Anti-Militia Riots in Lincolnshire, 1757 and 1796

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On two occasions in the second half of the eighteenth century, in August-September 1757 and October-November 1796, the greater part of Lincolnshire experienced for short periods a complete breakdown of the established pattern of law and order. Bands of labourers and farm servants, armed in many cases with scythes and clubs, broke up or prevented meetings called by the deputy lieutenant for the collection of lists of men liable to serve in the militia. Magistrates and chief and petty constables were assaulted, or prevented by threats from carrying out their duties. The country houses of the gentry were visited by the armed 'mobs' who obtained money and food from the inhabitants under the threat of destroying the building. Throughout the country the guardians of law and order were intimidated into inaction while the mob held sway.

The riot, used by those without political rights as the chief means of expressing their discontent, was a common feature of the English countryside in the eighteenth century. R. F. Wearmouth and G. Rudé have recorded many such events from entries in contemporary national journals and local newspapers. Unrest often coincided with periods of high food prices, distress being the principal factor in triggering off much of the rioting. The food riot however, as has been pointed out by E. P. Thompson, was not just a spasmodic 'rebellion of the belly', it was 'a highly complex form of direct popular action, disciplined and with clear objectives' and grounded on a traditional view of social norms and obligations.

The same could be said of riots caused by other issues, such as antagonism to the enclosure of the common fields, the erection of toll bars or the implementation of the militia acts, issues which disguised the underlying distress. Such was the basis of much of the rioting that occurred in Lincolnshire in the eighteenth century.

Each of the comparatively few riots that have been recorded as happening in Lincolnshire took place at periods of high grain prices, but only two, those at Bourne in 1740 when a mob, consisting chiefly of women, prevented a boat laden with wheat from sailing to Spalding and at Boston in 1768 when 200 armed rioters successfully fixed the price of butter in their market at three pence a pound, could be called food riots. The alleged agricultural workers, who were to some extent protected from the hardships imposed by high food prices through the provision of board and lodging by the farmers or by payment in kind with the possibility of buying grain at inflated prices, may be a factor in accounting for the lack of 'rebellions of the belly'. Nevertheless during the century agricultural workers did play a significant part in what unrest there was. In particular, the inhabitants of the fens and marshes gained a national reputation for their unruliness. In the seventeenth century the commoners in the fens had successfully risen against those engaged in drainage and enclosure, and their independent behaviour was still to be observed at the end of the eighteenth century.

Arthur Young expressed the view that the extensive commons and lack of organized religion produced 'barbarians ready for any mischief'; 'so wild a country raises up a race of people as wild as the fen'. When in 1729 a large mob stormed the cathedral close at Lincoln in defence of the western spires of the cathedral the bishop attributed the origins of the riot to the recent successful disturbances in the neighbouring fens. Similarly in 1757 the anti-militia riots seem to have originated in the townships bordering the fen to the south-east of Lincoln, and in that year and in 1796 they were particularly violent in the fens and neighbouring marshland. Specific outbreaks of unrest associated with attempts to drain and enclose the fens occurred in the West Fen in 1757 and Holland Fen in 1768-73.

The rioting which occurred in 1757 was by no means confined to Lincolnshire, much of the eastern half of England was affected, and the unrest was particularly widespread in the East Riding of Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire and Bedfordshire. The disturbances were consequent upon the action being taken to put into force the 'Act for the better ordering of the Militia Forces', passed on 28 June 1757. The series of disasters that had befallen England in the two years following the outbreak of war with France had led to great agitation for the reform of the militia, which functioned somewhat ineffectively under an act passed almost a century earlier. An enlarged militia was needed in order to provide an adequate defence force and thus release a regular trained army for service in one of the numerous theatres of the Seven Years War.

The new act radically changed the method of obtaining men for the militia, laying the responsibility on all adult males instead of just on the propertied classes. Previously any person with an annual income from land of fifty pounds per annum or an estate valued at £500 had been charged with providing and equipping an infantry man. Under the new act, the militia was to be chosen by ballot from all men between eighteen and fifty years of age in England, except peers, officers of the militia and regular forces, clergy, dissenting ministers, peace and parish officers, articled clerks, apprentices and seamen. If a man could serve himself or provide a substitute, which meant that for the wealthy there was little change, except that there was far less chance of them having to provide a militia man, but for the poorer classes it meant that some would have to serve and leave their work, homes and families, for up to three years, unless they were able to contribute to a parish fund for the payment of a substitute.

It is no wonder that the rioters, who were described generally as 'farmers, labourers and farm servants' or 'the common people', felt aggrieved. They clearly looked on the act as an attempt by the landowners to make use of them for the defence of their property. The dean of Lincoln reported that the Lincolnshire rioters declared 'We will not fight for what does not concern us, and belongs to our landlords: let the worst happen, we can but be tenants and labourers, as we are at present.' The duke of Ancaster was informed that the rioters complained of gentlemen just keeping poor men alive to fight for them.

Though this new imposition on the poorer classes was the major reason for the riots there were others. There was a great fear that once a man was in the militia he would be sent to serve abroad, and although the act specifically stated that service was to be only in this country the rioters claimed that the regulation was to extend to the year before for the regular army had been told the same, but then they had been deceived and sent abroad. The duke of Ancaster, in defence, stated that he had not enlisted 'one man but on the following terms, for three years or during the present war with France, to serve His Majesty wherever they were commanded.' The rioters were also very much concerned about the absence of any reference to pay in the act, which was to be covered by a later measure, and this led to many rumours about the amount to be paid. The rioters in Lincoln declared 'they would not be obliged to quit their homes for sixpence a day to serve in the Militia'; army rates of pay were not thought enough. Farmers in addition feared that the cost of the care of a militia man's family would fall on the already over burdened parish. In Nottinghamshire the actual making of the lists of the male population was
The rioters generally found little opposition, though when a mob threatened to burn down an unspecified town, which was said to be principally owned by the duke of Ancaster, the inhabitants prevented their approach by defending themselves. The gentry were too dispersed to be able to join together for self-defence and the chief and petty constables intimidated by the mob, were too afraid to enforce law and order.

The meeting for the receipt of the militia lists had been fixed for 6 September mainly for the convenience of the gentry who would already be in Lincoln for the races. But with so many lists having been destroyed and the fear of continued unrest the duke of Ancaster thought it wise to send ‘discharges to every chief constable with numbers of printed papers to be dispersed round the county to prevent the meeting’. For it was thought that if the meeting had been held ‘thousands would have appeared on the occasion at Lincoln, and great mischief ensued upon such a meeting’. The duke of Ancaster’s action placated the county but it left the nobility and gentry uneasy: he reported to the duke of Newcastle on 19 September ‘The County is at present tolerably quiet, but from these disturbances each individual may be doubtful how long his property may be his own. The county remained quiet though on 2 November a riot occurred on the West Fen when over 200 persons assembled with drum beating and colours flying. The rioting started on 23 August, the day when the constables began returning the lists to the chief constables. On that day a mob proceeded to the house of Mr. Hall, an aged clergyman, at Washingborough, south of Lincoln, ‘where they demanded half a Guinea and a barrel of Ale; which not being complied with they broke all the windows of his House, and did him other considerable damage’. The mob then moved on to Lincoln, gathering in strength as they went. On entering the city they were met by the mayor who demanded their business, and they replied ‘the several lists to be returned, which the constables have brought in, and a Guinea from each constable’. These demands were met because they threatened the mayor and company with violence and said that they would pull down and set fire to their houses. They also warned that they would return in greater numbers if further warrants were issued for the making of lists.

This success of the townships to the south of Lincoln, in obstructing the enforcement of the Militia Act, gave encouragement to other areas and there was soon rioting in many parts of the county. North of Lincoln the mob demanded the lists from the constables and forced them and certain farmers to go with them to Burton, where Lord Monson met them before they reached his house and persuaded them to disperse. His agent, however, was forced to provide the rioters with drink. There was unrest around Caenby on August 26th and the four days following, and the local magistrate Laurence Monk was twice threatened by a hostile mob who forced him to give them drink and nine guineas.

Further east two other magistrates, Samuel Dashwood of Claxby and his neighbour James Bateman of Well, were sent identical anonymous letters threatening the destruction of their houses if attempts were made to carry out the Militia Act. The letter, which has been described as a ‘middle-class political manifesto’, was seemingly the work of local farmers and its threat was real enough to cause the constables to transact business at a distance.

The major outbreak of unrest in the Holland division was at Boston, ‘where they made a great riot, committed great outrages, broke Lord Vere Bertie’s windows, and design’d to go to Lincoln races, in order to attack some nobility, who, they think, were the occasion of making this act’. However at Spalding on 3 September it was reported ‘they murmur here, but are not so riotous for want of sufficient numbers’.
them the necessaries of life, and who are therefore more likely than their fellow subjects to assemble in riots and tumults, attempt to arm themselves. Banks saw little likelihood of unrest among the inhabitants of Lincolnshire for their loyalty was 'not only unsullied but unsuspected', thus the rioting that occurred in October and November 1796 took him and his fellow magistrates and lieutenants by surprise. Their alarm is very evident in the extensive correspondence and other material on the riots that has survived in the Banks Papers in Lincolnshire County Library and the Home Office papers in the Public Record Office.

The rioting in the first place can be attributed largely to a mishandling and mistiming of the moves to obtain the lists of able-bodied men, which seemingly led to a misunderstanding on the part of the populace with regard to the purpose behind the renewed activity for militia recruitment. But underneath all the unrest lay an inherent hatred of military service, either regular or militia, and a fear that the militia would be used on active service abroad. When the deputy lieutenants issued precepts in the autumn of 1795 for the replacement of men of the Northern Battalion of the Lincolnshire Militia they took the unusual procedure of issuing a general summons to all parishes in the division to return lists, instead of calling only on those parishes whose representatives had died, deserted or been discharged, which was the normal procedure. Such an unusual move aroused the populace, who had begun to feel the full effects of the high corn prices consequent upon a failed harvest, and they assembled in considerable numbers at Spilsby on the day when the returns were to be made. Facing the prospect of a riot if they proceeded, the magistrates and lieutenants suspended their business. It was not until May 1796 that precepts were once again issued, and on this occasion the lieutenancy meeting was once more cancelled, for owing to the absence of Thomas Coltman of Hagnaby, the most active and respected of their number, there were no remaining magistrates, fearing a repetition of the events of the autumn, declined attending. As a result of the suspension of these meetings great encouragement was given to the opponents of the militia and Sir Joseph Banks remarked:

The Country people who conceived they had gained a victory at Spilsby before were now convinced in their minds that if sufficient opposition was given to the magistrates, meetings would not be held and they could be ever free from serving in the Militia.

In the light of the above it was unfortunate for the magistracy that their next moves for the return of the lists coincided with the publication of a bill for providing an augmentation of the militia. The bill, presented by Pitt to the Commons on 18 October 1796, and receiving the Royal Assent on 29 November, provided for the raising of an additional 60,000 men for the militia, needed because of the increasing threats of a French invasion and the alarming deficit in the numbers of the regular army. Lincolnshire was called on to provide a further 2,140 men, thus increasing the county's militia commitments from 1,200 to 3,350. This new burden on the parishes understandably increased the already present unrest.

The news of the bill for the supplementary militia spread rapidly and on 29 October, before the bill was passed by parliament, a meeting was to be held at Caistor for the taking in of the lists in connection with the replacement of men in the existing militia, a crowd of 500 people assembled armed with staves and sticks to prevent it. The deputy lieutenants, Marmaduke Tomline and Thomas Dixon both of Riby, did not dare venture into the town, and thus the crowd freely seized each of the parish constables, taking from them the lists and destroying them. Some of the constables were said to have been beaten with their own sticks and some seem to have either lost their lives or suffered a new act, 'but if the gentlemen would stand forward and pay them for their loss of time in having their exercise they would to a man stand true to their King and Country'.

A meeting for the taking in of lists from south-west Lindsey was to be held at Horncastle a week later on Saturday 5 November, which was both Guy Fawkes Day and market day. Five days before at Spilsby the bellman was given sixpence to cry round the town, it being market day, an announcement calling on every 'young fellow' that was liable to serve in the new militia 'to appear the 5th of November at Horncastle to let them know that they are neither willing to pay nor go'. The crier's wife reported to Thomas Coltman, the head of the committee, three days later, that the young men had scythes and clubs and that they had sworn to die in the streets rather than become militiamen. Coltman went at once from Spilsby to consult Sir Joseph Banks on the matter and it was decided that there would be little likelihood of unrest at Horncastle if the true purpose of the meeting could be explained to the crowd by the militia clerk who would be able to show how few men were required. Accordingly one of the Horncastle meeting Coltman and his fellow magistrate Rev. Edward Walls of Spilsby set off early for Horncastle from their respective homes. They found however that groups of twenty to thirty men were already converging on the town from all the surrounding villages. Walls himself was overtaken by a large group at Toynon, who stopped his horse but listened patiently while he explained the purpose of the meeting and warned them of the consequences of any violent action. The meeting adjourned and after getting Walls to join in 'huzzaing God Save the King' they let him go. The men continued on their way and when they reached Horncastle they found a crowd of about 500 gathered and their resolve to behave quietly was soon forgotten. Some of the crowd posted themselves at the entrance to the town, stopping the constables as they came in, taking away the lists and destroying them. Others searched the alehouses for any constables already in the town, and if any refused to give up his list he was lifted up by his ears until he submitted. The deputy lieutenants did take in four or five lists, but despite the active support of the respectable inhabitants of the town they were forced to surrender them by the mob, who chased them from the town before the militia clerk arrived to give an explanation of the meeting.

Before dispersing a number of the rioters bought blue ribbons and bound themselves to reappear at any further militia meeting that might be held, swearing that they would not suffer another man to be drawn for that purpose. They left Horncastle in smaller groups and were said to have waylaid people on the road and in the various villages, demanding money in a very menacing manner, before reaching their homes. One party over thirty strong, led by a man with a flag and accompanied by the sound of fifes, marched in pairs into Spilsby market place about four o'clock in the afternoon. They were all wearing cockades and they concealed small bales of furts in their clothes. Their main objective was the house of Mr. Walls, where they violently rapped on the door which was answered by the magistrate who recognised them as servants from Toynon, Halton Holgate and other nearby villages. He barred their way and once again stressed the true purpose of the militia meetings, but the men refused to leave quietly until Walls gave them money for drink. Then they gave the usual three cheers for the King, this time coupled with the name of the Spilsby's justice and spent the rest of the evening in the town's numerous alehouses, dispersing quietly after dark.

The Horncastle proceedings understandably made the magistrates uneasy, and Banks reported to John King, an Under Secretary of State:

We are as you may suppose under considerable alarm the whole power of executive Justice has been seized out of the hands of our magistrates by these young men and no one can tell in what manner young men will use power while in their hands. We expect every slight cause of dissatisfaction real or imaginary to see these gentlemen with their Ribbons in force again on a very short notice.

Fearing a greater crowd and increased violence at the proposed militia meeting to be held at Alford on Wednesday
9 November, it was postponed. Notwithstanding the circulation of this adjournment preparations continued to be made by those desirous of preventing the meeting. On Sunday 5 November meetings were held in many churchyards around Alford and plans made, and some of those who had been at Horncastle openly wore their ribbons at church services. On the fourth day, the rioters at Alford and acted more violently than hitherto. The whole town was forced into contributing to a subscription for the rioters, gentlemen were required to pay five shillings, clergy three shillings and the others in proportion. In all some ten pounds were collected. As it was market day a number of constables were in town on business, they were assaulted by the mob and one was pursued to his home where the rioters stole a hog’s face, drank his ale and forced him to pay ten shillings before allowing him to go. The fourth man was under arrest ordered into the market and forced into payment before being allowed to ride away. Some of the crowd remained until dark drinking in the alehouses, while others went in groups to outlying houses, here they demanded money and victuals, threatening the owners with the destruction of their houses if they did not comply. A crowd of over 200 visited the house of the elderly widow Mrs. Dashwood at Well, and she harangued them for half an hour from an upstairs window before they dispersed quietly on receiving a guinea.

On the same day as the Alford events, Boston was the scene of an attempt to prevent the militia lists beings taken in for the Holland division. The news of the success of the mob at Horncastle became a major talking point among the young men gathered for the Leake Statute Hirings on Monday 7 November, and a number determined to ‘play the Horncastle game at Boston’. Cockades were obtained and a reassembly advertised for the following day by blowing horns to rally supporters in Leake, Benington, Wrangle, Leverton and other villages to the north and east of Boston. The magistrates, being forewarned by these arrangements of the likely consequences, were quickly summoned by Thomas Fyddell to a meeting at Boston and they determined to send at once for the assistance of the recently formed Long Sutton and Spalding Troops of Yeomanry Cavalry. Messages were despatched at 6 p.m. to the Captains Scrope and Wilson who successfully mustered a force of 125 men who rode into Boston by ten o’clock the following morning. The mob had begun to collect in the villages quite early, the ears of John Lintorn of Fryston being ‘assailed with the Hems and Hallowing of a tumultuous multitude’ at eight o’clock. The assembled crowd however did not reach Boston until just before eleven, and they entered the town armed with staves and walking in pairs over Bargate Bridge only to find themselves faced by the volunteers and militia armed with no felonious. The mob of some 500, who had forced into company a great number of servants and labourers in husbandry from Holland Fen and Boston, was stunned into silence and the business of the day went on without interruption. The cavalry were kept on duty, riding about the town, for four hours but there were no reports of any disturbances.

This success of the volunteer force at Boston reinforced the views already expressed by Sir Joseph Banks and Thomas Colman in their letter to the Under Secretary of State and the duke of Portland, that it was necessary for the civil power to be backed by a military force if peace was to be secured and an example made of the rioters. Accordingly Portland issued orders on 9 November for the Somerset Fencibles to march from Lincoln to the various towns in Lindsey, two troops each to go to Horncastle and Louth, and one troop each to Spilsby and Alford. The troop which reached Spilsby on November 12 was under the command of Thomas Colman, in the apprehension of some of the ringleaders in the riots. The afternoon of 12 November was spent in obtaining information on the rioters and planning their capture, and in the evening Colman accompanied by a quartermaster and twenty men rode over fifty miles and took four prisoners. At Bolingbroke, considered one of the most disorderly towns, two labourers Samuel Turner, aged 26, and Edward Parkins, aged 23, were arrested, and at Hairby a house was surrounded and another labourer Samuel Hall, aged 21 taken. A fourth unnamed prisoner was taken after being pursued through the countryside. All four prisoners were lodged in the cage at Spilsby from Saturday night to Monday morning. There was some fear on the part of Colman and the soldiers that an attempt would be made to release the men and there were reports that the men were preparing their guns and obtaining ‘cats’ in order to lame the horses of the cavalry. The military were kept on the alert all Sunday and Monday morning but no guns, no cats and indeed no dissident person made their appearance. Colman and Banks accompanied by Lord Gwydir, son-in-law of lord Ancaster, paraded the town before committing Turner, Parkin and Hall; the fourth man was not required. The prisoners were taken swiftly to Lincoln Castle mounted on troopers’ horses and surrounded by cavalry with drawn swords. The magistrates had especially planned the mode of conveyance to Lincoln, in order to preclude all hopes of escape and to diffuse a terror of our proceedings over the country. The search for the ringleaders continued for some time, at Alford a constable was interrogated for several hours but was too scrupulous to divulge the names of those who attacked him even under the threat of imprisonment, similarly at Horncastle no one was willing to give information against the rioters. Two more prisoners were eventually taken, William Catliff, aged 54, probably from Welton le Wold and John Taylor, aged 23, who was charged with demanding ale and money from Rev. Thomas Remington at Alford. Another man Walker fled from the county and Colman suggested that the government advertise a reward for his arrest. The five prisoners were brought to trial at Lincoln Assizes in March 1797 and all were found guilty; Turner, Parkins and Hall charged with assaulting and obstructing John Birchby, constable of Bolingbroke in the execution of his office were sentenced to imprisonment for six months and to keep the peace for five years. The same sentence was passed on Taylor but Catliff described as ‘a hardened and irreclaimable thief’ and on that account a proper object for an example was sentenced to death on the capital charge of robbery of a dwelling house. Not wishing that any of the rioters should become martyrs in the eyes of the populace the gentlemen and magistrates of the area petitioned through Walls, a fellow collegian of the judge, that Catliff be reprieved and transported. The last sentence was preferable to a short imprisonment in Lincoln for fear of his future return to Welton and his corrupt influence on the other imprisoned rioters who were ‘unexperienced young lads’ with no criminal designs. Catliff accordingly was transported.

The presence of the volunteer cavalry and the swift capture and imprisonment of certain rioters, followed by a three day tour of the disaffected towns by Banks, Colman and other magistrates quietened the area. Action was also taken on a county level for the duke of Ancaster, under pressure from the duke of Portland, called a meeting of all the deputy lieutenants and magistrates at Lincoln on 17-18 November. Little how Colman came out of this meeting and the proposals of Banks and Colman regarding the publication of a notice or pamphlet to explain the necessity of an increased militia and to outline the details of service and pay received little support. There was a general fear that any such pamphlet would produce a counterblast from the experienced radical campaigner Major Cartwright of Brotherton, and so exacerbate the situation. Sir Joseph Banks and his ‘commander-in-chief’ Thomas Colman, disappointed 11th, when the negative results of the Lincoln meeting made moves in other ways. Colman, who resolved to refrain from hunting until order and tranquillity were returned to the county, actively promoted the Horncastle Yeomanry Cavalry, of which he was to be captain. Banks offered himself as an officer in the supplementary militia and proposed that all the Lincolnshire gentry should similarly volunteer as militia men and thereby do away with
the necessity of a ballot. They could provide their substitutes from among the sons of their tenant farmers, and 'vagabonds' would be reserved for the regular army and navy.

In general the Lincolnshire gentry were more sympathetic to the volunteer movement, which had shown itself as an effective anti-revolutionary force, than to the militia. Batson, Colman and Ellison all attributed the occurrence of unrest to the mistiming and mishandling of the ballot meetings on the part of the militia officers and clerks.

It is clear that the rioters in October and November 1796 thought that the meetings were being held to choose the supplementary militia, and they attended them in full force because, owing to the insistence of the militia clerks, both the ballots and the appeals were to be held at the same time. Therefore if any of them below the stature height or suffering from any irremediable need, or, to lodge their appeal if balloted. The principal grievances voiced were economic in character, complaints being made of the meagreness of militia pay and the allowances given for exercises, and it was rumoured amongst the crowd that the provision of substitutes would cost each man as much as three to five pounds. The expressed dislike of military service and the fear of being sent abroad was attributed by Banks to the antipathy to the army fostered in the county by the presence of Colonel Loft's licensed 'crimping house' through which many men had been enroled in the regular forces.

Though the riots in 1796 show more signs of organisation and forward planning than those which occurred forty years before, and despite the wearing of cockades, they were no more revolutionary in character. The same levelling sentiments were expressed with unwillingness to fight for the rich, but throughout the crowds were loyal. Sir Joseph Banks reported that:

The Persons who composed the mob are uniformly Servants of the larger Farmers and sons of the smaller ones, all the middle aged people as I am informed are Loyal in the extreme except those few Jacobins who are to be found in every market Town I believe in England. The Mob itself indeed was loyal for they had no requisition, they repeatedly said we will Fight the French with it whenever they come why do not the gentlemen come out we will go with them.

Understandably both the local and national authorities sought for any Jacobin involvement, but of this there was no evidence. However the production of a pike, which had been found on the Louth to Spilsby turnpike road, near Scotland House, in May of that year, led Banks to ponder on its purpose. He wondered if it could have fallen from a load of pikes being conveyed to a group of enemies of the constitution was intended to assist the enemy in case of an actual invasion, or perhaps it had been sent from that great centre of militant Jacobinism, Sheffield, to instruct local revolutionaries in the making of such desperate weapons.

The anti-militia riots in Lincolnshire in 1757 and 1796 were locally inspired, short lived affairs typical of the majority of rural riots in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The rioters were not aiming at a general insurrection, they had a limited objective, the prevention of the militia ballots, and once this was achieved on their success was declared by a military salute and the noise of the drums.

The staves, cudgels and blunt hooks carried were for show and moral support rather than use, there were few reports of actual violence. In no place did the disturbances persist after the day of the intended ballot though the widespread nature of the riots and their comparative success meant that for many months the gentry and farmers were left in a state of unease.

Surprisingly little over a month after the riots ballot meetings were once again planned to take place at Alford and Horncastle. Rioting was again feared and 'the apprehension of the county . . . magnified the intended crowd to five thousand resolute men determined to oppose the delivery of the lists'. But at neither place was there any disorder, troops from Louth, Horncastle and Spilsby, were however present at Alford and there were reports that the blacksmith at Keel had been approached to make iron instruments to disable the horses of the cavalry.

Appendix: Two documents relating to the 1757 riots

A. A Representation of the Case of Lawrence Monck Esq. of Gainby in the County of Lincoln, To his Grace The Duke of Ancaster, Lord Lieutenant of The Same County

The said Lawrence Monck saith That on Fryday the 26th Augst. 1757 He was Privately inform'd that the People of the Neighbouring Towns intended an Insurrection and had Appointed to meet at the said Mr. Moncks House, on the Monday following in Order to Pull it down. The Gentlemen, being Ask'd what reason the People gave for such a Proceeding, Answered that it was Reported Amongst them that Mr. Monck was Busy in the Militia Act, That he had said if the People woud not enter into it he woud force them, That they sho'd be handcuff'd: That Poor men were good for nothing but to be shot at, and some few More Expressions tending to shew Illwill towards Poor men.

The said Mr. Monck declares that he never used any such like Expressions nor, That he knows of, ever shew'd or intended any ill will against a Poor Man, but knowing well the dispositions and Manners of the Country People, and his House being Two Miles from his Town, and no nearer than the Distance of one mile to any house, he was a little Alarm'd and apprehended some Danger. Therefore he immediately Packt up his Small Papers of Value and carried them to Lincoln the next morning (being Saturday) he found the same report had reach'd Lincoln (above Ten miles distance from him) Therefore he was more Alarm'd, went home again Presently, and from thence to two of the Towns, and endeavoured to Persuade the Farmers to meet him that Evening at one of their Neighbour's Houses, To talk the Affair Over. He Stayd for them untill it was dark, and some Time after, but none of Them came, except some of His Own Tenants; at last he began To think that the People really did entertain an ill Opinion of him, and from thence apprehended more danger than before: The Farmer of the House also apprised him of great Danger and declar'd so, and advis'd Mr. Monck to go home. He did so, and before Parting from the Farmer, They heard sevral shoutings in the adjoyning Village, which, as since Appears was the Masterings of a Mob, and They went to the House where just before Mr. Monck had been. The next Morning (being Sunday) one of his Tennants came and informed him that they appeared determined to go to Mr. Monck in a Riotous Manner, at four o'clock the next morning, and to Pull down his House, and that if Mr. Monck Tho't it proper he and some others would go to every Farm House and endeavour to Persuade the People to go to Mr. Moncks in a Peaceable Manner, the same afternoon; Mr. Monck approv'd of it and they had success, and in the afternoon about forty Persons went to Mr. Monck, They were soon satisf'd of the Reports being false, but appear'd very unwilling to conform to the Militia Act, and went away seemingly determin'D not to conform to it; They drank plentifully Ask'd for some Money to make them drink again but on refusing two Gentlemen were Chearful; The next day (being Monday) Mr. Monck was Riding out upon a Visit to a Neighbouring Gentleman, and at about Two Miles distance from his House Accidentally met a Mob of Farmers, Labourers and Country Servants. He address'd them civilly and for
DAVID NAVE

Some time did not know one person amongst them. They look’d very surly & made no direct answers, but being spoke to again, They said they were going to Mr. Moncks House; He then spoke to them again, and desired they would be silent which they consented to, saying hear him! hear him! let’s hear Reason! Mr. Monck told them they were afraid they had been false and that in the Evening before he had appeard & Satisfied Two Towns, which he understood were to have met them in Their Expedition: This being confirm’d by a Person amongst them who belon’d to one of the said Two Towns; they changed their countenances and began to say they would do him no hurt, but many of them at the same time swore they would knock every Gentleman on the head, for that they would not be drag’d away from their families, and sent abroad: Mr. Monck told them that the Act of Parliament had provided that they should not be sent abroad, They Answer’d That they were Promis’d the same about a year ago, and were deceived and would trust nobody; They were told in reply That an Act of Parliament never had deceiv’d them, nor was likely ever to do so. They agreed, That was not to be trusted: There would be an End of all things, so desir’d Mr. Monck would turn back and give them some Ale, and promis’d to do him no mischief. He went home, and they follow’d him; He gave them victuals and drink, yet some of them struck several times at the window shutters with their Clubs, but were push’d off by Some farmers, Others stove to get into the House at the doors, but were repuls’d in the like manner, Others ask’d for some money to drink, and being ask’d how much They would have, They said a Guinea a Town. They call’d out their constables to take the Money for them, and received Six Guinea’s for Six Towns.

The said Mr. Monck further say’d that a Person in the Mob told him, That the Town where he lived had appointed to Rise on that Night, and to go to Mr. Moncks the next morning wherefore Mr. Monck sent them a Guinea to be spent amongst them on condition that they would be quiet, and he inform’d them that they did ris’d on that Night & afterwards; but did not go to his House. He was at the same Time inform’d That some other Towns had been in Motion and intended him a Visit and reflecting that the pacifying such People depended more upon Honour than Reason, and his family being already termify’d; He immediately took his family to Lincoln, except a few servants and he is of Opinion that if the Order for the Meeting of the Chief Constables, Lieutenants & Justices had not been discharg’d all the Country Gentlemen in Lindsey Division would have been in much danger.

Presented to His Grace Duke of Ancaster, on Fryday the 9th September 1757 by Lawnce Monck.

British Library, Additional Mss. 32874/159-60.

B Sir,

This informs you that the Parishes in this Wapentake is making an Agreement, That if you or any of His Majesties Justices of Peace send out Warrants to the Constables thereof and insists of the Names of the People of each Parish to be given in According to the Act made for that case, they will raise an Army of them and beat, pull down and destroy, all the Gentlemen’s Seats in this County, for they think its more for want of Money than men, and they say if you would have men rais’d you may raise them by the Assistance of your long green Purves and be dan’d if you will, They also desire to know if a Ticket be drawed and to fall To a Poor man’s lot to go that has a large & small family which of you Buntin A’s Coated fellows will maintain his family ’till its capable of taking care for itself. They think you’re Adding Charge and they are as high as the need to be, for they Swear they will not fight for their Estates, they will fight for their own lives first and so begin at home, for they have had loss enough by the riot last year and no consideration from the Landlord at Rent day Scarse will as ask a Tenant to eat or drink for his money, so the Just-Asses and the other start up Officers that buys a Commission for a Trifle and Sells his Nation to make his fortune when he comes abroad, and throws thousands of Poor mens lives away about it, such men as those shood behave well to their Tenants at home. Then they would have the Countyree good will, for tis the Farmers that maintains both the Poor and such as they too, and they swear if this go forward they’ll have a fair knock at most of your Houses in a small time too.

This letter was directed to Saml. Dashwood & James Bateman Esq. at Claxby & Well.


Footnotes

7 Sir Francis Hild, Georgian Lincoln, pp.59-61.
8 In 1796 virtually all places mentioned in connection with the riots in South Lindsey and Holland had right of commons on East or West Fens.
11 J. R. Western, op. cit., pp.52-74.
12 For Lincolnshire subscriptions for substitutes see C. Brears, Lincolnshire in the 17th and 18th Centuries (London, 1940), p.169. The majority of militia men were substitutes, of the twenty men who failed to turn up for the exercise with the supplementary militia at Boston in July 1797 only three, a grazer, a labourer, and a currier were balloted men. Stamford Mercury, 28 July 1797.
14 B.L. Add. Mss. 32874/157, Duke of Ancaster to duke of Newcastle 19 Sept. 1757
15 Ibid.
16 Leeds Intelligence, 6 Sept. 1757. Early in September 1757 some parishes in Lincolnshire ‘that were friends of the Militia Act’ organised the payment of ‘one shilling every man of their parish every time he attends the militia exercise until provision shall be made for them by Parliament’, ibid.
17 B.L. Add. Mss. 32874/161-2, see Appendix B.
18 J. R. Western, op. cit., p.299.
19 L.A.O. Holland Quarter Sessions Minutes, 1757.
20 B.L. Add. Mss. 32874/161-2, see Appendix B.
21 G. Rude, op. cit., p.36.
23 Leeds Intelligence, op. cit.
25 B.L. Add. Mss. 32874/159-60 see Appendix A.
26 Ibid., 161-2 see Appendix B.
27 J. R. Western, op. cit., p.300.
28 Hull Courant, 13 Sept. 1757.
29 Ibid.
ANTI-MILITIA RIOTS IN LINCOSHIRE, 1757 AND 1796

Banks Coll. 3/1/13b, 17, 27; P.R.O. HO/50/26 19 Nov. R. Ellison.
Banks Coll. 3/1/27.

Banks Coll. 3/1/27.

Banks Coll. 3/1/27.

Banks Coll. 3/1/15.

Banks Coll. 3/1/15.

Banks Coll. 3/1/32.

Banks Coll. 3/1/34, 36.

Banks Coll. 3/1/32.

Banks Coll. 3/1/32.

Banks Coll. 3/1/59, 3/1/59.

Banks Coll. 3/1/12, 16, 27. At Lincoln and Gainsborough the meetings were not held as the deputies did not turn up.

P.R.O. HO/50/26 Nov. 1. C. Gatham.

Banks Coll. 3/1/12, P.R.O. HO/50/26 7 Nov. T. Colman.

Banks Coll. 3/1/2.

Banks Coll. 3/1/21.

Banks Coll. 3/1/21.

Banks Coll. 3/1/10 Mrs. Dashwood of Well, to T. Colman 9 Nov. 1796; P.R.O. HO/50/26 11 Nov. Sir. J. Banks.

Banks Coll. 3/1/13-14; P.R.O. HO/50/26 10 Nov. Mayor of Boston, 18 Nov. T. Wilson; Stamford Mercury, 18 Nov. 1796; Gentleman's Magazine, Dec. 1796, p.1048. The ceremony of the consecration of the colours of the South Holland Squadron of gentlemen and yeomanry cavalry at Spalding was reported in great detail in Gentleman's Magazine, Nov. 1796, pp.459-60.

Banks Coll. 3/1/9a, 15; P.R.O. HO/50/26 9 Nov. duke of Portland.

Banks Coll. 3/1/27; P.R.O. HO/50/26 Sir John Banks, 11 Nov. A 'cat' was an instrument with four projecting spikes, used to scotch a horse in the round and so lame it.

Banks Coll. 3/1/20, 27; P.R.O. HO/50/26 14 Nov. Sir. J. Banks. Banks was disguised when later the rioter Catiff was conveyed to Lincoln from Spilsby in a post-chaise. Banks Coll. 3/1/27.

Banks Coll. 3/1/27.

Banks Coll. 3/1/27.

Banks Coll. 3/1/27.

Banks Coll. 3/1/27.

Banks Coll. 3/1/27.

Banks Coll. 3/1/27.

Banks Coll. 3/1/27.

Banks Coll. 3/1/27.

Banks Coll. 3/1/27.

Banks Coll. 3/1/32, 27-28, 32.

Banks Coll. 3/1/15.

For a discussion of the role of the volunteer forces at this time see J. R. Western, The Volunteer Movement as an Anti-Revolutionary Force 1779-1801, English Historical Review, lxxi, 1956, pp.603-614.

ANTI-MILITIA RIOTS IN LINCOSHIRE, 1757 AND 1796

Banks Coll. 3/1/13b, 17, 27; P.R.O. HO/50/26 19 Nov. R. Ellison.
Banks Coll. 3/1/27.

Banks Coll. 3/1/27.

Banks Coll. 3/1/5.

Banks Coll. 3/1/5.

Banks Coll. 3/1/32. In 1794 Banks had reproduced a plate showing how pikes could be manufactured by local blacksmiths when in time of invasion there was need to arm the populace. Anon. Outline of a Plan of Defence, op. cit., Banks Coll., 3/1/45, plate missing.

J. P. Dunhab, op. cit. As in 1757 the 1796 anti-militia riots were widespread throughout the country. They were recorded in Nov.-Dec. 1796 from the counties of Cambridge, Cumberland, Buckingham, Gloucester, Lancaster, Merioneth, Norfolk, Northampton, Shropshire and Worcestershire.


Banks Coll. 3/1/32.

Banks Coll. 3/1/34, 36.

Banks Coll. 3/1/32.

Banks Coll. 3/1/32.

Banks Coll. 3/1/32.

Banks Coll. 3/1/59, 3/1/59.

Book Review

MIDYEVAL CRAFTSMEN by John Harvey, vii + 231 pp., Illus., Batsford, 1975, £5.50.

The very considerable debt which antiquaries and historians already owe to Mr. John Harvey for more than a score of published works is much increased by this magnum opus in which he covers the whole range of craftsmanship in the middle ages, collecting, sifting and analysing the material from innumerable original sources. The dictum which he lays down in the Introduction that 'The social standing of skilled craftsmen .... was a good deal higher than might be imagined' and reiterated in the Epilogue ('The craftsman in his contribution to society, was closely equivalent to the professional middle class') is irrefutably supported by the mass of evidence adduced. So many fascinating lines of thought are suggested or pursued that it is impossible to do more than merely indicate some of them in a short review.

For example, the motives which lay behind medieveal craftsmanship are clearly set out in a felicitous paragraph, showing that these men, in spite of their human ambitions, their trade disputes and their conflicts, 'never forgot that at any moment their souls might be required, and that a strict account was due'. Many hoary myths are exploded as, for example, the once popular belief that skill in design and execution lay chiefly with professional churchmen, or the oft-repeated fallacy about chestnut roofs.

The arrangement of the book has much to commend it. After dealing with the organization of medieveal craft guilds, the training and methods of work of craftsmen and their shops, the author goes on to examine materials and methods of building. Craftsmen of construction in stone, clay and timber respectively are seen at work and many interesting sidelights appear e.g. the almost traditional quarrelosensness of stonemasons and the fact that the word 'millwright' first occurs as late as 1481.

Two valuable chapters are devoted to craftsmen of enrichment in painting and metalwork, although, as Mr. Harvey says, no hard and fast line can be drawn between construction and enrichment.

There is a comprehensive bibliography of nearly 200 works and seven closely printed, double-column pages of references. Particular mention should be made of the splendid illustrations, both for their selection and their reproduction.

It is no exaggeration to say that Mr. Harvey has produced a work which is likely to remain a classic of its subject for many years to come.

P. B. G. BINNALL

HEMSWELL