

# *The Impact of the Sales of Confiscated Land on English Society during the Revolution, 1647-1660*

by Ian Gentles\*

The first great European revolution of modern times occurred in England between 1640 and 1660. During that upheaval more than £5 million worth of landed property was confiscated and sold.<sup>1</sup> These land sales are of central importance to understanding the English Revolution, since they reveal not only who invested in that revolution but also who benefited from it.

We now know much more about these events than we did a generation ago. Joan Thirsk and P. G. Holiday have arrived at some remarkable conclusions about the sales of royalist or delinquent land, based on studies of thirteen of the forty counties. Their conclusions for the largest northern county, Yorkshire, and twelve south-eastern counties, are probably valid for the whole country. Sir John Habakkuk has examined three collective purchases of crown land, and has surveyed the financial and administrative aspects of the sales, and the disposition of the confiscated lands after the King's return in 1660. The pattern of crown land sales across England, in addition to the behaviour of the new owners in their capacity as estate managers, and the social impact of these sales in one county — Northamptonshire — have also been studied. The present writer has also recently completed a study of the bishops' land sales, and is presently collaborating with William Sheils in an assessment of the local impact of the sales in the archbishopric of York. The dean and chapter lands, worth just over £1 million, have not been exhaustively investigated, though some unpublished work has been carried out by Sir John Habakkuk. The crown fee farm rents, a less valuable block of property, have not yet received scholarly attention.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> H. J. HABAKKUK, "Public Finance and the Sale of Confiscated Property during the Interregnum", *Economic History Review*, 2nd Ser., XV (1962-3): 87.

<sup>2</sup> JOAN THIRSK, "The Sales of Royalist Land during the Interregnum", *Economic History Review*, 2nd Ser., V (1952-3): 188-207; "The Restoration Land Settlement", *Journal of Modern History*, XXVI (1954): 315-28; P. G. HOLIDAY, "Land Sales and Repurchases in Yorkshire after the Civil Wars, 1650-1670", *Northern History*, V (1970): 67-92; H. J. HABAKKUK, "The Parliamentary Army and the Crown Lands", *Welsh History Review*, III

It is perhaps time to attempt a synthesis of these findings, to see what generalizations can be made. With reference to royalist property, Dr Thirsk discovered that yeomen, small tradesmen and gentry together significantly outweighed the merchant class in the number of purchases.

Table 1. — A CLASSIFICATION OF ALL PURCHASERS HOLDING FORFEITED LAND IN SOUTH-EASTERN ENGLAND IN 1660.<sup>3</sup>

	Number	Percentage of Whole
Royalists' agents	20	8
Parliamentary officials, and grantees of land	18	7
London merchants	79	31
Local gentry*	66	25
Gentry*	13	6
London gentry*	7	3
Local yeomen and artisans	41	16
Lawyers	4	1
Unidentified	9	3
Total	257	100

\*"Local gentry" signifies those who bought land near their homes. "Gentry" signifies those gentlemen who were not apparently connected with the district in which they bought land. Several of them were creditors of Royalists. London gentry are classed separately.

While merchants represented thirty-one percent of the purchasers in the twelve south-eastern counties, many of them were buying land they already occupied or leased. Contemporaries might have expected something of a social transformation to ensue when £ 1.2 million worth of land was thrown onto the market in the early 1650s. Furthermore, the avalanche of confiscated property, descending on a land-hungry society ought to have made a field day for land jobbers and speculators. Yet those individuals who bought up large numbers of properties — men like John Wildman, the former Leveller and future postmaster, John Rushworth, the secretary of the army, and others — were usually acting merely as agents for local people eager to gain possession of land in their own neighbourhood.

Another function of these agents, as Dr Holiday points out, was to avert a social revolution by enabling the royalists to recover their property.<sup>4</sup> Thirsk's astonishing discovery, announced in 1954, and confirmed in 1970 by Holiday's study of Yorkshire, was that the royalist owners,

(1967): 403-26; "Landowners and the Civil War", *Economic History Review*, 2nd Ser., XVIII (1965): 130-51; "The Land Settlement and the Restoration of Charles II", *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th Ser., XXVIII (1978): 201-22; Ian GENTLES, "The Management of the Crown Lands, 1649-1660", *Agricultural History Review*, XIX (1971): 25-41; "The Sales of Crown Land during the English Revolution, 1649-1660", *Economic History Review*, 2nd Ser., XXVI (1973): 614-35; "The Purchasers of Northamptonshire Crown Lands, 1649-1660", *Midland History*, III (1976): 206-32; "The Sales of Bishops' Lands in the English Revolution, 1646-1660", *English Historical Review*, 95 (1980): 93-116.

<sup>3</sup> THIRSK, "The Sales of Royalist Land", p. 206.

<sup>4</sup> HOLIDAY, "Land Sales and Repurchases", p. 77.

usually operating through agents, recovered the lion's share of their confiscated property. There was no official attempt to prevent this from happening. All the sales of confiscated property were devised first and foremost as a means of raising money, not of crushing Parliament's enemies. Major-General John Desborow summed up Parliament's attitude to the cavaliers by declaring: "It is their reformation, not their ruin is desired."<sup>5</sup> As it turned out, the nobility were by far the most successful in recovering their estates. The Marquess of Winchester bought back all but two of his fifteen properties in Hampshire and Berkshire, and all his houses in the City of London. The only two properties which eluded him had already been granted by Parliament to his kinsman, Sir Thomas Jervois, but they returned to his hands by a devious route in 1655. Lord Arundel recovered his two manors in Oxfordshire, and Lord Morley and Mounteagle his six manors in Sussex, Essex and Hertfordshire. The Duke of Newcastle bought back his only estate in the south of England, in Clerkenwell.<sup>6</sup>

Parliament's policy of paying off the royalists' creditors first actually helped the royalists to recover their estates. In many cases the creditors were good friends with the royalists whose lands had been confiscated and which the creditors now possessed. Often creditors simply held the estates in trust for the erstwhile royalist owners. In the long run royalists were frequently able to recover their land from these creditors on more favourable terms than they could have secured by direct purchase.

In the twelve south-eastern counties twenty-five percent of royalist land had been bought back before the Restoration of 1660, and in the end the proportion rose to at least seventy percent.<sup>7</sup> The notable exception to this rule was the Earl of Cleveland, who was very deeply in debt at the time his lands were confiscated. His borrowings with interest exceeded £ 112,000, while the total debts of the remaining forty-nine royalists in Dr Thirsk's study came to only a quarter of that sum. Thus his property, comprising the three adjacent manors of Harlington, Toddington and Dixwells in Bedfordshire, and the two valuable manors of Stepney and Hackney in Middlesex, was sold out almost entirely to redeem his indebtedness. Of the thirty-five beneficiaries, thirty-three were his creditors. The creditors were made up of two fairly distinct groups: a) those whose business interests lay predominantly in London, and b) local gentry and yeomen of the neighbourhood. While the local creditors hung onto their acquisitions at least until 1660, the London creditors hastened to divest themselves of their new properties. In Bedfordshire the local squires and tenant farmers took the initiative in snapping up the lands offered for sale by creditors, while in Middlesex the purchasers, though still local, came largely from the class of wealthy merchants, or were prosperous craftsmen and artisans. The

<sup>5</sup> *The Parliamentary Diary of Thomas Burton*, ed.: J. T. RUTT (1828), I: 237, cited in THIRSK, "The Sales of Royalist Land", p. 193.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 193.

<sup>7</sup> THIRSK, "The Restoration Land Settlement", p. 323. Dr HOLIDAY points out that of the properties Dr Thirsk was able to trace, fully ninety-seven percent were eventually recovered by their royalist owners. "Land Sales and Repurchases", p. 90.

docks and warehouses of the East India Company were situated in Stepney, so it is not surprising to find many of the company's members and employees taking part in the sales.<sup>8</sup>

The eagerness of local people to take advantage of the windfall of royalist property is also seen in the transactions of Philip Skippon, Major-General of the New Model Army infantry. For his services to the cause, Parliament had awarded Skippon three manors in Buckinghamshire, worth approximately £10,000. By 1657 he had sold off most of the properties in twenty parcels to twenty-seven buyers, most of whom were small farmers and tradesmen from the neighbourhood. He realized a profit of twenty percent on the purchase price, besides the rents, fines and timber profits that he had collected before reselling the properties.<sup>9</sup>

To sum up Dr Thirsk's findings:

Some of the lesser Royalist gentry disappeared into oblivion as a result of the sales, but a larger number, including most of the nobility, managed to reassemble all or part of their estates before the Restoration. The wealth which they lost did not rattle in the pockets of those contemporary villains, the Parliamentary fortune seekers; it bulged the coats of some merchants and lawyers, but it also went to swell the purses of many gentry and some of the more ambitious of their land-hungry tenants.<sup>10</sup>

In Yorkshire, a county much less loyal to Parliament, and of less interest to London merchants and government officials, royalists were able to regain sixty-seven percent of their land immediately, with the percentage rising to eighty-seven by 1670.

The history of these sixty-one [Yorkshire] cavaliers illustrates the tenacity and financial resilience of the Yorkshire royalist gentry. 185 estates were confiscated and put up for sale. 134 were recovered within a few months. Of the remaining 51 properties 5 fell to grantees and 18 to creditors, and only 28 were lost through lack of initiative or a shortage of capital. Even so, the vast majority of these 51 estates were eventually recovered by their ex-owners — only 15 of those which can be traced were lost for good.<sup>11</sup>

The royalist sales thus had only a temporary impact on the pattern of landownership in England. Extensive repurchase of their properties by the original owners, both before and after the Restoration, dramatically underlines the strength and determination of the traditional landed class in the face of revolutionary confiscation of their property.

The crown lands were sold to clear off soldiers' pay arrears, which by January 1648 amounted to about £3 million.<sup>12</sup> Once the King had been executed and monarchy abolished, the Army was offered Charles's estates in settlement of about half its debt. Arrears of pay extending back to the beginning of fighting in 1642 were audited and certified. After appropriate

<sup>8</sup> THIRSK, "The Sales of Royalist Land", pp. 195-99.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 201-2.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 205.

<sup>11</sup> HOLIDAY, "Land Sales and Repurchases", pp. 81, 89.

<sup>12</sup> Ian GENTLES, "The Arrears of Pay of the Parliamentary Army at the End of the First Civil War", *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, XLVIII (1975): 55.

deductions had been made from soldiers who had taken free quarter, debentures were issued to all soldiers who were members of the field armies, garrisons or local troops in January 1648. These debentures, while they did not bear interest, could be freely bought and sold. As a consequence, a brisk trade in military debentures sprang up in 1649. For the most part the rank and file sold out to their commanding officers at prices commonly ranging between forty and seventy-five percent below the face value of their debentures. When civilians bought military debentures with the object of applying them to the purchase of a crown estate, they were usually able to negotiate discounts of between sixty-five and eighty percent off the face value. Only a fifth of the crown lands went to civilians, with the balance being obtained by soldiers. Most of the civilians were parochial gentry: minor esquires and gentlemen who resided in the county where they purchased land. Almost all of the 449 military purchasers were officers who acquired their men's debentures towards the purchase price. Some officers and civilians bought directly from the crown trustees, but others used the services of agents — men like Captain and MP Adam Baynes, the chaplain and legal theorist John Warr, and the Leveller pamphleteer Samuel Chidley. These men, like the agents for royalist land, were not speculators, but simply brokers who evidently found it profitable to act as middlemen for others.<sup>13</sup>

Table 2. — SOCIAL STATUS OF CIVILIANS WHO PURCHASED FROM THE CROWN TRUSTEES.

<i>Status</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Value of Purchases (£)</i>	<i>Value as a Percentage</i>
Baron	1	104	0.0
Baronet	1	8,120	3.1
Knight	3	4,091	1.6
Esquire	43	63,858	25.4
Gentleman	101	71,279	28.4
Yeoman	35	16,044	6.3
Husbandman	2	283	0.1
Lawyer	13	11,573	4.5
Merchant	6	16,758	6.6
Citizen tradesman (London)	21	22,351	8.8
Non-citizen tradesman (London)	17	12,317	4.8
Provincial tradesman	10	4,520	1.8
Town or corporation	3	1,015	0.4
Widow	7	976	0.4
Miscellaneous and unidentified	40	19,803	7.8
Total	303	250,092	100.0

Another method used to obtain crown land was the so-called regimental purchase. About £500,000, representing well over a third of the crown lands by value, were obtained in this way. Groups of officers and some-

<sup>13</sup> GENTLES, "The Sales of Crown Land", pp. 618, 622, 624-27.

times individual officers would go around to the men in their regiment, getting them to sign letters of attorney, empowering the officers in question to act on their behalf in the purchase of crown land. The wording of these letters of attorney gives the impression that a whole regiment or brigade was about to share collectively in the ownership of some of the great estates of England, and this is how Habakkuk and others have interpreted it. It is true that a few properties were held by trustees in the name of particular regiments for periods of up to five years. This was the case with the lordship of Bromfield and Yale for example, which was held in the name of the supernumeraries of North Wales between 1650 and 1656. Again, a group of manors chiefly in Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire was acquired between 1652 and 1655, and held for Philip Twisleton's regiment until 1655. In both instances, however, the properties were reconveyed to individual officers as soon as it was practical to do so. The trustees who had acquired Bromfield and Yale were both London relatives of the brigade's colonel, John Jones. He was unenthusiastic about buying the lordship, but he took the title to it in 1656, after failing to find an alternative purchaser. The partition of Twisleton's regimental purchases was delayed owing to the men's difficulty in obtaining valid debentures for their certificates of arrears. As soon as the final transaction was concluded in 1655 the properties were divided among twenty-one of the regiment's officers. The third "collective" purchase studied by Habakkuk involved the men of John Okey's regiment. The lands were mainly in Bedfordshire, where part of the regiment was located in 1649, but the bulk of the property ended up in Colonel Okey's hands, and he quit Hackney to set himself up as a landed proprietor in Bedfordshire.<sup>14</sup>

The same pattern holds for the controversial purchases made on behalf of Colonel Edward Whalley's regiment. These £30,000 worth of crown lands in Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Nottinghamshire were not owned corporately by the 600 horse troopers, but were partitioned among eight of the leading officers.<sup>15</sup> Similar examples are easily multiplied. Two months after Charles Fleetwood's regiment bought the manors of Woodstock and Methwold Warren for £17,895, the properties were conveyed entirely to Fleetwood himself.<sup>16</sup> Major-General John Lambert bought Wimbledon Manor and Park using his regiment's debentures;<sup>17</sup> Colonel Thomas

<sup>14</sup> HABAKKUK, "The Parliamentary Army and the Crown Lands".

<sup>15</sup> GENTLES, "The Sales of Crown Land", p. 628. Mark Kishlansky and I have had a clash of interpretation about the fairness of Parliament's treatment of the soldiers, and about the "regimental" purchases. Professor Kishlansky has argued that the sales of crown lands represented "an extraordinarily attractive settlement" for the soldiery, and that the lands bought by the officers of Colonel Whalley's regiment were in reality owned collectively by the regiment. I do not think that he proves either of his points. Mark KISHLANSKY, "The Sales of Crown Lands and the Spirit of the Revolution", *Economic History Review*, 2nd Ser., XXIX (1976): 125-30; Ian GENTLES, "The Sales of Crown Lands: A Rejoinder", *Economic History Review*, 2nd Ser., XXIX (1976): 131-35.

<sup>16</sup> Public Record Office (hereafter: PRO), Exchequer, King's Remembrancer, Certificates as to the Sale of Crown Lands, E121/5/7/12; Chancery Enrolments, Close Rolls, C54/3703/45.

<sup>17</sup> PRO, E121/4/8/30; C54/3677/29.

Pride got Nonesuch Palace and Great Park with his men's debentures.<sup>18</sup> Colonel Thomas Harrison got most of Marylebone Park,<sup>19</sup> Colonel Nathaniel Rich the manor of Eltham<sup>20</sup> and Captain Adam Baynes the manor and park of Holdenby in the same way.<sup>21</sup>

The interpretation of the regimental purchase as a legal fiction which enabled officers to buy up their men's debentures and obtain land without civilian competition seems to be the only one that makes sense. In the first place, such an arrangement was in the interests of both the officers, who wanted land, and their men, who only wanted cash. As Colonel Siddenham put it, "They [the rank and file] are poor, and if you assign lands to them they must sell again."<sup>22</sup> In the second place, genuine collective ownership would have been an administrative nightmare. How was a perpetual income from land to be divided up among a temporary and fluctuating body of 600 or 1,000 men? We must remember that every regiment experienced a constant turnover of personnel. Would men go on sharing in the ownership of a regimental property after they had returned home, or would they receive a cash settlement? If they had got cash, there would have been a powerful incentive to quit the Army. Again, how was an income to be divided up among a regiment, half of which might be stationed in Ireland, or half of whose companies might be dispersed to different parts of England? It was these difficulties to which Colonel Jones was alluding when he said: "The fancy of intituling all the Brigade to the purchase made with our debentures hath neither reason nor possibility of practice in it, without apparent loss and confusion."<sup>23</sup>

Finally, the concept of collective ownership was foreign to English custom, at least since the sixteenth century, and perhaps since the thirteenth. By the mid-seventeenth century English landownership was more intensely individualistic than that of any other European country, and there is no evidence that more than a very few of the officers and men of the parliamentary army departed from the individualistic assumptions of their society between 1647 and 1660.<sup>24</sup>

How did the purchasers of crown land look after their property during their short tenure? The local civilian purchasers do not appear to have introduced many changes. It would have been hard for them to do so in

<sup>18</sup> PRO, E121/4/8/100. See also C54/3941/22 for a reference to "Sir Thomas Pride of Nonsuch greate Parke ... Surrey" (3 April 1657).

<sup>19</sup> PRO, E121/3/4/27, Crown Estate Office, Entry Books and Registers; PRO, CRES 6/2, Surveyor General's Books of Constats, 1660-61, fos. 224-26.

<sup>20</sup> PRO, E121/2/11/19; C54/3745/28.

<sup>21</sup> PRO, E121/4/1/30; British Library, Add. MS. 21,427 (Correspondence of Adam Baynes), fo. 291.

<sup>22</sup> *Diary of Thomas Burton*, II: 240, quoted in Christopher HILL, *Puritanism and Revolution* (London, 1958), p. 177.

<sup>23</sup> "Inedited Letters of Cromwell, Colonel Jones, Bradshaw and other Regicides", Joseph MAYER, ed., *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, New Ser., 1 (1860-61): 229, quoted in HABAKKUK, "The Parliamentary Army and the Crown Lands", p. 422.

<sup>24</sup> Alan MACFARLANE, *The Origins of English Individualism* (Oxford, 1978), p. 163.

any case, since most of the lands they acquired were still burdened with leases outstanding for up to seventy years to come.<sup>25</sup> The military purchasers, especially those who acquired parks and palaces, proved considerably more innovative. Timber was cut, deer killed off, palaces demolished, and parks enclosed and converted to arable land or pasture.<sup>26</sup> After the Restoration royalists gave horrified accounts of the sorry decline of certain royal seats from their previous condition of splendour. The surveyor of Hertfordshire, for example, must have shed bitter tears as he recorded the decay into which the once great honour of Berkhamsted had sunk:

In obedience to your Lordship's command I have been at Berkhamsted, where I find a noble seat and house left standing but much worse than I have heretofore known it. All the west front thereof under the gallery being converted to a barn, and other parts of it decayed by defects in the tiling and taking away the lead over the gatehouse and other places and much of the leaden pipes from the walls, and by having the backhouse and brewhouse [turned in] to a stable and the dairy house to a barn, the great old barn being quite taken away and gone. And the water that served the house by a force from the river, all broken up and a new bucket well made, so that I think to repair the house and build a new barn and a stable will cost £ 500 or more, and then it will want a good tenant to keep it in repair and relieve the poor, wherewith that little market town abounds. And to govern the people much seduced of late by new doctrines preached unto them by Colonel Axtell and others that have long prevailed in those parts... The woods are all cut down (except about 70 beech trees and shrubs) to the value, as I am told, of above £ 10,000, and the defacing of the seat which was very noble and the impoverishing of the land now much worn out with tillage. And it is now believed that Colonel Axtell hath already raised his purchase money by wood and corn, and that most of the other purchasers are no great losers thereby.<sup>27</sup>

The soldiers who acquired parks had considerable scope for change, since parks were unencumbered by leases. A seventeenth-century royal park was a classic example of conspicuous consumption. An area of several thousand acres deliberately kept unproductive for scenic or hunting purposes, it was frequently fenced or walled, and had to be guarded against poachers, while being maintained at considerable expense. Royal penury, combined perhaps with the pressure of population, had already led to the elimination of a number of parks before 1640.<sup>28</sup>

Despite the charges levelled by royalists, the purchasers were not guilty of wanton destruction. Much of the property was in a state of decay when they bought it, and since the soldiers' needs were not the same as the King's it was only reasonable for them to dismantle and sell things for which they had no use. Only occasionally would there be a soldier like John Lambert who desired and could afford to maintain a royal palace. Accordingly, the palaces of Richmond, Oatlands, Berkhamsted, Holdenby and Theobalds were torn down, and the lead, glass and stone either sold or used to build more practical structures such as barns, stables, coach-houses and dovecotes.

<sup>25</sup> GENTLES, "The Management of the Crown Lands, 1649-60", pp. 25-27.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>27</sup> PRO, CRES 6/1, fo. 21.

<sup>28</sup> See for example, P. A. J. PETTIT, "The Royal Forests of Northamptonshire", *Northamptonshire Record Society Publications*, XXIII (1968): 151.

Alterations in land use sometimes entailed sizeable capital investments. The cavalry officers who bought Windsor Great Park, for example, subdivided it into about one hundred parcels, which they enclosed with hedges and ditches "at the great charge of the said purchasers". After the land had been cleared, manured and ploughed, and a number of houses, barns and stables erected, the former park became a substantial supplier of grain to the neighbouring district.<sup>29</sup>

There were many other estates where the soldiers pursued a policy of enclosure and agrarian improvement. One of their number, Captain Walter Blith, was the author of perhaps the best book of husbandry during the Interregnum,<sup>30</sup> *The English Improver Improved* (1652). He urged his fellow soldiers to enhance their newly-acquired lands, devoting much space to eulogizing new or unusual crops like clover, woad, saffron, "liquorish", parsnips, artichokes and turnips.

On one royal estate, Theobalds Park in Hertfordshire, not only was the soil put to new uses, but a small community of republicans established themselves, attracting notoriety for their social and religious ideas. Six of them were officers in Lord Fairfax's horse regiment, under the leadership of Major William Packer. At least two dozen more were civilians. Theobalds, "from [being] the seat of a monarch ... [became] a little commonwealth; so many entire tenements, like splinters [having] flown out of the materials thereof".<sup>31</sup> The community found its focus in a Baptist chapel which scandalized local inhabitants and proved to be a thorn in the side of the government. Packer and his comrades attended a stormy meeting of the council of officers and heckled Oliver Cromwell as he delivered a tirade against radicals. Cromwell retaliated by sacking all six of them from the Army.<sup>32</sup> Packer's community also created trouble for the Quakers, threatening to apprehend George Fox if he ever ventured near Theobalds. Fox, however, regarded the threat as an invitation. "I was moved of the Lord God to go down to Theobalds, and appoint a meeting hard by them", but his efforts at evangelization seem to have met with indifferent success.<sup>33</sup>

A quite different set of problems emerges when we look at the church lands. The bishops' estates were the first form of confiscated property to be sold during the English Revolution. Their sale was occasioned by Parliament's urgent need, in the fall of 1646, to find the £200,000 required to pay the Scots army to leave the kingdom. When the City of London was approached for a loan, the reply came back that no money would be forthcoming unless it was secured on the bishops' lands. Though

<sup>29</sup> PRO, State Papers Domestic: Charles II, SP29/22, fos. 263-64.

<sup>30</sup> G. E. FUSSELL, *Old English Farming Books* (London, 1947), p. 51.

<sup>31</sup> Thomas FULLER, *The History of the Worthies of England*, ed.: P. A. Nuttall (London, 1840), II: 38.

<sup>32</sup> Folger Shakespeare Library, Add. MS. 494 (Correspondence of Colonel Robert Bennett), vol. II, fo. 461.

<sup>33</sup> W. PAGE, ed., *Victoria History of the Counties of England. Hertfordshire* (London, 1912), III: 449.

the House of Lords at first balked, the City finally got its way and episcopacy was abolished. The City also got its way with the introduction of a novel scheme which came to be known as doubling. It was invented by Cornelius Burges, a Presbyterian divine. Anyone who had advanced money, plate or horses, and had been given a receipt or public faith bill in return could, by advancing the same amount again, receive a new bill for twice the original sum, to be secured on the bishops' lands and the excise. Both the old and the doubled bills bore eight percent interest, and both could be freely sold or exchanged.<sup>34</sup>

As soon as it became known that the bishops' lands were to be sold, a brisk trade sprang up in public faith bills. During the time of the land sales, undoubled bills fetched between forty and seventy percent of their face value. The equivalent rate for doubled bills was seventy and eighty-five percent respectively.<sup>35</sup> Such a high discount on public faith bills, even after they had been secured on church property, reflects very badly on the government's credit. Habakkuk has pointed out that the main reason for the Commonwealth's chronic financial trouble during the 1650s was the careless treatment of its creditors during the 1640s. "It is doubtful whether there has ever been in English history a regime whose obligations circulated at so heavy a discount."<sup>36</sup> The discount on public faith bills was heavy enough, but the soldiers suffered far heavier discounts on their debentures, even after they had been secured on the crown lands. Military debentures commonly fetched only twenty to twenty-five percent of their face value, although some soldiers succeeded in bargaining for up to sixty percent from their more liberal commanders.<sup>37</sup>

The relatively buoyant price for doubled public faith bills secured on bishops' lands is a reflection of the fact that this particular form of church property was very attractively priced. The minimum price was set at ten times their annual value. Castles, palaces and other houses were permitted to go for even less, presumably on account of the restricted number of people for whom these buildings had any use.<sup>38</sup> Only the crown fee farm rents, at eight years' purchase, were sold at a lower rate than the bishops' lands. The crown lands, by contrast, were sold for thirteen times their annual value. The surveyors of bishops' lands had to do their job in haste, and hence were at the mercy of tenants and other local people. The result was that the lands were undervalued. The crown land surveyors, on the other hand, did their job more carefully and produced a beautiful set of parliamentary surveys. They also, incidentally, substantially overvalued the crown lands.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>34</sup> *The Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum*, eds: C. H. FIRTH and R. S. RAIT (London, 1911), I: 884.

<sup>35</sup> Borthwick Institute of Historical Research, untitled MS, concerning the estates of the Archbishop of York, CC Ab3/2, fo. 23.

<sup>36</sup> HABAKKUK, "Public Finance", p. 82.

<sup>37</sup> GENTLES, "The Sales of Crown Land", p. 618.

<sup>38</sup> *Acts and Ordinances*, I: 1106.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, II: 360; GENTLES, "The Sales of Crown Land", p. 617.

It might be thought that buying confiscated church land from a precarious revolutionary regime was a risky business. So it was. Yet the records show that lenders were eager to double and that there was no trouble selling off all the land. Indeed, it sold for considerably more than the minimum ten years' purchase. Fourteen or fifteen years' purchase was not unusual in the beginning, but after a few months the prices bid seem to have settled down to about eleven or twelve years' purchase.<sup>40</sup> Even so, there was a handsome profit awaiting those who later sold off their bishops' land. In the forty-four transactions where it has been possible to make an exact comparison between purchase and resale prices, there was an average profit of forty percent. Compare this with a twenty-six percent *loss* on the sales of crown land.<sup>41</sup> All things considered, the bishops' lands were a never-to-be-repeated bargain in the history of the English land market.

Table 3. — TENANT PURCHASERS IN SIX BISHOPRICS.<sup>42</sup>

<i>Bishopric</i>	<i>Tenants</i>	<i>Purchasers</i>	<i>Tenant-purchasers</i>
Canterbury	378	65	8
Durham	1,375	24	6
Gloucester	157	13	1
London	183	26	0
Worcester	557	53	13
York	307	72	6
Totals	2,957	253	34

Who were the beneficiaries of this bargain? Certainly not the tenants. In the six bishoprics for which surveys survive in substantial quantity, tenants obtained barely five percent of the land, and yet tenants had the exclusive right to purchase for the first thirty days after the property went on sale. It is interesting to note that immediate tenants bought very little crown or royalist land as well, though they seem to have been more successful at acquiring dean and chapter land.<sup>43</sup> Why did so few tenants

<sup>40</sup> D. A. KIRBY, ed., "Parliamentary Surveys of the Bishopric of Durham", *Surtees Society Publications*, 185 (1972): 187; *House of Commons Journals*, VI: 23; Guildhall Library, Particular of Sale of Fulham Manor in 1647, MS. 10,464; St. Paul's Cathedral Library, Copy of the Minute Book of the Contractors for the Sale of Bishops' Lands, MS. WD51, fos. 29, 35, 70, 102, 37a.

<sup>41</sup> Ian GENTLES, "The Debentures Market and Military Purchases of Crown Land, 1649-1660" (PhD thesis, University of London, 1969), p. 146.

<sup>42</sup> Gloucester City Library, G3/19; KIRBY, "Parliamentary Surveys"; Lambeth Palace Library, Parliamentary Surveys of the Archbishopric of Canterbury, COMM. XXIa/22-3; Borthwick Institute of Historical Research, Parliamentary Surveys of Bishops' Lands (1647), CC Ab8/2-3; Worcestershire Record Office, Parliamentary Surveys of Bishops' Lands, b.009.1, BA 2636; Guildhall Library, Copy of the Parliamentary Survey of the Bishoprick of London, MS. 10,464A. Note: this table does not comprehend all the properties in the six bishoprics; merely those properties for which surveys were found. The surveys are known to be incomplete for Canterbury, London and York, but appear to be nearly complete for the other three.

<sup>43</sup> HABAKKUK, "The Land Settlement", p. 206.

manage to purchase their estates, despite their exclusive right to do so during the first month after the survey was completed? Reluctance to raid the property of the dead king or the defunct church does not seem to have been a factor. A tenant of Easington, Durham, declared that they had been ignorant of the benefit of pre-emption, and that their distance from London would have prevented them from taking advantage of it in any event.<sup>44</sup> A far graver obstacle was the expressed desire of Parliament to sell manors intact,<sup>45</sup> a desire that the trustees for the sale of the lands were mainly successful in honouring. This meant that unless he was quite prosperous, a tenant wishing to buy was obliged to club together with the other tenants of a given manor to raise the money and then to hire an agent in London to secure the conveyance. By then the pre-emption period would in all likelihood have elapsed. His only alternative was to negotiate with the purchaser of a manor for his own messuage or tenement. Some purchasers did part with a few scraps of land in this way, but Walter Boothby was more typical in his adamant rejection of his tenants' entreaties to be allowed to obtain the ownership of their estates.<sup>46</sup>

A search of all the resales traceable in the central court records produces a list of 807 people known to have been in final possession of the bishops' lands. About half a dozen who appear at first sight to have been large buyers turn out on closer inspection to have been agents. All of them were government officials, and only one of them, John Blackwell, can be classed as a speculator on any scale. A captain in Oliver Cromwell's horse regiment, Blackwell was also deputy-treasurer of war, and the son of one of the contractors for bishops' lands. His father was a well-to-do City grocer with a family estate in Mortlake, Surrey.<sup>47</sup> Blackwell bought and sold a number of properties in five bishoprics, realizing profits of fifty to seventy percent.<sup>48</sup> If Blackwell's use of discounted public faith bills is taken into account, the profit margin on these transactions was higher still. These speculative ventures were very much the exception; the other agents dealt in only a few properties each. At the time of the bishops' land sales, the market in confiscated land was as yet unsophisticated. Land jobbers on a large scale — men like Adam Baynes, Samuel Chidley, John Wildman and John Rushworth — each involved in dozens of transactions, did not make their appearance until the sales of crown and royalist land were underway in the 1650s.

What of the purchasers themselves? Overwhelmingly they came from the south of England. Almost half the bishops' lands were acquired by

<sup>44</sup> PRO, Chancery Proceedings, Bridges Division, C5/20/49.

<sup>45</sup> *Acts and Ordinances*, I: 1217.

<sup>46</sup> PRO, C5/20/49.

<sup>47</sup> G. E. AYLMER, *The State's Servants* (London, 1973), pp. 242-46.

<sup>48</sup> Bodleian Library, Rawlinson MS. B239, fo. 24 (no. 331); PRO, C54/3619/12; 3907/12; 3938/34, 36; Rawlinson MS. B239, fo. 41 (no. 473); fo. 44 (no. 496); PRO, C54/3998/8.

Londoners, both gentry and merchants.<sup>49</sup> Those who bought in the county where they resided were more numerous than outside purchasers, but the latter's purchases were far more valuable. The financial preponderance of non-local purchasers is largely a function of the leading part played by Londoners. By and large the aristocracy abstained from the scramble for land; the number of peers and baronets among the purchasers was minute

Table 4. — SOCIAL STATUS OF THE PURCHASERS OF BISHOPS' LANDS.

	<i>No. of Purchasers</i>	<i>Value of Purchases (£)</i>	<i>Percentage of Total Value of Bishops' Lands</i>
Peer	2	7,760	1
Baronet	8	34,812	5
Knight	16	24,683	4
Esquire	147	172,841	25
Gentleman	205	98,696	14
Yeoman	58	7,220	1
Husbandman	2	183	0
London merchant, or citizen-tradesman or-artisan	147	209,198	30
London non-citizen-tradesman or artisan	43	18,147	3
Provincial merchant, tradesman or artisan	45	23,949	3
Lawyer	49	66,075	9
Other professional	26	14,053	2
Other	19	9,340	1
Unknown	40	13,042	2
Totals	807	699,999	100

The chief beneficiaries were London merchants, and local gentry and yeomen. It is important to stress that the bishops' lands were not simply acquired by the London financial community. Many of the "Londoners" were in fact government officials. Twenty bishops' land officials alone bought land, as well as thirty-eight army officers. Sixty-seven Members of the Long Parliament ended up with over a quarter of the lands.

Whereas there appears to have been no discernible political motivation behind the purchases of other forms of confiscated land (the soldiers obtaining crown land because they had no choice, and civilians buying delinquent and capitular land because they knew a bargain when they saw one), many of the bishops' land purchasers seem to have shared the same political complexion. Almost three-quarters of the lands bought by MPs for example, went to revolutionaries or those who conformed to the revolutionary act of Pride's Purge.<sup>50</sup> Why is it that so many of the parliamentary purchasers were political radicals?

<sup>49</sup> In addition to the merchants, tradesmen and artisans, the "London" purchasers included the lawyers and fifteen percent (by value) of the esquires and gentlemen in Table 4. GENTLES, "The Sales of Bishops' Lands", p. 108.

<sup>50</sup> David UNDERDOWN, *Pride's Purge* (London, 1971), p. 220.

The answer is to be found in terms of the parliamentary loan of 1646 for which lands had been offered as security. Doubled public faith bills worth £400,000 were issued to those who lent the £200,000 needed to pay the Scottish Army and rid them from English soil. Getting the Scots to leave England was the paramount objective of the parliamentary Independents in the fall of 1646. Subscribers to the loan could not have been ignorant of the fact that they were giving tangible support to the "win-the-war" faction in the Long Parliament. It is not surprising, then, that a significant number were supporters and even members of that faction. That after the Restoration a fifth of the lands were held by those who belonged to the select company excluded from the royal pardon offers striking evidence of the radicalism of the bishops' land purchasers.<sup>51</sup>

Overall, the sales of confiscated land in the English Revolution did not effect a permanent alteration of English society. Most royalist property was regained by the royalists themselves, either before or soon after the Restoration. Most of the crown lands were acquired by 449 members of the Army, of whom few evinced any interest in turning into established landowners. The bishops' lands went to a combination of London merchants, MPs, state officials and local gentry, while it seems to have been principally immediate tenants who took possession of the dean and chapter lands.

What was the fate of the buyers of confiscated land after Charles II's return in the spring of 1660? In the months prior to his return it was widely feared that the land sales had created a vested interest opposed to monarchy. There were still many purchasers among the army in England, the MPs, and the London merchant community. The existence of this vested interest compelled General Monck to proceed cautiously, and to commit himself publicly to protect purchasers in any Restoration.<sup>52</sup> Although Charles and his advisers would have preferred a complete resumption of all confiscated property, they found it politic, in the Declaration of Breda (April 1660), to leave it to Parliament to "provide for the just satisfaction" of all concerned.<sup>53</sup> Purchasers interpreted this as a pledge either to confirm their titles, or to compensate them for any losses,<sup>54</sup> but the Convention Parliament thought otherwise. Embittered royalist MPs insisted that the crown and church lands were stolen property and that no one, whatever his innocence, could expect compensation for receiving stolen property. The Convention therefore returned the lands to the Crown and the Church, but left it to both those institutions to decide how they would treat the present occupiers.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Lambeth Palace Library, MS. 951, no. 11, fos. 48-v; *Statutes of the Realm*, V: 317. The politics of the parliamentary loans on the security of the bishops' lands is discussed in greater detail in my "The Sales of Bishops' Lands", pp. 111-14.

<sup>52</sup> R. BAKER, *A Chronicle of the Kings of England* (1679), pp. 678-79.

<sup>53</sup> S. R. GARDINER, *Constitutional Documents of the Puritan Revolution 1625-1660*, 3rd ed. (Oxford, 1906), p. 466.

<sup>54</sup> BAKER, *A Chronicle*, pp. 612-13.

<sup>55</sup> *Cobbett's Parliamentary History*, IV (1808): 4, 5, 8; *Old Parliamentary History*, XXII (1760): 254.

Charles II made very large grants of crown land to the man who had single-handedly effected his recovery of the throne, George Monck, and also to Edward Montagu.<sup>56</sup> Several dozen soldiers who asserted that they too had switched sides in 1659, were allowed to continue as tenants of their estates, paying only nominal rents.<sup>57</sup> A like number of royalists also benefited from generous leases of crown lands. A long-term consequence of Charles's policy was the effective disappearance of the crown lands as an important source of royal income, and hence the increased dependence of the Monarchy on parliamentary taxation.

Immediately upon their return, deans and bishops began negotiating with the purchasers who were still in possession of church lands. Although the ecclesiastics were anxious to maximize their income from entry fines and rents, there was pressure from the Crown to avoid antagonizing ancient tenants and politically influential purchasers.<sup>58</sup> With respect to the bishops' lands, most purchasers received moderate treatment. The guiding principle was to allow them either a long lease on easy terms or the repayment of their purchase money with interest, minus whatever income they had received during their tenure. Ancient tenants who compounded with purchasers for the return of their estates were allowed to deduct their costs from the entry fines they paid the bishops. The churchmen raised their entry fines and rents, but since these had been sharply undervalued in 1647, the increases were not exorbitant.<sup>59</sup>

Apart from the moderate treatment of purchasers and ancient tenants by churchmen, there were two additional reasons why their dispossession was effected so smoothly at the Restoration. Most crown and church property had been heavily burdened with leases, so that few purchasers were able to settle on their estates, even had they wished to. Compelled to content themselves with being rent receivers, they had failed to sink roots in a locality or establish a base of power and influence there. Secondly, most purchasers had recovered most if not all of their outlay by 1660. Land bought for twelve or fourteen years' purchase with debentures or doubled public faith bills that had been procured for anywhere from twenty-five to eighty percent of their face value, would have yielded a yearly profit of at least ten percent for a decade or more.<sup>60</sup> Having recouped their

<sup>56</sup> PRO, Land Revenue, Miscellaneous Books: Papers concerning the Crown Lands at the Restoration, LR2/266, fo. 83; W. A. SHAW, ed., *Calendar of the Treasury Books 1660-61*, I (1904): 194; *Calendar of the State Papers, Domestic Series*, pp. 285-86.

<sup>57</sup> PRO, LR2/266, fos 29-30, 66; CRES 6/1, fo. 4 *et passim*.

<sup>58</sup> HABAKKUK, "The Land Settlement", p. 217.

<sup>59</sup> THIRSK, "The Restoration Land Settlement", p. 326; I. M. GREEN, *The Re-establishment of the Church of England, 1660-1663* (Oxford, 1978), pp. 102, 103; W. J. SHELS, "The Restoration and the Temporalities: Archbishop Frewen's Commissioners, 1661-1662", *Borthwick Institute Bulletin*, 1 (1975): 21; Borthwick Institute of Historical Research, CC Ab2/6.

<sup>60</sup> "Fourteen years' purchase" means a purchase price equal to fourteen times the net yearly value of the property. The traditional price of land was reckoned at twenty years' purchase, and land sold for an average of eighteen years' purchase in the later seventeenth century. Confiscated land sold for considerably less than the normal rate during the Revolution, both because of the political risks involved, and because of the régime's desperate

investment by 1660, they were less inclined to protest the reconfiscation of their estates.<sup>61</sup>

In summary, the sales of confiscated land in England demonstrate that property which is simply sold or awarded to the state's creditors, does not bring about social transformation. To be sure, several hundred soldiers and parliamentary revolutionaries did take advantage of the sales of crown and bishops' lands to improve temporarily their social rank. A larger number of beneficiaries, however, were local gentry or London merchants. Most striking is the revelation that the great majority of the delinquent estates were bought back by the royalists themselves. There are parallels here with the experience of revolutionary France. There too, the primary reason for the auction of national property was to raise money. Hence, it was the bourgeoisie and peasant aristocracy who were the most important purchasers, while landless peasants derived very little benefit from the upheaval in the land market. As in England, many of the dispossessed French families recovered their estates within a short space of time.<sup>62</sup> Not until the Marxist revolutions of this century has the property of defeated social classes and institutions been redistributed for the political purpose of effecting a permanent alteration in the structure of societies. The lack of ideological motivation behind the land sales of the English Revolution also goes far towards explaining why there was relatively little conflict and bitterness during the counter-revolutionary transition of the 1660s.

need to raise cash and to re-establish its credit. Cf. C. CLAY, "The Price of Freehold Land in the Later Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries", *Economic History Review*, 2nd Ser., XXVII (1974): 174.

<sup>61</sup> HABAKKUK, "The Land Settlement", pp. 219-20.

<sup>62</sup> G. LEFEBVRE, "Recherches relatives à la vente des biens nationaux", *La Revue d'Histoire Moderne*, III (1928): 202, 203, 210; C. TILLY, *The Vendée* (Cambridge, Mass., 1964), p. 207.