

Catholic Forfeitures during the English Revolution: Parliament and the Role of Sequestration Agents

In early November 1656, the Catholic William Blundell wrote to his nephew Thomas Selby updating him about the latest news in his home county of Lancashire and on matters of his estate. Blundell had previously told Selby about his dealings with agent Gilbert Crouch who was managing his sequestration and compounding affairs which were taking place in London. He remarked that Crouch had promised him ‘that he wil [sic] look carefully to my Exchequer busines’ and Blundell hoped that Selby would inform himself how best he could befriend Crouch, as he was apprehensive about the current dangers that was occurring at that time. Gilbert Crouch had purchased the sequestered estates of William Blundell; he held Blundell’s estates’ of Little Crosby and Ditton in trust until the Restoration. During the civil wars, Blundell had actively supported King Charles I and the Royalist cause, answering the call to serve the king in the Commission of Array in 1642, becoming a captain in the local dragoons before his capture and imprisonment. Consequently, his estates in Little Crosby in Lancashire were sequestered for delinquency and he spent much of the war petitioning to compound for his estates.

Unlike the thousands that were sequestered for delinquency during the conflict, Blundell was well-versed in the art of sequestration and compounding for his estates. As a Catholic, he had frequently compounded for his estates for recusancy, and regularly paid his fines during Charles I’s Personal Rule in the 1630s. From the reign of Elizabeth I in the sixteenth century, Catholics who refused to conform and attend Protestant services and take communion in accordance with the Church of England faced the penal law sequestration, which forfeited a significant portion of their personal or real estates, returnable only upon payment of a fine based on the value of the forfeited property. By the time of the civil wars, sequestration had become a well-organised administrative system, in which Catholics like Blundell were presented by county committees and paid their fines to the Exchequer.

However, the outbreak of war across the British Isles in 1642 turned the lives of its citizens upside down, not least for Catholics, who now faced the potential of being legislatively perceived as political and religious enemies. The conflict prompted politicians to substantially overhaul the former sequestration system. In March 1643, the ‘Ordinance for sequestering notorious delinquents estates’ was passed, which not only caused political delinquents who fought on the Royalist side to face sequestration, but also confirmed that Catholics could find

themselves sequestered for delinquency, popery (otherwise referred to as ‘papist delinquency’), and recusancy. Catholic landowners were in danger of permanently losing their confiscated land and personal estate if the authorities decided to sell the estate for treasonous reasons, or if they failed to compound for their property in time. It risked their estates being broken up forever if Catholic landowners did nothing about it. Consequently, the landed Catholic gentry and peers had to take action to ensure their estates would not be permanently lost, and this was achieved through the role of agents, originally appointed in parliamentary legislation to assist the county sequestration committees with their mammoth workload. By the end of the civil wars and at the beginning of republican rule, however, agents became enormously influential in controlling and preventing delinquent and Catholic estates from being lost and broken up permanently. Agents gained substantial power and were often operating within the political heartlands of parliament, which reveals that there were influential figures within law and politics who willing to help landowners with their estates, but at a price.

This paper considers the important role of agents in protecting forfeited Catholic estates between 1642 and 1660 by examining how agents helped gentry Catholics to prevent the permanent loss of their forfeited estates. In particular, the activities of two agents, Gilbert Crouch and future historian John Rushworth, are scrutinised, as their positions as lawyers working in London enabled them to secure estates in their names on the behalf of Catholic families. While this set-up appeared to be auspicious for the agents, it will be discussed how domestic threats to the Protectorate in the mid-1650s caused officials to quash any suspicious activities of these agents and investigate forfeited land purchases. What this paper seeks to expose, therefore, is how landed Catholics and agents adapted to the sequestration legislation during this period, and how the role of agents became integral in the long-term protection of Catholic estates.

Catholics had, of course, been navigating through the sequestration and compounding process with outsider help prior to the civil wars. Figures such as Exchequer clerk and politician Sir Henry Spiller profited from Catholics seeking help when facing sequestration in the Jacobean and early Caroline periods. In his case, he used his influential position in political administrations to grant them leases to their confiscated estates for a substantial fee. Incidentally, Spiller himself was sequestered for supporting the Royalist cause during the first civil war. It was during the outbreak of war that the sequestration ordinances started to legislate the use of agents to assist local sequestration committees when they confiscated estates. Agents were given specified duties in the 27 March 1643 ‘Ordinance for sequestering notorious

delinquents estates'. In the ordinance, the county sequestration committees, sequestrators, deputies, and agents were ordered to seize the personal and real estates' belonging to delinquents, including their money, goods, manors, land and profits, as well as the estates 'of all and every Papist, or which any other person hath in trust for any Papists, or to the use of uses of any Papists'. Sequestrators and agents were authorised to enter all manors, lands, and tenements belonging to 'the said Delinquents, or persons before specified', and were also sanctioned to collect rents and other monies from tenants on these lands and properties, which were to go into the hands of local sequestrators and the county sequestration committees.

Agents were also mentioned in the May 1644 'Ordinance for the better execution of the former Ordinance for Sequestration of Delinquents and Papists Estates'. The ordinance reconfirmed that agents were required to assist the county sequestration committees, collectors, and sequestrators to help confiscate recusants' and delinquents' estates, and to help collect assessments. For Catholics and delinquents alike, agents dealing with sequestration affairs were a valuable asset to manage and protect their estates, especially as agents were in a position in London to borrow money and settle the purchases at Drury House on their behalf if needed. Lawyers who acted as agents were especially desirable as their legal counsel could provide more credibility to the proceedings and prevent estates from being broken up as they could purchase the estates intact. Lawyers such as Francis Theobald, William Morgan, Thomas Bedingfield and John Keble of Gray's Inn dealt with sequestration purchases, as well as Philip Packer and William Hussey of Middle Temple. What is more, the rewards that could be reaped from purchasing substantial confiscated estates were attractive to some agents. For instance, the Leveller John Wildman became renowned for his insider knowledge of land speculation during the early 1650s, which resulted in him contracting over fifty transactions for confiscated properties across twenty counties (though predominantly Lancashire and Yorkshire), and which included property belonging to Henry Marten.

John Rushworth and Gilbert Crouch were major figures in purchasing Catholic estates during the Interregnum, and substantial portions of their purchases covered estates scattered across the north of England, including Lancashire, Northumberland, Yorkshire, and Durham. Rushworth is a remarkable figure in seventeenth-century politics. Born in Northumberland around 1608, during his life, Rushworth worked as a lawyer at Lincoln's Inn, served as an MP, and today he is famously remembered for his historical writings about the civil wars. He worked as a clerk assistant during the Short Parliament in 1640, where he was infamously scolded for taking notes of proceedings. During the civil wars, the parliamentarian general Sir

Thomas Fairfax appointed Rushworth as his secretary, and he also briefly served as secretary to Sir Orlando Bridgeman. Under the Rump Parliament, Rushworth continued his political career by working in various administrative and legal roles. Comparatively, Gilbert Crouch, who came from northern England, was a lawyer who was based at Staple Inn, London. Both men had long-established connections with the local elite from their childhood regions. By marriage, Crouch was connected to the Catholic Salvin family of Croxdale, Co. Durham, and it has been estimated he purchased around thirty-eight properties – many in conjunction with other agents – which included twenty-three manors and scores of parcels of land. Rushworth was married to Hannah Widdrington, sister of Sir Thomas Widdrington, who was speaker of the House of Commons at intervals during this period. Rushworth helped his Widdrington in-laws during the Interregnum by purchasing Sir Edward Widdrington's manor of Ovington and colliery near the Tyne in 1654.

Forfeited estates were a means for parliament to pay off their many debts which had accumulated during the wars. Cromwell himself had been awarded lands which were confiscated from the Catholic marquess of Worcester in March 1648, which included estates in Monmouthshire and near Swansea, which gave him an estimated income of around £1,600 per annum. As the purchase of sequestered estates potentially offered buyers to reap huge financial gains, it is unsurprising that Rushworth and Crouch made mass purchases of these estates. Agents were able to purchase Catholic estates in their own names and Rushworth, in particular, was able to employ his connections with Catholic merchants in London to secure loans to pay for his purchases to great effect. Not all agents, of course, were honest or explicit about the motives for their purchases, especially if they were buying up sequestered estates at the behest of Catholic and delinquent landowners. During the 1650s, parliament strove to halt any suspect purchases by agents and county commissioners after their revenues decreased substantially. In 1654, parliament passed the 'Ordinance for the better ordering and disposing of the Estates under Sequestration'. Apart from reducing the number of central commissioners to six, the ordinance required all county commissioners, treasurers, and administrators to account for all the money that they had received from sequestered estates, which was to be paid to the Goldsmiths' Hall treasurers by 25 March, with any deficient county sequestration officers and agents to be replaced by 'other honest and able Persons'.

Rushworth's involvement in the political administration during the Interregnum included his appointment by the Rump Parliament in January 1652 to help regulate law administration after administrative delays had caused 'many inconveniences and mischiefs'.

He and others were charged to see in what ways ‘Irregularities in the Proceedings in the Law, may be prevented’, and he was granted considerable powers to converse, advice, and appoint people to help in that business. That September, he was also appointed as one of the commissioners in the ‘Act for reviving a former Act for Relief of Persons upon Articles’, which renewed the former legislation for those who had been sued or molested in breach of the articles of war during the 1640s. Additionally, in early April 1653, he was appointed a judge for the probate of wills and granting of administrations to oversee, ‘hear, sentence, and decree in all matters touching Wills, Administrations, and Inventories’. All combined, these roles gave Rushworth unprecedented powers across England and Wales, and they also granted him extraordinary access to personal information on people’s personal properties.

Rushworth was able to use his legal knowledge and experience to help Catholics who had previously compounded for recusancy before the war, but who now found themselves sequestered for delinquency or papist delinquency. As both a lawyer and agent, Rushworth was able to help Catholic landowners like the Constables, the Morleys, and the Forcers, who were substantial landowners in their local communities. The Constables were mainly based in Everingham, the West Riding of Yorkshire, although they also owned land in Lincolnshire. The family had been part of Yorkshire life for centuries, and were relations of the politician Sir William Constable, as well as the Catholic branch of the Fairfax family. The Morleys were northern landowners whose estates stretched from Wennington in Lancashire to Burton in Lincolnshire. Francis Morley had originally fought for the king, along with his sons, at the beginning of the first civil war, but switched his allegiance to parliament. Despite his change of political heart, Francis Morley’s estates were still sequestered. After his death in 1649, his son Thomas was discharged of sequestration of the Burton lands, which had been bought by John Wildman from the Treason Trustees. The Forcers’ landed estates were concentrated in Northumberland, though they mainly resided in Harbour House, in Chester-le-Street, Co. Durham.

In a similar capacity, Gilbert Crouch acted as an agent for several Catholic and delinquent landowners in the north of England. Aside from William Blundell, Crouch acted as the agent for the papist delinquent Sir Francis Howard of Corby in 1657 after he purchased Howard’s Thornthwaite manor from the Treason Trustees, and he helped financially towards the mortgage of the estate at the colossal sum of £30,000. Crouch also represented himself as an attorney for his Catholic father-in-law John Salvin in the attempt to safeguard Salvin’s estates which were scattered across Northumberland and Durham from the Treason Trustees.

Crouch and Rushworth occasionally joined forces with Catholics to protect their estates; for instance, both Crouch and Rushworth made an indenture with John Forcer in 1654 to protect his estate in Harbour House. What we need to remember is that while this paper and focus is on how Protestant agents helped Catholic landowners, Crouch and Rushworth also helped Protestant delinquent landowners who needed their legal expertise, money, and political connections within the heart of parliamentary administration to protect their estates from being sold off in piecemeal chunks.

Of course, Rushworth, Crouch, and other agents were careful to not leave too much of a paper trail in their purchasing activities and the reasons why they purchased certain substantial estates. However, we can glean the motivations behind these purchases when we look at correspondence written by concerned family members, who often played a role in hiring these agents in the first place. For instance, Rushworth gave legal advice to the Catholic Morley and Tempest families at the bidding of their relative, major-general John Lambert, who himself purchased Royalist and Catholic estates during the 1650s. Francis Morley often wrote to his cousin, Captain Adam Baynes, about the different ways Rushworth was helping to protect the family estates. Francis's father, Thomas Morley, was originally sequestered for delinquency during the civil wars. However, Morley had failed to pay his composition fine by the deadline set for payment, which meant that it 'elapsed his oportunitie' to compound for his estates. What is more, because he had since been 'Engaged in the third warr' (the Battle of Worcester in September 1651), it meant that he was now 'Incapable to Compound' and his estate was at the mercy of parliament, which left his sons with no choice but to prove that the titles had been transferred to them before the wars originally broke out.

In June 1652, Morley told Baynes that the family was currently waiting to hear about parliament's conditions for his family to compound for the estates, which was naturally giving Francis concern that he would 'be left destitute of [a] future livelihood'. In an added remark, Morley also informed Baynes that 'I have not shoued him Mr Rushworthes opinion' as he was currently afraid of upsetting his father 'for feare of wronging both my body and soule'. A common tactic long-used by Catholic landowners before the war was that they would often draw up legislation that bequeathed certain parcels of their lands and estates to their heirs. It has to be noted that the entailing of estates became increasingly employed during this period by all landowners for various reasons, such as to reduce taxation contributions, as well as to provide marriage portions for their children. For example, Sherrington and Edward Sheldon of Beoley, Warwickshire, petitioned to have publication of relief against sequestration in 1652 as

their father William Sheldon's vast estates had been sequestered for delinquency and papist delinquency since the civil wars. Similarly, Elizabeth Pudsey wrote to Gerard Salvin regarding £700 to protect her son's estates from difficulties. Sir John Arundell of Lanherne, Cornwall, confirmed to the Committee for Compounding in 1653 that he only possessed life interest in his Cornish estates, including Lanherne, Columbe Major and Penwith, with the lands indentured to his heirs, the sons of his grandfather, and his Tichbourne and Wardour relatives.

Heir petitions were normally substantiated by witnesses who swore oaths confirming that these indentures and entailments had taken place to add legitimacy to their appeals. For instance, the gentleman Philip Pritchard swore an oath in 1649, before the Committee for Compounding at Goldsmiths' Hall, that Lady Bridget Savage was to inherit the manors of Leighton and Great Neston in Cheshire, left to her by her late father William Whitmore. The estates had been at risk of sequestration as Bridget's husband, Sir Thomas Savage of Beeston, was sequestered for delinquency. Agents and lawyers from the Inns of Court played a vital role in confirming indentured and entailed estates, as their legal knowledge, close proximity to parliament, as well as their own financial interests in the estates (as they would receive all the profits from the land purchases), added a legitimacy to the proceedings. Consequently, lawyers frequently acted as witnesses to these indentures. In 1652, the lawyer George Neyle of Gray's Inn swore a deposition before the Committee for Compounding that the previous July, he witnessed an indenture made between Thomas Savage, Lord Lumley, and Isaac Cream concerning estates in Cheshire. Similarly, in 1653, Francis Goldsmith of Gray's Inn and Richard Beverley of the Middle Temple confirmed the authenticity of an indenture made between William Darrell of Scotney, Kent, and Richard Reynell of Holborn for the manors of Chingley and Scotney in Kent and Sussex for a term of ten years. Edward Somerset, Earl of Worcester made an indenture with Fenton Parsons of Lincolns' Inn in 1652 for estates scattered across several counties in England and Wales, including Penrose, Kilgoygan, Llandenny, Raglan, and Trelleck Grange in Monmouthshire; Crookham in Berkshire; and Kendal in Westmorland.

What is more, in Catholic delinquent cases, the heirs normally outwardly conformed to Protestantism during their parent's lifetimes, and regularly swore the oaths of allegiance, supremacy, and the Oath of Abjuration so that upon their parents' deaths, the lands would be transferred into their rightful hands. In 1645, John Caryll esquire of West Harting, Sussex, swore the Covenant and Oath of Abjuration not only for his own compounding affairs, but also to secure his claim to his father's lands in Sussex, as Sir John Caryll was sequestered for

recusancy. Likewise, Sir Philip Constable's son Marmaduke was certified taking the Oath of Engagement in front of two Middlesex Justices of the Peace to protect family lands in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire after his father was included in the Treason bill in November 1652. The teenager Sir Francis Throckmorton conformed to Protestantism during the 1650s so that the sequestered estates of his late Catholic father Sir Robert Throckmorton were discharged from the penal law.

The Catholic gentleman Richard Sherburne of Stonyhurst, Lancashire, gave John Rushworth money to purchase Sir Philip Constable's estates in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire, including Everingham, Middle and West Rasen, and Drax Abbey, which were transferred into his name. He was also appointed as the family's agent and purchased parcels of land, farms, and tenements which were rented out to tenants. Sherburne was compelled to help the Constables as his daughter Anne was married to Sir Philip's eldest son Marmaduke. Sir Philip Constable's estates had been re-sequestered in the November 1652 'An additional Act for Sale of several Lands and Estates forfeited to the Commonwealth for Treason' for delinquency, and this not only threatened the Constables' estates from being permanently broken up, but it meant that Marmaduke Constable, his wife Anne, and their children would have lost their inheritance because of this sequestration. Consequently, Richard Sherburne appointed Rushworth as the family's agent, and Sherburne gave him the funds to purchase the estates so that his daughter's, son-in-law's, and grandchildren's inheritance was protected. Since the war, Marmaduke Constable had spent several years paying rents on his father's estates and swearing loyalty oaths while asserting that the estates could only be sequestered for his father's lifetime, which were to revert to Marmaduke upon Sir Philip's death.

An account book belonging to the Blundell family provides detailed insight into how much the family relied upon Gilbert Crouch in managing their sequestration affairs and that of their tenants. Gilbert Crouch not only gave William Blundell vital up-to-date information about the sequestration proceedings which were taking place in London, but he also offered legal guidance to Blundell about how to protect the long-term interests of his real and personal estates in Lancashire. In one entry dated January 1652, Blundell wrote that 'M^r Crouch undertook my busines for prosecuting y^e Parkes and y^e claymes', which he later reimbursed the agent £6. When Blundell was in London between May and July 1653, he recorded that after the titles of claims on his estates were allowed and the purchases concluded, he paid Crouch £10 'for his paynes'. He did note in his accounts that there was 'a good summe of my Doubled moneyes' that was 'never imployd [sic] for me', which suggests that Crouch was making a

healthy profit from Blundell's estates. However, Blundell seemed to have contently accepted this arrangement, as he also added in that entry that 'ther is no question but M^r Cr: doth account for this in y^e summe y^t he saith are in his hands'. Of course, this is purely speculative. It is unclear from surviving correspondence whether the Catholic gentry were happy or, to some extent, resentful towards the agents who were protecting their estates, bearing in mind that they were able to reap off the profits from the lands and build up a substantial property portfolio. Nevertheless, Catholic and delinquent landowners like Blundell were dependent on agents and lawyers to protect the long-term interests of their estates. We have to remember that during the early 1650s, agents were the best means for landowners to protect their estates, and therefore, landowners needed to build up a good working relationship with their agents and lawyers if they wanted to prevent the estates being sold off in pieces.

Blundell clearly had a good rapport with his sequestration agent, remarking in 1658 that he remained Crouch's 'great Debtor' for the respect that Crouch had shown him. Crouch was instrumental in navigating Blundell through the changes in the sequestration policy passed by successive parliaments. And, at crucial moments, he warned Blundell about potential new legislation being debated. For instance, in November 1656, Crouch had alerted Blundell that the Protectorate Parliament was considering re-introducing the penal laws against Catholic recusants and the confiscation of their estates, which was eventually passed in June 1657 as the 'Act for discovering, convicting and suppressing of Popish Recusants'. Blundell thanked Crouch for the 'Duplicate of y^e Order against Recusants', while remarking upon the difficulties in clearing his charges against the Exchequer. In letters to his nephew Thomas Selby, Blundell remarked that he had employed Crouch to clear a charge in time before the deadline and that Crouch was carefully looking into his Exchequer business. Blundell was not the only Catholic to have benefitted from this warning by his lawyer. On 17 June 1657, just days before the act was formally assented to by the Lord Protector on 26 June, Francis Morley informed Captain Adam Baynes that he had been to see John Rushworth, who advised that the forthcoming act meant that no good could be done regarding the estates. However, he remarked that Rushworth had reassured him that should his estates 'Cum to sayle that If I can make Evedence that the Land was Ested upon me before thes wars began then the tytle will be Alloued' and which Morley assented he could easily do.

To make proceedings legally above-board, and undoubtedly because their hands were full of other responsibilities, both Crouch and Rushworth appointed their own agents to manage their new estates and to collect rents in their names. In 1653, Crouch appointed the yeoman

Thomas Cawsey as his attorney to collect rents from the Blundell estates, including Little Crosby, Thornton, and Liverpool. A few years later, Crouch, along with Roger Bradshaigh of Haigh, appointed a steward and bailiff for 'our Manour of Little Crosby' to keep records and collect rents from tenants. In 1653, Rushworth appointed as 'his true and lawfull Attorneys' Robert Sherburne, William Halley, and John Southern to oversee his purchases of the Constable estates in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire, which the attorneys let and demised all manors, tenements, and hereditaments in Rushworth's name. In 1658, the agent William Claxton wrote to Captain Adam Baynes notifying him that a Mr Crick was going to pay money in person in London, which shows that agents were also appointing their own men to deal with their affairs.

Although the agents now legally possessed the estates, it is clear some Catholic landowners still had the interests of their tenants at heart. As well as acting as Blundell's lawyer during the 1650s, Blundell paid Crouch to help his Catholic tenants when he purchased the estates. Blundell had a long reputation of being a good landlord, from renting his land out to the same families for generations, to providing his Catholic tenants with their own cemetery as Catholics were technically not allowed to be buried in churchyards or within churches if they had not conformed to Protestantism. Blundell was even willing to take a financial hit to protect his tenants, and enlisted Crouch's help so that their homes were saved. In 1657, Blundell wrote to Crouch after he had heard the agent had 'indeavoured to ioyne all my Tenants' into one plea, and he later financially rewarded Crouch for his efforts in gratitude for the lawyer helping his tenants. However, not all relationships between agents and tenants were harmonious. Many of Sir Philip Constable's former tenants in Arras and Gardholme, Yorkshire, did not pay their rents to John Rushworth, and several in Whalsey protested against Rushworth's rent increases. There were at least ten incidences of tenants being summoned before the local authorities because the tenants refused to recognise Rushworth as their new landlord. Gilbert Crouch faced a similar scenario when tenants at Thornthwaite manor sued in Chancery in 1657 to halt an attempt to levy fines upon them at twenty times their ancient rent. Although Crouch possessed the manor, it was in fact Sir Francis Howard of Corby who had caused the levying fines to skyrocket.

Things nearly unravelled for agents like Rushworth under the Protectorate. After a series of domestic disorders in early 1655, most notably Penruddock's rising in March that year, parliament turned its attention to removing abuses operating across the counties. Major-generals were appointed in the county regions who were designated to radically reform the

counties under their care, collect the decimation tax, and also clampdown on any abuses in the collection of fines. There were suspicions among county commissioners regarding John Rushworth's estate purchases, as it was believed that Sir Philip Constable still received the rents from his forfeited estates. In 1656, the clerk Robert Smith issued a bill in Chancery against Rushworth alleging that the lawyer was holding West and Middle Rasen in trust and for the benefit of Sir Philip Constable. That spring, the Commissioners for the Securing the Peace of the Commonwealth within the County of Lincolnshire decided that they could not discharge the estates of Middle and West Rasen to Rushworth, declaring that:

Wee cannot yet thinke fitt to discharge the said estates untill Mr Rushworth hath more clearely discovered att whose instance [sic] became purchaser of the said estate & whether since the purchasing the rest, he be not by the said Sr Philip or his son, or some other for them or on their behalf secured or reimbursed the mony by him layd out touching the said purchase and whether in trueth...the reall benefitt or a considerable parte thereunto doth not indeed accrue to the said Sr Philip Constable or his son.

Consequently, an inquiry was opened up and officials investigated whether some fraudulent arrangement had occurred between the Constables and Rushworth. In April 1656, Robert Sherburne and John Rushworth gave separate affidavits, in which they claimed that Sir Philip Constable's Lincolnshire estates were owned by Rushworth, and that these estates were managed by an agent called Christopher Bentley on Rushworth's behalf. Bentley separately confirmed this information, and that he always dispatched the collected rents to London straight into Rushworth's hands. During the inquiry, Rushworth revealed that he was persuaded to make the purchases at the behest of Richard Sherburne and from Constable's distant relation, the regicide Sir William Constable. He argued that the two men requested his help as they were concerned that the Constable estates would be permanently lost to other buyers. Rushworth contended that he purchased Sir Philip Constable's estates 'at the Speciall instance of Mr Shirburne of Stonihurst' so that the estates 'would not suffer destruction' and would not prejudice his heirs, son-in-law, 'or of his grand Children, by Mr Shirburns Daughter'. Rushworth concluded that he strongly believed that Sir Philip Constable was 'supported by the goodnes of his Freinds; and out of that dutifull respect a Sonne ought to beare to his aged Father'. Eventually, the charges were dropped, and Rushworth's deal with Constable and others continued until the Restoration.

The role of agents in protecting Catholic estate forfeitures cannot be underrated for the mid-seventeenth century. Agents like Gilbert Crouch and John Rushworth were integral in the purchasing and protection of sequestered Catholic estates during the Interregnum. Both men were able to buy vast confiscated estates by taking advantage of their legal knowledge and political positions so that their speculative activities were discreet. Their involvement reveals that these networks were widespread across the country. As seen in Rushworth's case, however, their influence was dependent on the current political climate and, after the failed Royalist uprisings in 1655, their powers were vulnerable. Sequestration agents were motivated by pecuniary incentive to bend them towards purchasing estates to make a profit. For sequestered Catholics and their families, however, it was a small price to pay to protect the future security of their estates.

Although surviving evidence makes it difficult to work out how exactly Catholic landowners felt about agents during the mid-seventeenth century, it is clear that for the later early modern period, lawyers and agents remained integral in the protection of Catholic estates. The barrister and politician Sir Edward Northey was frequently employed by Catholic landowners from the early 1700s until his death in 1723 to help them with their estates. Northey's influence was not limited to Catholic estates in Britain, but his advice was also sought for their estates as far flung as Ireland and the Caribbean. Lawyers like David Dixon in Northumberland also helped the Salvin family during the 1720s when anti-recusancy laws were revived in the aftermath of the failed Jacobite rebellion, which saw Catholics facing double taxation and legislation which stated that their estates could only be inherited by Protestant heirs. Agents and lawyers, therefore, were important in the long-term protection of Catholic estates in early modern Britain. Their impact took root during the English Revolution, and by the Georgian period, agents and lawyers were able to cast their net on protecting estates for British Catholic subjects across the emerging British Empire. It was an evolving process, but one which the agents and the Catholic landowners were ready to embrace for a multitude of reasons.

Selected Further Reading:

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Christopher Durston, *Cromwell's major-generals: Godly government during the English Revolution* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001).

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Peter Roebuck, 'The Constables of Everingham: The fortunes of a Catholic royalist family during the Civil War and Interregnum', *Recusant History*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (Apr., 1967), pp. 75-87.