

THE PROTESTATION RETURNS OF 1641-1642: PART I, THE GENERAL ORGANISATION

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Introduction

The genesis of the Protestation returns of 1641-1642,¹ extensively used as an historical source by demographers, social historians and genealogists, lies in the political crisis of the late spring and early summer of 1641, at the time of the threatened impeachment and later attainder of the Earl of Strafford, lately Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and widely believed to be the strong man behind Charles I. Although it was to be over a year before fighting began between Royalists and Parliamentarians, tension was high in both houses of Parliament and in the City of London. Rumours were rife that the king planned to use an army – perhaps an Irish, Catholic army – to overawe Parliament and secure Strafford's release, and the king's own appearance in the Lords on 1 May and the abortive attempt to seize control of the Tower of London seemed to give substance to these claims. In the debate in the House of Commons on 3 May Pym declared that the king must have 'good counsellors about him', and from the discussions emerged the demands that were to form the basis of the Protestation: 'Let us', declared Henry Marten, 'unite ourselves for the pure worship of God, the defence of the king, and his subjects in all their legal rights'. A committee of ten was appointed to draft a national declaration along the lines of the Oath of Association of Elizabeth's reign.

The resultant Protestation required the swearing of an oath to maintain and defend, first, the true Reformed Protestant religion as 'expressed in the Doctrine of the Church of England' against all 'popery and Popish Innovations within this realm'; secondly, 'according to the Duty of Allegiance', the king's royal person, honour and estate; thirdly, the powers and privileges of Parliament; and lastly, the lawful rights and liberties of subjects. This was preceded by a preamble, which gave prominence to the fear of Popery and arbitrary government. Members of the House of Commons took the Protestation on 3 May, and the Lords the following day. It was also circulated to citizens and clergy in the City of London. A bill to enforce it on all Englishmen failed to pass the Lords, but a Commons resolution of 30 July declared that those refusing to take it were unfit for service in Church or Commonwealth; the bill had included a provision that refusers were to be accounted convicted recusants, reinforcing the impression that the identification and control of recusants was in the forefront of the minds of members of the Commons.²

Administering the Protestation

Although some delay ensued in launching the taking of the Protestation nationwide, the congregations of some City churches took it in May, and from June to September 1641 it was tendered in parishes as far afield as Cornwall and Westmorland, and as near London as Essex and Kent, probably, as Cressy suggests, as the result of enterprise on the part of MPs and their agents.³ Effective general action, however, only began with a letter from the Speaker of the House of Commons, dated 19 January 1642, no doubt reflecting serious deterioration in the political situation, following the king's attempt to arrest the Five Members and the resulting panic.⁴ The Speaker asked the sheriff and JPs of each county to meet together in one place to take the Protestation themselves, and then

dispersing yourselves into your several Divisions, that you will call together the Minister, the Constables, Churchwardens, and Overseers of the Poor in every parish, and tender to them the Protestation, to be taken in your Presence; and to desire of them, that they will very speedily call together the Inhabitants of their several Parishes, both Householders and others, being of Eighteen Years of Age and upwards, into One or more Places, according to the Largeness of their Parishes, and to tender unto them the same Protestation, to be taken in their Presence; and to take their Names, both of those, that do take it, and do refuse to take the same Protestation; and to return them to yourselves, at such time as you shall appoint; which the House desires may be so speedily, as that you likewise may return such Certificate [sic], as you receive from them, to the Knights and Burgesses serving for that County, before the — Day of — ; Wherin the House desires your greatest Care and Diligence, as a Matter very much importing the Good both of the King and Kingdom...⁵

The Printer was ordered to print a sufficient number of Protestations and also of the Commons' declaration about the recent breach of privilege occasioned by the attempt against the Five Members, and MPs were likewise ordered to write to the JPs to urge them to do their best to ensure that the Protestation was duly taken throughout each county. The Speaker's letter was also sent to the Vice-Chancellors of Oxford and Cambridge, to the Benchers of the Inns of Court, and to cathedral and collegiate churches.

The organisation was thus a matter for secular officers, the sheriffs and JPs, but working together with the officers in each parish, the minister, churchwardens, constables and overseers of the poor, since the parish was the normal unit of local administration. When the Speaker's letter reached the sheriff in each county is not known, but its distribution to the JPs must have begun at least by the second week in February. Twelve JPs for Cornwall met the High Sheriff at Lostwithiel on 16 February 1642 and took the Protestation there; similar meetings presumably took place in other counties.⁶ At a division or hundred level, little time was lost in some areas; a small number of JPs (sometimes just one) appointed a day, time and place for a meeting of the ministers and officers of each parish or borough. Action in East Kent was immediate; letters to the

constables of the hundred of Whitstable and of Seasalter borough, dated 11 February, required the presence of the ministers and officers of the respective jurisdictions at Bridge Hill at nine o'clock in the morning on 15 February to take the Protestation.⁷

Similar meetings of JPs and parish officers took place in two hundreds in Huntingdonshire on 14 and 16 February; in West Sussex on 12, 14, and 17 and 25 February, and at Appleby in Westmorland on 3 March.⁸ The Mayor and three aldermen of the city of Lincoln sat at the Guildhall on 8 February to administer the Protestation to the ministers and parish officers in their jurisdiction; the Speaker's letter and the Declaration of the House of Commons were read 'to the end that they might see both warrant and ground for their taking the said Protestation'.⁹ There appears sometimes to have been a difficulty about the arrival, presumably from London, of the printed papers to be circulated. The return for Appledram in Sussex notes that some had arrived 'at the Swane' on Saturday, 12 February; in Toseland hundred, in Huntingdonshire, the taking of the oath on 16 February was held up for 'want of the printed protestation'.¹⁰ One of these papers was almost certainly distributed to each parish, and some made use of the back to list those who had taken the Protestation, as in several Buckinghamshire parishes.¹¹ There can be no doubt that the instructions from Westminster were being taken seriously; the mood of the country is shown by the petitions to Parliament in late January and early February, urging a general taking of the Protestation.¹²

Once the minister and officers of each parish had attended their regional meeting and taken the Protestation themselves, it was their duty to summon or 'warn' their respective parishioners, being of 18 years and upwards, to come to the place appointed each to make his protestation. The parish church seems to have been the designated place, at any rate in most instances, but on occasion the oath was administered to members of the household in the 'big house'.¹³ The day appointed was in many cases a Sunday, but no day in the week seems to have been barred. In 1642 Sunday fell on 13, 20 and 27 February and on 6 March, all days chosen by a number of parishes. But in some areas a later date was arranged; it was not until the third and fourth weeks in March and the first half of April that those liable to take the Protestation in certain Staffordshire parishes assembled for this purpose.¹⁴ If the Protestation was administered on a Sunday, attendance may have been easier to arrange than for a weekday. In Birchington, in Kent, for example, the time chosen was after Sunday evening service, but ten persons took it next day.¹⁵ Easter Day, 8 April, was the day appointed for Beckbury, in Shropshire.¹⁶

The time interval between the regional meeting of the ministers and the parish officers and the appointed day for the parish was sometimes very short, which suggests that a timetable must have been worked out in advance of the regional meeting. The ministers and officers in the West Sussex parishes of Edburton, Kingston Bowsey, Lancing, Patching and Sompting, for example, made their own Protestation on 25 February, while those liable to do so made theirs in their parishes on Sunday, 27 February.¹⁷ But in Penwith hundred, in West Cornwall, where the regional meeting was at Helston on 3 March, the Protestation was taken in some parishes on 4 March, and in others on 5 March,

a Friday and Saturday respectively.¹⁸ There are plenty of references to the process of warning, but exactly how it was carried out is not clear; it seems likely that the task fell to the constables of each parish.¹⁹ The return for Thanet St John (i.e. Margate), in Kent, reported that 40 or 50 had not yet taken the Protestation, most of them being 'at sea', but others 'out of warning'; some of those warned at Coventry had not complied; a man at Mullion 'had no notice of the occasion'.²⁰

Refusers and non-takers

Naturally enough, not everyone liable to take the Protestation turned up at the right place, on the right day, and at the right time. Local officers were anxious to distinguish those who had received a warning from those who, being away from the parish, could not comply with it, or did not know it had been issued. The officers also offered excuses for the non-attendance of the sick or bedridden, or those too old to come, like the two men of Drewsteignton in Devon who at 94 and 86 were too decrepit to appear.²¹ Many of these parishioners, they averred, would certainly have taken the Protestation had they been able to do so.

By contrast, recusants or 'refusers' reported were a different matter. The return for Warnham, in Sussex, lists four 'recusants', 'warned to appeare, but came not', contrasted with six men 'employed about iron workes, & worke in other Parishes', two men 'abroad in a journey', and one sick man, none of them suspected of popery.²² Excuses for absence are offered for two men at Thannington in Kent, one working in the Isle of Thanet, the other sick of the smallpox.²³ Recusants are almost always named, including members of well-known Catholic families, like the Thimblebys of Irnham in Lincolnshire, and the Mores at Fawley in Berkshire where among the household was 'Nicholas...the Lady Mores gardiner'.²⁴ Sometimes the local officers took great pains to track recusants down and confront them with the Protestation; Sir Ferdinand Phythion and his servant were sought many times but were prudentially away from his home at Aswardby, and at West Rasen, also in Lincolnshire, Philip Constable and others were warned by a visit of officers to their houses that the rector and others would offer the Protestation to them and the rest of the parishioners at two o'clock in the afternoon, but Constable and 12 of his servants refused it.²⁵ Special attention, it seems, was sometimes paid to women recusants, as at Brough under Stainmore, Kirkby Stephen and Brougham in Westmorland; it was commonly recognised that women were particularly important in maintaining Catholicism.²⁶

Puzzling are the returns for a considerable number of parishes reporting persons who could not take the Protestation because they were at sea. Those absent from the parish of Thanet St John have already been mentioned. Sometimes the seamen are named, such as the 18 reported from Northam, but those from Bideford, also in Devon, are not.²⁷ The absentees from Endellion in Cornwall are named, but not those from Fowey.²⁸ Seven from Punchknowle in Somerset who were at sea are named, and some of the 14 from Swyre were said to be engaged in voyages to Newfoundland.²⁹ Obviously many of these must have been out of warning, but it is surprising that those who constituted

a large fishing and seagoing population at a place like Bideford are not individually identified. By and large, however, the evidence strongly suggests that local officers were assiduous in trying to ensure that all those liable took the Protestation, and felt concerned when circumstances made this difficult. As we have seen, if a man did not, or could not, come to the church, they would often do their best to visit him, but it was not always possible; in the case of Newlyn East and Lanlivery, in Cornwall, time was reported to be too short to allow this.³⁰ Absentees were frequently said to be sound Protestants; officers were confident that when they were reached, they would take the oath. The Rector of Singleton in Sussex reported that some in his parish had failed to comply, but added with confidence that they would so do 'as soone as I can get to them'.³¹

Taking the oath

Exactly how the Protestation was presented by the minister and officers and in what way assent to it made must have differed from parish to parish. It is relying on supposition rather than on much evidence to think that each man of the required age read the oath aloud, and then confirmed 'his consent by adding his name in his own hand, or putting his mark by the scribe's writing of it; some, no doubt, could not read it for themselves. Such a procedure might have been possible in a small parish; in a large one, it would have taken a great deal of time. Cressy quotes what happened at St Katharine Cree, in London, where the minister declared that to save time '...the people expressed themselves after this manner as follows: I A.B. do in the presence of Almighty God freely and heartily promise, vow and protest the same which the leading person...did'.³² But in Irnham parish in Lincolnshire, with 89 names recorded, the incumbent explained that each man repeated the oath after him, 'according to the manner prescribed'; if this entailed a full reading of the Protestation, it must have been a lengthy process.³³ Some curtailing of the full oath, or an assent to it taken in groups, seems probable in at least some places. At Orton, in Westmorland, the oath was 'publickly read' to the 345 men who assented to it; at Milburn, after evening prayer, the parson communicated 'the busines of the protestation to the congregation', who then took it by general consent.³⁴ What appears to have been required is that the Protestation was sworn in the sight and hearing of the minister and officers; this is specifically said to have happened at Brightwalton in Berkshire, and at Stranton, in County Durham.³⁵ Exactly what the detailed procedure was in each parish seems irrecoverable, and perhaps it is of little importance.

Format of the returns

It must be recognised that, for many parishes, the returns of names of those who took the Protestation are fair copies, often written by a scribe in a uniform hand, without any signatures or marks made by those unable to sign their names. These tell us little about how the return was made at local level; indeed, were it not for the various asides found on a number of them, a cynic might assert that they are mere lists of names collected without any participation from the parishioners supposed to swear the required Protestation. This is obviously not the case; but it is those returns which bear signatures and the marks of the

illiterate which carry a different conviction. Not all the returns are dated; most are signed by the minister and some at least of the officers. They are written on paper of varying sizes, but mostly foolscap either as single or double sheets, or folded up into smaller sheets, sometimes stitched to make a little book. Some, in a scribe's hand, are marvellously uniform and neat lists, in careful columns, like those for Coventry and West Bromwich, presumably fair copies of much less tidy originals.³⁶ Those with signatures presumably written when the actual Protestation was being made, and with marks accompanying names written out by another hand (sometimes identifiable as that of the incumbent or curate), are seldom as neat, but bring the scene of signing much closer. Possibly a roll call was used to make the ceremony more orderly; a note on the return from Willoughton, in Lincolnshire, explains that a cross in the margin by certain names indicates those who did not take the Protestation, and some further crossings-out also point to the checking of a previously prepared list.³⁷ Sometimes, perhaps, signatures and marks were made at the same time on separate sheets, with different officers supervising the procedure; this may be indicated by sheets not fully filled up, and would, of course, have saved time overall.³⁸

Protestation returns are not, all of them, simple lists of those in a parish who have taken the oath. In some cases, the names are arranged under settlements or tythings, or some division of the parish which presumably made the checking simpler. Excellent examples of arrangements under farms or hamlets are the returns for Newlyn East and Crantock in Cornwall, Aldworth in Berkshire, Eaton under Heywood in Shropshire and Crowland in Lincolnshire.³⁹ In Somerset, the returns for Ilminster, Bishop's Lydeard, Wellington, Pitminster and Trull are set out in tythings, Stoke St Gregory in 'villages', and South Petherwin in streets.⁴⁰ Hamlets sometimes made separate returns, like the six settlements in Bampton parish, and so did chapelries, like Kelmscot in Broadwell parish, all in Oxfordshire.⁴¹ Another form of return is that separated into social groups, like that for North Witham in Lincolnshire, where esquires, gentlemen, clergy, husbandmen, cottagers, sons and servants are distinguished, and the returns for Hemswell, Raithby cum Maltby, Linwood and Thornton Curtis, all in the same county, which are alive to social distinctions.⁴² In many lists, respect is shown to the 'quality' by putting them at the head of the names, a fairly universal practice.

Age and sex

The letter from the Speaker of the House of Commons specified that inhabitants, 'both Householdiers and others, being of Eighteen years of Age and upwards' should take the Protestation. Almost all the returns consist of the names of men; a number state that they were of the age laid down, or say nothing about age. How carefully the ages of those who gave their consent to the Protestation were checked it is impossible to say, though of course research for places with good parish registers would probably throw some light on this. Sixteen was the more usual age to denote adulthood in the eyes of both the church and of the military authorities, and why eighteen was chosen in this instance it is difficult to say, though it was also retained for the subscribing to the Solemn League and Covenant but not for the Vow and Covenant of 1643.⁴³

Some local officers, in any case, ignored this direction and reverted to sixteen, as at Attenborough, West Bridgford, Lindy and East Leake, in Nottinghamshire.⁴⁴ In Westmorland, taking of the Protestation was limited to those between 18 and 60, the upper age limit generally accepted for the militia, at Bolton and Patterdale and Hartsop.⁴⁵ The list for Barton under Needwood, in Staffordshire, is said to be of 128 persons between 17 and 60 and upwards.⁴⁶

Women were explicitly neither included nor excluded from taking the Protestation; the Speaker's letter talks only of 'inhabitants'. Although it seems to have been the general assumption that only men of 18 and upwards were required to take the oath, some returns include women. When only a few are named, it seems likely that they were persons of property or widows of prominent men.⁴⁷ But in some parishes, the proportion of women to men suggests that the whole female population, presumably over 18, were brought in. This seems to be the case, for example, in 19 out of 33 parishes in Allerdale-above-Derwent ward, Cumberland,⁴⁸ six parishes in North Buckinghamshire,⁴⁹ and nine in Oxfordshire,⁵⁰ and a number of others such as remote St Tudy in Cornwall and, near to London, St Leonard Bromley and Stratford-le-Bow in Middlesex.⁵¹ However it is most unlikely that the parliamentary organisers intended the inclusion of women, and clearly only a few parish officers thought they should be involved. It is noteworthy nonetheless that female recusants were sometimes recorded.

Some returns make the big claim that all men of 18 years and over in the parish have taken the Protestation, and that their names are all included in the list, alongside any known refusers and/or recusants. It is one thing to be asked to believe that in a small parish like Poling in Sussex, with 28 names listed, 'every male Inhabiting or residing...being eightene yeares of age, have in our presence taken the Protestation, and that none refused', and another to trust the preamble to the return for Holsworthy, in North Devon, with 250 names recorded, that all the inhabitants of the required age have done likewise, again with no refusals.⁵² Such statements are, however, unambiguous. More difficult to interpret are the many returns which state that all the names given ('underwritten' is generally the phrase used) have signed the Protestation, but do not explicitly claim that they are all those in the parish required to do so, though some add that there are no 'neglecters' or 'refusers'.⁵³

Support for the Protestation

There is impressive evidence of how seriously the requirement to make the Protestation was regarded. Cressy notes that at Harleston, in Suffolk, a public fast and a collection for 'the distressed kingdom of Ireland' took place when the Protestation was tendered. Not very far away, at Birdbrook in Essex, the inhabitants of 18 and upwards, with the minister, to show their concurrence with the House of Common in 'so necessary and pious a work', witnessed it by 'their joynt receiving of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper together, and by the subscription of their hands'.⁵⁴ Obedience to the orders of the Speaker of the House of Commons, transmitted through the sheriffs, JPs and local parish officers was a clearly stated civil obligation but one that might also be given religious overtones. In fact there was little reason for any protestant to refuse

the Protestation; possible opposition from those with Presbyterian views had been obviated by excluding any reference to 'discipline' and specifying only 'doctrine' in referring to the Church of England in the oath.⁵⁵

There are a few references to opposition from Anabaptists, however; at Wilton, in Somerset, Mathew Pococke refused to come to the church and take the Protestation, and an Anabaptist at Scotter in Lincolnshire likewise refused it.⁵⁶ Only to recusants did it offer anything totally unacceptable, and some were no doubt well aware of the perils in store if they did not join with the rest of the parish in accepting it. Nevertheless a few persons, some of them clergy, showed a proper seventeenth-century scruple in making their subscription. One was the Vicar of Leamington Hastings, in Warwickshire; there were several objectors in Lincoln city, and a number of clergy in Dorset, one of whom had doubts about how the Protestation accorded with God's work, the standing laws of the kingdom and the oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy.⁵⁷ In the parish of Exeter, St Lawrence, one man refused the Protestation, another 'utterly'; at Colyton a man was reported as 'not obstinately refusing but scrupulously forbearing' it.⁵⁸ But there is no evidence of any general reluctance to take the Protestation, and very little of individual opposition.

General supervision was active to ensure that the returns were collected and sent up to London. In a letter of 25 March from the High Sheriff of Nottinghamshire to the two MPs for the county, the dispatch of a bundle of Protestations to London was reported, together with the promise of a further batch to come, and a schedule of all the JPs who had taken the Protestation in his presence. Three days earlier two JPs wrote to assure the same MPs that although in Rushcliffe hundred some had not yet taken the oath, this was the result of their necessary absence, rather than to 'any willing neglect, or Willfull refusal'.⁵⁹ Similar assurance of compliance with the Commons' orders was sent to the knights and burgesses for Sussex by the JPs on 28 February.⁶⁰ The House of Commons must have intended to scrutinise the results, for on 16 April a committee was set up 'to consider of the Number and Quality of the Persons in all Counties, that refuse the Protestation; and what Course is fit to be held towards them'. Moreover, MPs were told to 'view the Protestations themselves', and then to refer the refusers to the committee.⁶¹ Nothing appears to have resulted from these provisions, but that they were made is testimony of the seriousness with which the House regarded the responses to the Protestation.

Conclusion

This general survey of the Protestation returns, based on those for well over 400 parishes in 14 counties, leads to the conclusion that they should be taken seriously as in effect a census of men over 18 years of age and over living in a parish. The officers making the return stated in many cases that the list was a complete record; great care was taken to alert those liable to take the Protestation oath when and where it was to be administered, and to note recusants and refusers, and to name those who ought to have been present but were not. It is therefore not unreasonable to regard the returns as providing a true account of men over 18 living in a parish. But in default of corroborative evidence this must always be an assumption and, as with all other lists with a

local provenance, it must always be borne in mind that the men responsible for organising the oath-taking must have varied in ability and conscientiousness. Moreover, the problem of boundaries is an ever-present one; the return for a parish may not always include those living in a chapelry or hamlet, for which there may have been a separate list which has not survived. Nevertheless when all the provisos have been taken into account, the Protestation returns are unquestionably a unique source of information of great value, deserving a more careful examination and assessment than has sometimes been the case.

Acknowledgement

For much encouragement and help in the preparation of this article I am greatly indebted to Mr Tom Arkell.

Appendix I

What follows is a list of those Protestation Returns which have been published in printed form. For convenience the list has been arranged by order of county.

Cornwall

T.L. Stodate, ed., **Cornwall Protestation Returns, 1641**, (Bristol, 1974).

Devon

A.J. Howard and T.L. Stodate, eds, **Devon Protestation Returns, 1641**, (Bristol, 1973).

Berkshire

See entry under Oxfordshire, Gibson item, for North Berkshire parishes.

Derbyshire

See entry under Nottinghamshire for three Derbyshire parishes.

Dorset

E.A. Fry, ed., **Protestation Returns...1641-2**, (Dorset Records, 1912).

Durham

H.M. Wood, ed., **Durham Protestations**, Surtees Society, 135 (1922).

Huntingdonshire

Granville Proby, ed., 'The Protestation Returns for Huntingdonshire', **Transactions of the Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire Archaeological Society**, 5 (1937).

Lincolnshire

W.F. Webster, ed., **Protestation Returns 1641/2, Lincolnshire**, (Nottingham, 1984).

London and Middlesex

A.J.C.G., ed., 'London and Middlesex (parts)', Supplement to **Miscellanea Genealogica et Heraldica**, (1920).

Northumberland

See entry under Durham for two Northumberland parishes.

Nottinghamshire

W.F. Webster, ed., **Protestation Returns 1641/2 – Notts./Derbys.**, (Nottingham, 1980).

Oxfordshire

C.S.A. Dobson, ed., **Oxfordshire Protestation Returns, 1641-2**, Oxfordshire Record Society, 36 (1955).

Jeremy Gibson, ed., **Oxfordshire and North Berkshire Protestation Returns and Tax Assessments 1641-42**, Oxfordshire Record Society, 59 (1994), and Banbury Historical Society, 24.

Somerset

A.J. Howard and T.L. Stoate, eds, **Somerset Protestation Returns and Lay Subsidy Rolls 1641-2**, (Bristol, 1975).

Surrey

H. Carter, ed., 'The Surrey Protestation Returns, 1641-2', **Surrey Archaeological Collections**, 59 (1962).

Sussex

R. Garraway Rice, ed., **West Sussex Protestation Returns, 1641-2**, Sussex Record Society, 5 (1906).

Westmorland

M.A. Faraday, ed., **Westmorland Protestation Returns 1641-2**, Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society, Tract Series, 17 (Kendal, 1971).

Wiltshire

E.A. Fry, ed., 'The Wiltshire Protestation Returns of 1641/2', **Wiltshire Notes and Queries**, 7 (1911-1913).

Appendix II

Protestation Oath: Preston Bissett, Buckingham Hundred, Bucks
(reproduced by the kind permission of the Clerk of the House of Lords Record Office)



Die Mercurii: 5^o Maii. 1641.

IT is this day Ordered by the House of Commons now assembled in Parliament, That the Preamble, together with the Protestation, which the Members of this House made the third of May, shall be forthwith Printed, and the Copies Printed brought to the Clerk of the said House, to sett under his hand, to the end that the Knights, Citizens, and Burgeses may send them down to the Sheriffs and Justices of Peace of the severall Shires, and to the Citizens and Burgeses of the severall Cities, Boroughs, and Cinque Ports, respectively. And the Knights, Citizens, and Burgeses, are to intimate unto the Shires, Cities, Boroughs, and Cinque Ports, with what willingnesse all the Members of this House made this Protestation: And further to signifye, that as they justifie the taking of it in themselves, so they cannot but approve it in all such as shall take it.

Whereas the Knights, Citizens, and Burgeses of the Commons house in Parliament, finding, to the great grief of our hearts, that the designs of the Priests and Jesuites, and other adherents to the See of Rome, have of late been more boldly and frequently put in practice then formerly, to the undermining and danger of the ruine of the true reformed Protestant Religion in His Majesties Dominions established: And finding also that there have been, and having just cause to suspect that there still are, even during this sitting in Parliament, indeavours to subvert the fundamentall Lawes of England and Ireland, and to introduce the exercise of an Arbitrary and Tyrannicall Government, by most pernicious and wicked Councils, Practices, Plots, and Conspiracies: And that the long intermission, and unhappie breach of Parliaments, hath occasioned many illegall Extractions, whereupon the Subject hath been prosecuted and grieved: And that divers Innovations and Superstitions have been brought into the Church, multitudes driven out of His Majesties Dominions, Jealousies raised and kindled betwixt the King and His people, a Popish Army leaved in Ireland, and two Armies brought into the bowels of this Kingdom, to the hazard of His Majesties Royall Person, the consumption of the Revenues of the Crown, and Treasure of this Kingdom: And lastly, finding great cause of Jealousie, that indeavours have been, and are used to bring the English Army into a misunderstanding of this Parliament, thereby to incline that Army, with force to passe those wicked Councils, have therefore thought good to join our selves in a Declaration of our united Affections and Resolutions, and to make this ensuing Protestation.

IA. B. do in the presence of Almighty God, Promise, Vow, and Protest, to maintain and defend, as far as lawfully I may, with my life, power, and estate, the true Reformed Protestant Religion, expressed in the Doctrine of the Church of England, against all Popery and Popish Innovations within this Realm, contrary to the same Doctrine, and according to the duty of my Allegiance, His Majesties Royall Person, Honour, and Estate; As also the Power and Priviledges of Parliament; The lawfull Rights and Liberties of the Subject, and every person that maketh this Protestation, in whatsoever he shall do in the lawfull pursuance of the same. And to my power, and as far as lawfully I may, I will oppose, and by all good wayes and means indeavour to bring to condigne punishment, all such as shall either by Force, Practice, Councils, Plots, Conspiracies or otherwise, do any thing to the contrary of any thing in this present Protestation containingd. And further, that I shall in all just and Honourable wayes indeavour to preserve the Union and Peace between the three Kingdoms of England, Scotland, and Ireland; And neither for hope, fear, nor other respect, shall relinquish this Promise, Vow, and Protestation.

Whereas some doubts have been raised by severall persons out of this House, concerning the meaning of these words contained in the Protestation lately made by the Members of this House, (viz.) The true reformed Protestant Religion, expressed in the Doctrine of the Church of England, against all Popery and Popish Innovations within this Realm, contrary to the same doctrine, This House doth declare, That by those words, was and is meant, onely the publique Doctrine professed in the said Church, so far as it is opposite to Popery and Popish Innovations; And that the said words are not to be extended to the maintaining of any form of Discipline, or Government, nor of any Rites or Ceremonies of the said Church of England.

Imprinted at London by Robert Barker, Printer to the Kings most Excellent
Majestie: And by the Assignes of John Bill. 1641.

NOTES

1. The original Protestation returns, in the custody of the Clerk of the Records, House of Lords Record Office (hereafter HLRO), are filed by county and hundred or division etc. in the order given in the Appendix to the **Fifth Report of the Historical Manuscripts Commission**, 120-34; a few only have survived elsewhere, generally in a contemporary copy: see the checklist by I.W. Lawson Edwards, **The Genealogist's Magazine**, 19 (1977), 84-5 (kept up to date by the HLRO), and J. Charles Cox, **The parish registers of England**, (London, 1910), 199-200. I am grateful to the Clerk and his staff for allowing me access to the returns, making me various photocopies over the years, and giving me much help of various kinds. A guide to the returns, Jeremy Gibson and A.J. Dell eds, **The Protestation Returns 1641-42 and Contemporary Lists**, (Federation of Family History Societies, 1995) has recently been published. The returns have now been published for a number of counties, but on differing principles; those produced for mainly genealogical purposes sometimes have the names rearranged alphabetically, and much detail on the returns, including the date, omitted. The originals have been consulted for well over 400 parishes; some of these have now been printed.
2. S.R. Gardiner, **History of England, 1603-1642**, (London, 1884), IX, 318-25, 343-9, 351-6, 413-4. For the text of the Protestation and the Preamble to it, see Appendix II; a different version, also distributed, concluded with resolutions of the House of Commons of 30 July 1641 and 8 January 1642.
3. David Cressy, **Literacy and the social order**, (Cambridge, 1980), 66-8: St Austell, 8 June (Stoate, **Cornwall**, 132); Ravenstonedale, 18 July and Morland, 22 August (Faraday, **Westmorland**, 28, 50); Tilbury juxta Clare and Ridgewell, 4 July, Steeple Bumpstead, 7 July, Sible Hedingham, 18 July (HLRO, Essex, Hinckford hundred); Cowden, 27 September (HLRO, Kent, Somerden hundred).
4. Gardiner, **History of England**, X, 129-49.
5. **Journal of the House of Commons**, II, 389. A copy of the Speaker's letter, filed with the returns for Norman Cross hundred in Huntingdonshire, adds that those in counties within 60 miles of London were expected to send in their returns before 20 February, and those in counties over 60 miles, by 12 March: Proby, **Hunts**, 332. Spaces were left in the text of the letter for inserting dates, but they are not commonly found.
6. Stoate, **Cornwall**, viii; there is a reference to what may have been a similar meeting of the JPs for Nottinghamshire at Southwell, 28 February 1642, Webster, **Notts**, 97.
7. HLRO, Kent, Whitstable hundred.
8. Proby, **Hunts**, 339-40, 366-8; Wood, **Durham**, 1-5, 56-60; Fry, **Dorset**, 74-7, 144-7; Rice, **W. Sussex**, 117-8, 178-9, 66-7, 77; Faraday, **Westmorland**, 19.
9. Webster, **Lincs**, 38-9. The dates of meetings of the wapentakes in Lincolnshire are all later: e.g. 6, 9, 13, 14 and 15 March, Webster, **Lincs**, 87, 31, 91.
10. Rice, **W. Sussex**, 22; Proby, **Hunts**, 368.
11. For example, Adstock, Lillingstone Dayrell, Preston Bissett, Thornborough (HLRO, Bucks, Buckingham hundred).
12. Rice, **W. Sussex**, 4-5.
13. In Westmorland, for example, the church as the place of assembly is noted for four parishes (Dufton, Kirkby Thore, Milburn and Brougham, Faraday, **Westmorland**, 12, 18, 20, 43). Sometimes the proceedings took place at the 'big house': thus the Earl of Kingston and his servants took the Protestation at Woodhouse Hall, in Cuckney parish, in Nottinghamshire on 6 March (Webster, **Notts**, 33).
14. For example, Elford, 21 March; Clifton Campville and Haunton, 25 March; Hanbury, 27 March and 11 April; Hamstall Ridware, 30 March; Tutbury, 9 April; Handsworth, 15 April (HLRO, Stafford, Offlow hundred, South and North divisions).
15. HLRO, Kent, Ringslow hundred.
16. HLRO, Salop, Wenlock liberty.
17. Rice, **W. Sussex**, 77, 107-8, 111-2, 135-6, 160-1.
18. HLRO, Cornwall, Penwith hundred.
19. **The Association, Agreement and Protestation of the Counties of Cornwall and Devon**, (Oxford, 1643), a pamphlet about a local protest during the course of the war, describes the way in which it was to be organised, with copies delivered by the sheriffs to the hundred constables, and by them to the petty constables; the minister was to publish it the Sunday following its receipt (p.6). This was probably the customary procedure.
20. HLRO, Kent, Ringslow hundred; Warwick, Coventry City and County; Stoate, **Cornwall**, 18.
21. Howard and Stoate, **Devon**, 349.
22. Rice, **W. Sussex**, 186-8.
23. HLRO, Kent, Westgate hundred.

24. HLRO, Lincoln, Beltisloe wapentake; Berkshire, Newbury division.
25. Webster, **Lincs**, 68, 93.
26. Faraday, **Westmorland**, 9, 17, 43.
27. HLRO, Devon, Shebbear hundred.
28. Stoate, **Cornwall**, 185-6, 107-8.
29. Fry, **Dorset**, 169-70.
30. Stoate, **Cornwall**, 83, 119-20.
31. Rice, **W. Sussex**, 156-7.
32. Cressy, **Literacy**, 67.
33. HLRO, Lincoln, Beltisloe hundred.
34. Faraday, **Westmorland**, 24, 20.
35. HLRO, Berks, Newbury division; Wood, **Durham**, 185.
36. HLRO, Warwick, Coventry City and County; Stafford, Offlow hundred, South division.
37. HLRO, Lincoln, Aslackoe wapentake.
38. For example, Paul (HLRO, Cornwall, Penwith hundred).
39. Stoate, **Cornwall**, 81-3, 73-4; HLRO, Berks, Newbury division; Salop, Wenlock liberty; Lincoln, Elloe wapentake.
40. Howard and Stoate, **Somerset**, 12-5, 59-61, 62-4, 110-1, 119, 79-81, 94-7.
41. Gibson, **Oxon**, 6-9, 14, 25.
42. Webster, **Lincs**, 25, 49, 62, 91, 107.
43. Anne Whiteman ed., with the assistance of Mary Clapinson, **The Compton Census of 1676: a critical edition**, (British Academy, Records of Social and Economic History, NS 10, London, 1986), xxxiii-vi; Cressy, **Literacy**, 61-9.
44. Webster, **Notts**, 48, 84, 54, 79.
45. Faraday, **Westmorland**, 42, 52.
46. HLRO, Stafford, Offlow hundred, North division.
47. For example, Ashen and Gestingthorpe (HLRO, Essex, Hinckford hundred); Bishop's Norton and Coates (Lincoln, Aslackhoe wapentake).
48. HLRO, Cumberland, Allerdale-above-Derwent ward.
49. Addington, Adstock, Lillingstone Dayrell (where some of the women themselves signed), Twyford, Winslow; Aston Abbots (HLRO, Bucks, Buckingham hundred; Cottesloe hundred).
50. Asthall; Cokethorpe, Hardwick and Yelford; Ducklington; Minster Lovell; Steeple Barton; Wilcote (a chapelry of North Leigh); South Leigh; Combe; Stanton Harcourt and Sutton, (Gibson, **Oxon**, 4-5, 22, 23-4, 93, 120-1, 133, 134-5, 135-6, 140-1); those for Cokethorpe, Hardwick and Yelford and Ducklington give married couples (22-4). I am grateful to Mr Jeremy Gibson for allowing me to see, before publication, the proofs of his new edition of the Oxfordshire Protestation returns.
51. Stoate, **Cornwall**, 195-6; A.J.C.G., **London and Middlesex**, 51-2, 69-71.
52. Rice, **W. Sussex**, 139-40; HLRO, Devon, Black Torrington hundred.
53. For example, Sancreed (HLRO, Cornwall, Penwith hundred).
54. Cressy, **Literacy**, 67-8; HLRO, Essex, Hinckford hundred. At Finchingfield in the same county, the congregation 'entered into Covenant according to the Protestation enjoined by the Parliament', – a splendid Puritan form of words from Stephen Marshall's former parish (HLRO, Essex, Hinckford hundred).
55. See Appendix II.
56. Howard and Stoate, **Somerset**, 120; Webster, **Lincs**, 89.
57. HLRO, Warwick, Knightlow hundred; Webster, **Lincs**, 43; Fry, **Dorset**, 31, 52, 62-3, 129.
58. Howard and Stoate, **Devon**, 321, 155.
59. Webster, **Notts**, 47, 77.
60. Rice, **W. Sussex**, 7.
61. **Journal of...Commons**, II, 530.