

17. History, time and social memory

Andy Wood

I

The dangers of writing history in twenty-first century Britain are not profound. The academic historian might incur a stinging book review, find it hard to place articles in leading journals, fail to attract research funding or, worst of all, find a secure teaching position. These things can be disappointing. But, there are no government spies leaning over our shoulders, no overt political scrutiny of our work, no conviction on the part of the state that, as Nikita Krushchev observed, ‘Historians are dangerous, and capable of turning everything topsy-turvy. They have to be watched’.¹ Yet it was not always so.

John Hayward discovered the ideological limits of historical writing the hard way. When he published his history of the reign of Henry IV in 1599, he dedicated it to the Earl of Essex. The following year, when Essex launched his attempted coup against Elizabeth I, Hayward found himself in the Tower, accused of sedition. The affinity between Elizabeth I and Richard II, whom Henry had deposed, was too great to be ignored. Over and over again Hayward’s interrogators – leading members of the Privy Council – returned to his authorial intentions, especially the possibility of a link to Essex and to his apparent intention to stir trouble amongst what they called the common people.² What Hayward failed to recognize was that, when writing about certain historical subjects, he had to be very cautious. The next time that he wrote a study of a reign – this time that of Edward VI – he trod carefully. In particular, his

presentation of the popular rebellions of 1549 was markedly hostile, depicting the rebels as irrational, base and senseless.³ This time, Hayward uncritically reproduced the dominant values of his age, scripted into the historical past.

Grafton's Chronicle (1569) provided a blunt statement of the intended effects of reading history. From the study of the past, Grafton wrote,

Kings maye learne to depende upon God, and acknowledge his governance in their protection: the nobilitie may reade the true honor of their auncestours: The Ecclesiasticall state maye learne to abhorre trayterous practices and indignities done against kings by the Popishe usurping clergie : high and lowe may shonne rebellions by their dreadfull effectes, and beware how they attempt against right, how unhable soever the person be that beareth it.⁴

In an economy that remained fundamentally rural, the common people of the countryside – ‘country clowns’ – were regarded within this paradigm as the epitome of crude, senseless vulgarity. The Latin history of Kett’s rebellion written by Alexander Neville in 1575, for example, denounced the brutish violence of those whom he called plebs and agrestes.⁵ Reading such works sustained a broader elite sense that allowing the commons a space within the political order would usher in an age of chaos. These anxieties found clear voice in the months preceding the civil war, as supporters of the Crown and episcopacy argued that their puritan opponents – backed by threatening crowds of ordinary Londoners – were heirs to the rebel leaders of 1381, 1450 and 1549. In November 1641, the Bishop of Exeter, Joseph Hall, warned the House of Lords

My lords, if these men (sectaries and mechanical preachers) may, with impunity and freedom, thus bear down ecclesiastical authority, it is to be feared

they will not rest there, but will be ready to affront civil power too. Your lordships know, that the Jack Straws, and Cades and Wat Tylers of former times, did not more cry down learning than nobility.⁶

The representation of history could therefore be highly political. Yet ideas are hard to nail down. For all the one-dimensional emphasis upon order, obedience to the crown and plebeian senselessness, there was no single tradition of early modern historical writing.⁷ Importantly, the period saw a flowering of learned historical work that was dynamic, creative and ideologically unpredictable. Translations of classical works helped to underwrite a middling-sort participation in the English Renaissance. In works dealing with the classical past, for instance, William Shakespeare made extensive use of Sir Thomas North's 1579 translation of Plutarch's Lives. The feeling of a cultural and political inheritance from the classical past fed into a civic humanism emergent amongst urban propertied groups. Holinshed's Chronicles (1577 and 1587), a massive collaborative work that told the story of British history from its mythical foundations to the present, represented not just a landmark achievement in historical writing, but also another important foundation of a sense of citizenship amongst urban middling people. The collaborative team behind the Chronicles represented an emergent antiquarian movement which in its urban form provided a sharpened sense of the past, but also grew out of a longer-established tradition of town and city chronicles, manuscripts that were often carefully locked away in muniment boxes in guildhalls across the country.⁸ Similarly, William Lambarde's history of Kent (1576), helped to spawn a tradition of county antiquarianism that was intimately interwoven with 'country' gentry identity.⁹ Antiquarianism had its practical applications too. On the one hand, it could provide the basis for questioning the antiquity of their tenants'

customary rights; on the other, an awareness of legal history served in the early seventeenth century to buttress the defence of parliamentary privilege against the crown.¹⁰

Much of the historical literature concerning early modern perceptions of the past has dealt with political philosophy, antiquarianism, historical scholarship and state-sponsored works on the protestant reformation. Two things have flowed from this: firstly, the focus has been on the highly educated, leaving unaddressed the reception of this work by poorer and middling people; secondly, there has been a heavy dependence upon printed texts. It is only quite recently that historians have begun to study popular memory, drawing on in particular on antiquarian writings and the depositions made by older people in legal cases. As yet this work remains patchy. There has been considerable interest in the use of memory as a legal resource in conflicts over customary law.¹¹ The interactions between oral and written tradition in regards to senses of the past, have been explored.¹² The key subject of the relationship between landscape and memory has been addressed.¹³ The study of early modern popular memory, then, is finally opening up. Nor has the 'popular' been seen as hermetically sealed: there has been an interest in the dynamic interchanges of ideas about the past between ordinary people and their lettered superiors – for instance, in the study of antiquarian writers who initially drew heavily upon local folkloric traditions.¹⁴

As a result it is possible to illustrate two centrally important points about the popular sense of historical change in this period that constitute a distinctly early modern sense of the past. Firstly, by the early seventeenth century many English people felt that the

past was slipping away from them, generating a sense that the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries formed a separate world from that inhabited by the people of later Elizabethan and early Stuart England.¹⁵ Secondly, the distinct and traumatic experience of the English Revolution came to create a sense of continuity between the later Stuart and early Georgian period, as the women and men of that period constructed memories and representations of the 1640s that fed directly into the political struggles of later times. It was within this combined sense of change and continuity, I argue, that early modern English women and men came to understand themselves in time.

II

Like so much else in early modern England the popular sense of the past could be highly variable and localized. One way of remembering was plotted in the landscape. Writing around 1622, the Leicestershire antiquarian William Burton visited the location of the Battle of Stoke (1487) and was shown ‘a little Mount cast up, where by common report is, that at the first beginning of the battaile, Henry Tudor made his Pataeneticall Oration to his Armie’. He was also shown a great store of weapons, armour and arrow heads which every year were turned up by the plough.¹⁶

Popular rebellion also left its memories upon the land: Blackheath had been the location of rebel camps in 1381, 1450 and 1497; so had Mousehold Heath in 1381 and 1549. When an anonymous cartographer arrived in Norwich around 1590 in order to map Mousehold Heath, one of the historic landmarks he was shown was ‘The Oke of Reformation so callyd by Kett the Rebell’, that is, the oak tree under which Kett’s

rebel council had met in 1549.¹⁷ In Cumberland, Lord Howard noted in 1621 that, in the course of the struggles over tenant right, Cumberland tenants had gathered in an armed crowd at Geltebridge, the same place ‘where themselves or there ancestors as rebells and before that tyme fought a sett battle againste the forces of the s[ai]d late Queene Elizabethe’.¹⁸

Events of national historical importance were of course known, but were often used by the common people as a temporal marker for events of distinctly local significance. In Queen Mary’s reign, the 73 year-old James Herdman remembered how, immediately after ‘Kinge Ricards Field’ (the Battle of Bosworth, 1485), the tenants of Bury (Lancashire) heard that the earl of Derby and a multitude of Welshmen were coming to plunder them and so they brought their cattle into land held by the lord of Ashworth, who offered them ‘savegard’.¹⁹ The Battle of Flodden (1513), England’s greatest victory over Scotland, was so widely remembered that it came to form a sharp point in otherwise local temporal measurements. Speaking in 1563, the 60-year old Gloucestershire labourer Walter Potter felt that the time of his remembrance (that is, his awareness of local affairs) coincided with ‘the tyme of Skottyshe feld’.²⁰ A century later, the arrangement of the parish church of Lea (Lancashire) remained set by local participation at Flodden. Ellen Brabin recalled in 1664 how her father’s place in church had been challenged, and

upon inquirie was told (as he said) by auncient people that at flodden feild some of his Ancest[or]s who lived at Pinington Hall had furnished the then L[or]d of Atherton with eight or tenn men & horses against that battall and for that consideracion had leave given him to sitt & bury there.²¹

In 1612, a 79 year-old Lancashireman retained vivid memories of the return of his lord from Edward VI's later wars with the Scots:

aboute threescore yeares since imediately after.... S[i]r Thomas Talbott came home from Barwick hee upon a Sondaie or hullidaie came to Blackbourne church and broughte w[i]th him a greate companie of his souldiers w[i]th syde coats some in blewe, some in white wi[th] red crosses on, the backe and breste and saith upon the said S[i]r Thomas his comeinge in to the saide Chappell there sate some people there amongste whome as this dep[onen]t hath heard was one of the Talbotts Lords of Sailsburie ... all the w[hi]ch people that were in the said Chapell the said S[i]r Thomas upon his comeinge discharged sayeing there was noe [to sit] ... there butt for himselfe and his souldiers & whereupon all the people went awaie

Still in his armour, Sir Thomas knelt and prayed, giving thanks for the safe return of his company. This was a memory that had a purpose: it allowed local inhabitants to identify their lord's ownership 'tyme past memorie of man before him' of the side chapel within which Sir Thomas had knelt.²²

Memory, then, performed a function: it was what H.S. Commager calls a 'usable past'.²³ Such memories could be as varied and idiosyncratic as the local identities they enshrined and the local claims they legitimized. A common pattern that emerges, however is that, by the late sixteenth century, there had emerged a popular sense of historical change that identified the reformation and social and economic change as linked historical processes that fundamentally reshaped English society.²⁴

The pre-reformation church had its own memory culture. In its treatment of local saints, veneration of the memories of the founders of chantries, perambulation of parish boundaries or in the recitation of its bede rolls, pre-reformation belief was highly localized.²⁵ The Henrician reformation picked away at some of this; the more aggressive Edwardian reformation swept away much more. During Elizabeth's long reign, a moderately Calvinist church succeeded in implanting a new religious culture in the minds of two generations of English people. The old religion seemed, by the end of the sixteenth century, to be as much part of the past as was the cosy paternalism of good lordship.

As we have seen, this was a slow process and there were those who clung onto the old ways. At the height of the Northern Rising of 1569, the old services were reestablished in Durham Cathedral, hidden altar stones were dug up and reestablished and crowds gathered to hear the old services. One woman recalled that she could not find a seat in the nave, for 'the throng of people was so moch'. Witness statements taken in the aftermath point towards the continued affection of many people for the old ways. This memory was focused upon personal and parochial artefacts and upon old rituals. Many people mentioned their use of ritual objects that – under the Elizabethan settlement – were meant to have been set aside. Elizabeth Watson admitted that 'she used hir beads' during the service in the cathedral. Agnes Mixston had done the same, and while 'sorye for the offenc[e]s' confessed that 'she hath hir beads still'. Yet in emphasizing those parts of the old service they had not followed, witnesses usually managed to imply an only partial commitment to the old religion. Agnes' husband, Gilbert Mixston, was also in the cathedral, heard the priest deliver a sermon to the effect that 'the old s[er]vys was the right waye' and admitted that 'he

toke holly wayter'. Ralph Stevenson, however, 'toke holly water but no holly bred nor was shreven'. William Watson said that he took part in the celebration of mass out of fear, and that he 'bowed then downe of his knees but kno[c]ked nott & he toke holly water'. Members of the cathedral clergy were similarly selective and all denied knowledge of any old copes, relics, books or other objects that might sustain the supposedly vanished faith.²⁶

Memories of the old religion, then, could in many places be fiercely retained – yet, when confronted by officialdom, be still capable of careful modulation. The important point was that the success of the English reformation, in Durham as elsewhere, represented a triumph over local patterns of remembrance and the social organization of ritual and local meaning. Yet there were those who, despite the steady wash of Elizabethan amnesia, still sought to communicate the memory of the old church to succeeding generations. As late as 1593 the author of the manuscript 'Rites of Durham' provides the fullest description that has survived of a pre-reformation cathedral and the services that it sustained. As his mind's eye moved around the great romanesque cathedral, the author recalled the services and rituals that had once occurred there. His memories were deeply coloured, yet resonant of a sense of place and attachment that had been ruptured.²⁷ He was no antiquarian, recording a dead world as if it were some dessicated, empty entity. Rather, the 'Rites' remains full of vitality. The object, no less, was to provide a textual basis for the recreation of a lost world.²⁸

The gradual transformation of religious identity and of the forms of worship that it entailed, were perhaps the most obvious manifestation of the extent to which the mid-

sixteenth century represented a watershed. But the reformation also broadly coincided with other forms of change (and directly contributed to them through the redistribution of former church property). And subsequent early modern memories of forms of rebellion against, or resistance to, such changes encapsulates memories of former ways of living and perceptions of what were conceived of as deleterious developments in both economic and social relations.

In 1573, aged witnesses from Middleham (Yorkshire) remembered that enclosing walls were established across their common some two years 'after the Scottishe felde called Floddam felde'.²⁹ In the last years of the sixteenth century, the tenants of Worsley (Lancashire) remembered that they had retained their rights of common on Walkden Moor until 'soone after Scotts Field, when their was a bickeringe betwixt the lords of worsley and the lords of Boothes upo[n] walkden moore'.³⁰ In 1554, witnesses from the Lancashire 'country' of Blackburnshire dated their ejection from the commons of Horelaw and Hollinhey by the powerful magnate Sir John Towneley to 'iiii years after the Scottes Feyld' or to 'aboute iiii or v years after Flowden Feyld'.³¹

In the Elizabethan West Country, there were sharp memories of the rebellions of 1549. The 90 year-old yeoman Richard Clannaborough of Lustleigh (Devon) recalled in 1602 the customs he had known 'ever synce the Commotion in the tyme of the Raigne of the late Kinge Edward the Sixth' in the course of a dispute concerning the lord of the manor's claim to a monopoly over corn mills in the village.³² In 1583, the Cornish yeoman Thomas Toser - 'borne about Christmas was twelve months after Blackheeth field [in 1497]' - remarked that a struggle over manorial boundaries in his

home village of St. Mellion had commenced shortly 'before the Comosyon in Cornewall last'.³³ In Norfolk, one way of recalling the events of 1549 was as an outright attack upon seigneurialism. In 1601, the 80 year-old husbandman John Crosse remembered how, around 1540, Sir Edmund Bedingfield had constructed a lodge on the lordly rabbit warren (much hated by tenants due to the deprivations of the lagomorphic inhabitants amongst their crops). As Crosse recalled things, the 'lodge was pulled downe in the comotion tyme': this was a direct attack upon the landscape of lordship.³⁴

Such memories recorded not only grievance and subsequent resistance, but also repression. Kett's rebellion, with its comprehensive indictment of landlord abuses, also entered local memory as a time of bloodshed. The Norwich authorities went out of their way to mark the city's relief from plebeian disorder, ordaining in 1550 that each year on 29 August ('Kett's Day' – the anniversary of the rebel defeat) the bells of all the parish churches should be rung and prayers said, followed by a special sermon against rebellion preached at the Cathedral.³⁵ In this way, the suppression of popular rebellion was scorched into official remembrance. Similarly, in 1537, the main urban centres of Norfolk – Norwich, King's Lynn and Yarmouth – were chosen as key sites at which rebels from Walsingham (Norfolk) who had plotted to murder the local gentry and to restore the monastic houses were to be hanged, drawn and quartered. A generation later, when the official chronicles of Norwich, Lynn and Yarmouth came to be written, the annihilation of these local opponents of Henry VIII's reformation was given due prominence.³⁶

The Northern Rising, like those of 1549, provided a marker in time according to which local events might be recorded. Powerful storms in Lincolnshire coincided with its suppression in 1570; local remembrance of the two events worked together.³⁷ Memories of the cruel aftermath of the rising were still strong in the Yorkshire ‘country’ of Kirkbyshire in 1601. In the course of large-scale crowd action against the enclosing landlord Sir Stephen Proctor, locals were called out in the Queen’s name to break down enclosures. Some warned their neighbors that ‘we [were] commanded in the Rebell tyme in Gods name and the Queenes name, but we had like to have bene hanged in the devylls name at wch speches the people murmured saying then to themselves howe sholde we knowe when to obey in the queens name’. Yet despite these dark memories, some of 300 or 400 Kirkbyshire folk gathered to break down enclosures on Thorpe More ‘the like whereof hath not there bene seene since the late rebellion in the North’.³⁸

In 1620, giving evidence in a tithe dispute before the consistory court of Durham, the 75 year-old Robert Darlinge recalled how ‘he this ex[aminan]t was servant to and did dwell w[i]th one Mr Franckland att Cocken in the yeare of the insurrecon or rebellion in the north that last was’. Rebellion, Darlinge seemed to imply, might revisit the North: 1569 was the ‘rebellion in the north that last was [my emphasis]’.³⁹ In some places, the changes in landownership that followed the sequestration of rebel lords’ estates following the ‘last rebellio[n] in the north’ formed as important a marker in time as the rebellion itself.⁴⁰

In the Anglo-Scottish borders the militaristic culture of earlier times, fostered by the custom of ‘tenant right’, which ensured low rents and dues in return for the men’s

military service on the borders, were remembered into the seventeenth century as a past which had vanished, together with the social relations that had sustained it. The antiquarian Isaac Gilpin, noted the 'Theevish' nature of the mid-Tudor border folk, observing that 'although they were amongst themselves very brutish and much addicted to robbing, stealing and so many other rude & disorderly Qualities, yet because of the name [of their landlords] they so loved their Landlord that they would unanimously rise' upon being so bidden.⁴¹

That sense of an ending was at its most powerful when the Crown turned against tenant right following the union of the Crowns in 1603.⁴² Old Westmorland men giving testimony in support of tenant right in 1622 retained clear memories of their former service. One remembered how he had been called out by the warden on six occasions to fight the border reivers, 'furnished with a horse bowe and arrowes, steele cappe, a jacke and sword and dagger'. An eighty year-old topped this: he remembered serving on the borders, a red cross stitched on his coat, on some twenty occasions.⁴³ Old John Askrigg looked back fondly on his warlike youth, a time when the Crown protected the northern tenants; his neighbours remembered how he used to say that 'he hoped yet to see the border againe, & he stroakinge his beard he saide he hoped that gray beard shold once serve at Carlile again & Ryde before his master as of his white horse he was wont to do'.⁴⁴ These memories endured for generations, long after the border reivers had departed into the mist. In 1651, the 97 year-old James Taylor of Askgarth (Yorkshire) explained how, like the other men of his village, he come to the borders when needed, riding his light horse and equipped with a coat of mail, a spear, dagger, sword and a steel cap. He remembered that, early in Elizabeth's reign, when he and John Harth of Swaledale had served together against the Scots, fourteen of

their neighbours had been killed and he was himself wounded. This was an old man looking back on the bloody skirmishes of youth. The struggles of John Harth, James Taylor and their neighbours had, by the end of Taylor's life, become part of local tradition. George Metcalfe explained that same year how he had been by his grandfather about his service on the borders, the old man showing Metcalfe his withered arm, the use of which he had lost in the struggles with the reivers. Metcalfe's neighbor, the 75 year-old John Kettlewell well remembered his father's words: 'he heard his father name diverse of the said tenants who did goe in p[er]son to fight against the Scots, some of w[hi]ch said Ten[a]nts lost their lives there some others came wounded and lame home and some others never came home againe'.⁴⁵

In the northern borders after 1603, then, there was a sense of an ending: of an old world passing away. Yet these memories were no mere whimsies; nostalgic they may have been; but as the contemporary historian Ben Jones reminds us, nostalgia can represent a form of agency.⁴⁶ In recalling their border service, the old men of the North both reasserted a distinctly martial masculinity that had been lost following the Union of the Crowns and reminded their younger neighbors of the bargain that had once existed between Crown and border tenant: wartime service for secure copyhold tenures. Every time that northern women and men saw the scars on the bodies of their aged menfolk, they were reminded of that service, and how the bargain had been broken after 1603. In all these ways, ordinary people constructed a sense of change, one that carried with it distinct warnings for the future.

If the events and transformations of the sixteenth-century retained their place in local memory, for the people of later Stuart and early Georgian England, the civil wars represented a profoundly traumatic body of memories. They remained divisive: recollections of violence, repression, destruction and atrocity committed by one's neighbors proved hard to forget.

Social historians have tended to avoid direct engagement with the historiography of the English Revolution, with far too many studies arbitrarily finishing in 1640.⁴⁷ Yet the civil wars and Interregnum were so powerful a force as to impose themselves on temporal registers across the country. They marked another watershed in time. The widowed Ellinor Sergeant of Harrogate (Yorkshire) recalled in 1669 how her husband had been the Forester of Knaresborough 'sev[er]all yeares before the Warrs began'.⁴⁸ Many were more impassioned in the terminology they used about the 1640s. One correspondent to John Walker, who was collecting memories of the sufferings of royalist clergy in the 1640s, referred to that decade as the 'wickedly wicked times'.⁴⁹ A Cambridgeshire witness of 1674 referred to the 1640s as 'the troublesome tymes', as did Elizabeth Fisher of Canterbury in the same year and the aged Cheshire husbandman William Horton in 1701.⁵⁰ In some places, specific engagements – plunder, siege warfare, a skirmish or major engagement – stuck in local memory. In 1679, when William Stephenson gave evidence concerning a disputed watercourse in Hull, the clerk noted that he 'speaks to eight or nine years before the late siege'.⁵¹ In 1697, a number of witnesses from Malmesbury (Wiltshire) dated local events in relation to the Restoration. One had a sharp memory of the most traumatic event of the English Revolution, dating an agreement about parish tithes to 'about the time that King Charles the first was beheaded'.⁵² Derbyshire witnesses of the 1680s referred

simply to the 'Late warr tyme'; others spoke of 'the souldering tymes'; the village gentleman George Hopkinson, whose home had been plundered by parliamentary soldiers spoke pointedly of the 'late unhappy warres'.⁵³

The intrusion of the wars into temporal registers that were otherwise profoundly local points to the significance of the English Revolution to ordinary people, being sufficiently powerful to stand as markers in time.⁵⁴ In this respect, they helped to validate individual and collective claims to local memory. One clear instance of this came in 1656, when a group of Weardale tenants recalled how they had served, under colour of their obligations to the Crown under the custom of tenant right, for 14 days on the Scottish border at the time of the Bishops' Wars. The effect was to legitimate claims to tenant right at a time at which they were coming under threat from the local Parliamentarian magnate, Sir Arthur Hesilrige.⁵⁵

The 1640s were scorched into popular memory for good reasons. The wars brought with them slaughter, disease, plunder, impoverishment, hunger and atrocity. The records of Quarter Sessions administration are full of petitions from maimed soldiers or war widows seeking relief. Up until 1660, that relief was restricted to the injured men who had fought for the Parliament and to parliamentarian soldiers' dependents. After the Restoration, it was the turn of former Cavaliers and their wives and children.⁵⁶ The terms according to which parochial and county relief was administered to the victims of war, then, helped to perpetuate wartime divisions for generations to come. The disease and dearth that came with the disruption of trade and passage of marching armies was also burnt into people's memories. In the history that he wrote around 1700 of his home village of Myddle (Shropshire), Richard

Gough recalled how the common had been ‘cutt, and burnt, and sowed with corne in the later end of the warr time, temp. Car. I. The first crop was winter corne, which was a very strong crop; the next was a crop of barley, which was soe poore, that most of it was pulled up by the roote, because it was too short to bee cutt. That time there was a great dearth and plague in Oswaldstree’.⁵⁷ All of this mattered to ordinary people’s experience of the wars, perhaps more so than the great issues of state that had provoked it.

For generations after the wars, their material destruction remained everywhere to be seen. In a set of notes that repeatedly reference the impact of the civil wars, the Lincolnshire antiquarian Abraham de la Pryme recorded in the 1690s that ‘It was the L[or]d Kimbolton, Earl of Manchester’s Regiment that defaced the Ch[urch] of Hatfield, they were exceeding rude people’.⁵⁸ He knew that he was traversing an ancient landscape. Some of the wayside crosses that de la Pryme passed denoted the bounds of land that had once been held by monastic houses; this landscape had been disrupted by the wars. De la Pryme noted two such crosses, one of which was still standing in 1697; the other had been ‘a stately cross [of] great height like a markate cross ... calld... St Katherines – which was standing until Cromwell’s days & then the soldiers pull’d it down to the bare ground’.⁵⁹

Within a culture that understood the material world as a way of plotting local memory – in church seating plans, parish bounds, wayside crosses – the effects of wartime damage could be sharply felt. In 1705, the minister of Otton Belchamp (Essex) wrote an account of the parish boundaries, his intention being ‘To describe the Bounds and limits of our Parish which are very obscure and to prevent encroachings of others’.

This was a matter of special concern to him because ‘in the times of the long Rebellion the landmarks of our Parish were cut downe, and it would be difficult for posterity to find out the proper precincts which our parish are incompassed withal’.⁶⁰ On the other hand, the civil wars might be commemorated within the landscape. In 1674, it was recorded that in Wigan (Lancashire) there had been a battle at the northern end of the town in 1651 which ended in the death of the royalist Sir Thomas Tildersley ‘and as a memoriall of the place where S[i]r Thomas did falla great Heap of stones [was] soon after laid together, by well affected persons’.⁶¹

Changes to parish churches – another memory site in local communities - were also keenly felt. The shock of the destruction of their parish church remained powerful in Pontefract in 1667. William Gates recalled how ‘the p[ar]ish Church of Allhallowes was burnt and pulled downe in the late time of rebellion & that the steeple thereof onely is in part repaired’.⁶² In 1686, William Walker, who had been a servant in Holford Hall for 26 years, remembered how he, his fellow servants and his masters – the Cholmondeleys, who had fought for the King in the 1640s – had always sat in the chancel of the church of Lower Peover (Cheshire). The chancel, Walker was sure, was the property of the Cholmondeleys. His 70-year old neighbor, Richard Litter, was able to provide some historical context to the reflected pride that Walker seems to have felt in being a part of so prominent a household. He remembered how, back in 1625, one of the Cholmondleys had passed away and was buried under ‘a white gravestone in the same chancel’. Fifty years ago, he recollected, ‘before the late unhappy warrs’, the Cholomondeleys had financed the repair of the chancel and had renewed their heraldic arms, ‘but in the s[ai]d warrs the same Coates were taken down

by the soldiers (as this depo[nen]t hath heard) and were aft[e]r that... preserved by Peter Frodsham deed who was a tenant to the Lords of Holford'.⁶³

Moreover, the social event that underwrote this reading of the landscape – the yearly Rogationtide custom that saw the perambulation of parish bounds, which many puritans saw as pagan – had in many parishes been discontinued during the Interregnum. In Kirkby-in-Ashfield (Nottinghamshire), there was a deep sense of landscape that reached back to before the dissolution of the local Priory of Newstead: it was general knowledge before the wars came that certain fields had been held by the Priory prior to its dissolution in the 1530s. These fields were taken in by the parish perambulation and old folk would call out to their younger neighbors to take note of the boundaries and field names ‘and desired them to remember itt for the tyme to come’. All of this ceased when war came, after which the Rogationtide processions were discontinued. Now, in 1664, the parishioners were attempting to recover their collective memories of the bounds.⁶⁴

The land itself was also a bearer of memory: local inhabitants possessed an often intricate knowledge of the tenure that attached to different fields, to their prior occupancy, and to the entitlements and responsibilities that came with that occupancy. The English Revolution disrupted this too, not just with the seizure of the great estates of royalist gentry, but also with the sequestration of lands held by relatively humble people. William Shakespeare of Rowington (Warwickshire), for example, recalled in 1675 how ‘in the time of the late warrs in the kingdome many of the coppinghold tenements’ of Rowington ‘were under sequestracon’; all of this led to confusion as to the precise pattern of tenure.⁶⁵

In all of these ways, then, the civil wars proved highly disruptive of local ways of remembering. There is a certain irony to the searing of the English Revolution into popular memory. The Act of Indemnity and Oblivion Act (1660) enjoined subjects to erase the Interregnum from their memory.⁶⁶ But both sides found this hard to achieve. One former Cavalier, John Hague of Aston (Derbyshire) couldn't let go of his anger, finding himself in trouble for having 'tooke upon him to speake of the act of oblivion & said the Kinge was a foole & a knave if he made it not voyde & Hanged not upp all the Roundheads'.⁶⁷ Another Derbyshire man, Henry Alsibrooke of Church Broughton wished that a local meadow 'were full of souldiers & he amongst th[e]m & th[a]t he should never be light at heart till th[a]t they may pull downe the higher powers (meaning the kinge)'.⁶⁸ The commemoration of civil war struggles underwrote continued opposition to the Stuarts. The inhabitants of Restoration Taunton (Devon), who had withstood a prolonged siege in the first civil war, enjoyed a three-day festival to celebrate the defeat of their Royalist besiegers. Beginning with drums sounding reveille in the dawn, pious sermons were followed by bonfires, drinking and dancing at which members of the crowd chanted 'Rejoice you dogs, 'tis the eleventh of May, the day the cavaliers ran away'. In 1671, it was reported to the Privy Council that the people of Taunton performed this commemoration 'by which they glory in their rebellion (so far are they from repentance for it). This course they do also entail to their posterity'. Inter-generational continuity had already taken hold: the correspondent noted that the 'rejoicing' was 'kept by men, women and children throughout the whole town, many of which were not then born when the siege was raised'.⁶⁹

The politics of later Stuart and early Georgian England were fought out under the shadow of the English Revolution. The 1640s represented as powerful a force in the politics of late seventeenth and early eighteenth century England as would the events of 1789, 1848 and 1871 in Third Republic France.⁷⁰ The Exclusion Crisis of 1678-81 was fought as if the party labels Whig and Tory represented synonyms for Roundhead and Cavalier. In the turbulent year of 1715, a Cheapside crowd marched behind effigies of Cromwell, William III and the Duke of Marlborough, crying out ‘Down with the Rump’ and ‘No Hanoverian, No Presbyterian Government’.⁷¹ A similar set of analogies occurred to a Coventry crowd, who in 1736 cried out ‘Down with the Rump, down with the Roundheads, no Hanover, down with the King’s Head’.⁷² Pursuing the same point, a Lancashire carpenter found himself in trouble in 1722 for having cried out during a riot, ‘Down with the Rump’.⁷³ Meanwhile, a rioting crowd at Harwich (Essex) in 1724 delighted in mocking George I: an outraged witness reported that the crowd was ‘drumming a ridiculous Tune of Roundheaded Cuckolds &c’.⁷⁴ In a slippage that was indicative of the instability of straightforward party narratives, George Cleeve was presented to the assizes in 1716 for warning that ‘King George must have a care what he did otherwise he would lose his head as King Charles had done’.⁷⁵

The civil wars, then, represented a nightmare that loomed over later generations. But reconstructing those memories represents a methodological as well as an empirical challenge. There is no single, authoritative source that allows the historian entry into early modern popular memory. Perhaps more so than any other field in the social history of the 1500-1750 period, the evidence is both partial and fragmentary. Yet there are points of consistency and cohesion within the flux of remembrance. This

chapter has tried to illuminate some of those points, especially where they help to mark out a distinctly early modern sense of time and place. All of this reminds us that popular memory is a field that is constantly ‘crossed by competing constructions, often at war with each other’.⁷⁶ The study of social memory takes us into a contested, protean field. Understanding the constantly unpredictable eddies within popular memory will require the next generation of early modern social historians to transcend sub-disciplinary boundaries and to rethink the nature of the social history project. There is everything to be gained, bringing us ever closer to the world we have lost.

¹ M. Ferro, The use and abuse of history, or how the past is taught (1981; Eng. Trans. London: Routledge, 1984), 114.

² J.J. Manning (ed.), The first and second parts of John Hayward's The life and raigne of King Henrie III, Camden Ser. 4th ser., 42 (London, 1991). For Hayward's interrogation, see TNA, SP12/274/58-62.

³ B.L. Beer (ed.), The life and raigne of King Edward the sixth by John Hayward (Kent State University Press, Kent: OH, 1993).

⁴ F. Smith Fussner, Tudor history and the historians (New York: Basic Books, 1970), 256.

⁵ A. Nevylly, De furoribus Norfolciensium Ketto Duce (London, 1575), 35, 42.

⁶ B. Manning, The English people and the English Revolution (1976; 2nd. Ed., London: Book Marks, 1991), 99. For an example, see BL, Add Ms 70520; also

Anon., The rebellious life and death of Wat Tyler and Jack Straw (London, 1642); B. Stirling, 'Shakespeare's mob scenes: a reinterpretation', The Huntingdon Library Quarterly, 3 (1945), 213-40.

⁷ The foundational work is K. Thomas, The perception of the past in early modern England, Creighton Trust Lecture, (University of London: London, 1983).

⁸ R. Tittler, 'Reformation, civic culture and collective memory in English provincial towns', Urban History 24, 3 (1997), 283-300. For an overview, see A. Dyer, 'English town chronicles', Local Historian, 12 (1977), 285-95.

⁹ For notable examples of county studies, see R. Church (ed.), William Lambarde: a perambulation of Kent (Trowbridge: Adams and Dart, 1970); R. Carew, The survey of Cornwall (1602; repr. Trowbridge: Adams and Dart, 1969); J. Norden, Speculi Britaniae: the description of Hartfordshire (1598; repr. Da Capo: New York, 1971). For the more fragmentary genre of county chorographies, see D. MacCulloch, (ed.), The chorography of Suffolk, Suffolk Record Society, 19 (Ipswich, 1976); C.M. Hood (ed), The chorography of Norfolk (Jarrold: Norwich, 1938).

¹⁰ D.R. Woolf, The Idea of History in Early Stuart England, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990); G. Parry, The trophies of time: English antiquarians of the seventeenth century (Oxford, 1995); D.R. Kelley, The writing of history and the study of law (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997); J. Broadway, 'No historie so meete': gentry culture and the development of local history in Elizabethan and early Stuart England (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006); R. Cust, 'Catholicism, Antiquarianism and Gentry Honour: The Writings of Sir Thomas Shirley', Midland History 23 (1998) 40-70; R.B. Manning, 'Antiquarianism and seigneurial reaction: Sir Robert and Sir Thomas Cotton and their tenants', Historical Research, 63, 152 (1990), 277-288.

¹¹ A. Wood, The memory of the people: custom and popular senses of the past in early modern England (Cambridge, 2013); N.M. Whyte, 'Landscape, memory and custom: parish identities c.1550 – 1700', Social History, 32 2 (2007), 166-186; R.W.

Hoyle (ed.), Custom, improvement and the landscape in early modern Britain (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011); S. Sandall, 'Custom, memory and the operations of power in seventeenth-century Forest of Dean', in F. Williamson (ed.), Locating agency: space, power and popular politics (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), 133-60.

¹² A. Fox, Oral and literate cultures in England, 1500-1700 (Oxford, 2000). For early work on the neglected subject of popular senses of time, see K. Wrightson, 'Popular senses of past time: dating events in the North Country, 1615-31', in M.J. Braddick and P. Withington eds., Popular Culture and Political Agency in Early Modern England and Ireland (Boydell and Brewer, Woodbridge, 2016).

¹³ N. Whyte, Inhabiting the landscape: place, custom and memory, 1500-1800 (Oxford: Oxbow, 2009); A. Walsham, The reformation of the landscape: religion, identity and memory in early modern Britain and Ireland (Oxford, 2011).

¹⁴ D. Woolf, 'The "Common Voice": history, folklore and oral tradition in early modern England', P&P, 120 (1988), 26-52.

¹⁵ C. Brooks, 'Contemporary views of "feudal" social and political relationships in sixteenth and seventeenth-century England', in N. Fryde and P. Monnet (eds), Die Gegenwart des Feudalismus (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002), 109-35; M. Aston, 'English ruins and English history: the dissolution and the sense of the past', Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, 36 (1973), 231-55.

¹⁶ W. Burton, A description of Leicestershire, (London, 1642), 47.

¹⁷ The National Archives [hereafter TNA], MPC/2787. One Restoration antiquarian was shown Kett's Oak, but garbled its significance. See Richard Blome, Britannia (London, 1673), 169. I hope to write more fully about the Mousehold map in the future.

¹⁸ TNA, STAC8/161/16.

¹⁹ H. Fishwick, 'Disputed boundary in Ashworth', TLCAS, 15 (1897), 63-72. For other mid-Tudor Lancastrians' mention of Kinge Ricards Field', see TNA, DL1/55/H2-3. See also P. Schwyzer, 'Lees and moonshine: remembering Richard III, 1485-1635', Renaissance Quarterly, 63 (2010), 850-883.

²⁰ TNA, E134/7Eliz/East1.

²¹ Cheshire Record Office, EDC5 (1664) 69.

²² Cheshire Record Office, EDC5 (1612) 28. For other memories of Edward's Scottish wars, see TNA, E134/5JasI/Mich8.

²³ H.S. Commager, The search for a usable past (New York: Knopf, 1967).

²⁴ Wood, Memory, 43-93.

²⁵ Eamon Duffy has captured this localized memory with the greatest clarity. See, in particular, The voices of Morebath: reformation and rebellion in an English village (Yale University Press, New Haven: Conn., 2001).

²⁶ DUL (hereafter Durham University Library), DDR/EJ/CCD/1/2, fols. 177r, 178v, 200v, 201r, 201v-2r.

²⁷ DUL, Cosin MS. B.ii.11, p. 50. The earliest complete copy is DUL, Cosin MS. B.ii.11. For an earlier copy, some sections of which have been lost, see Durham Cathedral Library MS. C.iii.23. For a good nineteenth century copy, see DUL, CCB/B/175/57144/6. A definitive version of the Rites of Durham is currently being prepared. For authorship, see A.I. Doyle, 'William Claxton and the Durham chronicles', in J.P. Carley and C.G.C. Tite (eds), Books and collectors, 1200-1700 (London, 1997), 346-9. I am grateful to Adrian Green for advice on this subject.

²⁸ For the parochial equivalent of the ‘Rites of Durham’, see D. Dymond and C. Paine (eds), The spoil of Melford church: the Reformation in a Suffolk parish (Ipswich: Salient Press, 1989).

²⁹ TNA, E134/17Eliz/East6.

³⁰ Henry E. Huntington Library, Egerton Ms, Ellesmere 5698f.

³¹ TNA, DL44/196. I hope to write more fully about this dispute in the near future.

³² C. Torr (ed.), Wreyland documents (Cambridge, 1910), 92.

³³ Cornwall Record Office, CY/7189. For further mid sixteenth-century memories of the Battle of Blackheath as an event around which to organize time, see M. McGlynn, ‘Memory, orality and life records: proofs of age in Tudor England’, Sixteenth Century Journal, 40, 3 (2009), 684.

³⁴ TNA, DL4/43/12.

³⁵ A. Wood, The 1549 rebellions and the making of early modern England (Cambridge, 2007), chapter 6.

³⁶ Norfolk Record Office (hereafter NRO), Y/D41/104, fol. 37r; NRO, NCR17A, ‘Mayor’s Book’, fol.19r; BL, Add Ms 8937, fol. 2r; C.E. Moreton, ‘The Walsingham conspiracy of 1537’, Historical Research, 63 (1990), 29-43.

³⁷ TNA, E178/4036.

³⁸ TNA, STAC5/P14/21; TNA, STAC5/A57/5.

³⁹ DUL, DDR/EJ/CCD/1/11, fol. 75v. I am grateful to Megan Johnston for this reference.

⁴⁰ TNA, E134/26 Eliz/East4.

⁴¹ A. Bagot, 'Mr Gilpin and manorial customs', Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society, 2nd. ser., 57 (1962), 231.

⁴² R.W. Hoyle, 'Lords, tenants and tenant right in the sixteenth century: four studies', Northern History, 20 (1984), 38-63; *idem.*, 'An ancient and laudable custom: the definition and development of tenant right in north-western England in the sixteenth century', Past and Present, 116 (1987), 24-55. For a regional study, see J.L. Drury, "'More stout than wise": tenant right in Weardale in the Tudor period', in D. Marcombe (ed.), The last principality: politics, religion and society in the Bishopric of Durham, 1494-1660 (Nottingham: University of Nottingham, 1987), 71-100. For a description of tenant right, dated 21 March 1582, based upon "'The reports & sayings of sundry aged persons touching the customarie service of the Inhabitants of the countie of Duresme & as they have seen it used in their tymes'", see DUL, DCD/S/LP32/5(a).

⁴³ TNA, STAC8/34/4.

⁴⁴ TNA, STAC8/34/4.46; see also piece 54.

⁴⁵ TNA, E134/1651/Mich17.

⁴⁶ Jones, B., 'The uses of nostalgia: autobiography, community publishing and working-class neighbourhoods in post-war England', Cultural and Social History, 7 (2010), 355-74.

⁴⁷ The social history of the English Revolution remains to be written.

⁴⁸ TNA, DL4/111/15. See also TNA, E134/28ChasII/East20; Borthwick Institute for Archives, CP/H/3344.

⁴⁹ F. McCall, 'Children of Baal: clergy families and their memories of sequestration during the English civil war', Huntington Library Quarterly, 76, 4 (2013), 618. See also A. Laurence, "'This sad and deplorable condition": an attempt towards recovering an account of the sufferings of northern clergy families in the 1640s and 1650s', in D. Wood (ed.), Life and thought in the northern church, c.1100-1700: essays in honour of Claire Cross (Boydell and Brewer: Woodbridge, 1999), 465-88. The Walker Manuscripts deserve systematic study.

⁵⁰ Cambridgeshire Archives [Cambridge], P109/28/4; TNA, E134/35ChasII/Mich9; Cheshire Record Office, EDC5 (1701), 7.

⁵¹ East Riding of Yorkshire Archives and Records Services, DDBL/10/14.

⁵² TNA, E134/9WmIII/Trin9.

⁵³ TNA, DL4/123/1685/2; TNA, DL4/123/1684/4; TNA, DL4/122/1683/1; TNA, DL4/109/8. For the interest displayed by William Hopkinson (father) in local history, see BL, Add Ms 6668, fol. 430r.

⁵⁴ For the localism of temporal registers, see A. Wood, 'Popular senses of time and place in Tudor and Stuart England', Insights, 6, 3 (2014).

⁵⁵ DUL, WEC.145/12, 15; J.L. Drury, 'Sir Arthur Hesilrige and the Weardale Chest', Transactions of the Architectural and Archaeological Society of Durham and Northumberland, new ser., 5 (1980), 125-37.

⁵⁶ M. Stoye, "'Memories of the maimed": the testimony of Charles I's former soldiers, 1660-1730', History, 88, 290 (2003), 186-203; G.L. Hudson, 'Negotiating for blood money: war widows and the courts in seventeenth-century England,' in J. Kermode and G. Walker (eds), Women, crime and the courts in early modern England (London: UCL Press, 1994), 146-69. Andy Hopper is currently engaged on a major study of this subject.

-
- ⁵⁷ R. Gough, The history of Myddle (London: Penguin, 1981), 63.
- ⁵⁸ BL, Lansdowne Ms 897, fol. 71r.
- ⁵⁹ BL, Lansdowne Ms 897, fol. 52v.
- ⁶⁰ Essex Record Office, D/DU 441/96, pp. 22-4.
- ⁶¹ Cumbria Record Office [Carlisle], DLONS/L12/2/18.
- ⁶² Borthwick Institute for Archives, CP/H/2836.
- ⁶³ Cheshire Record Office, EDC5 (1686)1.
- ⁶⁴ Nottinghamshire Archives, DD/2P/24/5, 7.
- ⁶⁵ TNA, E134/26ChasII/Mich32.
- ⁶⁶ P. Aguilar, Memory and amnesia: The role of the Spanish Civil War in the transition to democracy (Oxford: Berghahn, 2002).
- ⁶⁷ Derbyshire Record Office, Q/SB2/630.
- ⁶⁸ Derbyshire Record Office, Q/SB2/631.
- ⁶⁹ R. Clifton, The last popular rebellion: the Western Rising of 1685 (Hounslow: Martin Temple Smith, 1984), 44-5.
- ⁷⁰ R. Gildea, The past in French history (New Haven: Conn: Yale University Press, 1994).
- ⁷¹ N. Rogers, Crowds, culture and politics in Georgian Britain (Oxford, 1998), 31.

⁷² D. Rollison, The local origins of modern society: Gloucestershire, 1500-1800 (London: Routledge, 1992), 219.

⁷³ D. Woolf, The social circulation of the past: English historical culture, 1500-1730 (Oxford, 2003), 341.

⁷⁴ E.P. Thompson, Customs in common (London: Merlin, 1991), 69.

⁷⁵ Rogers, Crowds, 57.

⁷⁶ Popular Memory Group, 'Popular memory: theory, politics, method', in R. Johnson, G. McLennan, B. Schwarz and D. Sutton (eds), Making histories: studies in history writing and politics (Minnesota University Press: Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1982), 207.

Select Reading

The starting-point remains K. Thomas, The perception of the past in early modern England, Creighton Trust Lecture, (University of London: London, 1983). For a major overview, see D. Woolf, The social circulation of the past: English historical culture, 1500-1730 (Oxford, 2003). For memory, orality and literacy, see A. Fox, Oral and literate cultures in England, 1500-1700 (Oxford, 2000). For memory and custom, see A. Wood, The memory of the people: custom and popular senses of the past in early modern England (Cambridge, 2013). While civic memory has been explored, popular memory in urban communities remains little-studied; for an important intervention see R. Tittler, 'Reformation, civic culture and collective memory in English provincial towns', Urban History 24, 3 (1997), 283-300. Memory and landscape is recently opening up as a new field; see N. Whyte, Inhabiting the landscape: place, custom and memory, 1500-1800 (Oxford: Oxbow, 2009); A. Walsham, The reformation of the landscape: religion, identity and memory in early

modern Britain and Ireland (Oxford, 2011). Although print representations of the civil war have received attention, popular memories of the wars and revolution remain unstudied. Similarly, much work remains to be done on popular memory and the reformation. Any work on popular memory needs to engage with the interdisciplinary and comparative literature. Two volumes are especially useful: J. Fentress and C. Whickham, Social memory (Oxford, 1992); B. Misztal, Theories of social remembering (Open University Press: Maidenhead, 2003).