

A chapter from the forthcoming book
the Great Chamber at the Charterhouse



Clockwise from top left: King Charles II, the Duke of Buckingham, the Duke of Monmouth, the Earl of Craven, Archbishop Sheldon, Bishop Morley, the Earl of Shaftesbury, Bishop Henchman, the Earl of Shrewsbury. Photographs: Will Pryce.

‘Men of Honour and Power’: the Charterhouse’s Restoration governors

Cathy Ross

At first sight, the portraits of Charterhouse’s governors show the English Establishment in all its pomp.¹ These ten men clearly belong to the nation’s governing elite. Here are clerics and archbishops, lords and a king. All are depicted as serious and unsmiling figures wearing or carrying their personal symbols of high office – from the Order of the Garter to episcopal robes. One wears a suit of armour. There are no women.

Taken together, the portraits could be taken as a parade of establishment types: a predictable tribe of like-minded patricians. These are surely men who consolidated their status through the patronage of charitable institutions like the Charterhouse: men who believed that slow change was preferable to sudden revolution, and that power was best reserved to the great and the good – the great and the good being people just like them.

That may be true, but these portraits also have other stories to tell. The fifty years following the restoration of King Charles II in 1660 saw the English establishment at its most splintered and divided, as various governments tried to build a new world on the foundations of an old world still smarting from civil war. These were years of terrorist plots, bitter arguments about religion, and ruthless power-games played out in a country where top-down authority was ephemeral, despite the supposed restoration of stability in the form of a king and the Anglican Church. Far from constituting a homogeneous self-perpetuating elite, many of Charterhouse’s governors held bitterly opposed ideas about what the post-republican English state should look like.

The ten Restoration governors whose portraits now hang in the Great Chamber represent the full spectrum of warring views. They include the first Earl of Shaftesbury, scourge of Anglican bishops; Bishop Humphrey Henchman, scourge of nonconforming Protestants; Archbishop Sheldon, *éminence grise* of conforming Anglicans; George, second Duke of Buckingham, *éminence grise* of esoteric free-thinkers; a king who was secretly sympathetic to Catholics; his wayward son the Duke of Monmouth – openly stoking populist hatred against Catholics. Monmouth met his end on the scaffold, Shaftesbury died in exile: both deemed guilty of treason. Two Masters of Charterhouse during this period were accused of dangerously heretical ideas. Another governor helped contrive the coup d’état that ended the Stuart monarchy. The men who met around the table at the Charterhouse do not seem to agree about much.

The portraits thus encourage speculation: not least, the question of whether national tensions transferred into decision-making about the Charterhouse during this period. The governance arrangements at the hospital mirrored the national state in recognising three clusters of power: the crown, the Church and the law. Thus, the sixteen governors comprised three royal governors, six high-ranking bishops, and six high-ranking statesmen. The sixteenth governor was always the current Master, the junior in terms of rank. In the national state, the interplay between Church, court and parliament was perpetually turbulent. Could the same be said of the Charterhouse. Was the hospital in effect a microstate where larger disagreements about power were pursued in miniature?

THE GREAT CHAMBER PORTRAITS

	Charles I	Archbishop Gilbert Sheldon	First Earl of Shaftesbury	Bishop George Morley	Bishop Humphrey Henchman	Earl of Craven	Second Duke of Buckingham	Duke of Monmouth	Thomas Burnet	Earl of Shrewsbury
1660										
1660-5 Act of Uniformity Laws against nonconformist preaching	royal governor 1660-85	governor 1662-77	governor 1662-83	governor 1663-84						
1665-70 Plague Great Fire of London					governor 1667-75	governor 1668-97				
1670-5 Test Act Growing fear of Catholics					1675		governor 1670-87			
1675-80 Popish Plot Moves to exclude James from the throne		1677					governor 1675-85			
1680-5 Accession of James II Monmouth's rebellion	1685		1683	1684			1685			
1685-90 Accession of William and Mary							1687		Master 1685-1715	governor 1689-1718
1690-1700						1697				
1700									1715	1718

Writing about the very early years of Thomas Sutton's hospital at the Charterhouse, Stephen Porter notes its potential to be a mini-Utopia, a place where the governors could project their values.

'Both because of [the] size and the terms of Sutton's endowment, [its] foundation and administration provided an opportunity for the most senior figures in church and state to create, consciously or not, the kind of society which reflected their ideals and assumptions.'²

If agreement among the governors about what constituted an ideal society was even possible in 1611, the hospital's foundation date, it was a very tall order by the 1660s. And if this was so, were the governors at daggers drawn over every decision, big or small?

Contemporary accounts of Sutton's Hospital present the opposite view. Two of the charity's early chroniclers describe harmonious accord. Both Percival Burrell in 1629 and Samuel Herne in 1677 use the metaphor of a sailing ship to link both nation and hospital. The governors are 'at the Helm' of the kingdom and also steering 'the goodly ship' of the charity:

'Thus the Government of this Foundation is fixed upon the most Honourable Grandees of our State, and the most Reverend Prelates of our Church; they who sit at the Helm of our Kingdom, and are graciously pleased to steer and guide this goodly Ship of Renowned Sutton's Charity. And here we may note the great Wisdom of our Founder, who made choice of men of Honour and Power, who were able to maintain his Foundation by their Interest, and to grace it with their Honour.'³

Herne's words evoke calm seas and prosperous voyages for both ships. But the possibility of discord among the men of honour and power was ever-present. The individual governors whose portraits hang on the walls of the Great Chamber include men fully prepared to rock the boat of the ship of state, even to the extent of armed rebellion. Did they set aside their differences when meeting to steer the smaller ship of the charity: or was the journey from 1660 to 1700 equally turbulent?

'ANABAPTISTS AND SPURIOUS FELLOWS...'

If there was discord among the governors, it seems inevitable that the root was religion. The reigns of Charles II and James II have been characterised as a period of 'religious cold war', a period when the clash of ideas about belief and worship infused every aspect of political, social and cultural life.⁴ It was probably inevitable that the Charterhouse should become entangled in the skirmishing, given its role as a model Protestant institution. Since its foundation, Sutton's Hospital had been seen as a bricks-and-mortar testament to 'the unparalleled bounty of Protestant piety',⁵ as opposed to the hypocritical greed of Catholic superstition. Defining Sutton's Hospital as Protestant not Catholic may have been straightforward in 1611, but the aftermath of the Civil War saw this single religious fault-line mutate into a more complicated web. It was no longer sufficient for the hospital to be Protestant: it had to be the right kind of Protestant.

The restoration of the monarchy had also re-established the Anglican Church with its governing

hierarchy of bishops. And this meant dis-establishing the low-church puritans who had ruled the country's religious life during the republic. To the restored and reinvigorated Anglican bishops, 'the enemy within' was no longer just Catholics but the dissenting or nonconforming Protestant sects – including Presbyterians, Baptists, Anabaptists, Quakers, Unitarians and a host of independent sects formed around charismatic preachers. The religious cold war was now a three-way affair: no longer just Protestants against Catholics, it was now Anglicans against papists against dissenters.

The Charterhouse had fallen into low-church hands during the republic. But the return of the king promised a change. In 1660 Nathaniel Butter, 'citizen and stationer of London' petitioned Charles II asking '.... for his favour to obtain him a place in Sutton's Hospital, where there are not six pensioners lawfully put in, many being Anabaptists or spurious fellows.' ⁶ Butters was typical of such petitioners during 1660 in citing loyalty to the monarch and the Church of England as evidence of his eligibility as a Brother.

By the 1660s Charterhouse's sixteen governors covered all sides of the religious divide. On the one side were six Anglican bishops, including the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London, zealously determined to purge their parishes of nonconformist preachers. The three royal governors – Charles II, his consort Queen Catherine, and his heir James Duke of York – were equally hostile to extreme puritans but not in the least bit hostile to Catholics. Indeed both the queen and the Duke of York (from 1673) were Catholics

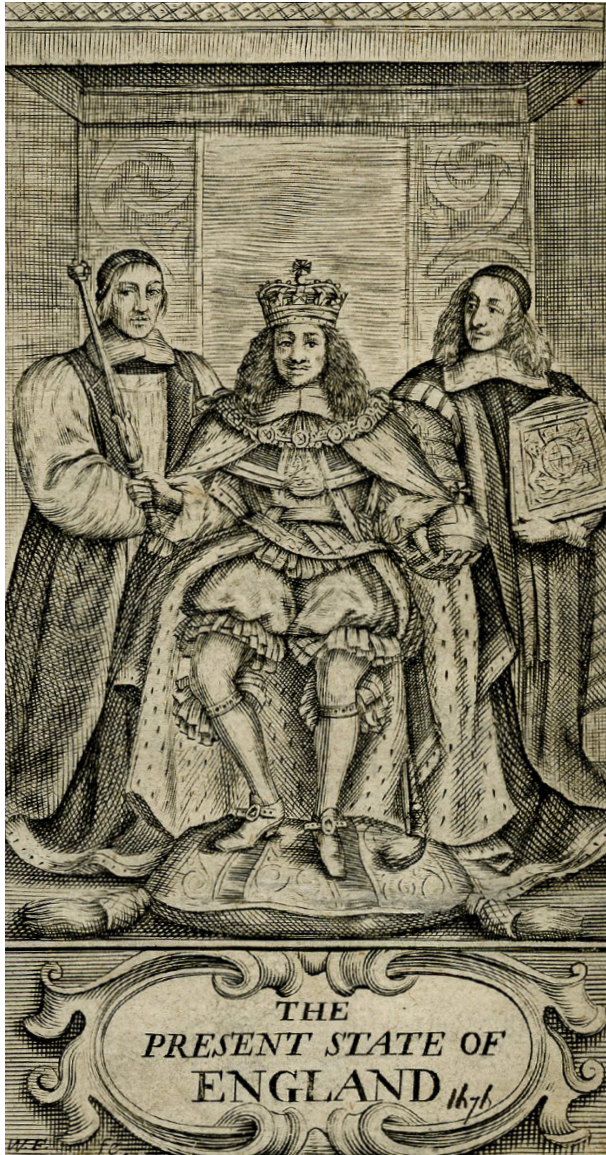
themselves, a point which damned them as devils in the eyes of hard-line Protestants.

The religious views of the six secular governors varied according to the man. The six normally included the Lord Chancellor, the Lord Chief Justice and several privy councillors. Once appointed, governors kept their roles even after leaving office. Some governors were fully signed up to the 'Tory-Anglican' faction, as for example Lord Clarendon in the 1660s and the Earl of Danby in the 1680s. Other governors were less than enthusiastic about bishops. Chief among these was the first Earl of Shaftesbury, a governor from 1662 until 1683; together with another member of the Cabal government, the second Duke of Buckingham, a governor from 1670 until 1687.

Even the Master's Anglican credentials could not be guaranteed. The post was normally reserved for a clergyman, but in 1670 the Duke of Buckingham engineered the appointment of his secretary, Martin Clifford. The new Master was a thoroughly unorthodox character. His 1675 book *A Treatise of Humane Reason* advanced the radical idea that religion should be a personal matter and not prescribed or regulated by laws – as was the case in 1670s England. Such views did not go down well with Clifford's fellow governors. The Bishop of Ely was heard to remark that 'twas no matter if all the copies [of Clifford's book] were burnt and the author with them.' ⁷

A few years later, another Master published a controversial book. Thomas Burnet's appointment in 1680 was probably helped by the patronage of the Duke of Ormonde, a governor from the generally anti-clerical 'Whig' faction. Burnet's offending publication

Frontispiece to *Angliae Notitia; or the Present State of England*, by Edward Chamberlayne, 1673. Charles II is flanked by Gilbert Sheldon, Archbishop of Canterbury and Sir Orlando Bridgeman, the Lord Keeper. All were governors of the Charterhouse. © National Portrait Gallery.



was his monumental *The Sacred Theory of the Earth*, a complex attempt to reconcile his enthusiasm for the new discoveries of observational science with Biblical texts. Burnet argued that both could co-exist: 'we are not to suppose that any truth concerning the Natural World can be an enemy to religion, for truth cannot be an enemy to truth.'⁸ This did nothing to help his reputation among those who thought a clergyman should always privilege the Bible. It was said of Burnet that 'though he was a clergyman, he went always in a lay-habit.'⁹

The orthodox Anglican view about new scientific discoveries was that human observation was as nothing compared to God's all-seeing eye. As Samuel Herne wrote in a sermon of 1679:

'... the Grand Revolutions of this Globe of Earth, (beyond what may be gathered by Observation, and founded upon Presumption) these things are too deep for the Scantling of Humane Nature to reach, the Object lies too far to be discovered by the dim, and narrow sight of a Mortal Eye: In vain therefore do Men gaze upwards to read their Destiny in the Stars, when the Periods of Time, and the Stages of Humane Life are only Registered in the Kingdom of Heaven.'¹⁰

Herne was perhaps angling for the Mastership for himself. At the time he was chaplain to the Duke of Monmouth, an association that did him no favours six years later when Monmouth's life ended on the scaffold. Interestingly, another possible candidate for the Mastership in the early 1690s was Sir Isaac Newton, like Burnet a man whose intellectual curiosity reconciled a scientific approach with religious faith. Although Newton did not pursue the post,



Thomas Burnet, Master of the Charterhouse, shown with his book *The Sacred Theory of the Earth*. Photograph: Will Pryce.

his interest suggests that the Charterhouse was seen as a good berth for an enquiring mind.

So was Restoration Charterhouse a bastion of Anglican conformity or a hub for unorthodox thinking? Location-wise, The Charterhouse was predisposed not to conform, Not only just outside the City of London's boundaries, the enclave was also a 'liberty', a place outside the parish system and therefore beyond the reach of ecclesiastical law. Bishop Humphrey Henchman's edicts about the form of worship in London parishes held no legal weight in the Charterhouse and it is no surprise to find evidence of nonconformist activity creeping into the neighbourhood. In 1669 a Baptist meeting house was set up in the adjacent liberty of Glasshouse Yard, part of the old monastic estate (and by the 1660s owned by the Duke of Buckingham). In the 1680s a leading Presbyterian preacher, Richard Baxter, moved to Charterhouse Yard from where he continued to call for a rapprochement between the established and non-established forms of Protestant worship.

The Charterhouse's extramural status had always attracted suspicion of secret Catholic practices, not least by Thomas Sutton himself ('... 'tis presently whispered about that Sutton died a Papist that the house was built upon naughty Popish ground, that all the walls were full of tapers and crosses, that it was designed to Jesuitical ends and purposes').¹¹ These rumours were said to have been conjured up by puritan zealots in the 1640s to justify seizing control of the hospital, but Catholic worship was not unfamiliar in the liberty. In January 1656 several Londoners were prosecuted for 'willingly hearing Mass

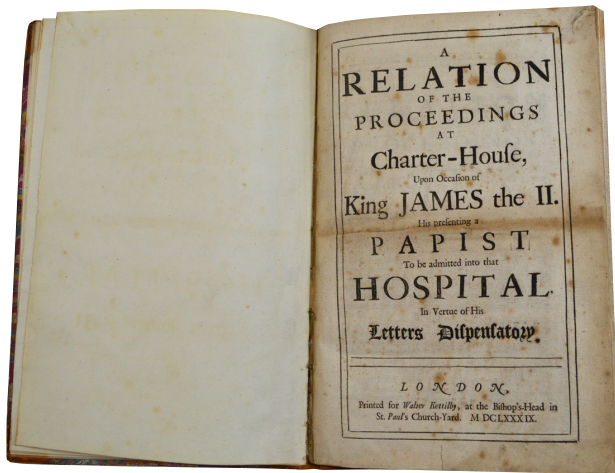
at the Venetian Ambassador's house in Charterhouse Yard'.¹² The Charterhouse was also implicated in the anti-Catholic hysteria surrounding the Popish Plot. In November 1678 the House of Lords directed 'that some Boys belonging to the Charter House, in London may be examined, in order to a further Discovery of the horrid Design against His Majesty's Person'.¹³ No incriminating evidence seems to have emerged on this occasion, but the Charterhouse never quite shook off its reputation as a place where the laws about worship did not apply.

The Charterhouse was located just outside the City ward of Aldersgate. Interestingly, Aldersgate was both a hotbed of London dissent and the symbolic home of Anglican power. During the post-Fire rebuilding, the episcopal lodgings for the Bishops of London were located at London House on the west side of Aldersgate Street. In 1676 the anti-clerical Shaftesbury moved into Thanet House, on the east side of Aldersgate Street, directly opposite the bishops. It is tempting to wonder whether Humphrey Henchman's successor, Bishop Henry Compton, ever exchanged neighbourly greetings with his fellow governor as they strolled to the Charterhouse for a governors meeting.

'A USURPTION UPON THE LAWS OF ENGLAND ...'

The most controversial of the religious conformity laws enacted during the period was the Test Act of 1673. This required all holders of public office to take the oaths of allegiance and supremacy, an impossible ask for Catholics and nonconformists since it required them to

Title page of the 1689 account of the Charterhouse governors defiance of James II.



recognise the supreme authority of the king in matters of religion. At the Charterhouse, new Brothers were required to take the oaths, as were new governors and officers, but it was said around 1680 that the practice had not been observed rigorously in recent years.¹⁴ It is certainly possible that some pensioners admitted in the 1660s and 1670s were not as orthodox as the bishops would have liked. Looking at the nominations from the Earl of Shaftesbury, were any of the men moderate dissenters? No definite example has come to light yet, but it is possible that governors may have turned a blind eye to a nonconformist Brother in the 1670s.

A Catholic Brother, however, was beyond the pale. In February 1685, James Duke of York succeeded his brother, becoming James II in England and Ireland, and James VII in Scotland. The new king was, notoriously, a Catholic and his accession was accompanied by a wave of lurid rumours about unfettered royal power dis-establishing the Church of England. These fears shook the Charterhouse's governors, one of whom, the Duke of Monmouth, rose in rebellion in the name of Protestant liberty: 'For God, Freedom and Religion' read his marching banners. Monmouth's uprising began in June 1685 but ended with defeat and capture within weeks. The hapless Duke of Monmouth was officially removed from the Charterhouse's governors in June and was executed on Tower Hill in July 1685.

Following Monmouth's departure from the Charterhouse governors, James II appointed men more likely to support his efforts to ease legal restrictions on Catholics and nonconformists. A year later, he tested the

water by instructing the governors to give a pensioner's place to a practising Catholic, one Andrew Popham. As a long-standing royal governor, James had been nominating Brothers for many years, but his choice of Popham proved provocative. It led to an episode which became notorious, thanks to an anonymous pamphlet published several years later just as James fell ignominiously from power.¹⁵ The episode retained its notoriety into the nineteenth century when it was recounted by the Whig historian Thomas Macauley as an example of England's 'firm resistance to tyranny'.¹⁶

The Popham affair raised the question of whether Charterhouse's royal governor could set aside the law. James proposed to invoke his royal powers of dispensation to absolve Popham from the requirement of taking the Test Act oaths: '... notwithstanding any statute, order or constitution of or in the said hospital. we are graciously disposed to dispense in this behalf'. Exercising his powers of royal dispensation in this way confirmed the suspicions of those who believed James was modelling himself on Louis XIV, the Catholic king of France, and ruling by means of royal decree and standing army rather than the law. As the anonymous pamphleteer put it, the Charterhouse episode proved that James was intent on 'a Usurpation upon the Laws of England by a Dispensing Power'.

After some delay, eight of the sixteen governors wrote to the king stating that they could not comply because their legal constitution trumped his royal power. The defiant eight included the Anglican bishops and 'Tory' governors, such as the Earl of Craven who might in normal

circumstances have been expected to side with the Stuart crown. The governors who voted in favour of the monarch's mandate included Catholic sympathisers such as the Earl of Sunderland, and James's supporter the Earl of Mulgrave (whose portrait also survives at the Charterhouse, but is not currently hung in the Great Chamber).

The 1689 pamphlet about the Popham affair ended its account with a defiant assertion that 'neither could they ever get any Popish Governor or Popish Pensioner admitted into that Society'. What the anonymous writer had forgotten was that Charterhouse had had two popish governors since 1660: James II as Duke of York, and Charles II's queen, Catherine of Braganza. The Popham episode was indeed an example of royal power rebuffed, but it was also an example of one law for the rich governors and another for the poor Brothers.

'WE DO ALL OF ONE ASSENT AND CONSENT...'

Comparing the nation state of England and the microstate of the Charterhouse during the last half of the seventeenth century, it seems fair to judge Charterhouse as the more stable enterprise. As Stephen Porter's history outlines, the hospital operated without interruption and more or less in line with Thomas Sutton's wishes for the fifty years after 1660. By contrast, the nation saw plague, fire, civic unrest, armed rebellion and eventually a military coup-cum-invasion, otherwise known as a glorious revolution.

Whether the hospital's stability was despite or because of its constitution is an interesting question. Its constitution certainly encouraged consensus.



Thomas Sutton's coat of arms, carved on the seventeenth-century organ screen in the Charterhouse chapel. Photograph: Lawrence Watson.

Charterhouse was a 'body corporate and politique', in modern terms a corporation. Its governors were required to act as a single entity: they were 'in a Body and no single governor could act separately in it.'¹⁷ This corporate character had been established from the beginning and was written in to the Letters Patent through which King James I approved Thomas Sutton's scheme. At the time, a corporate body was typically a town or city, operating under an ancient charter; a City livery company; or one of the new monopoly trading companies. In all cases the corporate form assumed that the body would outlast any one individual.

The legitimacy of Sutton's Hospital was further strengthened by a landmark legal judgement in 1612 when Sir Edward Coke confirmed that the foundation was indeed a corporate body and thus protected from any personal raids on its assets, either from the heirs of Thomas Sutton or from individual governors. This judgment, 'The Case of Sutton's Hospital', still has legal currency today (it has its own Wikipedia page) but at the time did not entirely repel raids on the hospital's immense wealth. In 1624 the first Duke of Buckingham proposed that the state divert the hospital's annual income to a more useful national purpose, by which he meant forming a standing army. Nothing came of this idea but this suggestion, plus a general crack-down on monopolies formed by Letters Patent, provoked the governors into strengthening the hospital's constitution through a third legal instrument, an Act of Parliament. The Act, finally passed in 1627, confirmed the hospital's status as 'a body corporate with its own seal'.¹⁸

Thus fortified by Royal Charter, judgment in Chancery and Act of Parliament, Sutton's Hospital required its governors to speak as one. Minutes of the governors' assemblies record decisions as collective actions: 'we do constitute and ordain ...', 'we do think it fit ...', 'we do all of one assent'. The 'we' of the governors could of course be engineered to suit short term politics, as the hospital's experience during England's short-lived republic demonstrated, but equilibrium was generally preserved. Processes settled down and precedents observed so that by the 1660s the governors' role was pretty much set in stone.

The sixteen governors formally met in assemblies twice a year. The December assembly was devoted to the hospital's finances, its substantial property portfolio yielding an annual income of £5-6,000 by the 1670s. The June assembly was when nominations for new Brothers and Scholars were approved. Normal day-to-day business was managed by the Master, but the governors formed a court of appeal, particularly when money was involved. The hospital's archives include a number of petitions to the governors. In 1671, for example, the gardener Thomas Field petitioned for a salary increase from £20 to £30 annually. He had lost goods in the recent fire that destroyed the Brothers' lodgings but nevertheless was 'taking great care to keep the Wilderness and Garden in handsome and decent manner, by pruning trees, cutting hedges, weeding in places necessary, rolling and graveling the walks, beautifying thereof and supplying the Masters table'.¹⁹ His petition was approved.

One annual expense which was never questioned

was the governors' annual feast. These were stupendously lavish occasions, as surviving bills testifies. The food and drink ordered for the occasion in November 1675 included large quantities of beef and mutton, fifteen ducks, two pheasants, ten partridges, four dozen larks, twenty-six wild pigeons, fifteen hares, twelve lobsters, six dozen shrimps and twelve barrels of oysters; along with exotic fruits and vegetables such as artichokes, quinces, bergamots, peaches plus three hundred apples. Drinks included claret, canary, French wine, sack and beer. The total cost in 1675 (for thirty governors and their guests, plus the Brothers and staff) amounted to £43 11 shillings – a sum far exceeding the gardener's annual salary.²⁰

Despite temporary set-backs, such as the 1671 fire, the governing arrangements established by Thomas Sutton served the hospital well. This leads on to another interesting question. Did 'the Hospital of King James founded in Charter House in the County of Middlesex at the humble Petition and only Costs and Charges of Thomas Sutton Esq', influence the two royal hospitals which followed it? These were, of course, the royal hospital for soldiers at Chelsea conceived by Charles II in the early 1680s; and the royal hospital for seamen at Greenwich established by Queen Mary in 1694. Did the first Stuart royal hospital provide a ready-made template or an example of what not to do?

In 1682 Charles II had asked Sir Stephen Fox for ideas about a hospital for army veterans. Fox consulted John Evelyn who recorded their discussion in his diary. Evelyn knew the Charterhouse, indeed had dined with the Master, William Erskine, two months earlier; but

neither he nor Fox seem to have mentioned it, even though they conjured up a virtual replica.

'So in his [Fox's] study we arranged the governor, chaplain, steward, housekeeper, surgeon, cook, butler, gardener, porter and other officers with their several salaries and entertainments. I would needs have a library, and mentioned several books, since some soldiers might possibly be studious, when they were at leisure to recollect. Thus we made the first calculations and set down our thoughts to be considered and digested better to show his Majesty and the Archbishop. He also engaged me to consider of what laws and orders were fit for the government, which was to be in every respect as strict as in any religious convent.'²¹

In its early stages the hospital at Chelsea was designed to operate under Letters Patent as an independent corporation, much as the Charterhouse. However, by the time it opened in 1692 the Chelsea institution had moved much closer to national government. It was in effect the pension department of Charles' standing army, and its governance rested on three commissioners – all military appointments. In similar fashion the Greenwich hospital was closely knitted into the needs of the Navy.

In short, the Charterhouse model was not replicated at Chelsea or Greenwich. It is probably fair to explain this in part by money. The Charterhouse could still claim it was a private foundation, since its 'costs and charges' came from Sutton's endowment. The institutions at Greenwich and Chelsea relied on funding from the state. But the difference perhaps also reflects a sense that the

Charterhouse's form of governance was an anachronism by the 1690s. The idea of the nation's grandees directing a microstate that was both royal and private, both independent and conformist at the same time, was perhaps just too Utopian.

The opening of the two new royal hospitals lifted the pressure on Sutton's Hospital to be an emblem of national achievement. Thereafter, the make-up of the governors remained as before, with the same establishment links, but governors' decisions were perhaps less sensitive to public mood and political debate. In terms of the Brothers, diverting military veterans to the new hospitals allowed the Charterhouse to embrace a more diverse bunch of occupations. The early years of the eighteenth century saw the arrival of the poet and dramatist Elkanah Settle, the antiquarian book collector John Bagford; and the scientist Stephen Gray whose experiments into electrical conductivity were the subject of public lectures given at the hospital.

As the legal pressure on non-Anglicans lessened in severity, nonconformists revived the old habit of seeing the Charterhouse as a testament to Protestant virtue, but with a slight change of emphasis. Now the hospital clearly demonstrated individual effort rather than national glory. In Daniel Defoe's words, Charterhouse was 'the greatest and noblest gift that ever was given for charity by any one man, public or private, in this nation.'²² It was praise that perhaps would have pleased Thomas Sutton, never a man for joining establishment networks but clever enough to realise that yoking them into his project gave it a good chance of a long life.

A NOTE ON WEALTH AND SLAVERY

Where did the wealth of the men whose portraits hang in the Great Chamber come from? This is a fair question to ask in 2020 when new debates are being aired about the ethics of wealth-creation, not just in Britain's present but also in Britain's past. It is probably no surprise to find that some, but not all, profited from activities we now find morally wrong.

It is important to say that the seventeenth-century governors gave their time to the Charterhouse, but not their money, bar the odd personal gift or bequest.²³ Indeed, the charity had little need of financial help because it was already relatively wealthy, thanks to the property legacy left by Thomas Sutton. Although some of the activities behind Sutton's rise to riches might now be considered ethically questionable – coal mining, money lending, arms dealing, for example – he was not involved in overseas colonies or the slave trade. Sutton left the Charterhouse a handsome endowment of English land, the rents from which amounted to £5 – £6,000 a year by the 1670s (rent arrears always reduced the actual sum received). By contrast, the income from the Earl of Shaftesbury's lands at his death in 1683 was estimated at around £3,000 and he died with debts amounting to £9,724.²⁴

Between 1660 and 1700, fifty-two men served as governors of the Charterhouse, sixteen serving at any one time. The ten whose portraits hang in the Great Chamber are typical in that they are either bishops, royal governors or aristocrat-politicians; plus one Master of



E. OF
ANCELLOR

(detail) Anthony Ashley Cooper, first Earl of Shaftesbury, painted in 1673. Photograph: Will Pryce.

the Charterhouse, Thomas Burnet. For all these men, personal wealth largely came from three sources: rents from land; posts with salaries attached – such as military commissions, church preferments or crown pensions; and financial speculations – such as commercial ‘adventures’ overseas.

Salaried positions included being Master of the Charterhouse itself. Thomas Burnet, was appointed in 1685 on a salary of £200 a year, a sum that Isaac Newton, a potential candidate in 1690, considered insufficient compensation for ‘a confinement to the London air, and to such a way of living as I am not in love with.’²⁵ Appointments to such salaried positions would not meet today’s best practice. Cronyism was commonplace; as was nepotism – well illustrated by the case of the Duke of Monmouth. An illegitimate son with no wealth of his own, he was showered with appointments and opportunities from his doting father, Charles II. By the mid-1670s Monmouth had been made Lord High Chamberlain of Scotland, Lord Lieutenant of the East Riding of Yorkshire and the Chancellor of Cambridge University amongst many other positions. Charles also gave him an annual pension of £6,000 a year.²⁶

For most of the Charterhouse’s aristocratic politician-governors, the main source of income was land. Like the Charterhouse itself, rents from largely rural English estates provided a regular income, although not necessarily a secure one in the aftermath of the Civil War. In 1652 William Craven’s land with a rental value in excess of £10,000 a year was ‘sequestered’ (confiscated) by the state because of his support for the royalist cause.

His estates were returned to him at the Restoration.

Anthony Ashley Cooper – from 1661, Lord Ashley the first Earl of Shaftesbury – lost much of his land as a child, when his estates were sold in order to settle debts left by his father.

Perhaps it is no coincidence that William Craven and Anthony Ashley Cooper were the two governors most interested in developing English land and trade overseas. Both were governors of the Hudson’s Bay Company, with Craven instrumental in financing an expedition to find a north-west passage to the Pacific. Craven was also a Commissioner of Tangiers and Cooper helped set up the Bahama Adventurers’ Company. Both were also Lords Proprietors of Carolina, the group of eight aristocrats granted governing rights over the American colony named after King Charles I.

Cooper and his secretary the philosopher John Locke are often credited with drawing up *The Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina*, a document of 1669 whose vision of Utopia is troubling today. The scheme of government proposed a hierarchical society, at the top of which were landed aristocracy – just like the Lords Proprietors themselves. At the bottom were plantation slaves. The only right extended to slaves was the right ‘to be of what church or profession any of them shall think best’ but the constitution decreed that this should not exempt any slaves from ‘that civil dominion his Master hath over him.’²⁷ Today, Cooper’s influence on the development of the Province of Carolina and the city of Charleston is marked by the Ashley and the Cooper rivers, both named after him.

Cooper had been interested in colonial trade since the 1640s when he had acquired a share in a sugar plantation in Barbados together with nine enslaved Africans. He sold his shares in the Barbados plantation in 1655 (for just over £1,000) but went on to serve on several privy council committees concerned with overseas expansion, becoming President of the Council of Trade and Foreign Plantations in the 1670s. He was also involved with the Company of Royal Adventurers into Africa, initially formed in 1660 and notorious today for its development of the slave trade. The company was formed to search for gold mines in West Africa as a means of swelling royal finances. By the time of its relaunch in 1663, it was trading in enslaved Africans as well as goods. The royal impetus behind this company meant it attracted several of Charles II's inner circle of courtiers, including his brother James Duke of York, the company's chief promoter, and the Duke of Buckingham who is recorded as 'paying his arrears' to the company in 1668.²⁸

To his supporters at the time, Anthony Ashley Cooper was a champion of Protestant liberty. From today's point of view, it seems indefensible that his understanding of liberty embraced freedom of worship and freedom from despots but not freedom from enslavement. He and other Whig-minded politicians used the word 'slavery' to describe the tyranny of absolute monarchy, particularly when the monarch was Catholic: 'popery and slavery, like two sisters go hand in hand...' proclaimed Shaftesbury in 1679.²⁹ Ridding England of 'popery and slavery' was a favourite soundbite for those who deposed James II in 1689. Yet the inhumanity and

brutality of slavery as actually practised on enslaved Africans in England's plantations went unchallenged.

These jarringly contradictory attitudes to slavery, are also recalled by the portrait of the Duke of Monmouth. Although not involved in the plantation economy himself, his rebellion led to several hundred of his followers being punished by a particularly harsh form of transportation. The convicted rebels, largely farm workers and cloth workers from the West Country, were shipped to the West Indies, sold to plantation owners and set to work for ten years alongside enslaved Africans. In Barbados, those that tried to escape were punished by having the letters 'FT' (Fugitive Traitor) branded on their foreheads – as opposed to the 'DY' (Duke of York) branded on Africans escaping from the Royal Africa Company.³⁰ Unlike the Africans, the Monmouth rebels found an escape route through the association of slavery with Catholic despotism. In 1690 the Act under which they had been sentenced was repealed by the incoming King William, almost certainly a gesture of opposition to the popery and slavery of James II. Enslaved Africans had no such reprieve from the tyranny and remorseless cruelty of an economic system which James II as the Duke of York had done so much to develop.

Carved head decoration on the seventeenth century woodwork in the Charterhouse chapel. Photograph: Lawrence Watson.



Notes

- ¹ I am extremely grateful to Stephen Porter and Dominic Tickell for their knowledgeable comments on initial drafts of this chapter.
- ² Stephen Porter, 'Order and Disorder in the Early Modern Almshouse: The Charterhouse Example', *London Journal*, xxiii/1, 1998, 1-2.
- ³ Samuel Herne, *Domus Carthusiana, or an account of the Most Noble Foundation of the Charter House* (London 1677), p 177. This passage is copied almost word for word from Percival Burrell, *Sutton's Synagogue, or, the English Centurion: shewing the un-paralleled bounty of Protestant piety* (London 1629), 24-5.
- ⁴ See: *The Politics of Religion in Restoration England*, ed. Tim Harris, Paul Seward and Mark Goldie (Oxford 1990).
- ⁵ Burrell, 1629, see note 3.
- ⁶ *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Charles II, 1660-1* (London 1860), 168, petitions of July 1660. Butters was a printer and argued that he had been helping the royalist cause through 'his services in printing and dispensing proclamations, letters and book, including of the late King's meditations'.
- ⁷ As reported by the antiquarian Anthony Wood. Quoted in G. Tarantino, 'Clifford, Martin (c. 1624-1677), headmaster and author', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.
- ⁸ Thomas Burnet, *The [Sacred] Theory of the Earth* (London 1684), preface, a2.
- ⁹ The opinion of senior bishops at the time. Quoted in S. Mandelbrote, S. 'Burnet, Thomas (c. 1635-1715), natural philosopher and headmaster', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.
- ¹⁰ Samuel Herne, *A Discourse of Divine Providence etc* (London, 1679), 17.
- ¹¹ *Letters from a Moor at London to His Friend at Tunis* (London, 1736), 73. The author quotes the passage as an example of unfounded popular rumour.
- ¹² 'Middlesex Sessions Rolls: 1656', in *Middlesex County Records: Volume 3, 1625-67*, ed. John Cordy Jeaffreson (London 1888), pp241-256. Retrieved at www.british-history.ac.uk.
- ¹³ *Journal of the House of Lords*, volume 13, 1675-1681, 6 November 1678.
- ¹⁴ Stephen Porter, *The London Charterhouse* (Stroud, 2009), 57-8.
- ¹⁵ *A Relation of the Proceedings at Charter House, upon Occasion of King James the II. His presenting a Papist to be admitted into that Hospital* (London, 1689). The author is thought to be Thomas Burnet.
- ¹⁶ Thomas Babington Macauley, *A History of England etc*, vol 2 (London 1854 edition), 233.
- ¹⁷ See note 15, p.11.
- ¹⁸ 3 Cha. 1 c1. *An Act for the establishing and confirming of the Foundation of the Hospital of King James founded in Charter House in the County of Middlesex at the humble Petition and only Costs and Charges of Thomas Sutton Esq.*
- ¹⁹ London Metropolitan Archives (LMA) ACC/1876/G/05/040, gardeners petitions. Research carried out by Islington U3A as part of a shared learning project based at the Charterhouse, Autumn 2018.
- ²⁰ LMA ACC/1876/AM/03/008, Diet Book 1674-1678. Research courtesy Islington U3A.
- ²¹ *The Diaries of John Evelyn*, ed William Bray, vol 2 (London 1952), 167-8.
- ²² Daniel Defoe, *A tour through the whole island of Great Britain* (London 1724-7), quoted in Porter, 2009, 75.
- ²³ For example, Stephen Porter records a bequest from William Craven of £100 in the 1690s. See S. Porter, *The London Charterhouse* (Amberley 2009), 55.
- ²⁴ Tim Harris, 'Cooper, Anthony Ashley, first earl of Shaftesbury (1621-1683), politician', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.
- ²⁵ Quoted in David Brewster, *Memoirs of the Life, Writings, and Discoveries of Sir Isaac Newton*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh, 1855), 117.
- ²⁶ Anna Keay, *The Last Royal Rebel*, (London, 2017), 73.
- ²⁷ Clause 107 of the Constitution, retrieved at quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A48880.0001.001/1:2?rgn=div1;view=fulltext. Also, see Thomas Leng, 'Shaftesbury's Aristocratic Empire', in John Spurr, ed., *Anthony Ashley Cooper, First Earl of Shaftesbury 1621-1683* (London, 2011), 101-126.
- ²⁸ As reported by Samuel Pepys in his Diary, VIII, 142.
- ²⁹ Speech in the House of Lords, 25 March 1679.
- ³⁰ Abbot Emerson Smith, *Colonists in Bondage: White Servitude and Convict Labor in America, 1607-1776*, (Carolina 1947), 193.