were Catholics, the only evidence of Catholicism from the Tudor years, and that circumstantial, is the marriage of Thomas’s aunt to a Lancastrian recusant.¹⁰⁶⁹ After his marriage Thomas took a further two decades to emerge from the Catholic closet, and was then no more than a church papist, as his conformity in rites of passage, discussed at section 3.1.3 above, demonstrates.¹⁰⁷⁰

It was Elizabeth who was instrumental in the family’s advancement and its alignment with the Catholic elite. She was the daughter of Thomas Darcy, third baron Chiche, and Mary Kitson, two of the foremost Catholic families of East Anglia, but had even more

¹⁰⁶⁵ Questier, *Catholicism and Community*, p. 3; Peter Marshall and Geoffrey Scott, ‘Introduction: The Catholic Gentry in English Society’, in idem (eds), *Catholic Gentry in English Society: The Throckmortons of Coughton from Reformation to Emancipation* (Farnham, 2009), pp. 1-30, p. 6.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Cust, ‘Shirley’, pp. 44-45.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Stone, *Crisis*, pp. 594-595, 599.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Boothman and Hyde Parker, *Savage Fortune*, pp. xvi-xvii.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Ibid.; NA, PC 2/19, f. 248.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Glyn Redworth, *The Prince and the Infanta: The Cultural Politics of the Spanish Match* (New Haven, 2003), p. 43 notes that Thomas avowed his Catholicism in 1622 on the advice of the Spanish ambassador Gondomar, when he was seeking advancement at Court.

illustrious papist connections via the marriage to Lord Lumley of her aunt Elizabeth, who may have been their means of access to the early Jacobean Court.¹⁰⁷¹ Both Thomas and Elizabeth prospered in the Court environment, particularly after the accession of Charles I and his marriage to the Catholic Henrietta Maria: Elizabeth was appointed lady of the bedchamber to the Queen, and Thomas ultimately became the Queen's chancellor and counsellor.¹⁰⁷² Thomas succeeded Darcy as Viscount Colchester when the latter became Earl Rivers in 1626, and the earldom passed to Thomas's heir John on Darcy's death in 1641.¹⁰⁷³

The Savages brokered strategic marriage alliances with prominent Catholic families over the length and breadth of the kingdom. Their son and heir John married the daughter and heiress of Lord Mouteagle, and their second son Thomas the dowager Lady Somerset.¹⁰⁷⁴ Their eldest daughter Jane was the bride of John Paulet, Marquis of Winchester: the second daughter, Dorothy, defied her parents' (and the King's) wishes, marrying secretly, but still contracted an advantageous Catholic marriage to Lord Andover.¹⁰⁷⁵ Two younger daughters married into the Sheldons of Beoley, Worcestershire and the Thimblebys of Lincolnshire respectively, and in 1661, after both her parents' deaths, another daughter married Robert Brudenell, who converted to Catholicism upon his marriage and two years later became Earl of Cardigan.¹⁰⁷⁶

Their eventual relations by marriage the Whitmores of Leighton provide another good example of Catholic marriages bringing about social advancement. The first William Whitmore, the younger son of the Whitmores of Thurstaston, married Alice, daughter and sole heiress of the proto-recusant gentleman William Hough, who was himself the son of

¹⁰⁷¹ Boothman and Hyde Parker, *Savage Fortune*, pp. xviii-xix.

¹⁰⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. xl, xlvi

¹⁰⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. xxxiii, xli, lviii.

¹⁰⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 183, 187.

¹⁰⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 186-187.

¹⁰⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 185-187.

Alice, an illegitimate daughter of Thomas Cromwell.¹⁰⁷⁷ Whitmore thus succeeded to Hough's estates on the latter's death in 1586, and by the time of Davenport's listing (around 1611) outranked his elder brother in the county community.¹⁰⁷⁸ His son, the second William, married Margaret, daughter and sole heiress to the prominent Cheshire church-papist Sir Hugh Beeston, and this inheritance was evidently sufficient to secure their daughter Bridget the hand of Edward Somerset, fifth son of the Catholic Earl of Worcester. After Somerset's early and childless demise in the early 1620s, William secured a remarriage for the dowager Lady Somerset to Thomas, the second son of the Savages.¹⁰⁷⁹

The younger William's correspondence with both Somerset and the elder Thomas Savage shows him to have been a tenacious negotiator. A pre-nuptial agreement of 1619 with Somerset specified the payment of £500 to Whitmore 'before the sealing and Delivery', and there was a dispute with Savage lasting several years over payment in respect of the entailment of the Beeston estates upon the younger Thomas.¹⁰⁸⁰ In a letter of 1624 Whitmore complained of 'having now for the space of three years expected a supply from you.'¹⁰⁸¹ At this point the bride and groom apparently got tired of waiting and Bridget's pregnancy forced the issue, yet the wrangling continued for another two years, by which time Savage is 'gone more amazed at your nature then (sic) I did.'¹⁰⁸²

Such marriages could, however, also facilitate mutual assistance going beyond the immediate nuclear families of the spouses. The marriage of another of William's daughters in 1634 to a 'Mr Moore' would seem to provide an example.¹⁰⁸³ The Moore in question was

¹⁰⁷⁷ Wark, *Cheshire*, pp. 154, 168.

¹⁰⁷⁸ CCALS, ZCR 63/2/22; see Table 3.4 below for the rankings of the two men. Richard Cust, 'Heraldry and Gentry Communities in Shakespeare's England', in Nigel Ramsay (ed.), *Heralds and Heraldry in Shakespeare's England* (Donington (Lincs.), 2014), pp. 190-203, p. 190 provides further details of the ranking process.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Ormerod, *Cheshire*, II, p. 304.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Bangor, Mostyn MS 692.

¹⁰⁸¹ *Ibid.*, Mostyn MS 9082, no. 1.

¹⁰⁸² *Ibid.*, nos. 3, 6.

¹⁰⁸³ *Ibid.*, Mostyn MS 9082, no. 16.

probably one of the family of Sir Edward Moore, a Nottinghamshire Catholic who in the 1630s took up residence in Thelwall on a estate bequeathed to him by his late uncle, a physician from London.¹⁰⁸⁴ In 1637 William underwrote a bond for Moore and George Vawdrey of Bowdon, a member of another Cheshire Catholic family which included Moore's mother.¹⁰⁸⁵

The pedigrees of the other Catholic gentry families of Cheshire do not exhibit such enhancement as the Savages and Whitmores achieved, and are less richly documented, but a corpus of information is available for a further seven who flourished in the first half of the seventeenth century, and which demonstrates the same propensity to endogamous marriage, as shown in Table 3.4 below.

Family	Parish	Ranking (Davenport c1611)	Date range	Marriages					%age Cath (total)
				Cath	Prob Cath	Prot	Prob Prot	n/a	
Savage	Runcorn	1	1602-61	8	1			1	90%
Stanley	Eastham	28	c1570-c1640	3	2			1	83%
Poole	Eastham	31	c1570-c1640	2	2		1	7	33%
Massey	Burton	35	c1570-c1650	2			2	4	25%
Beeston	Bunbury	46	1579?-1625	4		1		2	57%
Starkey	Over	69	1580s-c1610		1			3	25%
Glasier	Backford	77	1590s?-c1620	2				2	50%
Whitmore	Neston	78	1570s-1625	4					100%
Whitmore	Thurstaston	unranked	c1585-1646	2	1	1		2	50%
TOTAL				27	7	2	3	22	56%

Sources: Boothman and Hyde Parker, *Savage Fortune*; Ormerod, Cheshire, II; CALS, EDV series

If the analysis is confined to the heir line, as per Table 3.5 below, this tendency to endogamy is more prominent.¹⁰⁸⁶

¹⁰⁸⁴ *Cheshire Sheaf*, 3rd. series, VIII (1910), pp. 19, 27.

¹⁰⁸⁵ University of Bangor, Mostyn MS 703.

¹⁰⁸⁶ In both analyses the true picture is probably understated as a result of the significant number of marriage partners whose religious allegiances are not known.

Table 3.5 Religion of marriage partners of gentry Catholics (heir line only)							
Family	Parish	Date range	Marriages				%age C of (C=D)
			A Cath	B Prob Cath	C Prot	D Not known	
Savage	Runcorn	1602-61	1	1			100%
Stanley	Eastham	c1570-c1640	2	1			100%
Poole	Eastham	c1570-c1640	2	2		2	67%
Massey	Burton	c1570-c1650	2			2	50%
Beeston	Bunbury	1579?-1625	4	1		1	83%
Starkey	Over	1580s-c1610		1		3	25%
Glasier	Backford	1590s?-c1620	2			2	50%
Whitmore	Neston	1570s-1625	4				100%
Whitmore	Thurstastor	c1585-1646	2		1		67%
TOTAL			19	6	1	10	69%

Stanley heirs married successively daughters of the Herberts of Powis, Draycotts of Staffordshire, Molyneuxes, Pastons of Norfolk, and Eyres of Hassop, all of these notable Catholic families.¹⁰⁸⁷ Similarly, the brides of the Poole heir line were Stanleys, Tyldesleys of Lancashire, Draycotts and then Pershalls, both of Staffordshire, Talbots of Worcestershire, Mostyns of Talacre and Eyres of Hassop.¹⁰⁸⁸

The evidence for the Masseys of Puddington and the Starkeys of Darley, amongst both of whom the heir line moved to a cadet branch of the family in the early Jacobean period, is less clear. The widow of George Massey (d. 1600) was evidently Catholic (she was the first presentee for absence from Burton in 1622): George's brother and successor William was married to Elizabeth Aston of Aston, a family of no known Catholic credentials, though his marriage, probably in the 1570s, would seem to antedate the emergence of hard confessional lines; and the marriage of his son and heir, also William, to Katherine Herbert of Montgomery points to the maintenance of family tradition.¹⁰⁸⁹ Katherine's intransigence, noted in Chapter 2, appears to have been instrumental in propelling the family from church

¹⁰⁸⁷ Ormerod, *Cheshire*, II, pp. 230-231; Bossy, *Community*, pp. 87, 93-94, 98, 176 for the Catholicism of the families with whom they intermarried, with the exception of the Pastons.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Ormerod, *Cheshire*, II, p. 235; Bossy, *Community*, pp. 98, 150, 176, 262. For the Pershalls, see Foley, *Jesuits*, V, p. 431; for the Mostyns, Shaun Evans, "'To continue in my blood and name': Reproducing the Mostyn Dynasty, c. 1540-1692" (unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Aberystwyth, 2013), p. 124.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Ormerod, *Cheshire*, II, p. 308; CALS, EDV 1.24, f. 16.

papistry into outright recusancy, which was sustained after their son Edward's marriage to Alice Braithwaite of Westmorland. Similarly, Alice Starkey nee Dutton appears to have established the family's tradition of separation, which is sustained by her son Hugh, who married a Brooke of Madeley.¹⁰⁹⁰ Hugh predeceased his father, and the line successively passed to his younger brothers. The tenure of the elder, Ralph, appears to have been brief, and of his wife Winifred Poynter of Whitchurch nothing more is known. Jane, wife of the younger, Henry, is regularly presented for recusancy from 1611 onwards, though of her family of Wilkinson there is no further evidence, neither is there of the the origins of Margaret, the wife of Jane's son John (d. 1684), who was the last of the line.¹⁰⁹¹ The recusancy of the Glasiers was a phenomenon of the distaff side, which included a Stanley bride, as was that of the Beestons until the Savage marriage.¹⁰⁹²

There is only one clear cut instance of an heir marrying outside, and rejecting, the family faith before the Restoration. Valentine Whitmore of Thurstaston, son of the younger John and his wife Lucy nee Roper, a granddaughter of Sir Thomas More, was evidently raised a Catholic: he was regularly presented for recusancy between 1626 and 1634.¹⁰⁹³ In 1646, by which time his parents were dead, he married Elizabeth, daughter of his Protestant neighbours the Gleggs of Gayton, and in the papers of the Committee for Compounding of that year he is listed only as a royalist, not as a papist.¹⁰⁹⁴

As Chapter 2 demonstrated, after the Restoration the numbers of the Catholic gentry were greatly diminished, most significantly by the departure into north Wales of Bridget, daughter and heiress of Darcy Savage, after her marriage into the Protestant Mostyns of Mostyn.¹⁰⁹⁵ But amongst the rump that remained Catholic the endogamous marriages of

¹⁰⁹⁰ Wark, *Cheshire*, p. 165; Ormerod, *Cheshire*, II, p. 105; Bossy, *Community*, p. 260.

¹⁰⁹¹ Ormerod, *Cheshire*, II, p. 105.

¹⁰⁹² Ormerod, *Cheshire*, II, p. 209.

¹⁰⁹³ Beasley, 'Thurstaston', p. 65.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Beasley, 'Thurstaston', p. 71; Everett Green, *Committee for Compounding*, I, p. 60.

heirs remained the norm. Thomas Bellasis, who inherited the viscountcy in 1700, was married to Bridget Gage, probably of the leading Catholic family of Sussex.¹⁰⁹⁶ The Masseys remained Catholic through a further, unknown marriage until 1715, when their line was extinguished and passed to the Stanleys, who, as shown above, retained an unblemished Catholic eschuteon. On the other hand Francis Poole, the heir from 1706 onwards, by his will precluded his own succession by a Catholic, married one of the Pelhams of Lewes, whose MP he became.¹⁰⁹⁷

Turning to the lower orders, the extent of endogamy is much more difficult to assess. Only one explicit example of a mixed marriage is recorded during this period: in 1679 it was reported to the ruridecanal visitors that William Bostock of Eastham, ‘who being himself a protestant, brings up his children popish’ (his wife Elen was persistently recusant from 1664 to 1691).¹⁰⁹⁸ The only indicative measurement possible is that of married women who were recorded as Catholics but whose husbands were not, and that suggests that mixed marriage was quite extensive. 37 per cent (238) of the husbands of the 646 plebeian married women identifiable as Catholics between 1560 and 1706 never feature in the record on account of their own Catholicism, although, particularly early in the period, a substantial proportion of these may have been church papists. Hence this percentage varied considerably over time, from over 50 per cent (166 of 324) between 1603 and 1641 to only 20% (42 of 213) over the post-Restoration period, which suggests that endogamy amongst Catholics was by that stage becoming normative.

Lacunae in the record preclude a definitive conclusion, but the evidence that survives points to endogamous Catholic marriage as being normative in the heir line of the elite, at least down to the Civil War, and fairly common in cadet branches. It reinforced existing

¹⁰⁹⁶ [Belasyse.GED \(qmul.ac.uk\)](http://Belasyse.GED(qmul.ac.uk)), accessed 14 September 2021. See Bossy, *Community*, p. 324 for the Gages.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Ormerod, *Cheshire*, II, p. 235.

¹⁰⁹⁸ CALS, EDV 1.54, f. 16.

networks within the county and constructed new ones beyond. In the case of the Savages, these extended from the Scottish border to the south coast, and from east to west, whereas amongst the gentry they tended to be confined to the neighbouring counties of the west midlands and north-east Wales. Amongst the Catholic lower orders, exogamy seems to have been considerably more common.

3.2.2 *Familial continuity*

Bossy was careful to qualify his picture of the major Catholic families with the observation that it was not an immutable one, but rather had to be re-ratified generation by generation with the advent of a new heir, as the constant alternation in the religious allegiance of the Dukes of Norfolk over the post-Reformation era illustrates. The remission of paternal debts for recusancy fines introduced in the first Jacobean parliament was a powerful inducement for incoming heirs to conform.¹⁰⁹⁹ How steadfast, then, were the Jacobean and Caroline Catholics of Cheshire in adhering to the faith of their Elizabethan forefathers?

In general, the Catholic elite of Cheshire did not experience the reduction from a widespread grouping of traditionalists to a recusant rump that MacCulloch observed in Elizabethan Suffolk, although some attrition is visible.¹¹⁰⁰ Thus from the early recusant triumvirate of the Wirral, John Whitmore of Thurstaston and subsequently his son, also John, remained recusant through to the Civil War;¹¹⁰¹ William Hough was succeeded by his son-in-law William Whitmore, and William and his eponymous son maintained a Catholic household at Leighton through to the Civil War whilst for the most part conforming themselves;¹¹⁰² only the Catholicism of the Hocknells of Prenton was extinguished, and it is

¹⁰⁹⁹ Bossy, *Community*, pp. 150-151.

¹¹⁰⁰ MacCulloch, 'Catholic and Puritan', pp. 248-250.

¹¹⁰¹ See section 3.2.1 above.

¹¹⁰² Wark, *Cheshire*, p. 168 for prosopographies of the elder William Whitmore and his immediate family. After his conviction in 1605 William was persistently recusant until his death in 1620: see NA, E377/17 and E377/22; *ibid.*, CHES 21/3, fos 9, 14, 18v, 32. His son and heir, also William, was never presented for Catholic offences,

difficult to imagine a greater incentive for the juvenile heir of 1591 to conform than the manslaughter of his father by an irate gaoler.¹¹⁰³

Two of the three elite Catholic families of Bunbury parish retain their Elizabethan religious allegiances through to the Civil War. The obduracy of Lady Mary Egerton of Ridley was sustained in the family through to the Civil War in the line of George Egerton, who may be an illegitimate son of her husband.¹¹⁰⁴ The Beestons were church papists, and recusant from 1626, when on Sir Hugh's death the estate passed to his granddaughter the dowager Lady Somerset, a daughter of William Whitmore.¹¹⁰⁵ Her son and successor to the Whitmore estates, Darcy Savage, was recusant from 1648 down to his death in 1670.¹¹⁰⁶ Philip Spurstow, however, who appeared on a national list of recusants in 1581, died in 1586, and his two nephews, who appeared on similar lists that year, died without issue before the end of the century.¹¹⁰⁷

Extinction of the male heir line is a recurrent theme in the cases of attrition there were. Like the Spurstow brothers, Peter Dutton of Dutton died without issue, and Sir Randle Brereton without a son.¹¹⁰⁸ Although Randle's daughter and heiress Mary was married to Sir Richard Egerton of Ridley, the grandson of Lady Mary who was presented as a recusant in 1617, she herself did not trouble the authorities.¹¹⁰⁹ Such cases, are, however, outnumbered by the numerous instances of families emerging from apparent conformity into recusancy

and in 1625 succeeded in getting his father's arms restored on the grounds of his conformity (see NA, SP 16/8 f. 1, p. 126). His wife and daughters, however, were recusant (see for example NA, CHES 21/3, f. 63v).

¹¹⁰³ Ormerod, *Cheshire*, II, p. 293; Wark, *Cheshire*, p. 72. There is no record of the delinquency of the son, also John, although Hocknell's widow Margaret appears in the record through to 1598 under her remarried name of Ravenscroft.

¹¹⁰⁴ Ormerod, *Cheshire*, II, pp. 160-162; Wark, *Cheshire*, pp. 147-148. George does not appear in Ormerod's pedigree, but Ormerod notes that an illegitimate son of her husband Sir Ralph became Viscount Berkeley, chancellor of England, so generous provision for another bastard is conceivable. CALS, QJB 2/6, fos 15v, 16v records the presentment of three, possibly four of George's children as recusants in January 1641,

¹¹⁰⁵ Ormerod, *Cheshire*, II, p. 145.

¹¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*; NA, CHES 21/4, f. 166v; *ibid.*, CALS, EDV 1.35, f. 153.

¹¹⁰⁷ Ormerod, *Cheshire*, II, p. 158; Wark, *Cheshire*, pp. 164-165.

¹¹⁰⁸ Ormerod, *Cheshire*, I, p. 476 and II, p. 377.

¹¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, II, p. 162; NA, CHES 21/3, f. 6v.

from the 1590s onwards. Thus in 1591 William and Richard Poole of Marbury inaugurated nearly a century of presentments of their family, as did Alice Starkey, nee Dutton, of Darley in 1595 for hers.¹¹¹⁰ On the Wirral, the heirs of Sir Rowland Stanley were recusant by the early Jacobean years, their neighbours the Pooles of Poole by 1625, and Katherine Massey, the chatelaine of Puddington, received her first indictment at the Assizes of 1610.¹¹¹¹ As previously noted, all three families remained Catholic into the eighteenth century.¹¹¹² The most significant bolstering of the Catholic ranks in the county, however, came with the marriage in 1602 of the Savage heir Thomas to the daughter of Baron Darcy of Chiche. As noted in the previous paragraph, this tradition persisted up to the death of Darcy Savage in 1670.

All of these late-flowering instances of Catholicism continued to bloom up to the Civil War, and some beyond. This evidence of the constancy of the Catholic elite is, furthermore, complemented by that of consolidation within their ranks. Table 3.6 below illustrates this by comparison of data from four peak years of recusancy presentment volumes at Assizes and Quarter Sessions, for those families who featured in the ranking of the Cheshire elite of 1611¹¹¹³ Whilst the total number of families with recusant members shows relatively little variation over the period 1593 to 1619, the average numbers of recusants per family steadily grew, from one in 1593 to 1.5 in 1610 and slightly over two in 1619. The substantially higher figures for 1641 no doubt reflect the comparative thoroughness of this exercise, mandated by the Long Parliament, as much as they do organic growth, but show continuation of this trend: the number of families reported is three times that of 1593, whereas the number of individuals increases almost tenfold.¹¹¹⁴ The growth of Catholicism

¹¹¹⁰ Wark, *Cheshire*, pp. 160-161, 165; CALS, QJB 3/3, f. 267 and QJB 3/4, f. 251v.

¹¹¹¹ NA, CHES 21/2, fos 32, 64v and CHES 21/3, f. 134.

¹¹¹² See section 3.2.1 above.

¹¹¹³ CCALS, ZCR63/2/22.

¹¹¹⁴ Jansson, *Long Parliament*, I, p. 482.

amongst the elite over the half-century before the Civil War was thus to a large extent intra-familial.

Table 3.6: Presentments of Elite Recusants at Assize, 1593-1641

Ranking	Family	Seat	1593			1610			1619			1641		
			M	F	All	M	F	All	M	F	All	M	F	All
1	Savage	Rocksavage										2	2	4
12	Egerton	Ridley				2	1	3	3	1	4	1	2	3
16	Brereton	Shocklach		1	1									
20	Davenport	Bramhall											1	1
28	Stanley	Hooton		1	1	1	1	2		1	1	1	3	4
31	Poole	Poole					1	1		1	1	2	1	3
32	Delves	Doddington											1	1
35	Massey	Puddington					1	1		1	1	4	4	8
46*	Beeston	Beeston					1	1				1	3	4
59	Starkey	Darley					2	2		2	2	2	3	5
64	Lawton	Lawton		1	1									
67	Glasier	Lea								1	1		5	5
68	Whitmore	Leighton		1	1		1	1	1	4	5		1	1
76	Dod	Edge		1	1								1	1
90	Hollinworth	Mottram											1	1
114	Hocknell	Prenton		1	1							1	2	3
116	Vaudrey	Hale										1	2	3
125	Masterton	Nantwich										1		1
155	Wickstead	Marbury										1	1	2
164	Follyhurst	Coppenhall					1	1				2	2	4
n/a**	Moore	Thelwall										2	2	4
			0	6	6	3	9	12	4	11	15	21	37	58

Figures are taken from the autumn sessions of 1593 and 1610, and from the spring sessions of 1619 and 1641. The autumn sessions of 1626 also saw a peak volume of presentments, but are excluded because they were not geographically comprehensive and were inflated by plebeian presentments from Bunbury.

*The heir to Sir Hugh Beeston (d. 1626) was his granddaughter Lady Bridget Somerset, widow of a son of the Earl Worcester and subsequently wife of the Savages' second son. Sir Hugh's ranking (46th) does not reflect the increased pre-eminence of the family.

** Sir Edward Moore Bart. of Langford, Notts. moved to the county during the 1630s and thus does not appear in the 1611 ranking, but is listed here on account of his seniority.

Sources: CCALS, ZCR63/2/7/1, ZCR63/2/22; TNA, CHES 21/1

The absence of any males from the Elizabethan presentments in Table 3.6, and the presence of only a handful in the Jacobean ones, is noteworthy.¹¹¹⁵ Bossy described the period to 1620 as the ‘matriarchal era’ of post-Reformation Catholicism in England, and the preponderance of females in the first three sets of Assize statistics above points to the chatelaine as the driving force behind the development of these elite Catholic dynasties.¹¹¹⁶ Brindley has noted how frequently the testimony of the apostate priest Thomas Bell named elite women as harbourers of priests and providers of mass centres in Lancashire, and whilst such hard evidence is largely lacking for Cheshire, it would seem reasonable to suppose that at least some of the Cheshire matriarchs followed the example of their counterparts north of the Mersey.¹¹¹⁷ Lady Egerton, who maintained a series of Marian priests at Ridley over the first Elizabethan quarter century, and whose relocation to Astbury in the 1590s was followed by a haemorrhage of recusants and non-communicants in that hitherto conformist parish, is the most conspicuous example, but in the following generations Alice Starkey of Darley and Katherine Massey of Puddington, who were the harbingers of separatism in their respective families, as noted in 3.2.1 above, would also seem likely candidates.¹¹¹⁸ And while Bossy’s assertion of the decline of matriarchal influence in tandem with that of church papistry after 1620 is borne out by the higher proportion of males in the 1641 figures, his statement that ‘church papists were virtually extinct as a race by 1641’ would seem excessive judging by the evidence in Table 3.3 for the Dod and Glasier families, who were still then, as they had been since the beginning of the century, recusant in the distaff side only.¹¹¹⁹

As Chapter 2 has demonstrated, the numbers of the Catholic gentry in Cheshire declined sharply after the Restoration: of the twenty-one families which were Catholic on the

¹¹¹⁵ John Whitmore of Thurstaston and William Poole of Marbury, neither of whose families featured in the 1611 ranking, were both exceptions to this pattern.

¹¹¹⁶ Bossy, *Community*, p. 158.

¹¹¹⁷ Brindley, ‘Images of female piety’, pp. 133-

¹¹¹⁸ For Lady Egerton, TNA, SP 15/27/2, f. 170; CALS, EDV 1.12a, f. 56.

¹¹¹⁹ Bossy, *Community*, pp. 158, 159, 187.

eve of the Civil War (see Table 3.6 above), only three – the Wirral triumvirate of Massey, Stanley and Poole – remained stalwart by the time of James II's accession. The post-Revolution generation of all three families continued the tradition, though the Masseys' numbers were declining, and in 1715 the line became extinct.¹¹²⁰ Their estates transferred to the Stanleys, who kept the faith throughout the eighteenth century, although Sir James Poole's heir Francis apostasised, stipulating in a will of 1725 that his heir must be a Protestant.¹¹²¹

Evidence of similar familial continuity amongst plebeian Catholics is rather more tenuous. Parental information (e.g. *eius filiam*) is only sporadically recorded in visitation and court books, and may reasonably be assumed to be confined to the period between an individual becoming liable for recusancy fines at the age of sixteen and establishing an independent household upon marriage, typically a decade or so later.¹¹²² Furthermore, given that clandestine marriage was normative amongst Catholics, traceability of females is lost upon their marriage and adoption of their husbands' surnames.

Of over 3,600 plebeian Catholics recorded in Cheshire between 1560 and 1700, only 238 are identifiable from the records as the children of other Catholics, but the recurrence of surnames in parish presentment lists suggests that the true level of familial transmission is substantially greater. To cite an extreme example, twenty-three Billingtons (excluding spouses) were presented from Little Budworth parish between 1624 and 1696, but there is no explicit evidence of interrelationship between any of them, nor between any of seven Bennetts of Great Budworth presented between 1619 and 1696. In Bunbury, the parish with the greatest number of Catholics, 311 of 696 presentees between 1598 and 1700 shared

¹¹²⁰ Ormerod, *Cheshire*, pp. 308-309.

¹¹²¹ Geoffrey Holt, 'Three Centres of Recusancy in Cheshire'. *NWCH* (2007), pp. 1-9, pp. 3-5.

¹¹²² Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*, p. 285 notes that the mean age of first marriage was 27-28 for men and 25-26 for women.

twenty-four surnames, and of the 311 117 (38 per cent) are identifiable as either the parents or children of others (often as both).¹¹²³

The Bunbury evidence suggests that transmission of the faith to subsequent generations was strongest in areas where there were significant clusters of Catholics: there, for example, at least five, possibly six generations of the Cheswis family may be discerned between 1580 and 1720.¹¹²⁴ Two surveys from opposite ends of the post-Reformation period which are richer than most presentment lists, providing for example household and income details, point to a significant level of familial transmission of faith, especially within Catholic clusters. The first is the Archbishop of York's return to the Privy Council of 1596, which lists eighty-one plebeian Catholics from the county, amongst them thirty-two (40 per cent of the total) who are identified as the children of others. Of these thirty-two, twenty-two are from Bunbury and a further seven from the neighbouring and strongly Catholic parish of Malpas, the remaining three being singletons from their respective parishes.¹¹²⁵ The second survey is the bishop's return to the House of Lords of 1706, which reported a total of ninety-three non-gentry Catholics. Thirty-one (33 per cent) of these are listed as the offspring of others listed, twenty-two from the parishes of Chester, which is unsurprising since the majority of the individuals listed in the survey were residents of the city. The remainder are from Nantwich and Neston, also parishes which reported significant clusters of Catholics.¹¹²⁶

This pattern of clustering is consistent with Sheils's findings on mid-Jacobean recusancy in Yorkshire. He noted that overall only one-third of plebeian Catholics were part of a household with one or more co-religionists, and that 'it is not common to find a surviving recusant tradition within a non-gente family living in these circumstances'.¹¹²⁷ In contrast at

¹¹²³ See Appendix C.

¹¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹²⁵ Talbot (ed.), 'A Book of Recusants', pp. 66-74.

¹¹²⁶ Mitchinson, *1705 Returns*, pp. 1-3.

¹¹²⁷ Sheils, 'Jacobean Recusants', pp. 137-138.

Egton in the North York Moors, ‘the largest and most notorious recusant community in the diocese at the time’, he identified amongst the presentees of 1615 six households with recusant children.¹¹²⁸

Striking exceptions to this pattern of familial transmission in the heartlands come from the seigneurially dominated Wirral parishes of Eastham and Burton. which each record it in only one plebeian parent-child relationship during the seventeenth century, though repeated surnames suggest there may have been a few more.¹¹²⁹ The reasons for this dearth are unclear: it suggests a demographic disproportionately made up of the very young, for whom service was a transient phase of life prior to marriage, and the elderly, who may have taken up service roles when agricultural work was beyond them, though no evidence has yet been found to substantiate this speculation. Outside the heartland areas, instances are unsurprisingly confined to families who were staunchly recusant across several generations, like the Chantrells, who are variously found in the Wirral townships of Noctorum, Poulton and Leighton during the seventeenth century, the Ashtons of Aston near Frodsham, and the Higginbothams of Sutton, near Macclesfield.¹¹³⁰ As in Yorkshire, family traditions seem mainly to have flourished amongst the peasantry in areas where there was a critical mass of Catholics to provide support and example.

The analysis of gentry families above showed that the role of the matriarch was often key to the preservation of the family’s Catholic tradition, but this trend is not significantly apparent amongst the humbler sort. In over three-quarters (eighty-seven of 113) of plebeian Catholic families with identified offspring, both parents were Catholics, and after the Restoration this is almost universally the case among the thirty-five examples found.¹¹³¹ In

¹¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 142-143.

¹¹²⁹ CALS, QJB 3/3, f. 251v records that Elen and Mary Sherlock were the daughters of Elen senior of Eastham and *ibid.*, QJF 123/1 that John Kelley or Colley was the son of William and Bridget of Burton.

¹¹³⁰ See Appendix D.

¹¹³¹ See Appendix E.

the majority (nineteen of twenty-six) cases where only one parent was a Catholic, it was the mother, but the prime reason for this would seem to be bereavement: ten of the nineteen mothers are listed as widows at the date of their first presentment, and of the remainder five were hardly stalwarts, only being presented on one occasion, amongst them Margaret Johnson of Woolstanwood, Nantwich, who in 1605 was said to have been ‘seduced from the church’ by John Street, a recidivist recusant of the same township.¹¹³² Bereavement, possibly death in childbirth, may also account for four long-term recusant fathers from Bunbury parish who appear in the record without their wives, amongst them William Cheswis, who offended persistently for half a century up to his death in 1633, the first fourteen years spent as a prisoner in Chester Castle. His wife Anne was described as an ‘obstinate recusant’ at the visitation of 1598 (the year of his release) but disappears from the record after 1600.¹¹³³

In summary, it may be noted that the majority of the elite Catholic families of Cheshire remained stalwart at least up to the Civil War, and that matriarchal influence was probably a key factor behind this. Amongst the lower orders, however, the role of the father seems to have been as important as that of the mother.

3.2.3 *Education*

The historiography of Catholic education, at least for males, is slight and non-specialist, but such as there is suggests that it was not a success story. Aveling observed that only a minority of gentry offspring received a Catholic education, through private tuition and / or the continental colleges at Douai and St Omer, the remainder being products of the grammar schools, and Bossy’s examination of seminary *responsa* for the Jacobean period led him to a similar conclusion.¹¹³⁴

¹¹³² CALS, EDV 1.14, f. 58v. For John Street’s early recusancy, see Wark, *Cheshire*, p. 166.

¹¹³³ Wark, *Cheshire*, p. 144.

¹¹³⁴ Aveling, *Handle and Axe*, p. 146; Bossy, *Community*, p. 165.

The Cheshire evidence is equally thin – Boothman and Hyde Parker’s study of the Savages, for example, is virtually silent on the topic¹¹³⁵ – but such as there is suggests that at least some of the gentry (or perhaps, their chatelaines) afforded it the necessary priority for the propagation of the faith within their families. This evidence comes largely from the presentment of unlicensed teachers at visitations. Thus the presentment from Woodchurch parish at the metropolitan visitation of 1590 stated that ‘John Cotgrave teacheth schoole privatelie in Mrs hocknays house he is a recusant’: his employer, who was presented for absence on the same occasion, was the widow of the recusant prisoner John Hocknell, murdered by his gaoler in Chester Castle earlier that year.¹¹³⁶ At Waverton in 1611 Roger Gorste ‘teacheth Mr Dutton of Hatton his children’: Dutton and some of his household appear on the same page of the visitation book for non-communication.¹¹³⁷ In 1624 Henry and Jane Starkey of Over were presented at the Assize for recusancy alongside one Massey ‘gent their schoole maister’ and the ‘seminarie priest’ William Breedsweeke, and 1629 one Cotton, ‘schoolmaster’ is presented from the same parish on the same dual charge at the metropolitical visitation.¹¹³⁸ It would seem possible that this was the children’s sole education: the youngest son would have been ten or eleven at the time of Cotton’s presentment, and his brothers and two of his sisters somewhat older.¹¹³⁹

The recusant Robert Totty appears several times between 1625 and 1631 in presentments from the Massey’s parish of Burton, and in 1628 and again in 1629 he is also presented for teaching without licence.¹¹⁴⁰ By the time of the visitation of 1634-5 Dominic Arrowsmith, described as ‘*pedagogus*’, appears to have succeeded him in that role.¹¹⁴¹ In

¹¹³⁵ Boothman and Hyde Parker, *Savage Fortune*, p. lviii notes only that the youngest two sons were sent to the English College in Lisbon in late adolescence, discussed below.

¹¹³⁶ BIY, V.1590-1, CB.2, f. 87; Wark, *Cheshire*, p. 72.

¹¹³⁷ CALS, EDV 1.17, f. 30.

¹¹³⁸ NA, CHES 21/3, fos 104v, 113; BIY, V.1629-30, CB, f. 198.

¹¹³⁹ Ormerod, *Cheshire*, II, p. 105.

¹¹⁴⁰ CALS, EDV 1.26, f. 32 and EDV 1.29, f. 7; NA, CHES 21/3, fos 134v, 154, 183v, 203, 221; BIY, V.1629-30, CB, f. 202v.

¹¹⁴¹ CALS, EDV 1.32, f. 38v.

1671 Edward Massey, the next heir, was presented to the ruridecanal visitors ‘for keeping [...] Mr John Plaseington in house to teach his children’, though that role was at least in part a cover for Plessington’s role as the household priest.¹¹⁴² It would appear, however, that at least one of the elder Massey children was sent to Douai, since an entry of 1615 in the *responsa* there records William as ‘schismaticus’ and Katherine as ‘Catholica’, terms used by the continental seminaries to describe the religious affiliations of students’ parents.¹¹⁴³ In the next, post-Restoration generation, Catherine, the deaf and dumb daughter of Sir Edward Massey, was sent to a convent school in Bruges.¹¹⁴⁴ It may also be noted here that the two youngest sons of Thomas and Elizabeth Savage were sent Lisbon College in 1640, though for what purpose is unclear: they were both in their late teens at the time, and ordination may have been the plan, though a concern for their safety at a time of anti-Catholic hysteria would seem likely, given that the venture was abortive. The elder was expelled for indiscipline after two months, and the younger departed for France two years later.¹¹⁴⁵

With the exception of the two Massey instances noted above, there is no firm evidence of children of the Cheshire gentry being sent abroad for their education, although as discussed in the following section, there are numerous cases of adolescents or young men going there to train as seminary priests. There survive two references to education overseas, but neither is conclusive. In 1581 Chadderton received instructions, probably from the Privy Council, to take bonds from nine men whose children were being educated outside the realm, but Catholic credentials can only be identified with a degree of certainty for two of them, and their offspring seem to have been adults at the time.¹¹⁴⁶ A generation later in 1615, Bishop

¹¹⁴² CALS, EDV 1.38, f. 61.

¹¹⁴³ Philip Prodger, ‘Sir William Massey’s Recusancy, 1634’, *North West Catholic History Society*, 16 (1989), pp. 6-9, p. 8. The evidence is, however, problematised by the pedigree in Ormerod, *Cheshire*, II, p. 309, which states that the eldest son was born in 1609, making him only six years old at the time.

¹¹⁴⁴ S. F. Onslow, ‘Mistress Catherine Massey, 1659-1728’, *NWCH* 6 (1979), pp. 11-15, p. 11.

¹¹⁴⁵ Boothman and Hyde Parker, *Savage Fortune*, p. lviii.

¹¹⁴⁶ Wark, Cheshire, p. 23. TNA, SP 15/27/2, f. 170, from the early 1580s, notes Peter Dutton of Dutton, son of John, was ‘latelie arryved from Rome, and wandereth up and downe the country commending Rome’. The ‘Brewerton’ listed may possibly be Sir Randolph Brereton, though as Wark notes, the only evidence for that was

Lloyd was seeking the advice of Sir Thomas Lake on the problem of individuals who refused to be bound in respect of their children's education abroad, but they are not named, and on the balance of probability it would seem reasonable to assume that the query related to the Lancastrian portion of his diocese.¹¹⁴⁷

There are also fragments of evidence of unlicensed teachers from areas with no obvious elite connection: Tarporley's presentments at the 1611 visitation included Francis Sabey, who had 'taught at Utkinton for 2 years but never received', and Anne Veare of Alpraham, the spouse of William '*pedagogus*' is presented from Bunbury for recusancy at the Assizes of spring 1626, and again the following autumn, when he had apparently switched to yeomanry as his occupation.¹¹⁴⁸

Finally, in the context of education brief mention should be made of its reverse aspect, that of Catholic parents protecting their children from Protestant indoctrination. Most of the visitation records of failure to present children for catechisation are not of known Catholics, and probably reflect apathy than popery, though the presentment of the gentleman George Egerton of Ridley and his wife in 1592 is a conspicuous exception to this rule: further down the social scale, that of Joan Whitby of Spurstow on the same occasion may be another.¹¹⁴⁹

Though the evidence above is fragmentary, collectively it provides glimpses of five of the leading Catholic gentry families of the shire, perhaps indicating that they attached more importance to the education of their young than Aveling and Bossy suggest was the norm.

the reported presence of a Jesuit of that name in Scotland in 1582. As noted in Chapter 2.1.4 above, the attribution of the Savage listed to either the eighth or ninth Sir John does not fit with what is known of the births of either's children. The eighth Sir John's family were grown up by the date of the document and the ninth's heir was a small child.

¹¹⁴⁷ TNA, SP 14/80 f.143.

¹¹⁴⁸ CALS, EDV 1.17, f. 32v; NA, CHES 21/3, fos 138, 154v.

¹¹⁴⁹ CCALS, EDV 1.10, f. 91v. A husbandman John Whitby of Spurstow was presented for Catholic offences on a number of occasions over the course of the 1590s, and Joan Whitby may well be his wife. See Wark, *Cheshire*, p. 167.

3.2.4 *Vocations*

Religious vocations may be viewed as a barometer of the vitality of the Catholic community, and the evidence of these alone from Cheshire would seem to problematise the notion of its ‘resolute conformity’ which is an accepted, albeit minor, historiographical orthodoxy.¹¹⁵⁰

Table 3.7 below shows that the county produced thirty-nine seminary priests over the period of this study, and Table 3.8 that until the Restoration, when this supply underwent a severe decline, it compared favourably with that of all the west midlands counties to the south apart from Staffordshire.¹¹⁵¹

¹¹⁵⁰ Wark, *Cheshire*, p. 132; Bossy, *Community*, p. 92.

¹¹⁵¹ Bossy, *Community*, pp. 404-405 shows all these counties, with the possible exception of Derbyshire, as areas of above average Catholic strength.

Surname	Xtian name	DOB	Birthplace	Gentry?	Sem date	Seminary	Mission	Religious?
Shert	John				1576	Douai / Rome	1578	
Coxie	William		Smeton'		1581	Rheims	1588	
Holford	Thomas	1541	Aston		1582	Rheims	1583	
Wilcocks	Robert	1558	Chester		1583	Rheims	1586	
Crocket	Ralph	1552	Barton-on-the-Hill		1584	Rheims	1586	
Bentley	Hugh				1591	Rheims / Valladolid	1595	
Egerton	Thomas			Y	1591	Valladolid		
Leigh	Edward	1553		Y	1592	Rome	n/a	
Price	John				1592	Valladolid	n/a	SJ
Price	Thomas				1592	Valladolid		SJ
Damford	John	1576		Y?	1596	Valladolid		
Holland	Henry	1568?			1598	Rome VEC	1605	SJ
Huxley	George	1581	Alpraham		1599	Valladolid	1607	
Davenport	Peter		Bramhall?	Y	1600	Valladolid		SJ
Fitton	Francis		Gawsworth?	Y	1599	Douai	1600	
Starky	John	1570	Hatton	Y	1601	Rome	1603	
Antrobus	Ralph	1576	Peover?		1603	Rome	n/a	
Davies	William	c1545			1604	Douai	1605	
Probyn	Edward		Malpas?		1604	Douai	1616	
Minshall	Thomas			Y?	1605	Douai	1609	OSB
Egerton	John		Egerton / Oulton?	Y	1607	Douai	1615	
Massey	Edward			?	1607	Douai	1611	
Maddock	John	1590	Agden, Bowdon		1608	Valladolid	n/a	
Stanley	Edward 1	1564/5	Hooton	Y	1609	Rome VEC	1612	SJ
Stanley	Edward 2			Y	1610	Douai	ord. 1615	
Gradwell	John				1613	Douai	1619	
Miles	Francis	1590	London		1613	Rome VEC	1619	SJ
Gardiner	John	1606	Manley		1627	Rome VEC	1634	
Minshall	Randolph		Nantwich?	Y?	1629	Rome VEC	1634	
Starkey	Henry	1612	Darley	Y	1632	Douai / Lisbon	1661	OSB
Catterall	Thomas				1640	Valladolid	1647	
Berry	Thomas	1635			1647	Douai	ord. 1661	
Parsons	John	1639		Y?	1659	Rome VEC	1664	
Stockton	Edward		Malpas?	Y?	1673	Rome VEC	1679	
Griffith	Thomas	1665	Chester		1687	Douai / Magdalen	1691	
Savage	John	1665	Plemstall	Y	1696	Douai	1700	
Holford	Peter	1690	Lostock Gralam	Y	1708	Lisbon	ord. 1712	
Chantrell	William	1708	Noctorum	Y	1725			

County	1558-1603	1603-59	1660-1714	Total
Cheshire	17	14	6	37
Derbyshire	15	14	4	33
Salop	9	18	14	41
Staffs.	23	26	22	71
Herefs.	7	23	12	42
Warwicks.	8	17	9	34
Worcs.	9	14	17	40
Sources: Anstruther, <i>Seminary Priests</i> Wark, <i>Cheshire</i>				
Note: excludes those whose diocese only is known				

Table 3.7 merits several comments. Firstly, the execution of the first four priests listed illustrate the extreme dangers of life on the mission in the 1580s: Haigh notes that 30 per cent of the priests dispatched from the continent during this decade died on the scaffold.¹¹⁵² Shert, who arrived in 1578, before the temperature reached crisis point, evaded capture for three years, and Holford for eighteen months, but Willcocks and Crocket were apprehended within weeks of landing.¹¹⁵³ Coxe only avoided this fate through purchasing a royal pardon, as did William Davies in 1624, possibly granted because he was nearly eighty at the time.¹¹⁵⁴

Except for Holford, who was the son of a Protestant cleric, nothing is known of the families of the first wave of seminary priests.¹¹⁵⁵ From 1590 onwards, however, a tendency towards disproportionate recruitment from the elite emerges, with roughly half of those who departed for the continent between 1590 and 1610 coming from the gentry, which Bossy notes was typical of that era.¹¹⁵⁶ The presence of candidates from the yeomanry of Bunbury and Malpas (Huxley, Maddocks, Probin, and possibly the Prices), is, however, significant.

Bossy further observes that the elite domination of the seminaries intensified sharply after 1610, and continued for the next half century, a phenomenon he tentatively attributes to a reduction in scholarship funding.¹¹⁵⁷ Though a subsequent growth in gentle seminarians is not perceptible in the Cheshire statistics, a sharp drop in the intake volume is, and funding may possibly have been a factor here. Following the Restoration, however, all recruits seem to be from the gentry, which runs contrary to Bossy's posit of a decline in gentry vocations during this period.¹¹⁵⁸ Too much, however, should not be made of these socio-economic

¹¹⁵² Haigh, 'Revisionism', p. 402.

¹¹⁵³ Anstruther, *Seminary Priests*, I, pp. 93-94, 170-172, 310-311, 381.

¹¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, II, 82-83.

¹¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, I, p. 170.

¹¹⁵⁶ Bossy, *Community*, p. 198. For the purposes of this breakdown, the gentry are defined by their inclusion in CALS, ZCR63/2/22, Davenport 's ranking of c. 1611.

¹¹⁵⁷ Bossy, *Community*, pp. 199-201.

¹¹⁵⁸ Anstruther, *Seminary Priests*, III, pp. 87, 104, 196-197, 211.

variances: Bossy's data was mostly derived from the records of the English College at Rome, which less than half of the seventeenth century seminarians from Cheshire attended.¹¹⁵⁹

The most conspicuous feature of this group of seminarians is that the majority come from families without conspicuous Catholic credentials, though this is consistent with Walsham's observation that many Jesuit novices came from conformist backgrounds.¹¹⁶⁰ The presence of Stanleys and Starkeys is unremarkable, and perhaps that of Leigh and two Davenports (Damford is a probable corruption of the latter name): Sir Piers Legh of Lyme, according to a report of the early 1580s, 'never communycateth, his famylie greatlie corrupted, come not at Church, and is a cherisher of Masse prestes and suche others', and Margaret Davenport of Bramhall was presented at the Assizes for recusancy in 1591 and had dower lands seized the following year.¹¹⁶¹ But the vocation of the son of Sir Edward Fitton, who in 1577 reported a haemorrhage of recusants in the county to Walsingham, and that of the son of the puritan Sir John Egerton of Oulton, whose attempts to suppress the Little Budworth wakes are discussed below, are more surprising, though the younger Egerton's Catholicism may have come from his mother, a daughter of Sir Rowland Stanley.¹¹⁶² Collectively, the backgrounds of the Cheshire ordinands suggest the presence of a significant sub-stratum of Catholicism beneath the visible, non-communicant church papist layer.

But quite a few were the product of conversions. That was certainly the case with Thomas Holford and Ralph Antrobus, both sons of Protestant clerics. Holford converted in 1582 whilst working as a schoolmaster to the Scudamore family of Holme Lacy, Herefordshire, and Antrobus whilst at Oxford, around the turn of the century.¹¹⁶³ And whilst John Gardiner had a Catholic mother and was raised in the faith, with some of his education

¹¹⁵⁹ Bossy, *Community*, p. 199.

¹¹⁶⁰ Walsham, *Church Papists*, pp. 76-77.

¹¹⁶¹ TNA, SP 15/27/2, f. 170; *ibid.*, CHES 21/1, f. 157; *ibid.*, E377/1, m. 6.

¹¹⁶² Wark, *Cheshire*, p. 15; Ormerod, *Cheshire*, ii, p. 350

¹¹⁶³ Anstruther, *Seminary Priests*, I, p. 170; Wark, *Cheshire*, p. 174.

at St Omer, he lapsed whilst living in the house of a Protestant nobleman, and was subsequently reconciled by the Jesuit Humphrey Leach.¹¹⁶⁴ Francis Miles, Randolph Minshall, and later in the century Edward Stockton and Peter Holford were also converts, as probably was Thomas Griffith, given that his parents were married in Holy Trinity, Chester.¹¹⁶⁵

Cognisance should also be taken of a number of female vocations from Cheshire during this period. Katherine Savage (1620-87), fifth daughter of Thomas and Elizabeth nee Darcy, was professed at the age of sixteen into a Benedictine convent in Ghent, where she became sacristan. In 1662 she left Ghent to found another house at Dunkirk, of which she was the prioress until the year before her death. Her niece Bridget (c.1630-66), daughter of Thomas Savage junior and Bridget Whitmore, was at the same Ghent convent from 1653. Together with the ordination of Thomas and Elizabeth's grandson John in 1700, these two vocations hint at a depth to the Savages' Catholicism which is not clearly apparent in the record.¹¹⁶⁶

A third Ghent Benedictine from Cheshire was Elizabeth Stanley (1639-c.1705), daughter of the third Sir William and Mary Draycott. She was also instrumental in the founding of Dunkirk but was summoned back to the mother house in 1675: additionally, no fewer than five of her great-nieces, daughters of Sir Rowland Stanley, were professed as Augustinian nuns in Bruges between 1700 and 1711.¹¹⁶⁷ There were no vocations from the Poole family in the period under consideration, and as noted above the second Sir James Poole's heir Francis apostasised, but cadet branches of the family produced six nuns during

¹¹⁶⁴ Foley, *Jesuits*, I, p. 647.

¹¹⁶⁵ Anstruther, *Seminary Priests*, II, pp. 221, 222; III, pp. 87, 104, 211.

¹¹⁶⁶ *Who were the Nuns? A Prosopographical Study of the English Convents in Exile, 1600-1800* at <https://wwtn.history.qmul.ac.uk/search/nsearch.php?uid="e=no&surname=savage&variants=on&place=,> last accessed 23 June 2020.

¹¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.* at <https://wwtn.history.qmul.ac.uk/search/nsearch.php?uid="e=no&surname=stanley&variants=on&place=,> last accessed 23 June 2020.

the eighteenth century.¹¹⁶⁸ And as noted above, Catherine Massey (1659-1728), the deaf and dumb daughter of Sir Edward Massey, went to be schooled at the convent of the Poor Clares in Bruges at the age of nine, and remained there for sixty years until her death. Because of her disability she was never professed, but out of devotion she wore the habit for twenty-seven years.¹¹⁶⁹

Two of the daughters of Rowland and Anne Bellasis, Anne (1663-1741) and Mary (1670-1742) also become Benedictine nuns at Pontoise, Boulogne, in 1680 and 1689 respectively, and were followed there in the mid-eighteenth century by two of their nieces, a further niece taking the veil at Dunkirk.¹¹⁷⁰ Whilst then the numbers of Cheshire's Catholic gentry were greatly diminished by the end of the seventeenth century, this plethora of vocations among their womenfolk is indicative of a vigour in their spiritual life.

¹¹⁶⁸ Ibid. at [Poole of Poole.GED \(qmul.ac.uk\)](https://www.history.qmul.ac.uk/search/nsearch.php?uid="e=no&surname=massey&variants=on&place=), last accessed 15 October 2021.

¹¹⁶⁹ Ibid. at <https://www.history.qmul.ac.uk/search/nsearch.php?uid="e=no&surname=massey&variants=on&place=>, last accessed 23 June 2020.

¹¹⁷⁰ Ibid. at <https://www.history.qmul.ac.uk/search/nsearch.php?uid="e=no&surname=bellasis&variants=on&place=>, last accessed 23 June 2020.

3.3 The wider community

As noted above, recent historiography has tended towards demonstration of Catholics' links with the wider society of early modern England, with such historians as Questier, Marshall and Glickman producing studies of the gentry, and Sheils asserting that lower down the social chain, 'getting on' and 'getting along' was the normative mode of cross-confessional interaction. This final section of the chapter will consider the relationships of both elite and plebeian Catholics with their Protestant peers, but it will first conclude the discussion in the preceding two sections of the mechanisms underpinning Catholic identities, by considering the importance of links with Catholics beyond the county boundary, and indeed beyond the seas.

3.3.1 *Wider Catholic networks*

Marie Rowlands observes that whilst county studies of Catholicism are an inevitable result of the structure of the archives, 'this is to compartmentalise to the point of falsification.'¹¹⁷¹ It is necessary, at least to a manageable degree, to look beyond administrative boundaries, and discern networks which straddle them, as Questier convincingly demonstrated in his positioning of the Montagus in the context of the gentry of both Sussex and Hampshire, and indeed beyond.¹¹⁷² This is especially important in the case of Cheshire, the notion of whose staunch conformity sits uneasily alongside the evidence of Catholic strength in its hinterland – Lancashire, Flintshire, and the counties of the north-west midlands. An earlier section of this chapter showed how the Catholic gentry of Cheshire contracted marriage alliances throughout this geography: this section will consider other respects in which the surrounding shires bolstered Catholicism in the county, and then go on to consider wider links overseas.

¹¹⁷¹ Rowlands, 'Introduction', p. 5.

¹¹⁷² Questier, *Catholicism and Community*, pp. 30-67.

Any consideration of the county's wider links must begin with Chester, its county town and cathedral city, with a population of between five and six thousand, and a variety of specialist products such as leather goods and hats that attracted both purchasers of finished goods and purveyors of raw materials.¹¹⁷³ Before the navigability of the river Dee began to be impeded by silting in the late seventeenth century it was the principal port of the north-west, and it also had strategic importance to the midlands and south in respect of its links to Ireland.¹¹⁷⁴ In times of concern about the situation in Ireland Chester, together with Bristol, was the Privy Council's conduit of choice for the dispatch of men and arms, and Atherton and Cooksley have shown how Staffordshire was impacted by a flood of refugees via Chester in the aftermath of the Irish rebellion of 1641.¹¹⁷⁵ The extent of traffic through the port thus presented Catholics with opportunities. A number of reports of priests in the city in the post-Armada years were noted in the opening section of this chapter, and on three occasions in the early 1590s groups of youths attempted to leave the country for continental seminaries via Chester and Ireland: two of them were from as far away as the fen country, and one of them succeeded in reaching Ireland before interception.¹¹⁷⁶ This caused headaches for the city authorities: the Ecclesiastical Commission of 1592 gave instructions:

And because this City is a port towne, and that diverse passengers take shipping here for Ireland, we have commanded the inkeepers and others that kepe lodging in this City to kepe notes of the names and special markes of all strangers resorting to their howses for diet or lodging, and to geve us knowledge presently therof.¹¹⁷⁷

The reverse traffic from Ireland was a problem in 1608, when Bishop Lloyd, Sir John Savage and Sir Henry Bunbury interrogated Henry Quyn, a recusant Irish linen merchant who was in the city, about his suspected links to a conspiracy by the Earl of Tyrone.¹¹⁷⁸

¹¹⁷³ Phillips and Smith, *Lancashire and Cheshire*, pp. 7, 48, 54.

¹¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 39, 85, 108.

¹¹⁷⁵ For example, TNA, PC 2/28, f. 375; Atherton and Cooksley, 'Staffordshire' p. 57.

¹¹⁷⁶ Wark, *Cheshire*, pp. 108-114.

¹¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

¹¹⁷⁸ TNA, SP63/233, f. 228.

As noted above, Cheshire's Catholicism was concentrated along its western fringe, and it is here that the evidence of external support during this period is strongest. North-east Wales – Flintshire and Denbighshire - was a major nucleus of Catholicism in the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods.¹¹⁷⁹ At the southern end of this region, the four parishes of the deanery of Bangor, within the Chester diocese but straddling the southern exclave of Flint and the north-west corner of Shropshire, presented recusants at visitations in volumes often exceeding those of Bunbury and Malpas.¹¹⁸⁰ The celebrant at the mass of 1586 in a Malpas farmhouse, Edward Hughes, was said to come from Bangor, and in 1592 it was reported to the Ecclesiastical Commission for Chester City that another seminary priest, Humphrey Hamner 'useth aboute Hanmer, Elsmear and Osester, and hathe bene oftentymes at Mr. Lloyde's house of Lloydsmaine.'¹¹⁸¹ The leading recusants of this area, however, were the Edwards of Chirk.¹¹⁸² Lady Throckmorton was present at a mass in their house, Plas Newydd, in 1578, and it would seem at least conceivable that her kinswoman Frances, wife of Sir Randle Brereton of Shocklach, may also have been in attendance.¹¹⁸³ Lastly John Bennett, who is mentioned in connection with another mass at Malpas in 1582, is believed to have worked in Wales, quite possibly in his native Flintshire, for many years before his death in London in 1625.¹¹⁸⁴

¹¹⁷⁹ E. Gwynne Jones, 'Catholic Recusancy in the Counties of Denbigh, Flint and Montgomery, 1581-1625', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* (1945), pp. 114-134, passim.

¹¹⁸⁰ CALS, EDV 1.13, for example, records eighty-one presentments of Catholics from Bangor deanery at the visitation of 1604, against sixteen from Bunbury and eight from Malpas, both large parishes of at least equivalent size to the deanery.

¹¹⁸¹ CALS, QJF 16/1, m. 1; Wark, *Cheshire*, p. 96; Bowler and McCann, *Recusants 1581-92*, p. 113, shows that Richard Lloyd of Llwynmaen was regularly presented for recusancy in the late 1580s. Hanmer was another of the Bangor deanery parishes, and Ellesmere and Oswestry were close by north-west Shropshire

¹¹⁸² J. Gwynfor Jones, *Early Modern Wales c. 1525-1640* (Basingstoke, 1994), pp. 146, 164; G. Dyfnallt Owen, *Wales in the Reign of James I* (Woodbridge, 1988), pp. 104-108; idem, *Elizabethan Wales: The Social Scene* (Cardiff, 1962), p. 35.

¹¹⁸³ I am grateful to Michael Hodgetts for this information. For Lady Brereton, Wark, *Cheshire*, pp. 141-142.

¹¹⁸⁴ CALS, QJF 12/1, MS 1, f. 2r; Anstruther, *Seminary Priests*, I, p. 31.

Further north, the gentry family of Crewe at Holt, again within the diocese but without the county, were obdurate Catholics.¹¹⁸⁵ They also appear to have had property at Plemstall, near Chester, from where they were presented in 1605.¹¹⁸⁶ The Jacobean sheriff of Flintshire, John Conway, also appears to have been at least of Catholic sympathy, and more overtly Catholic were the Pennants and the Mostyns of Talacre, on the Dee estuary, who intermarried with the Pooles.¹¹⁸⁷ By the 1620s Jesuits had established a school in the Mostyn's home.¹¹⁸⁸ There was also a Benedictine presence at Hawarden from 1617 onwards.¹¹⁸⁹

The most visible beacon of Catholicism in Flintshire, however, was the shrine of St Winifred at Holywell, on the Welsh bank of the Dee. There a holy well was said to have sprung in Saxon times on the spot where the saint had been martyred.¹¹⁹⁰ By the fifteenth century it had grown to a shrine of national importance, to which both Henry V and Edward IV made pilgrimages.¹¹⁹¹ Possibly through the intervention of the Pennants and the Mostyns, it avoided despoliation at the Reformation, and continued to attract pilgrims from far and wide, including in 1605 some of the Gunpowder conspirators: in 1640 a local Catholic nobleman, George Petre, began an abortive building project to accommodate the traffic.¹¹⁹² Secular clergy and Jesuits set up rival headquarters in the town's two inns, where they developed a substantial library and promoted the pilgrimage cult by means of plenary indulgences, a confraternity and a new printed hagiography of St Winifred.¹¹⁹³ The well however, also attracted Protestant tourists, like Sir Dudley Carleton's sisters in 1608,

¹¹⁸⁵ BIY, V.1590-1, CB.2, f. 94v and V.1595-6, CB.3, f. 2; CALS, EDV 1.10, fos. 22v, 23, EDV 1.15, f. 15v, EDV 1.17, f. 37v, EDV 1.24, f. 12 and EDV 1.26, f. 5.

¹¹⁸⁶ CALS, EDV 1.14, f. 16v.

¹¹⁸⁷ Mullett, *Britain and Ireland*, p. 31; Owen, *James I*, p. 85; Ormerod, *Cheshire*, II, p. 235.

¹¹⁸⁸ Alexandra Walsham, 'Holywell: contesting sacred space in post-Reformation Wales' in Will Coster and Andrew Spicer (eds), *Sacred space in early modern Europe* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 211-236, p. 222.

¹¹⁸⁹ David Lunn, *The English Benedictines 1540-1688* (London, 1980), p. 226.

¹¹⁹⁰ Walsham, 'Holywell', p. 211.

¹¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 213.

¹¹⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 217-218, 228-230.

¹¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 222-223.

including invalids taking the waters.¹¹⁹⁴ It would seem likely that some of the party of around two hundred from Ness and the surrounding villages of Wirral who made the journey at St Jamestide 1617 were only there to dance to the piper who led them there, though the choice of destination and the presence of Puddington and Neston residents in the party suggests that the attraction was not wholly secular.¹¹⁹⁵

The fact that this day trip would have had to cross to the Welsh bank of the Dee by the ford at Puddington, is a reminder of the ease with which the Masseys and the Whitmores of Leighton, and in particular their priests, could escape to Wales in times of danger, although there is no evidence of any having done so.¹¹⁹⁶ It also prompts reflection on the fact that on the eastern side of Wirral the Stanleys and Pooles were only a ferry across the Mersey away from the fastnesses of south-west Lancashire, and from the Norrises of Speke in particular. Further east the homes of the Savages at Runcorn, of the Moores at Thelwall, and of the Vaudreys at Hale, were also close to the Mersey, which at that time formed the county boundary, thus facilitating a quick escape from the county authorities. There is, however, surprisingly little evidence of interaction with Catholic Lancashire before the Restoration: only the intermarriage of the Pooles and the Tyldesleys of Leigh, noted above, has been detected. During the reign of James II, however, bishop Cartwright's diary records interactions with Lord Molyneux which suggest that Massey and Poole were also present, and it would seem probable that Bishop Leyburn confirmed a number of Wirral Catholics when staying with Molyneux at Croxteth (outside Liverpool) in September 1687.¹¹⁹⁷ More substantially, Molyneux was in 1688 to raise the army that attempted to take Chester, in

¹¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 232.

¹¹⁹⁵ Hindle, *Little Budworth Wakes*, p. 166.

¹¹⁹⁶ Virginia Bowes, 'The Masseys and the Reformation' in Paul Booth (ed.), *Burton in Wirral: A History* (Burton (Wirral), 1984), pp. 39-48, p. 44 notes that during the siege of Chester in 1645 Parliamentary troops were stationed at Puddington to prevent Welsh troops from making the reverse journey.

¹¹⁹⁷ *Cartwright Diary*, pp. 71, 79; Hilton et al., *Leyburn's Confirmation Register*, p. 193 contains the names of two prominent Wirral Catholics, Robert and William Chantrell, amongst the confirmands at Croxteth.

which Massey, Stanley and Poole held commissions.¹¹⁹⁸ And as Chapter 1 demonstrated, there is circumstantial evidence of the Wirral trio's involvement in the so-called 'Lancashire Plot' of 1694.¹¹⁹⁹

By contrast, in the south and east of the county, where paradoxically the Catholic presence was weaker, there are several examples of Catholics fleeing the county in times of crisis. Thus in 1581 the Privy Council ordered searches for Margaret Davenport of Bramhall in Buxton, Derbyshire, and for Mary Lawton of Church Lawton in Betley, just over the Staffordshire border.¹²⁰⁰ In the Archbishop of York's return of recusants to Cecil in 1596, Margaret Coxey of Wrenbury was noted as 'a popish vagrant fugitive recusant, sometimes at the house of Allen Coxey her sonne and sometimes shee flyeth into the countie of Salopp.'¹²⁰¹ The itinerary of the anonymous celebrant of the mass of Passiontide 1582 at Malpas, crossing the Cheshire-Shropshire both on his inward journey from Whitchurch and his outward journey to Oswestry is a double example of the exploitation of the interstices between jurisdictions.¹²⁰² His escort on the former journey was a denizen of Whitchurch, from where the mass hosts were also obtained: the coincidence suggests a network between the recusants of Malpas and those of the nearby market town.¹²⁰³

Apart from the seminarians and nuns noted earlier in this chapter, very few cases of European exile from Cheshire are recorded. Sir William Stanley remained in the Spanish Netherlands after his surrender of Deventer in 1587, and in 1606 his wife Lady Elizabeth and grandson William joined him there, the latter returning to Hooton in 1626.¹²⁰⁴ The only other instances of expatriation were temporary, in times of crisis. Countess Rivers fled to France

¹¹⁹⁸ See Chapter 1.10.

¹¹⁹⁹ See Chapter 1.11.

¹²⁰⁰ Brindley, 'Images of female piety', pp. 98-99.

¹²⁰¹ Talbot (ed.), 'A Book of Recusants', p. 74.

¹²⁰² CALS, QJF 12/1, m. 1, f. 2v.

¹²⁰³ *Ibid.*, f. 1r.

¹²⁰⁴ Wark, *Cheshire*, p. 182; Loomie, *Spanish Elizabethans*, pp. 179-180.

twice during the Civil War, where she may have been joined by her third son, Francis, who is recorded as being in Paris in the early 1640s, and her youngest son Charles, who left the seminary at Lisbon for France in 1643.¹²⁰⁵ Similarly, in the aftermath of the Popish Plot, William Massey and his servant, and Sir James Poole are separately recorded as boarding a boat at Gravesend for ‘parts beyond the seas.’¹²⁰⁶ The only other case of exile found is that of John Savage who, after inheriting the earldom of Rivers in 1712, found it impossible to combine his peerage with his priesthood and retired to Liege.¹²⁰⁷

There is, however, some evidence of the activities of Cheshire natives in the New World. On conclusion of service with the army in 1628 William Whitmore’s brother Thomas ‘accepted employment in *terra nova*’ with Lord Baltimore’s expedition, though he returned the following year disillusioned. In an account of his voyage he said of Newfoundland that ‘the contrey might rather be called nuefound rock, for indeed it is no other, so barren and unfruitfull that no savage people inhabit it.’ The expedition redirected its sights towards Florida, but seems to have foundered on reaching Virginia, where fellow expatriates ‘understandeing of what religion we weare, would not permit us to winter amongst them’.¹²⁰⁸

Others, apparently, had more success. There are records of recusant families named Gardiner and Hatton from Frodsham and Malpas, who became slave owners in Maryland.¹²⁰⁹ It would seem likely that the former were members of the family of Manley whose son John entered the English College in Rome after his reconciliation by Humphrey Leach, though no match against the latter name has been found.¹²¹⁰

¹²⁰⁵ Boothman and Hyde Parker, *Savage Fortune*, pp. lviii, lx, lxii, 186. Nothing is known of the movements of the fourth son, Richard, following his expulsion from Lisbon for unruly behaviour, but Anstruther, *Seminary Priests*, III, p. 196 records him as living in Cheshire when his son John was born in 1665.

¹²⁰⁶ TNA, S.P. Dom., Entry Book 51, pp. 205, 290.

¹²⁰⁷ Anstruther, *Seminary Priests*, III, p. 196.

¹²⁰⁸ Bangor, Mostyn MS 9082, items 10 and 12.

¹²⁰⁹ I am grateful to Dr Helen Kilburn for this information.

¹²¹⁰ Foley, *Jesuits*, I, p. 647.

3.3.2 *The Catholic gentry and the county community*

In April 1625 Sir Thomas Savage wrote to his fellow Catholic, the younger William Whitmore to ‘rejoice’ at the birth of a daughter to his son, also Thomas, and Whitmore’s daughter, the dowager Lady Somerset. In the course of the letter Savage refers to the forthcoming meeting of the Assizes that his indisposition prevents him from attending:

I pray commend me to my brother Wilbraham whoe I presume you will see this asize, and when you two are aloane with Sir John Done wish me with you, for I thank God I am able to laugh and be merry with my frends allthough I wantt my strenght (sic) to walk.¹²¹¹

The cordiality between Savage and the moderate Puritan Sir Richard Wilbraham is unsurprising, since Wilbraham was married to Savage’s (Protestant) sister, Grace.¹²¹² The bond between the two men was evidently strong: Wilbraham was to be a supporter to the chief mourner at Savage’s funeral procession in 1635.¹²¹³ He also had ties to the Whitmores, having been a witness and beneficiary of the will of Whitmore’s father five years earlier.¹²¹⁴ But the inclusion in this circle of Sir John Done, a protégé of John Bruen and one of the hotter Protestant gentry, is striking. It suggests a certain degree of ecumenism amongst the county community.

In a recent study of the pre-Civil War Cheshire gentry, Richard Cust and Peter Lake shed light upon this apparent anomaly by illustrating a strong degree of collegiality among this community, and acknowledge the personal role of Savage himself in reinforcing these bonds:

the county’s affairs owed a great deal to the connections with the court, and the social glue, provided by a catholic, Viscount Savage, and even some of the more puritan of the shire’s gentry were quite able to maintain easy social relations, indeed to share quintessentially gentlemanly pastimes like horseracing, with other far from godly, indeed even catholic or crypto-catholic elements.¹²¹⁵

¹²¹¹ University of Bangor, Mostyn MS 9082, 3.

¹²¹² Ormerod, *Cheshire*, III, p. 199.

¹²¹³ Boothman and Hyde-Parker, *Savage Fortune*, pp. 72, 170, 194.

¹²¹⁴ CCALS, WS1620 William Whitmore.

¹²¹⁵ Cust and Lake, *Gentry Culture*, p. 96.

The horseracing mentioned exemplified the collegial culture of the Cheshire gentry. Lord Cholmondeley, who ranked second only to Savage in the shire, sponsored an annual meeting at Farndon throughout the decade before the Civil War, with the specific objective of ‘unity and peace among the gentlemen [...] and for the mutuality of friendship and kind society amongst them.’ Amongst the attendees was the Catholic gentleman Sir William Massey.¹²¹⁶

Both Savage’s Catholicism, and his involvement in Court life, seem to have stemmed from his marriage in 1602 to Elizabeth, daughter and heiress of Baron Darcy of Chiche, the introduction to Court circles probably through the auspices of her aunt, Lady Lumley.¹²¹⁷ By the 1620s Savage was desirous of office, and avowed his Catholicism to the King in 1622 on the advice of the Spanish ambassador Gondomar.¹²¹⁸ Honesty proved the best policy, and a succession of high profile public roles ensued: he was a commissioner for the forced loan in 1626, and sometime between then and 1629 was appointed chancellor to the Queen, to whom Elizabeth was a lady of the bedchamber.¹²¹⁹ In 1629 he was appointed to a commission for leasing Henrietta Maria’s lands, the powers of which were extended in 1631.¹²²⁰ But although he spent most of his time at Court, in London, or on his wife’s family estates at Melford Hall in Suffolk, Savage retained an active role in county politics, serving a deputy-lieutenant from 1625 to 1627.¹²²¹ He was thus well placed to act as a broker between Court and country, smoothly negotiating the Cheshire contribution to the forced loan by lobbying Buckingham to intervene in issues of concern to both the city and county, and arbitrating a dispute between the town clerk and corporation of Chester on behalf of the Privy Council two years later.¹²²²

¹²¹⁶ Ibid., p. 59.

¹²¹⁷ Boothman and Hyde-Parker, *Savage Fortune*, pp. xvii-xix, xxii.

¹²¹⁸ Redworth, *Prince and Infanta*, p. 43.

¹²¹⁹ Richard Cust, *The Forced Loan and English Politics 1626-1628* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 121-122; Boothman and Hyde-Parker, *Savage Fortune*, p. xliii; CALS, DCH/U/13 and DCH/O/42.

¹²²⁰ CALS, DCH/O/42 and DCH/U/13, reproduced in Boothman and Hyde-Parker, *Savage Fortune*, pp. 56-60.

¹²²¹ Cust and Lake, *Gentry Culture*, p. 62; Barry Coward, ‘The Lieutenancy of Lancashire and Cheshire in the Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries’, *Transactions of the Historical Society of Lancashire and Cheshire* 119 (1968), pp. 39-64, p. 44.

¹²²² Cust and Lake, *Gentry Culture*, p. 100; Boothman and Hyde-Parker, *Savage Fortune*, p. xliii.

Such contributions predisposed his Cheshire colleagues to silence on the matter of his religion, a convention only breached by the Puritan Sir Richard Grosvenor, who denounced him as a Catholic office-holder in the parliaments of 1626 and 1628.¹²²³ The family's involvement in county affairs continued with his son and heir John, subsequently Earl Rivers, who succeeded him as a deputy-lieutenant, served as a Justice of the Peace and was a leading figure in the county's royalist party in the prelude to the Civil War.¹²²⁴

Clearly the Savages' Catholicism did not materially affect either their social or political integration. It was, however, exceptional, of Court rather than country. To what extent was such tolerance shown to the Catholic country gentry? Unlike Elizabethan Worcestershire, Cheshire had no Catholic MPs, but a surprising number of individuals with Catholic credentials sat on the Commission of the Peace, some of them well into the Stuart era.¹²²⁵ Though Sir Randle Brereton was excluded in 1587 on account of his wife's recusancy, Sir Rowland Stanley was still a JP in 1603 despite the Catholicism of his sons, daughter-in-law and granddaughter, and his departure from office may well have been due to his age (he was then eighty-seven) rather than religious considerations.¹²²⁶ Sir William Massey retained the same office until 1626 despite imprisonment for refusing the Oath of Allegiance, and there are indicators that his termination may well have been the result of his non-attendance, though Morrill notes that such dilatoriness was common amongst Cheshire JPs, a small group of godly magistrates like Grosvenor excepted.¹²²⁷ And the younger William Whitmore, the sole conformist in a recusant household, sat on the Bench from 1636 until at least the outbreak of the Civil War: a generation earlier, just before his presentment for recusancy, his father had fulfilled a royal commission to collect a levy from Neston.¹²²⁸

¹²²³ Johnson, Frear Keeler, Johnson Cole and Bidwell (eds), *Commons Debates 1628*, III, pp. 61, 63-64.

¹²²⁴ University of Bangor, Mostyn MS 9082, 3; Morrill, *Cheshire*, pp. 16, 30.

¹²²⁵ Dures, *English Catholicism*, p. 42.

¹²²⁶ Wark, *Cheshire*, pp. 165, 179, 182.

¹²²⁷ NA, CHES 21/3, f. 8v; Bowes, 'Masseys', p. 43; Morrill, *Cheshire*, p. 16.

¹²²⁸ NA, 24/123/4; University of Bangor, Mostyn MS 687.

Finally, Hugh Glasier served as Mayor of Chester in 1603 and his father as Vice-Chamberlain, despite the delinquency of their respective spouses.¹²²⁹ Admittedly, all of these men were no more than church papists (at least whilst holding office – Massey subsequently became recusant), but their tenure of office in spite of question marks over their conformity would seem to suggest a reasonably relaxed confessional climate amongst the political establishment of the county.

There are also indicators of good relations between Catholic gentry and the ecclesiastical establishment. In 1626-7 Savage wrote to his ‘very good lord’ Bishop Bridgeman undertaking to fund a window in the south transept of his cathedral.¹²³⁰ The Cheshire petitioning campaigns on the eve of the Civil War also provide some limited evidence of Catholics supporting their conformist neighbours in resisting Puritan demands for ‘root and branch’ reform. The church papist William Whitmore, whose family were solidly recusant though he himself was never presented, heads the signatories from Great Neston parish to the pro-episcopacy petition of February 1641, and Thomas Wickstead, who had been churchwarden of Marbury in 1625, is listed amongst the petitioners in favour of the Prayer Book from that parish later that year, his presentment for recusancy at the Quarter Sessions the previous January notwithstanding.¹²³¹ Despite their recusancy the Masseys of Puddington retained their office as the bishop of Lichfield’s stewards of the manor of Burton beyond the abolition of episcopacy in 1646, only relinquishing it in 1662.¹²³² They could, however, be assertive of their rights against the established Church if required: Sir William Massey was involved in a land dispute with the rector of West Kirby during the 1630s, and in

¹²²⁹ Wark, *Cheshire*, p. 150.

¹²³⁰ SRO, D1287/18/2 (P/399/32).

¹²³¹ Parliamentary Archives, HL/PO/JO/10/1/53, p. 69; Maltby, *Prayer Book and People*, p. 218; CCALS, QJB 2/6, f. 11v; *ibid.*, P39/8/1, f. 25.

¹²³² Bowes, ‘Masseys’, pp. 41, 45.

1642, when he refused payment of tithes for Wallasey parish, ‘the sons of Sir William so threatened examinant (the bailiff), that he durst not distrain.’¹²³³

Gentry collegiality even extended to Catholics whose actions circumvented, and even broke, the law. A deed of 1607 shows the elder William Whitmore, who had recently been convicted as a recusant, conveying part of his Leighton estate to the church papist Sir Hugh Beeston and his Protestant neighbour William Glegg at a peppercorn rent of 6d a year, presumably to avoid sequestration.¹²³⁴ The device seems to have been unsuccessful, for payments in respect of the property appear in the Recusant Rolls for 1609 and 1614.¹²³⁵

After the Restoration, the illegal holding of office by Catholic entry was a thing of the past, at least until the reign of James, though this seems not to have been a sore point: when James II appointed five Catholics as JPs in 1687, Stanley and Poole each came to the sessions only once, and Massey, Oldfield and Gerard did not attend at all.¹²³⁶ Convivial contact, both between political opponents and between Protestants and Catholics, however, seems to have continued as before.¹²³⁷ During the reign of Charles II both Sir Rowland Stanley and Sir James Poole were created baronets, and in June 1676 entertained to dinner Sir Thomas Mainwaring and Edward Glegg, both of whom were to take the Whig side in the Exclusion Crisis.¹²³⁸ The integration of the two new baronets into county society, and also that of Sir William Massey was more fulsomely revealed during the episcopate of Thomas Cartwright, with whom they frequently dined: other guests or hosts on these occasions included the Chester MP Sir Thomas Grosvenor, the county MP Sir Philip Egerton, the Mayor of Chester

¹²³³ Philip Prodger, ‘Sir William Massey’s Recusancy, 1634’, *North West Catholic History Society*, 16 (1989), pp. 6-9, p. 8; NA, SP 16/539/1, f. 187.

¹²³⁴ Bangor, Mostyn MS 4349.

¹²³⁵ NA, E377/17, E377/22.

¹²³⁶ Challinor, ‘Cheshire politics’, p. 144.

¹²³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 70, 151-152.

¹²³⁸ CALS, DDX/384/2, p. 73.

and ‘Mr. Cholmley’.¹²³⁹ Overall, the evidence points towards the social integration of the Catholic gentry.

3.3.3 Plebeian Catholics: ‘getting on’ and ‘getting along’?

Evidence of cross-confessional co-operation involving non-gentry Catholics is much scarcer and very fragmentary, and perhaps the strongest indicator is the apparent extent of mixed marriages, discussed above. Historiographical studies of this social group are equally few, unsurprisingly given the lack of a corpus of evidence, but two important contributions to this genre suggest potential avenues of investigation. In his 2009 article “‘Getting On’ and ‘Getting Along’” Sheils observed that in areas of Catholic concentration like Egton in the North York Moors the shortage of suitable Protestant candidates obliged them to take their turn as churchwardens and parish constables. He also pointed to such activities as being witnesses and executors of wills as providing evidence of Protestant-Catholic co-operation.¹²⁴⁰ And in a case study of Madeley in Shropshire, Malcolm Wanklyn suggested that economic roles can also serve as pointers: ‘common sense would suggest that, as Catholics had to earn their income in the outside world, they must have been integrated to a considerable extent.’¹²⁴¹ This section will examine assess the evidence from Cheshire which satisfies these three tests.

These studies exemplify the paucity of the evidence for the first test, that of service in public roles. Sheils’s observation appears to be derived from an earlier demographic analysis which highlighted a disproportionately low number of recusancy presentments of established males whose age would render them potential candidates for office.¹²⁴² He presents a

¹²³⁹ *Cartwright Diary*, pp. 15, 17, 25.

¹²⁴⁰ Sheils, “‘Getting on’ and ‘getting along’”, esp. p. 70.

¹²⁴¹ Malcolm Wanklyn, ‘Catholics in the Village Community: Madeley, Shropshire, 1630-1770’ in Marie Rowlands (ed.), *Catholics of Parish and Town 1558-1778* (CRS, 1999), pp. 210-236, p. 211.

¹²⁴² Sheils, ‘Jacobean Recusants’, pp. 143-146, 149.

convincing case with suggestive circumstantial detail but is unable to cite any specific examples of Catholics holding offices. Wanklyn provided two examples of Catholic churchwardens from 1670s Madeley but noted that it was more usual for Catholic candidates for the role to field a Protestant substitute, or, as he observes of a number of cases from the 1630s, to decline the role.¹²⁴³ More substantial supporting evidence, however, comes a recent doctoral thesis by Wendy Brogden, who found several examples in the Catholic heartland of south-west Herefordshire.¹²⁴⁴

The findings from the Cheshire evidence are commensurate with those of Wanklyn and Sheils rather than that of Brogden. On the basis that such instances are most likely to be found in areas of Catholic concentration, this study has compared the list of churchwardens of Bunbury parish for the years 1599 to 1701 with a list of recusants presented over the same period, but only one potential match (John Huxley, warden in 1639) has been found.¹²⁴⁵ There is, however, an intriguing entry in the burial register for 1623: Richard Longton of Tiverton is described as '[g]ard. solumente nomine tenus et XXX' (churchwarden in name only), suggesting either that he failed to fulfil the role, or that it was purely honorific, the recognition of a popular member of the community. Either interpretation would seem consistent with his track record of recusancy from 1590 to 1614.¹²⁴⁶

The evidence of recusants serving as village constables is even more tenuous. None of the three studies mentioned above furnish any examples, and it should be noted that Joan Kent's study of the role does not mention any evidence at all from Cheshire which might enable systematic investigation.¹²⁴⁷ Two examples have been found in passing: John Wilson is listed as one of the constables for Wardle township in the 1611 Quarter Sessions

¹²⁴³ Wanklyn, 'Madeley', pp. 216, 225.

¹²⁴⁴ Brogden, 'Herefordshire', pp. 230-231, 262-266.

¹²⁴⁵ Elsworth, *Bunbury Registers*, 'Editorial Notes', Appendices 4 and 5.

¹²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴⁷ Joan Kent, *The English Village Constable 1580-1642: A Social and Administrative Study* (Oxford, 1986).

presentments, and given that only eleven households in the township are recorded in the 1590 Easter Book, it is easy to see that the appointment of a Catholic – the family name recurs throughout seventeenth century recusancy presentments – might well have been a necessity in the absence of other suitable candidates.¹²⁴⁸ And the behaviour of Henry Barrow, the village constable of Ness, who in 1617 led a party of around 200 to the Catholic shrine at Holywell in Flintshire, would suggest that he was probably a Catholic, although there is no evidence of him being presented for religious delinquency.¹²⁴⁹ All in all, the evidence suggests that though the holding of public office by plebeian Catholics was not unknown, it was a relatively rare occurrence.

In contrast, the evidence of roles relating to wills is in abundant to the point of excess, with over 20,000 wills from the period in the holdings of the Cheshire Record Office, necessitating sampling. Bunbury has been used as the sample, again because of the concentration of Catholics there. 201 individuals from Bunbury left wills or inventories which survive from the period 1580-1650, and of these twelve yield matches against known recusants or their husbands on name, township and date, but only two can be said with confidence to be the wills of individuals who were active recusants at the time of their deaths, and in both cases non-Catholics were protagonists.¹²⁵⁰ Neither of the executors or witnesses to the will of William Mason of Alpraham, who died in 1608, had any track record of delinquency, though the obdurate recusant Thomas Huxley of the same township is one of the four witnesses to his inventory. Huxley also certified the inventory of one of the non-recusant husbands, Randle

¹²⁴⁸ CALS, QJF40/2, f. 22; *ibid*, DCR27/3 (unpaginated).

¹²⁴⁹ Hindle, 'Little Budworth Wakes', p. 166.

¹²⁵⁰ CALS, WS1608 William Mason and WS1638 John Wilson. Of the remaining ten, four (WS1612 William Walley, WS1623 Richard Longton, WS1623 Richard Longton, WS1628 Richard Egerton, WS1639 George Hazlehurst) had a gap of at least seven years between the date of their last presentment and that of their will, which suggests that they may have conformed, two (WS1607 Randle Robinson, WS1622 Thomas Redrupe) were not recusants themselves but had recusant wives, and only inventories survive for a further three (WS1597 John Wilson, WS1601 George Beeston, WS1631 John Wilson). The tenth, that of the gentleman Sir Hugh Beeston, was discussed in the preceding section.

Robinson of Tilston Fearnall. The Catholic Thomas Wilson of Wardle was the executor of his father John in 1638, but neither of the witnesses to his will or inventory were known Catholics: one of them, Randle Wilson, was, however, probably a close relative. Wilson left legacies to his Catholic servants, Thomas and Margaret Radley, and to Ralph Stockton, one of the witnesses to his inventory. Mason's bequests were more numerous, none of them to known Catholics, though one of them, his brother-in-law John Watson, may have had a recusant wife.¹²⁵¹ The wills of possible conformists and non-recusant husbands from the initial sample of twelve follow a similar pattern of Protestant predominance, including amongst debtors and creditors. It is noteworthy, however, that Wilson's will stipulated merely 'Christian burial at the ov[er]sight and discrecion of myne executors', rather than the more common request for burial in the churchyard, which he may have suspected might not have been possible (though happily it was).¹²⁵²

The volume of wills from Bunbury covering the period from 1650 onwards is similar – 197, of which ten can be matched against lists of known recusants, though only five of these can be identified as active Catholics at the date of the will.¹²⁵³ Like the two earlier examples, none of these disclose any evidence of specifically Catholic piety, though that of James Palin from 1685 provided for a penny dole to those of the poor who attended his funeral, and a further £2 for them at the discretion of his executors. The names of executors, witnesses and beneficiaries, however, show the emergence of tighter Catholic circles, which is consistent with the evidence of greater endogamy after the Restoration, demonstrated at 3.2.1 above. Eight of the eleven executors named were known Catholics, as were five of twelve witnesses, and three of the five inventories were compiled, at least in part, by

¹²⁵¹ NA, CHES 21/2, f. 28v; *ibid.*, E277/14, E377/19.

¹²⁵² See Appendix E.

¹²⁵³ WS1670 Elizabeth Price, WS1671 Dorothy Darlington, WS1684 Thomas Powell, WS1685 James Palin, and WS1700 Edward Cheswis. WS1661 John Huxley, WS1665 John Palin, WS1681 Joseph Buckley, WS1683 Thomas Farrar and WS 1686 Elizabeth Allen all match recusant lists on name and location, but disappear from the record several years before the date of the will.

Catholics.¹²⁵⁴ The prominent recusant Edward Massey features highly in the four documents compiled before his last appearance in the record in 1686, as the executor of two, compiling the inventory of a third, witnessing a fourth, and as a beneficiary from all four. The lists of beneficiaries show the extended families and Catholic networks of the deceased: the poorest of the five, Thomas Powell (estate value £8/15/-) touchingly bequeathed to his co-religionist Peter Cheswis his ‘citheron’, which is suggestive of evenings spent in making music together.

Wanklyn observed that in early seventeenth-century Shropshire a number of Catholics were engaged in occupations which would today be described as ‘customer-facing’ – for example, the landlady of the Crown Inn in Bridgnorth – and argued that the performance of these roles necessitated a measure of integration with the wider Protestant community. This provides a useful lens, albeit one applicable principally to urban areas where a number of specialist trades and professions congregated, as opposed to rural Cheshire, where the majority of Catholics were yeomen, husbandmen and agricultural labourers. Out of the 444 non-elite male Catholics of the period whose occupations are recorded, some ninety-one fall into this niche group.¹²⁵⁵ Perhaps surprisingly, less than a quarter of these (twenty-one) come from the county town of Chester, where a more significant cluster might be expected: this reflects the city’s low level of delinquency presentments throughout the Stuart era. This group comprised retailers (two butchers and a baker, a draper, an innkeeper, a vintner, and in the early eighteenth century, a perfumer), craftsmen (three tanners, two tailors, a carpenter, a miller, a pewterer, a cutler, and a glover), as well as a small group of professional men (two lawyers, a doctor and a soldier), although as may be expected the lawyers are both Elizabethan examples, antedating the exclusion of Catholics from that profession under the

¹²⁵⁴ See Appendix D for this and subsequent references from this paragraph.

¹²⁵⁵ See Appendix F for references for this and the following two paragraphs.

legislation of 1606. In the county's second town, Nantwich, a recusant cell flourished in the Restoration period, which included a chapman and a fletcher-cum-cooper.

The remaining three-quarters were mostly distributed across the major Catholic clusters in the county. Recusants from Bunbury included four tailors, three glovers and three coopers as well as a carpenter, a smith, a mason and a wheelwright. Some of these roles, however, may have been transient or part-time, to supplement seasonal agricultural work: both of the coopers, for example, were also listed as husbandmen. The parish also had a Catholic innkeeper, Richard Brock (discussed in the following section), although he never featured in any presentments for religious delinquency. In the pre-Civil War period Malpas enjoyed the services of two Catholic carpenters and a Catholic miller, in addition to the village blacksmith 'olde' Hugh Wilbraham, an attendee at the farmhouse mass of 1582, whose son Owen seems to have successfully sustained the family business into the next century despite the prominent recusancy of his wife and daughters. Over the century and a half under investigation some fifteen specialist tradesmen were presented as papists from the parishes of Wirral, including six millers and two brewers.

Excepting Chester and Bunbury, however, the largest concentrations of skilled artisans were in two parishes in the north of the county, where Catholicism was less entrenched. In Aston, which was created as a separate parish from Runcorn in 1635 at the instigation of Sir Thomas Aston, the Ashton family plied their trade as coopers and fletchers through to the end of the century, and over the same period in Great Budworth Allens and Bennetts worked as tailors and glovers, Thomas Daynteth as a shoemaker, and Wilfred Savage as a paver. There were also one or two places where the tradesman in question was the only recusant, like the joiner John Presse of Lower Peover in 1596, or the miller John Bennett of Church Minshull in 1641. And in Audlem, on the southern border of the county, the father and son recusants John and Richard Eldershawe had precious few co-religionists

there whilst they practised as physicians from 1564 through to 1625. Such examples of the self-employed, then, suggest that plebeian Catholics for the most part ‘got along’ with their Protestant neighbours.

3.3.4 *Catholics, Puritans and festive culture*

A final area of community life meriting attention, and reinforcing this observation of neighbourliness, is the struggle against Puritan attempts to suppress the traditional festive culture of the parish in the early seventeenth century. To the godly, such festivities were a major barrier to the inculcation of a Protestant culture. Describing 1570s Kent, Patrick Collinson stated the problem somewhat strongly:

The build up of effective protestant evangelism of that decade found itself competing not so much with Catholicism [...] as with a way of life and especially a pursuit of pastimes and pleasures which had lived happily alongside the old religion but found that it could not put up with the new. It was minstrels more than mass-priests who proved to be the enemy.¹²⁵⁶

Elizabeth Baldwin, the historian of entertainment in early modern Cheshire, takes a different slant which nevertheless reinforces Collinson’s point: because the occupation of minstrelsy entailed travel between various venues, its practitioners were well placed to act as messengers between Catholic households.¹²⁵⁷ Small wonder, then, the ‘riot and excess in eating and drinking, dancing, gaming, &c’ at ‘the vain amusements called *wakes*, or *vigils*, practised and kept in honor of certain popish saints’ led to the godly gentleman John Bruen of Stapleford introducing the alternative attraction of a three day marathon of sermons in Tarvin church at St. Andrew’s tide, the parish’s patronal festival.¹²⁵⁸ Nor that William Hinde, Bruen’s son-in-

¹²⁵⁶ Patrick Collinson, *The Birthpangs of Protestant England: Religious and Cultural Change in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Basingstoke, 1988), p. x.

¹²⁵⁷ Elizabeth Baldwin, *Paying the Piper: Music in Pre-1642 Cheshire* (Michigan, 2002), p. 31.

¹²⁵⁸ Hinde, *Life of John Bruen*, p. 46.

law and biographer, inveighed against such events from his pulpit in Bunbury, the county's epicentre of Catholicism.¹²⁵⁹

Historians of Catholicism have paid little attention to this phenomenon, though Haigh notes an 'emphasis on the harmony and vitality of the village unit, at play and at worship' amongst the orphaned ex-Catholic rump he designates 'parish Anglicans', and Walsham that Catholics were frequently accused of organising merry-making activities with the express intention of dissuading the populus from church attendance.¹²⁶⁰ In an article of 1995, Steve Hindle studied attempts to suppress the festive culture in Elizabethan and Jacobean Cheshire, which he described as 'a project of unimaginable difficulty' in a county where it was particularly entrenched.¹²⁶¹ Although his principal focus is upon the interaction of authority and popular agency, he touches upon a number of incidents which point to Catholics being in the vanguard of resistance.

The centrepiece of his article focuses on the conflicts at Little Budworth during the mid-1590s, which resulted in a number of actions at the Court of Star Chamber.¹²⁶² In 1596 a local JP, Sir John Egerton, forbade the parish constables to allow the Petertide wakes, which were in his opinion 'overmuch superstyciously used'. The constables appealed to another local gentleman, Sir John Starkey, whose family were 'greatly affected & superstitiously inclined to the observinge and kepinge of the wakes & such other lyke vayne & abolished Trashe', which may be a reference to fines imposed by the manorial court a year earlier for damage to the bear-baiting enclosure.¹²⁶³ Egerton's assessment of the Starkey's religious

¹²⁵⁹ J. Hall (ed.). 'Memorials of the Civil War in Cheshire and the Adjacent Counties, by Thomas Malbon, of Nantwich, Gent., and Providence Improved, by Edward Burghall, Vicar of Acton, near Nantwich', *Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire* 19 (1889), p. 1.

¹²⁶⁰ Haigh, 'Church of England', p. 253; Alexandra Walsham, 'The Parochial Roots of Laudianism Revisited: Catholics, Anti-Calvinists and "Parish Anglicans" in Early Stuart England', *JEH* null (1998). pp. 620-651, p. 641.

¹²⁶¹ Hindle, 'Little Budworth Wakes', pp. 157-159.

¹²⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 167-170, 177 is the source for the information in the following two paragraphs except where otherwise indicated.

¹²⁶³ Baldwin, *Paying the Piper*, pp. 27-28.

proclivities was accurate: the chatelaine, Lady Alice, and her daughter had been presented for absence before the Metropolitan Visitation of 1595, and several other members of the family appeared on similar charges in subsequent years.¹²⁶⁴

Starkey upheld the constables' appeal, and the wakes went ahead on 7 and 8 July, though not without abuse of and threats against Egerton and his bailiff, the shepherd Thomas Buckstones, who was also assaulted when he attempted to disperse the crowds. A campaign of intimidation against the two men ensued, including the disturbance of their livestock, and culminating at Michaelmas with the entry of the village shoemaker into morning service in the parish church, dressed like Buckstones in full Egerton livery and proclaiming himself, to the mirth of the assembled congregation, to be a 'a pretty fellow to be some great man's shepherd, or his foole', thereby causing the service to be abandoned, and triggering Egerton's litigious response.

Egerton alleged that the harassment was orchestrated by Hugh Starkey, Sir John's heir, and the Court found in his favour, fining Starkey £300 and other participants £20. Circumstantial evidence also supports Egerton's assertion, and also points to the involvement of other Catholics. One of Egerton's servants were assaulted after the wake by two of Starkey's, who were part of a party *en route* to a dance at Darley Hall, their master's residence.¹²⁶⁵ And both one of the parish constables examined and the shoemaker turned entertainer were named Billington, a name which occurs frequently in early Stuart recusancy presentments from Little Budworth.¹²⁶⁶

Whilst the above case points to Catholic involvement in the defence of the traditional village culture, a second example from Wirral shows Catholics proactively fashioning it to satisfy their religious proclivities.¹²⁶⁷ At St Jamestide 1617 the constable of Ness, Henry

¹²⁶⁴ BIY, V.1595-6, CB.3, f. 15; CALS, EDV 1.12a, f. 60v and EDV 1.12b, f. 73.

¹²⁶⁵ Baldwin, *Paying the Piper*, pp. 28-29.

¹²⁶⁶ NA. CHES 21/3, fos 104v, 105, 113.

¹²⁶⁷ The information in this paragraph is taken from Hindle, 'Little Budworth Wakes', pp. 163-164.

Barrow, rode into Wales (the Dee ford at Puddington would seem to have been the most likely route) and up the west bank of the Dee to Holywell ‘accompanied with most of the inhabitants of Shotwick, Rabie, Puddington and Little Neston to the number near unto two hundred’. The information that the excursion had been the suggestion of ‘one Evans a young man who dwelleth in Flint’, ‘that they might come over into Wales and play and dance and nothing would be said to them’ suggests that the event may have been in part circumvention of the Cheshire Assize Order of the previous year against wakes, and many of the participants were doubtless there purely for the ‘fidlinge and dauncing to and fro’ which seems to have been the principal business of the day, but none the less the choice of a Catholic pilgrimage site as a venue, which extended the round trip by around ten miles, is highly significant. Barrow ended up doing penance for his error in Neston parish church.

Both of these examples demonstrate assertiveness to the point of recklessness on the part of their protagonists, and it would seem likely that there were others: Hindle notes other early Stuart episodes relating to either bear-baiting, gaming or the performance of music on the Sabbath from Bunbury, Little Budworth, Malpas, Tarporley and Tattenhall parishes, all centres of recusancy.¹²⁶⁸ The presentation in 1616 of Roger Brock of Bunbury for ‘maintaining [...] bearwards’ is highly suggestive: as noted at 3.1.2 above, an innkeeper of the same name had his alehouse suppressed in 1638 for the display of ‘divers pictures and other popish relics.’¹²⁶⁹ Brock was evidently as forthright as the individuals described above: following charges by John Witter, the Puritan head constable of Eddisbury, at the Assizes of September 1618, he responded to further allegations the following year with counter-allegations of his own which, Hindle surmises, resulted in the latter’s dismissal from office.¹²⁷⁰

¹²⁶⁸ Ibid., pp. 164-166.

¹²⁶⁹ NA, CHES 21/2, f. 118; Bennett and Dewhurst, *Quarter Sessions Records*, p. 93.

¹²⁷⁰ NA, CHES 21/3, fos. 27, 39; Hindle, ‘Little Budworth Wakes’, p. 166.

It would seem that Catholics were joined with Christopher Haigh's 'parish Anglicans' and the less than godly in what Cust and Lake describe as 'a loose coalition' to defend festive culture against Puritan assaults.¹²⁷¹ These opposing forces were reflected in Puritan self-perceptions: on multiple occasions in his writings, Hinde conflates 'the popish and profane', and the dominant trope in the diary of Edward Burghall, the parish schoolmaster in the pre-Civil War years, was how frequently the ungodly – drunkards, bearbaiters and the sexually promiscuous – providentially received their just deserts.¹²⁷² The extent of Catholic participation in these culture wars is unclear, but a clear ringleader was the alehousekeeper Richard Brocke, who was the subject of at least five Assize or Quarter Sessions presentments over the course of two decades, and it is reasonable to suppose that his was not the sole Catholic voice crying in the Puritan wilderness of Bunbury.¹²⁷³ Moreover it would seem that much of the period the tide was in the traditionalists' favour, as Burghall relates of the wakes of 1633 and 1634:

A Multitude of People being set under the Church Yard Wall, of the South Side of the Church in Bunbury, at the Time of their Wakes, to see a Bear-bait, the Wall suddenly fell down upon them, yet they were not hurt. They had the same Disorder the Year following, & there happened the same Disaster, & the same Deliverance. Oh! the great Patience of Almighty God!¹²⁷⁴

Such a calamity, occurring but once, would seem a heaven-sent gift to the godly cause: that it should be allowed to recur without any sign of a Puritan backlash seems somewhat odd, as also does Burghall's tone, which resembles that of an exasperated but indulgent parent rather than that of a zealot engaged in a Manichaean conflict. Perhaps Archbishop Neile's visitation of 1633 had clipped the wings of the godly.¹²⁷⁵ And Burghall's silence on the occasion when in

¹²⁷¹ Cust and Lake, *Gentry Culture*, p. 89.

¹²⁷² Hinde, *Life of John Bruen*, pp. 9, 43; idem, *Office and the Morall Law of God*, quoted in Cust and Lake, *Gentry Culture*, p. 87; Hall, 'Memorials', pp. 1-22.

¹²⁷³ NA, CHES 21/2, f. 118 and CHES 21/3, fos 27, 35v, 39; Bennett and Dewhurst, *Quarter Sessions Records*, p. 93.

¹²⁷⁴ Hall, 'Memorials' p. 11.

¹²⁷⁵ NA, SP 16/259, f. 167.

1638 the godly at length achieved a victory by closing six of the seven alehouses in the parish is equally curious. Their action, however, shows that their target was not confined to the Catholic Richard Brocke, but embraced all who posed a challenge to godly rule.

Conclusion

As Chapter 2 demonstrated, the strength of post-Reformation Catholicism in Cheshire was probably commensurate with that of neighbouring north-west midlands counties such as Shropshire and Derbyshire, and stronger than that of the country overall. It was concentrated in the western half of the shire, where missionary clergy seem to have been harboured in the homes of numerous of the significant gentry – Whitmores, Starkeys, Masseys, Pooles and Stanleys – for some if not all of the seventeenth century, and thus these families received a regular level of priestly ministrations. The clustering of Catholic communities around these households suggests sufficient outreach to sustain the faith there, supported, at least in the earlier part of the period, by networks with Catholics outside the county, particularly across the Welsh border. The fate of the scattered Catholics in the east of the county, on the other hand, was less securely supported – most clusterings of recusancy here were transient, and even where they display some continuity, as in late seventeenth-century Macclesfield, a monthly mass at most was the most that the people could expect, and private non-sacramental devotions must have played a key part in keeping the faith alive.

Religious practices were, however, not the only supporting mechanisms. Amongst the elite, family tradition, sometimes enhanced by Catholic schooling, was strong, and arranged marriages with co-religionists were normative up to the Civil War. After the Restoration, as the Catholic elite shrank sharply in numbers, vocations to convents in France and the Low Countries flourished amongst the ranks of the remaining rump, and endogamy amongst the humble sort seems to have become more prevalent.

Probably most important, though, in the survival of Catholicism was the attitude of wider Protestant society. As Chapter 1 demonstrated, such persecution as there was was intermittent and low-level. The social bonds of the county's gentry were strong enough to withstand religious divisions among them: similarly amidst the lower echelons community

consciousness, expressed in the defence of 'Merrie England' against Puritan challenges, remained strong, and economic interest could militate in the same direction. At the same time there were limits to tolerance: even semi-conforming Catholics among the gentry, though initially numerous, had been purged from public office by the time of the Civil War, and examples of their plebeian counterparts serving as minor officeholders, or even acting as witnesses to wills, are rare throughout the period. There was to a degree an uneasy coexistence which remained perceptible down to the first half of the twentieth century, and one cannot ignore the death of a thousand cuts that minor acts of social ostracism could no doubt inflict in some cases.

Conclusion

In examining the *longue duree* of the post-Reformation era through the lens of a single faith community in a single county, this study must confront the old Whig narrative of a progress from persecution to toleration, which the last generation of early modern historians has discredited. Building upon the work of Ole Peter Grell and his various co-editors and co-contributors, Alex Walsham in particular has demonstrated that in the British case, as in mainland Europe, toleration was a temporary, contingent phenomenon which could easily be reversed.¹²⁷⁶ Does a county study shed any further light on this question?

In the first place, it is questionable to what extent the Cheshire experience is best described as persecution, with its connotations of ‘dungeon, fire and sword’.¹²⁷⁷ For a small number of late Elizabethans, incarcerated in Chester Castle for years on end, it undoubtedly was, although that was a transient due to the regime’s inability to apply any more appropriate discipline, and may well have been discontinued for logistical reasons (the absence of space) once distraint was established as a remedy. Distraint too, for the relatively small number who were subjected to it, may be appropriately described as persecution, particularly for those in the lower strata of what was still to a large extent a subsistence level economy. But for the vast majority of Cheshire Catholics (including the persecuted minority) the legal proscriptions on the practice of their faith were probably an ineffective deterrent, little more than harassment or inconvenience, though the fortress mentality inculcated by generations of being seen as ‘the other’ cannot be discounted.

That is because of the ever-present possibility that the present relative passivity of the regime could mutate into a more threatening future. The long-term imprisonment of

¹²⁷⁶ Walsham, *Charitable Hatred*, pp. 4, 8-9.

¹²⁷⁷ The quotation is from the hymn ‘Faith of our fathers, living still / In spite of dungeon, fire and sword’ by the Catholic convert and priest Frederick William Faber (1814-63).

recusants ceased in 1598, but the short-term incarceration of prominent ones recurred at intervals throughout the seventeenth century, in 1618 for refusal of the Jacobean Oath of Allegiance, in the fevered run up to Civil War, and in the wake of the Popish Plot. And though none of these events resulted in popular violence, the events of 1688 and its aftermath saw disturbances in Chester. The only martyrdom of the post-Reformation period was not until 1679 and brought with it a collateral casualty with the brutal treatment of the octogenarian priest Humphrey Evans, which resulted in his death.

The ongoing milching of Catholics throughout the seventeenth century and beyond may be more properly seen as exploitation, which provided toleration at a price, rather than as persecution pure and simple. Such exploitation characterised Charles I's personal rule and the interregnum in particular, and it may be doubted whether after the interlude of Restoration it was any easier after the Glorious Revolution. Though the burdens of the double charges of the Land Tax upon Catholics cannot be quantified, it would seem improbable that they were less than those of the recusancy fines which preceded them, and additionally the early Georgian years saw further attempts, albeit unsuccessful ones, to sequester Catholic estates. In no sense was the climate of the early eighteenth century a more tolerant one towards Catholics than that of the Elizabethan era, though some of the worst excesses of the latter may have been mitigated.

This possibly explains the reason why so many Catholics equivocated and sought refuge in the halfway house of church papistry, that twilight phenomenon which Alex Walsham succeeded in dragging into the historiographical spotlight in the 1990s. What this local study contributes to this aspect of the period is to portray both the scale of this practice - the norm rather than the exception in the Elizabethan and Jacobean years, and especially in areas of the county that were remote from the heartland - and its persistence through to the Civil War in families such as the Savages and the Whitmores of Leighton, and probably

beyond. Digby Gerard was reputed to be a papist when he was appointed a Justice of the Peace in 1683, but was never presented as a recusant, nor was Somerford Oldfield for most of the Restoration period, during which his wife was regularly listed at the Assizes and Quarter Sessions. Church papistry seems to have persisted well beyond the Restoration, though drowned out in the evidence by examples of nonconformist Protestants adopting the same stance. Taking cognizance of the fluid nature of early modern religious identities, which Keith Wark sidelined in his 1971 study of Elizabethan Catholicism in the county, also explains why contemporaries in the 1641 House of Commons bracketed Cheshire with its heartland neighbours Lancashire and Staffordshire as the parts of England ‘most stocked with papists and in this respect most dangerous’.

A further demographic feature to which the present study draws attention is that of independent, plebeian-led Catholicism, as opposed to the seigneurially dominated strain that traditionalist historiography portrayed as normative. Sheils’s 1997 article on the plebeian Catholics of Egton Bridge in the North York Moors was complemented the following year by a contrasting one by Malcolm Wanklyn on the proto-industrial community of Madeley in Shropshire, but there were no further documented examples of this phenomenon until my own article of 2018 on Elizabethan Malpas (happily now augmented by a number of examples from Wendy Brogden’s doctoral thesis on pre-Civil War Herefordshire). My article shows how the yeomanry of Malpas were proactive in arranging several masses in Malpas during the 1580s, and this thesis builds on this by demonstrating that the Catholicism of many parishes in the south-west of Cheshire similarly lacked seigneurial influence. Further case studies of this kind are needed to inform understanding of plebeian Catholicism in post-Reformation England.

Detailed examination of the Catholic heartland of south-west Cheshire provides other examples to enrich our understanding of early modern English Catholicism. It suggests that

its extensive growth there in the Jacobean and Caroline years was probably attributable to the missionary efforts of its clergy, who were in turn building upon those of their Elizabethan predecessors. It shows that the Catholics of parishes like Bunbury and Malpas maintained a line of strict recusancy, including in the key rites of passage, and suggesting that the documented examples of those who succeeded in burying the ancestors in the parish churchyard, in spite of official disapproval at the outset, were probably only the tip of the iceberg.

And it enables this conclusion to end on a more positive note than that on which it begun. There is little evidence of sectarian conflict in the quotidian aspects of life, but suggestions of cooperation in the bare necessities of life, particularly in the maintenance of the traditional parish culture, and amongst the gentry a great deal of collegiality across the religious divide. Early modern English Catholics maintained a tightly-knit sense of community through endogamous marriage, most visibly among the elite, but increasingly further down the social scale as time moved on, as the evidence both of plebeian wills and of elite women drawn to the religious life from the later Stuart period demonstrates. Through these visible social bonds, the Catholic community was well positioned to prosper when life gradually became easier for them in the later eighteenth century.

Appendix A: Presentments of Catholics, 1590-3							KEY	(codes concatenated)
Surname	Christian name	Location	MV 1590	AZ 1591	1592 DV	AZ 1593		
Aire (Eyre)	Margaret (Margery)	Malpas	R		A	R	MV	metropolitan visitation
Aldersey	Margaret	Chester	R				DV	diocesan visitation
Aldersey	Randle	Bunbury	R	R	R	R	AZ	Assizes
Aldersey	Thomas	Chester	NC					
Ames	Thomas	Malpas	R	R			R	recusant
Bailey	Elizabeth	Prestbury	R				A	absent for church
Beeston	Lady Alice	Bunbury	R				nm	for n months
Booth	Margery	Mottram	R	R			ny	for n years
Huxley	Thomas	Bunbury	NC		R	R	NC	non-communicant
Burrows	Ralph	Bunbury	R				E	at Easter
Bushell	Ralph	Bunbury	R				X	excommunicate
Cannon	?	Chester	R				P	papist
Dod	Elizabeth	Malpas	R		1mA	R	O	other
Cooke	Elizabeth	Bunbury	A		R	R	bap	baptismal offence
Cooke	Isabel	Bunbury	R		R	R	ncat	child not catechised
Bowker (Barley?)	Margaret	Malpas	R		1?mA	R	u/bc	child not baptised
Cooke	William	Bunbury	R			R		
Burrows	Jane (Joan) (Ann?)	Bunbury	R					
Cotgreve	John	Christleton	R			R		
Cotgreve	Randolph	Christleton	A					
Cotgreve	Thomas	Christleton	A		3yR	R		
Crocket	Anne / Katherine	Malpas	R		R			
Didsbury	John	Mottram	R					
Cooke	Ralph	Bunbury	A		R	R		
Dod	Katherine	Shocklach	R			R		
Cotgreve	Elizabeth	Christleton	A		3yR	R		
Egerton (nee Grosvenor)	Mary	Bunbury	R	R	R			
Egerton	George	Bunbury	R	R	OncatR			
Cotgreve	Margery	Christleton	A		3yR	R		
Erdeswick	Hugh	Nantwich	R					
Erdeswick	Sampson	Nantwich	R					
n/a	n/a	Nantwich	R					
n/a	n/a	Nantwich	R					
Foster	Robert	West Kirby	R					
Garnet	George	Bunbury	R		R			
Dytoe	Elizabeth	Malpas	R		1?mA	R		
Eldershawe	Richard	Audlem	XR		R			
Hebarte	Ralph	Chester	R					
Golborne (nee Dod)	Katherine	Malpas	R	R	1mA	R		
Jones	Robert	Chester	R					
Huxley	Ralph	Tarvin	XR			R		
Kelsall	Maude (Matilda)	Daresbury	R		P			
Lawton	Maria	Church Lawton	R		?A	R		
Longton	John	Bunbury	R			R		
Longton	James	Bunbury	R			R		
Maddocks	Eleanor	Malpas	R					
Maddocks	John	Malpas	R			?		
Maddocks	Matilda / Maude	Malpas	R		NC A	R		
Mallam	Anne	West Kirby	R		A	R		
Mason	Katherine	Bunbury	R					
Mason	Margery	Malpas	R					
Massey	Mary	Coddington	R	R	R			
Moyle	Anne	Shocklach	R			R		
Owley	Elen	Malpas	R					
Owley	Elen	Bunbury	R					
Owley	John	Bunbury	R					
Longton (Laughton 1596)	Richard	Bunbury	R	R				
Platt	Randle	Acton	R			R		
Longton (Laughton 1596)	Robert	Bunbury	R					
Primrose	Elizabeth	Chester	A					
Primrose	Henry	Chester	R					
Primrose	Margaret	Chester	R					
Probin	Edward	Malpas	R					
Probin	Joan	Malpas	R			R		
Ridley	John	Wistaston	NC12y		?			
Salisbury	n/a	Farndon	A					
Sim	Hugh	Bunbury	R		R	R		
Sim	Ralph	Bunbury	R	R				
Sim	n/a	Bunbury	R					
Somner	Peter	Bunbury	R	R	?R	R		
Street	John	Nantwich	R		NC?- prisor	R		
Stretbarrell or Stretbarrowe	William	Bunbury	R	R		R		
Tatton	Mary	Northenden	16yR	R				

Appendix A: Presentments of Catholics, 1590-3 (contd)							KEY	(codes concatenated)
Surname	Christian name	Location	MV 1590	AZ 1591	1592 DV	AZ 1593		
Thatcher	Richard	Malpas	R				MV	metropolitan visitation
Tilston	Elen	Chester	R				DV	diocesan visitation
Whitby	Alice	Aldford	A		NC		AZ	Assizes
Whitby	John	Aldford	A		NC			
Whitby	John	Bunbury	NC	R	R	R	R	recusant
Whitby	Robert	Thornton	R				A	absent for church
Whitese?	n/a	Chester	R				nm	for n months
Whitmore	William	Neston	NC				ny	for n years
Whitmore	Alice	Neston	R		A	R	NC	non-communicant
Whitmore (nee Primrose)	Jane	Thurstaston	Ou/bcEA		R		E	at Easter
Whitmore	Katherine	Guilden Sutton	NC				X	excommunicate
Whitmore	Richard	Guilden Sutton	R				P	papist
Wilbraham	Joan (Jane)	Malpas	R		1?mA	R	O	other
Woodward	Eve	Bunbury	R				bap	baptismal offence
Woodward	Thomas	Bunbury	A		R	R	ncat	child not catechised
Jameson	Elizabeth	Frodsham	NC				u/bc	child not baptised
Gill	Thomas	West Kirby	NCE					
Wilson	John	Chester	NC					
Wilson	n/a	Chester	NC					
Marion?	William	Chester	NC					
Marion?	n/a	Chester	NC					
Gillam	Jasper	Chester	NC					
Gillam	n/a	Chester	NC					
Kyrkes	Richard	Chester	Obap					
Crewe	Thomas	Holt	R		*R			
Crewe	Katherine	Holt	R		*R			
ap Griffiths	Jane	Holt	R		R			
Crewe	Elen	Holt	NC		NC*			
Garner	George	Holt	R					
Dun	Thomas	Holt	R					
Grosvenor	Maude	Eccleston	NC					
Simson	Richard	Tarvin	NC					
Browne	Ralph	Tarvin	NC					
Reynolde	n/a	Chester	NC					
Smith	n/a	Chester	NC					
Huddleston	Roger	Chester	NCE					
Huddleston	n/a	Chester	NCE					
Dod	Robert	Chester	NCE					
Jo nion?	Ralph	Chester	NCE					
Daniell	Henry	Stockport	NC					
Foulceis?	Robert	Barthomley	NC					
Thickens	Ralph	Barthomley	NC					
Smith	n/a	Barthomley	NC					
Walles	William	Wybunbury	Obap					
Boscell?	Richard	Wybunbury	Obap					
Ireland	Barbara	Church Lawton	P					
Raymonde?	William	Middlewich	NCE					
Bostock	Thomas	Middlewich	NCE					
Boothe	Elen	Middlewich	NCE					
Bulkeley	Rowland	Davenham	NCEX					
??dandlay	Hugh	Davenham	NCEX					
Chaddock (Cheidock)	William	Bunbury		R (failed?)		R		
Poole	William	Marbury		R	3yR	R		
Davenport	Margaret	Stockport		R				
Mason	William	Bunbury		R	R	R		
More alais Cayliffe	Margery	n/a		R				
Poole	Richard	Marbury		R		R		
Price	Henry	Bunbury		R				
Price	William	Bunbury		R				
Price	John	Bunbury		R				
Ridgeway	John	Bunbury		R				
Smith	Elen	Bunbury		R				
Smith	Robert	Bunbury		R				
Smith	Thomas	Bunbury		R		R		
Tatnall	Robert	Bunbury		R				
Whitby	Richard	Bunbury		R	R	R		
Wilson	Randle	Bunbury		R	R	R		
Wooley	Henry	Bunbury		R				
Wooley	William	Bunbury		R	Ou/bc?			
Alger (Angyer)	Robert	Barthomley			NC			
Anion / Onion	Richard	Chester			NCR			
Buckley	Cecily	Bunbury			R			
Capper	Anne	Bunbury			R	R		
Cheswis	Jane or Anne	Bunbury			R	?		
Crocket	Katherine	Bunbury			R	R		
Dunne	Katherine	Bunbury			cR			
Egerton	Margaret - wife of Ge	Bunbury			OncatR			
Follyhurst	Robert	Barthomley			NC?			
Garnet	Margery	Bunbury			?	R		
Gatlies?	Thomas	Bunbury			?			
Golborne	Matilda	Chester			NCR			
Golborne	William	Chester			R			
Hocknell (later Ravenscroft)	Margaret	Woodchurch			A	R		
Hough	Joan / Jane	Bunbury			?	R		
Humpston	Elizabeth	Bunbury			R	R		
Huxley	Margery	Bunbury			R			

Appendix A: Presentments of Catholics, 1590-3 (contd)							KEY	(codes concatenated)
Surname	Christian name	Location	MV 1590	AZ 1591	1592 DV	AZ 1593		
Jones	Henry	Chester			NCR		MV	metropolitan visitation
Lawton	Maria	Church Lawton			?R		DV	diocesan visitation
Lawton	Thomas	Bunbury			P	R	AZ	Assizes
Ledsham	Richard	Chester			NCR			
Maddocks	Joan	Thurstaston			?R		R	recusant
Massey	Margaret	Waverton			R		A	absent for church
Otley	George	Acton			R		nm	for n months
Prees (Price)	Jane	Bunbury			R	R	ny	for n years
Probin	Randle	Malpas			NC A		NC	non-communicant
Probin	Sybil	Malpas			1?mA	R	E	at Easter
Robinson	Elizabeth	Bunbury			R	R	X	excommunicate
Smith	James	Bunbury			(c?)R	R	P	papist
Sparrow	Katherine	Tarporley			R	R	O	other
Stanley	Jane	Eastham			NC		bap	baptismal offence
Stanley	Elizabeth	Eastham			?yA	R	ncat	child not catechised
Whitby	Joan	Bunbury			Oncat		u/bc	child not baptised
Wilson	John (sen?)	Bunbury			R	R		
Wooley	Elen	Bunbury			R	R		
Yardley	Margaret	Malpas			NC A	R		
Hand	James	Chester			NC			
Hand	Jane	Chester			NC			
Anion / Onion	John	Farndon			R			
S??burne ?	Elizabeth	Farndon			NC			
Crewe ?	Richard	Farndon			P			
Dodd	Robert	Chester			NC, A?			
Holm	William	Chester			NC 2y?,? A			
Lee		Chester			NC 1y+			
Davies	Rostan?	Chester			NC 1y+			
Warburton	Elizabeth	Chester			NC 12m			
Hand	Dorothy	Chester			NC			
Large	Robin?	Waverton			NC			
Wettnall als Lewis	John	Waverton			NC			
Smithe	Randolph	Waverton			NC			
S??th	Richard?	Waverton			NC			
R?????son	Peter	Waverton			NC			
Massie	Thomas	Waverton			NC			
Earles?	Anne	Eastham			NC			
Culcheth	Matilda	Eastham			NC (c?)			
Coventrie	Thomas	Woodchurch			NC			
Glegge or Clegge	William	West Kirby			NC			
Lea?	John?	Aldford			NC			
Lea?	n/a	Aldford			NC			
Pova?	Jane	Tilston			NC			
Hesketh	Alice	Tilston			NC 3yA			
Starkey	n/a	Great Budworth			NC 2y			
Pe??????	William	Great Budworth			NC 2y			
Heoward	Thomasina	Daresbury			P			
Howard	Ellen	Daresbury			P			
Bradburne	Margaret	Northenden			NC ?m			
Cowp? / Cowper	Thomas	Prestbury			A			
Brooke	Rand	Barthomley			NC			
S?wa?	E??	Barthomley			NC			
	William	Barthomley?			?R			
		Barthomley?			?R			
		Barthomley?			?R			
Dodington	Randle	Bunbury			NC			
Smith	Susan	Bunbury				R		
Spurstow	Peter	Bunbury				R		
Trine	Thomas	n/r - Whitchurch, Salop				R		
Worsley	Ralph	Chester				R		
TOTALS			124	31	117	62		
Total presentees	214							
Presented on one occasion	139							
Presented on two occasions	44							
Presented on three occasions	27							
Presented on four occasions	4							

Appendix B1: Sequestration receipts recorded in Recusant Rolls, 1593-1611

Surname	Xtian name	Location	Group	1st offence	Last offence	1593	1594	1597	1598	1600	1602	1606	1609	1611
Aldersey	Randle	Bunbury	Gentry	1590	1598		13s4d							
Booth	Margery	Mottram	Y/man	1582	1595		£1/10s*							
Cheswis	Alice	Bunbury	n/a	1585	1602						£6/13/4*			
Cheswis	Richard	Bunbury	Y/man	1584	1624						£6/13/4*			
Cheswis	William	Bunbury	Y/man	1584	1630						£6/13/4*		13s4d	
Cooke	Ralph	Bunbury	Y/man	1590	1617		1s*							
Cooke	William	Bunbury	Y/man	1590	1600			21/-*						
Cotgreve	Margery	Christleton	Y/man	1590	1608		£11*							
Crocket	Katherine	Bunbury	n/a	1592	1604		13/4d*	13s4d						
Davenport	Margaret	Bramhall	Gentry	1581	1592	66s8d		33s4d						
Dytoe	Elizabeth	Malpas	n/a	1590	1617		£1*							
Egerton	George	Bunbury	Gentry	1590	1624								26s8d	
Erdeswick	Hugh	Nantwich	Gentry	1581	1590	£4/8/10								
Erdeswick	Sampson	Nantwich	Gentry	1581	1592		£4/8/10	£4/8/10				12		
Hocknell	John	Prenton	Gentry	1577	1590	£10	£10	£10						
Hough	William	Leighton	Gentry	1576	1586	£26/13/4	£26/13/4	£26/13/4						
Huxley	Thomas	Bunbury	Y/man	1587	1617		£2/6/8d*	£4/2/6d	£9*	£4, 46/8d*	£4*,£7?	15/-?	16s6d	
Longton (Laught)	Richard	Bunbury	Y/man	1590	1614							£14/6/8		
Longton (Laught)	Robert	Bunbury	Y/man	1590	1604		6s8d*							
Maddocks	John	Malpas	Y/man	1582	1608			14/-					26/8, 26/8	30/-
Massey	Margery	Bunbury	n/a	1601	1626									
Poole	Richard	Marbury	Gentry	1591	1625		£4/16s/8d*			41/-*				
Poole	William	Marbury	Gentry	1591	1621			£21/16/1	£2/11/-	£40/18/4		£14/2/6	18s8d	
Probin	Edward	Malpas	Y/man	1582	1606				20/-*				20/-	
Sim	Hugh	Bunbury	Trade	1590	1596			30/-*		30/-*				
Spurstow	Peter	Bunbury	Gentry	1586	1595			d 100/-						
Street	John	Nantwich	Y/man	1590	1635		£12*							
Whitby	John	Bunbury	Y/man	1590	1608		£11/6/8d	£1/6s/8d						
Whitmore	William	Neston	Gentry	1590	1619								£29/13/4	
Whitmore	John (sen)	Thurstaston	Gentry	1570	1601	£15/7/10	£15/7/10	£23/1/8		34	£22/13/4	42	102s2d	
Wilson	John (jun?)	Bunbury	Y/man	1598	1635		£3/18/8	£1/4/-					67/8, 20/-	
Wooley	Elen	Bunbury	Y/man	1582	1617		6s8d	13s4d						
Larden	Anne	Bunbury	n/a	1605	1608								£10/4/5	
Total receipts						£59/16/8	£101/13/-	£109/18/1	£12/11/-	£75/17/-	£53/13/4	£83/3/2	£58/6/1	£0
Total persons debited				5	18	17	3	5	5	5	5	5	11	0

Appendix B2: Sequestration receipts recorded in Recusant Rolls,1614-29

Surname	Xtian name	Location	Group	1st offence	Last offence	1614	1620	1622	1629
Burrows	Alice	Bunbury	n/a	1601	1619				106s8d
Bushell	Ralph	Bunbury	Y/man	1590	1613				44s5d
Cheswis	William	Bunbury	Y/man	1584	1630	13s4d			£6/13/4
Egerton	George	Bunbury	Gentry	1590	1624	26s8d			£6/13/4
Erdeswick	Sampson	Nantwich	Gentry	1581	1592				£13/6/8
Hesketh	Thomas	Thurstaston	Gentry	1593	1604				43s8d
Huxley	Thomas	Bunbury	Y/man	1587	1617	£10/2/2			£4/8/10
Longton (Laught)	Richard	Bunbury	Y/man	1590	1614				£20?
Maddocks	John	Malpas	Y/man	1582	1608	13s4d			
Massey	Margery	Bunbury	n/a	1601	1626	73/4d			£6/13/4
Moulton	Thomas	Acton	n/a	1581	1619				£8/17/9
Poole	William	Marbury	Gentry	1591	1621	55/1d	18s8d	18s8d	14s5d, 18s8d
Probin	Edward	Malpas	Y/man	1582	1606	20/-			46s8d
Probin	John	Malpas	Y/man	1596	1630	8/-?			
Probin	William	Malpas	Y/man	1596	1650	8/-?			13s4d
Smith	Elen	Bunbury	Srvnt	1591	1655				40/-
Whitmore	William	Neston	Gentry	1590	1619	£16/6/8			
Whitmore	John (sen)	Thurstaston	Gentry	1570	1601	131s4d			
Whitmore	John (jun)	Thurstaston	Gentry	1608	1642			£ 22/13/4	
Wilson	John (jun?)	Bunbury	Y/man	1598	1635	46/8	46/8	46/8	£12, 46/8
Wilson	Randolph	Tattenhall	Gentry	1598	1635		2s2d	2s2d	71/8, 2/2
Lucas	William	Bunbury	Srvnt	1596	1605				2/-
Follyhurst	Jane	Coppenhall	Gentry	1598	1614				£6/2/2
Kelsall	John	Daresbury	Y/man	1604	1619				44/5
Huxley	Randolph	Over	n/a	1604	1629	12/-,?			
Prescott	Margaret	Marbury	n/a	1605	1605				£3/13/4?
Ashton	Margaret	Daresbury	Y/man	1605	1605				£8/17/9
Larden	Anne	Bunbury	n/a	1605	1608	44/6, 13/4			44/5
Massie	Randle	Bunbury	Y/man	1605	1651				106/8
Buckley	George	Bunbury	n/a	1605	1635				26s8d
Younge	John	Tarporley	Y/man	1605	1634				£13/6/8
Johnston	William	Tattenhall	Y/man	1608	1611	26s8d			
Maddocke	Richard	Malpas	Y/man	1608	1650				26s8d
Maddocke	Margaret	Malpas	n/a	1608	1617	£7/2/4*			
Chantrell	William	Woodchurch	Y/man	1610	1642				46/8
Poole	Richard	Wrenbury	Gentry	1610	1611	16s4d			
Cheswis	Robert	Bunbury	n/a	1617	1628				44/5
Woodward	Richard	Bunbury	n/a	1621	1626				44/5
Williams	John	Tarporley	Gentry	1622	1641				£8/17/9
Gardner	Owen	Whitegate	Y/man	1624	1641				13s4d
Guest	James	Little Budworth	n/a	1624	1624				4s5d
Billington	John snr	Little Budworth?	Trade	1624	1629				£28/17/9
Walker	John	Little Budworth	n/a	1624	1625				13s4d
Hayward	Peter	Daresbury	n/a	1625	1629				13s4d
Smith	Thomas	Bunbury	Y/man	1626	1641				22s2d
Total receipts						£57/3/9	£3/7/6	£26/0/10	£191/15/11
Total persons debited						17	3	4	36
Total persons compounded that year									1
Cumulative total persons compounding									1

Appendix B3: Sequestration receipts recorded in Recusant Rolls,1630-40

Surname	Xtian name	Location	Group	1st offence	Last offence	1630	1634	1635	1638	1640
Cheswis	William	Bunbury	Y/man	1584	1630	£4/8/10		£6		
Egerton	George	Bunbury	Gentry	1590	1624	£13/6/8				
Egerton	Randolph	Bunbury	Gentry	1598	1651			£6/13/4		
Hesketh	Thomas	Thurstaston	Gentry	1593	1604	£4/13/4	£6/13/4			
Poole	William	Marbury	Gentry	1591	1621	103/6d				
Probin	William	Malpas	Y/man	1596	1650	13s4d	40/-			
Smith	Elen	Bunbury	Srvnt	1591	1655	40/-				
Street	John	Nantwich	Y/man	1590	1635	£10/2/2		£6		
Vernon	Richard	Over	Y/man	1598	1628	2s2d				
Wilson	John (jun?)	Bunbury	Y/man	1598	1635	46/8d		£6		
Wilson	Randolph	Tattenhall	Gentry	1598	1635	46/8d		£6		
Follyhurst	Jane	Coppenhall	Gentry	1598	1614	£4				
Whitby	Richard	Thornton	Gentry	1605	1641					£7
Bickerton	Katherine	Marbury	Y/man	1605	1634	40/-				
Massie	Randle	Bunbury	Y/man	1605	1651	44/5	£4/8/10			46s8d
Buckley	George	Bunbury	n/a	1605	1635	13/4d	46s8d			
Owley	? (Ran 1608,	Bunbury	Y/man	1605	1631	44/5				
Younge	John	Tarporley	Y/man	1605	1634	£18/17/9	£16/2/4			
Maddocke	Richard	Malpas	Y/man	1608	1650	26s8d	40/-			40/-
Massie	Elen	Bunbury	Y/man	1608	1655		£4/8/10			
Chantrell	William	Woodchurch	Y/man	1610	1642	£6/13/4	£6/13/4			
Wilson	Thomas	Bunbury	Y/man	1610	1658			£6		
Dunne	George	Holt		1611	1611	26s8d				
Wooley	Randle	Bunbury	n/a	1616	1630		46s8d			
Cheswis	Robert	Bunbury	n/a	1617	1628	£4/8/10				
Bennett	William	Bebington	n/a	1619	1648		40/-			
Deane	Anne	Bidston	n/a	1619	1647					46s8d
Brayne	Thomas	Acton	Y/man	1619	1658					100/-
Bennett	Thomas	Great Budworth	Y/man	1619	1641	106/8?	40/-			
Williams	John	Tarporley	Gentry	1622	1641					40/-
Gardner	Owen	Whitegate	Y/man	1624	1641	5s4d	8/10d			
Guest	James	Little Budworth	n/a	1624	1624	8s10d				
Billington	John snr	Little Budworth?	Trade	1624	1629	£13/6/8	16/8d			
Billington	John jnr	Little Budworth	n/a	1624	1655					£6/13/4
Whitmore	Jane	West Kirby	Gentry	1624	1649	£13/6/8				£6/13/4
Dutton	Richard	Tattenhall	n/a	1625	1658	8d				
Stanley	William (3?)	Eastham	Gentry	1625	1653			£40		
Poole	John	Eastham	Gentry	1625	1641				£50	
Hayward	Peter	Daresbury	n/a	1625	1629	£4/8/10				
Cornes?	Anne	Middlewich	n/a	1629	1629		20/-			
Warren	Anne	Prestbury	Gentry	1630	1641		40/-			
Moore	Edward	Daresbury	Gentry	1637	1641					£10
Wickstead	Elizabeth	Wrenbury	n/a	1641	1641					40/-
Parsons	George	Bunbury	Gentry	1641	1641				40/-	
Warren	Edward	Prestbury	Gentry	1641	1641			£20		
Moore	John	Daresbury	Gentry	1641	1641			£21/13/4		
Macount / Maki	John	Grappenhall	Y/man	1641	1641					40/-
Total receipts						£126/12/7	£85/5/6	£88/6/8	£52	£48
Total persons debited						26	20	4	2	11
Total persons compounded that year						26	2	3	7	
Cumulative total persons compounding						27	29	32	39	

Appendix C - Familial transmission of faith amongst Bunbury Catholics, 1580-1700

Surname	Christian name	Sub-location	Occupation / status	Family / generation	1st offence	Last offence
Aldersey	Randle	Spurstow	Gentleman	A0	1590	1598
Aldersey	n/a			A1?	1635	1635
Aldersey	n/a		Offspring	A2	1635	1635
Brotherton	John	Spurstow	Husbandman	B0	1608	1617
Brotherton	Margaret	Spurstow	Spouse John	B0	1613	1618
Brotherton	Margery	Spurstow	Spinster? 1624 daughter John	B1	1617	1641
Bryndly	Elen	Haughton	Widow	C0?	1608	1617
Bryndly	Margaret	Haughton	Spouse (of John snr)	C1	1605	1617
Bryndly	John (snr?)	Haughton		C1	1608	1619
Bryndly	John jnr	Haughton	Husbandman	C2	1608	1610
Buckley	George	Haughton		D0	1605	1635
Buckley / Blackley	Mary	Haughton	Spouse Geo yeoman	D0	1610	1675
Buckley	Dorothy	Haughton	Daughter Geo	D1	1633	1663
Buckley	Mary	Haughton	Daughter Geo	D1	1635	1641
Bulkeley	Joseph	Haughton	Husbandman - son Geo	D1	1628	1677
Bulkeley	n/a	Haughton	Spouse Joseph	D1	1655	1655
Challen(or)?	Katherine?	Tiverton	Spouse (of John yeoman)	E0	1610	1621
Challenor	John	?	Husbandman	E0	1613	1619
Challenor	Elen (2?)	Tiverton	Daughter of John	E1	1619	1619
Challenor	Katherine	Tiverton	Daughter John	E1	1621	1621
Cheswis	Alice	Alpraham	Widow	F0	1585	1602
Cheswis	Richard	Alpraham/Spurs	Son Alice	F1	1584	1624
Cheswis	William	Alpraham/Spurs	Son Alice	F1	1584	1630
Cheswis	Jane or Anne	Alpraham	Spouse (of William)	F1	1592	1600
? Cheswis?	Anne	Spurstow	Spinster - 1621 daughter Wm	F2	1610	1635
Cheswis	Robert	Spurstow	Son of Wm	F2	1617	1628
Cheswis	Richard	Spurstow	Son Wm - gent 1626	F2	1621	1621
Cheswis	Agnes	Spurstow	Daughter Wm	F2	1624	1624
Cheswis	Thomas	Spurstow	Son of Rob / Wm? 1624 of Wm	F2/3	1619	1641
Cheswis	Alice	Spurstow	Daughter of Rob / Wm? 1624/9 of Wm	F2/3	1619	1635
Cheswis	Elizabeth	Haughton	Spouse Thos?	F2/3	1668	1694
Cheswaies	Edward	Peckforton	Son Rob?	F3/4	1641	1697
Cheswaies	Anne	Spurstow	Spouse Ed	F3/4	1655	1655
Cheswis	Mary	Spurstow	Spinster , daughter Thos	F3/4	1633	1641
Cheswis	Polly	Haughton	Daughter Thos	F4/5	1663	1663
Cheswis	Winifred	Spurstow	Spinster, daughter Ed	F4/5	1681	1695
Cheswis	Anne	Spurstow	Spinster, daughter Ed	F4/5	1681	1684
Cheswis	Thomas	Spurstow	Son Thos	F3/4	1682	1685
Cheswis	Thomas	Spurstow	Son Wm	F2?	1698	1698
Dunne	Elizabeth	Spurstow	Spouse Wm	G0	1624	1676
Dunne	William (jnr?)	Spurstow	Husbandman	G0	1596	1641
Dun	William (2)	Spurstow	Son Wm / Eliz?	G1	1635	1693
Egerton (nee Grosvenor)	Mary	Ridley	Widow	H0	1581	1598
Egerton	George	Ridley	Gentleman	H1?	1590	1624
Egerton	Margaret - wife of Ge	Ridley	Spouse (of gentleman)	H1	1592	1617
Egerton	Mary	Ridley	Spinster 1624 daughter Geo	H2	1613	1641
Egerton	Dorothy	Ridley	Daughter Geo	H2	1617	1648
Egerton	Edward	Ridley	Son Geo	H2	1624	1641
Egerton	Randolph	Ridley	Gentleman	H1	1598	1651
Egerton	Richard	Ridley	Knight, son /heir Randolph	H2	1617	1617
Farrell / Farrar	Alice	Peckforton	Spouse Thos	H1	1626	1682
Farrell / Farrar	Thomas	Peckforton	Yeoman	H1	1626	1658
Farrar	James	Peckforton	Son Thos	H2	1655	1696
Farrar	Elen	Peckforton	Spouse Jas	H2	1681	1694
Notes: Family / generation - alpha prefix denotes family, numeric suffix generation (starting from zero)						
? = relationship not documented but deemed probable from circumstantial evidence						

Appendix C - Familial transmission of faith amongst Bunbury Catholics, 1580-1700 (contd)						
Surname	Christian name	Sub-location	Occupation / status	Family / generation	1st offence	Last offence
Huxley	Thomas	Alpraham	Husbandman	J0	1587	1617
Huxley	Elizabeth	Alpraham	Spouse (of husbandman)	J0	1589	1617
Huxley	Margery	Alpraham	Spinster daughter Thos	J1	1592	1601
Huxley	John	Alpraham	Husbandman	J1?	1624	1673
Huxley	Dorothy	Haughton	Spouse John	J1	1633	1682
Huxley	William	Haughton	Son John	J2	1648	1665
Huxley	Thomas	Haughton	Son John, carpenter? 1692	J2	1668	1694
Huxley	Richard	Haughton	Son John	J2	1668	1668
Huxley	Mary	Haughton	Spouse Thos	J2	1671	1691
Huxley	John	Haughton	Son Thos	J3	1692	1696
Huxley	n/a	Haughton	Son Thos	J3	1694	1694
Huxley	n/a	Haughton	Daughter Thos	J3	1694	1694
Loughton	Elen	Tiverton	Widow	K0	1621	1621
Loughton	Henry	Tiverton	Son of Elen	K1	1621	1621
Massy	Katherine	Alpraham?	Widow	L0	1619	1628
Massy	Alice	Alpraham	Daughter Kath vid	L1	1621	1621
Massy	Radus	Bunbury	Yeoman	LL0	1633	1638
Massie	Jane	Bunbury	Spouse Rad	LL0	1633	1634
Massie	Elen	Bunbury	Daughter Rad	LL1	1633	1633
Massie	Elizabeth	Bunbury	Daughter Rad	LL1	1633	1633
Massy	Raph	Bunbury	Yeoman	LL1?	1651	1658
Massy	Joyce?	Bunbury	Spouse Raph	LL1	1641	1668
Massy	Edward	Bunbury	Son Raph	LL2	1651	1686
Massy	Anne	Bunbury	Spouse Ed	LL2	1661	1685
Palin	Henry	Haughton		M1	1605	1608
Palin	Joan	Haughton	Spouse (of Henry)	M1	1608	1651
Palin	John	Haughton	Son Joan	M2	1635	1658
Palin	James	Haughton	Son Joan	M2	1635	1684
Palin	Margaret	Haughton?	Daughter Joan	M2	1635	1651
Palin	Alice	Haughton	Daughter Joan	M2	1635	1651
Palin	Margaret	Haughton	Widow (of John? - see Jas will)	M2?	1668	1693
Palin	Dorothy	Haughton	Daughter widow - Marg?	M3?	1675	1692
Price	John	Tiverton	Husbandman	N0	1610	1629
Price	Eleanor	Tiverton	Spouse John	N0	1619	1641
Price	Dorothy	Tiverton	Daughter John (spin 1624/09)	N1	1621	1635
Savage	Thomas	Beeston	Knight	P1	1633	1641
Somersett / Savage	Bridget	Beeston	Lady Somersett	P1	1624	1670
Savage	Elizabeth	Beeston	Spinster	P2	1641	1651
Savage	Katherine	Beeston	Spinster	P2	1641	1641
Smith	Elen	Tiverton	Spouse (of labourer)	Q0	1591	1655
Smith	James	Tiverton	Labourer	Q0	1592	1593
Smith	James	Tiverton	Son Elen	Q1	1624	1635
Smith	Susan	Tiverton	Spinster (daughter Elen)	Q1	1624	1641
Smith	Anne	Tiverton	Spinster (daughter Elen)	Q1	1629	1641
Wooley	William	Tiverton	Husbandman	R0	1591	1605
Walley	William jnr	Tiverton	Labourer/husbandman	R1	1596	1629
Walley	Joan	Tiverton	Spouse Wm jnr	R1	1610	1629
Walley	William (3)	Tiverton	Son of Wm jnr	R2	1624	1626
Wilson	John (sen?)	Wardle	Yeoman	S0	1592	1598
Wilson	John (jun?)	Wardle	Husbandman	S1	1598	1635
Wilson	Thomas	Wardle	Husbandman (son John RR41)	S2	1610	1669
Wilson	John	Wardle	Labourer - 1624 son John	S2	1610	1626
Wilson	John	Wardle	Son Thos	S3	1651	1673
Wilson	John	Wardle		S?	1668	1686
Wilson	Elen	Wardle	Spouse John	S3	1668	1693
Wilson	Mary	Wardle	Daughter John	S4	1667	1667
Wilson	Thomas	Wardle	Son John	S4	1669	1669
Wilson	Richard	Wardle	Yeoman	S?	1692	1700
Woodward	Thomas	Haughton	Husbandman	T0	1587	1626
Woodward	Thomas	Haughton / Agden		T1?	1605	1605
Woodward	Richard	Haughton	Son Thos	T1	1621	1626
Woodward	Margaret	Haughton	Daughter Thos	T1	1621	1628
Woodward	Joan	Haughton	Daughter Thos	T1	1624	1624

Notes: Family / generation - alpha prefix denotes family, numeric suffix generation (starting from zero)

? = relationship not documented but deemed probable from circumstantial evidence

Appendix D1: Wills of Bunbury Catholics, 1608-1671

Ref	Name	Township	Execs	Witnesses	Beneficiaries	Debtors	Creditors	Inventory
WS1608	William Mason	Alraham	Richard Lloyd Rafe Ankers	Jeffrey Brooke John Cappel	wife Elena 50% goods & half tenement to executors George Cappel (bro-in-law's son) - sword Margaret Ankers (sis-in-law), Agnes her daughter Richard Lloyd's children bro-in-law John Watson sister Katherine mother daughter Joan 50%	unnamed £8		£39/18/- Thomas Huxley Richard Simkin James Thrope ? Lewis
WS1638	John Wilson	Wardle	Thomas Wilson (son)	John Walker Raffe Wilson?	Thomas Wilson (son) Thomas and Margaret Radley (servants) Ralph and Amy Stockton			£39/9/4d John Walker Raffe Wilson?
WS1670	Elizabeth Price	Tiverton	Edward Massey Thomas Price	Richard Dutton	John Hitchmoore? £8 towards his trade Edward Massey 40/- Mary Pulford wife of Robert of Tiverton £5 Elizabeth daughter of Thos Price 5/-			£22/16/10 Thomas Daintith Richard Hatton David Hinton
WS1671	Dorothy Darlington	Haughton	Joseph Buckley (bro) Matthew Mulliner (bro)	James Palin Henry Palin	Joseph Buckley (bro) Mary Mulliner (sis) 20/- pa Anne Mulliner (goddaughter) Joseph Buckley jnr Barbara Buckley (cousin) Edward Massey 5/-, £3pa from above John Wilson £3 pa from above Mary Buckley (mother) goods Ralph Buckley (bro) William/Anne/Elizabeth Buckley 5/- ea Matthew Mulliner (bro) Edward Buckley (cousin) goods Christopher Mulliner (kinsman) Dorothy Palin (goddaughter)	n/a	n/a	£10/16/- James Palin Edward Massey
Note:	Names highlighted in bold are known Catholics							

Appendix D2: Wills of Bunbury Catholics, 1684-1700

Ref	Name	Township	Execs	Witnesses	Beneficiaries	Debtors	Creditors	Inventory	
WS1684	Thomas Powell	Burwardsley	Edward Massey Edward Buckley	Thomas Powell Anne Dutton Peter Cheswis	John Powell (kinsman) 2/6d Thomas Powell 1/- William Powell 1/- Peter Cheswis citheron Edward Massey Edward Buckley	Frances Dod £2 William Hill £1 John Bridley £1 Edward Cheswis 10/- John Wilson 6/- & others		£8/15/- Thomas Dodd John Mason	
WS1685	James Palin	Houghton	John Palin Mary Palin	Thomas Dod John Rawlinson Edward Massey	penny dole poor £2 Margaret Palin (s-in-law) 20/- Henry Palin (nephew) 20/- John Palin (nephew) £15 Mary Palin (kinswoman) £15 Dorothy Palin (kinswoman) £15 Peter Cheswis (godson) 2/6 Peter Cheswis (godson) 2/6 Amy Huxley (goddaughter) 2/6 Elizabeth Huxley (goddaughter) 2/6 Edward Massey (kinsman) 10/-	n/a	n/a	£59/15/- Richard Woodward Edward Buckley	
WS1700	Edward Cheswis	Spurstow	Elizabeth Cheswis Anne Cheswis Peter Cheswis to assist	A Wicksteed John Fressingham? ? Brereton	Winifred Billington (daughter) 5/- Elizabeth Cheswis (sister) 50% Anne Cheswis (daughter) 50%	n/a	n/a	£49/9/9 Edward Buckley John Palin	
WS1710	Edward Buckley	Houghton	John Massey of Sutton John Fennall of Houghton	Walter Butler Hugh Wads Richard Hall	wife £6/10/- pa + 1/3 personal estate widow of bro Joseph 5/- Joseph's 2 daughters 50/- ea Joseph Buckley (nephew) real estate reversion of above to George Mullinex (son Chris) minor bequests to children of 3 bros-in-law	n/a	n/a	£123/08/01 John Dutton Hugh Sommer	
Note:	Names highlighted in bold are known Catholics								

Appendix E1: Recorded burials of Bunbury Catholics, 1592-1660

Surname	Christian name	Sub-location	Occupation / status	d	Comments in register	Key
Garnet	George	Spurstow / Ba	Labourer	1592		P
Aldersey	Randle	Spurstow	Gentleman	1600		R
Cooke	William	Tilstone Fearn	Yeoman (cottager 1596)	1600	XR nr neighbours	X
Woodward	Richard	Haughton		1611?		n
Wooley	William	Tiverton	Husbandman	1612		nr
Longton (Laughton 1596)	Robert	Tiverton	Husbandman	1614		
Cooke	Ralph	Haughton	Husbandman	1617	R n nr neighbours	
Longton	John	Tiverton	Labourer	1619		
Longton	James	Tiverton	Skinner / glover	1619		
Owley	Rondle?	Tilstone Fearn	Widow??	1621-2	R n nr	
Longton (Laughton 1596)	Richard	Tiverton	Yeoman	1623		
Smith	Thomas	Tiverton	Labourer	1623	XR nr	
Millington	John	Ridley	Gentleman	1624?		
Egerton	George	Ridley	Gentleman	1624-5	XR n nr sons & neighbours	
Plant	John	Spurstow	Yeoman	1625	XR n nr	
Owley	John			1625	R n nr neighbours	
Cheswis	Richard	Alpraham/Spt	Labourer thru yeoman	1625/6	XR n nr	
Dod	Richard		Yeoman	1626?		
Stockton	John	Haughton	Labourer	1626	XR n nr	
Walley	Henry	Tiverton		1626	X nr	
Loughton	William	Tiverton	Yeoman	1626	XR n nr	
Beeston	Sir Hugh	Beeston	Knight	1626		
Woodward	Thomas	Haughton	Husbandman	1627	XR n nr	
Garnet	Richard	Tilston	Husbandman	1627	XR n nr	
Egerton	Richard	Ridley	Knight, son /heir Randolph	1627-8		
Wilson	John	Wardle	Labourer - 1624 son John	1631		
Cheswis	William	Alpraham/Spt	Labourer thru yeoman	1632?		
Morle?	Ralph			1632?		
Palin	Henry	Haughton		1637?		
Povall?	Randle		Husbandman	1637?	X	
Wilson	John (jun?)	Wardle	Husbandman	1638	R	
Buckley	George	Haughton		1638	PR	
n/a	n/a	Peckforton	Priest	1640	R	
Chawnor	John	Teverton	Husbandman	1642	XR	
Brotherton	John	Spurstow	Husbandman	1642?		
Moores?	John	Peckforton	Husbandman	1642?	R	
Walley	John	Teverton	Yeoman	1642?		
Woodward	John	Haughton	Labourer	1643-4	R	
Dunne	William (jnr?)	Spurstow	Husbandman	1644	P	
Woodward	Richard	Haughton	Son Thos	1645?		
Walley	George	Tiverton	Yeoman	1645??		
Huxley	William	Haughton	Son John	1648	R	
Owley	Rondle jnr?	Tilston		1657	R	
Woodward	Thomas	Haughton	Cooper. 1652 husb.	1657	R	
Hunt	Francis		Sojourner	1657	R	
Massy	Raph		Yeoman	1658	R	
Dutton	Roger	Beeston		1660	R	

Appendix E2: Recorded burials of Bunbury Catholics, 1664-1700

Surname	Christian name	Sub-location	Occupation / status	d	Comments in register	Key
Woodward	Ambrose	Haughton		1664		P papist
Palin	John	Haughton	Son Joan	1665	R	R recusant
Cheswis	Thomas	Haughton		1665	R	RC Roman Catholic
Massey	Harriet		from William'	1666	R	Romaine Roman Catholic
Wilson	Thomas	Wardle		1667	R	
Poulford	Susannah	Wardle		1667	R	
Wilson	Mary	Wardle	Daughter John	1667	R	
Bratherton	Margaret	Spurstow	Widow	1667	R	
Price	John	Teverton	Yeoman	1668	R	
Wooley	Robert	Tiverton	Husbandman	1668	R	
Massy	Joyce			1668	R	
Huxley	Richard	Haughton	Son John	1668	R	
Billington	Alice		Widow 1661	1669		
Wooley	Margaret	T Fearnall	Spinster	1669		
Dutton	Mary	Beeston	Daughter John	1669	R	
Nickson	Anne	Tilston		1669	R	
Brooke	Thomas			1670		
Tapley	Katherine			1670		
Brooke	Alice		Spouse Thos	1670		
Price	Elizabeth	Tiverton	Spouse John	1670		
Darlington	Dorothy	Haughton	Widow	1670	R	
Smith	Amy/Anne	Wardle	Spouse Thos	1671	R	
Cheswis	n/a (Elizabeth?)	Spurstow	Mother of ?	1671	R	
Smith	Thomas	Wardle		1672	R	
Huxley	John	Haughton		1673		
Alcock	Hugh (sen?)	Wardle		1673		
Buckley	Mary	Haughton	Widow 1665	1675	R	
Wilson	Thomas	Wardle	Son John	1675	R	
Cartwright	Anne?		Spouse Alexander	1676		
Farrar	Thomas	Peckforton		1676		
Wooley	Jane	T Fearnall	Widow	1676	R	
Brock	Mary	Haughton	Spouse Rad	1676	R	
Cheswis	Alice		Widow	1678		
Billington	Hugh		Labourer	1678		
Walker	Isabel	Haughton	Spinster	1680		
Farrar	n/a (Alice?)	Peckforton	Spouse Thos	1683		
Palin	James	Haughton	Yeoman	1684		
Cheswis	Elizabeth	Spurstow	Spouse Thos	1684		
Walley	Thomas	Tiverton		1684		
Windsor	Mary	Peckforton		1684		
Huxley	Dorothy	Haughton	Spouse John	1685		
Billington	Mary		Spouse Hugh	1687		
Hill	Mary	Tilston Fearnall	Spouse Gwilm	1688		
Wright	Elizabeth	Bunbury	Spinster	1691		
Palin	Henry	Haughton		1692		
Cheswis	Elizabeth	Haughton	Spouse Thos?	1694		
Farrar	Elen	Peckforton	Spouse Jas	1694		
Sumner	Barbara	Haughton	Spouse Wm	1694		
Dod	Margaret	Tiverton		1695		
Dunn	Gwilm	Spurstow	Husbandman	1696	RC	
Smith	John	Wardle		1696	Romane	
Clarkson	Katherine	Tiverton	Widow	1697	RC	
Wilbraham	Thomas	Tiverton		1697		
Powell	Thomas	Burwardsley	Husbandman	1698		
Cheswis	Thomas	Spurstow	Son Wm	1698	Romane	
Fleet	John	Haughton	Husbandman	1699		
Cheswis	Edward?	Spurstow	Yeoman	1700	RC	
Cheswis	Elen	Peckforton	Spouse Peter	1700	P	

Appendix F1 - Catholic tradesmen,1577-1641

Surname	Christian name	Location	Occupation / status	1st offence	Last offence
Aldersey	William	Chester	Linen draper	1577	1588
Bird	Richard	Chester	Tanner	1585	1585
Bostock	William	Chester	Innkeeper	1588	1592
Foster	Robert	West Kirby	Miller	1587	1590
Heape (Heypey)	Henry	Tarvin	Carpenter	1598	1605
Lawton	Thomas	Bunbury	Tailor	1592	1593
Ledsham	Richard	Chester	Pewterer	1592	1592
Litherland	n/a	Chester	Tanner	1585	1585
Litherland	George	Woodchurch	Weaver	1582	1582
Longton	James	Bunbury	Skinner / glover	1589	1618
Price	John	Malpas	Joiner	1587	1596
Primrose	Henry	Chester	Tailor	1588	1595
Sim	Hugh	Bunbury	Glover	1590	1596
Smith	Richard	Chester	Cutler	1568	1578
Somner	Peter	Bunbury	Smith	1590	1593
Whitehead	John	Chester	Baker	1578	1578
Whitmore	Richard	Guilden Sutton	Tailor	1578	1590
Wilbraham	Hugh	Malpas	Smith	1582	1587
Woodhall	William	Chester	Tailor	1595	1598
Berry	Roger	Great Budworth	Cook	1596	1596
Presse	John	Lower Peover	Joiner	1596	1596
Roberts	Richard	Chester	Butcher	1608	1608
Thornton	Thomas	Chester	Vintner	1608	1608
Palyn	John	Bunbury	Tailor	1610	1610
Guest	James	Malpas	Carpenter	1613	1622
Tetley?	George	Malpas	Shearman	1613	1626
Bennett	Hamnet sen	Chester	Tanner	1619	1622
Welshe	Thomas	Chester	Butcher	1622	1622
F?rree / Farrowe	Thomas	Bunbury	Tailor	1624	1676
Higgenson	Richard	Whitegate	Taylor	1624	1641
Billington	John snr	Little Budworth?	Joiner	1624	1629
Cowe - Cowler 1651?	John	Malpas	Miller?	1625	1651
Hill	Thomas	Astbury	Blacksmith	1625	1625
Litherland	William	Runcorn	Carpenter	1625	1625
Woodcocke	Robert	Chester	Glover	1628	1628
Woodward	Thomas	Bunbury	Cooper. 1652 husb.	1629	1652
Hospell?	Edward	Nantwich	Tradesman	1629	1629
Sumner	Thomas	Burton	Smith	1634	1634
Wickstead	William	Marbury	Tailor	1634	1635
Aston	William (jnr)	Aston (parish from 1635)	Cooper (gent 1638)	1638	1670
Woodward	Richard	Acton	Joyner	1641	1648
Bennett	John	Church Minshull	Miller?	1641	1641
Pointon	Thomas	Bunbury	Mason	1641	1641
Crewe	Robert	Bunbury	Wheelwright	1641	1641
Hill	Thomas	Aston (parish from 1635)	Cooper	1641	1641

Appendix F2 - Catholic tradesmen, 1651-1706

Surname	Christian name	Location	Occupation / status	1st offence	Last offence
Dutton	Thomas	Tattenhall	Carpenter	1651	1690
Brocke	Raph	Bunbury	Skinner / glover	1655	1681
Farrar	James	Bunbury	Tailor 1658	1655	1696
Woolley	John	Bunbury	Timberman, yeoman	1655	1681
Astley / Aston	William	Handley	Weaver	1657	1673
Platt	George	Handley	Weaver	1657	1658
Ashton	John	Aston (parish from 1635)	Turner	1658	1685
Ashton	Robert	Aston (parish from 1635)	Cooper	1658	1684
Bennett	Henry	Great Budworth	Tailor	1658	1700
Allen	Alexander	Great Budworth	Glover	1658	1664
Allen	Edward	Great Budworth	Tailor	1658	1658
Grimshall	Alexander	Eastham	Tailor	1658	1694
fFoord	Richard	Daresbury	Glover	1658	1682
Hooline?	Robert	Neston	Miller	1658	1658
Massie	George	Little Budworth	Tailor 1658/10	1658	1681
Squire	Henry	Mottram	Joiner	1659	1684
Knowles	Robert	Woodchurch		1662	1669
Daynteth	Thomas	Great Budworth	Shoemaker, labourer	1662	1681
Tomkins	Richard	Malpas	Blacksmith, husb	1663	1684
Burd	Thomas	Nantwich	Chapman -1671 milliner	1667	1687
Braine	John	Acton	Yeoman,blacksmith 1681	1667	1690
Huxley	Thomas	Bunbury	Carpenter? 1692	1668	1694
Hill	Gwilm	Bunbury	Cooper, husbandman	1668	1681
Savage	Wilfrid	Great Budworth	Paver.husb 1681/10	1669	1685
Kelley	William	Burton	Miller	1669	1699
Knowles	Robert	Neston	Miller?	1670	1706
Turner	Thomas	Shotwick	Yeoman / miller	1670	1681
Hill	Laurence	Nantwich	Cooper / fletcher	1671	1706
Bostock	William	Eastham	Carpenter	1671	1679
Wilson	James	Macclesfield	Tailor + ? 1684	1671	1684
Bennett	Hamnet	Great Budworth	Tailor	1673	1696
Braine	Joseph	Acton	Cooper 1681	1673	1682
Ashton	William	Aston	Cooper	1674	1684
Ashton	Thomas	Aston	Fletcher 1689	1674	1700
Ashton	John	Aston	Yeoman	1674	1700
Ryley	William	Chester	Carpenter	1676	1706
Houghton	William	Eastham	Brewer	1678	1681
Bennett	Henry	Aston	Cooper	1681	1681
Houghton	William	Eastham	Brewer	1681	1681
Nixon	John	Macclesfield	Carpenter	1682	1686
Knowles	Robert jnr	Neston	Blacksmith	1683	1706
Stockton	Peter	Acton	Shoemaker	1685	1706
Jump	Richard	Neston	Aleseller	1692	1706
Knowles	John	Backford	Miller	1694	1706
Doceys	Philip	Chester	Perfumer	1706	1706
Blundall	William	Chester	Miller	1706	1706

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