

ART. VIII – “*Sizergh to be burnt within two days*”. *Sizergh Castle and the Gordon Riots*  
BY DICK WHITE

**I**N June 1780 London was affected by serious rioting in which some 800 people died, and much property including Newgate Prison was destroyed.<sup>1</sup> The riots were provoked by the Catholic Relief Bill of 1778, which sought to ease some of the severe penalties imposed on Catholics following the Reformation and the Glorious Revolution of 1688. Activists led by Lord George Gordon petitioned parliament to repeal the Act, because they believed it would open the way for a return to Catholicism. The riots which followed were principally confined to London, though minor incidents occurred in Hull<sup>2</sup> and Bath.<sup>3</sup>

Evidence has recently come to light that an incident linked to the Gordon Riots occurred in Westmorland. On 10 July 1780 men broke into Sizergh Castle, the home of the Stricklands, a prominent Catholic family living near Kendal, and attempted to set fire to it. The attempt failed, but the circumstances and correspondence related to the event are of interest in terms of public attitudes at the time.

### **Sizergh**

Sizergh has been the home of the Strickland family since the thirteenth century. Members of the family represented Westmorland in Parliament throughout the Middle Ages, and they played a leading role in wars with France and Scotland. Following the Reformation they outwardly conformed to the religious changes of the time and in 1564, the then head of the house was described by the Bishop of Carlisle as being “of good Religion” despite having been involved in the Pilgrimage of Grace. In the early seventeenth century a marriage with Margaret Curwen, a staunch Catholic, resulted in the children being brought up in that faith, and in consequence the family afterwards suffered the penalties and disadvantages of recusancy. In 1688 Sir Thomas and Lady Winifred Strickland, having been courtiers to James II, went into exile with the King when he abdicated and fled to France. Lady Winifred was Under-Governess to Prince James Edward Stuart, and for a time Governess. Sizergh had been placed in trust and escaped forfeiture. After a time Walter Strickland the elder son, returned from France and resumed the family’s occupation, albeit living quietly, but without noticeable hostility.<sup>4</sup>

In the early eighteenth century the Revd Thomas J. F. Strickland, son of the above Sir Thomas, was much involved in trying to ameliorate the condition of the English Catholics and had the promise of a Cardinal’s hat had his schemes come to fruition. In the event his plans did not succeed and he exchanged that opportunity for the Bishopric of Namur and a sum of money.<sup>5</sup> Later, his nephew the Revd William Strickland played an influential role in maintaining the fabric of the Jesuits in England when the Society was suppressed in 1773. He is credited with being responsible for its re-emergence in 1814.<sup>6</sup>

At the time of the incident described in this paper the principal occupant of Sizergh was Cecilia Strickland and her second husband Jarrard Strickland.

### **Cecilia Strickland (née Townley) 1741-1814**

Cecilia Townley was the daughter of William Townley, of Townley in Lancashire, and grand daughter of Henry, sixth Duke of Norfolk. She married Charles Strickland of Sizergh in 1762. They had three children. Thomas, who became heir to the property on his father's death, was in his minority at that time and the Sizergh estate was administered by his mother until he came of age in 1795. He was educated at the English Academy at Liège, as was his brother William Philip. They also had a sister, Mary. After the death of Charles in 1770, Cecilia married his cousin Jarrard Edward Strickland of York in 1779.<sup>7</sup> She was very active in society and was a patroness of Thomas West who wrote the *Antiquities of Furness* and a *Guide to the Lakes*.

Cecilia's time at Sizergh coincided with some reconstruction, refurbishing and remodelling of the house necessitated by its state of disrepair, which included the cutting up and complete alteration of the Great Hall and central portion of the building. Her modifications caused a certain amount of dismay. One source says the changes were not all in good taste, but certainly had a feeling for modern fashion and comfort! However, her motivation was guided by a need to spend as little as possible of the money available to safeguard the inheritance that would pass to her son. It was through Cecilia that the Borwick and Standish estates passed to the Stricklands.

She was well acquainted with Samuel Johnson.<sup>8</sup> Accounts of her accompanying him to Paris, and visiting him in London show that she was a close friend. Indeed, Johnson referred to her as "Stricky". A prominent member of Johnson's circle, Mrs Thrale, whom Cecilia met when they were children together in London, named her daughter after her. In one of her letters Mrs Thrale, who lived in Clwyd, writes in 1797:

We had Mrs Strickland to visit us from Westmoreland – You have heard me speak of her with Esteem. She is a Courageous Lady; for though lame and Infirm, nothing could keep Her from visiting an Old Friend when just within 100 Miles of her Brother's House, and She would see Bachygraig too and Llewenny because it did belong to my Family 40 years ago.<sup>9</sup>

While there is no record of Johnson visiting her at Sizergh, several of his circle are known to have done so. Johnson did have an intention to visit Sizergh, but nothing came of it.<sup>10</sup>

Henry Hornyold records:

For many years before her death Mrs Strickland suffered from rheumatism to such an extent as to necessitate her being wheeled about in a chair. When she went out to drive she was lifted into her carriage in her chair, the carriage being so contrived as to suit the chair which occupied half a side.<sup>11</sup>

There is a portrait by Romney at Sizergh, which for many years has carried the label "Cecilia Strickland (née Townley)". Recent research suggests that the picture is actually of Margaret Strickland (née Messenger). The Romney portrait of Cecilia was included in the sale of pictures from Sizergh in 1896, and is now in the National Museum, Havana, Cuba.<sup>12</sup>

A number of Cecilia's letters have been preserved in archives.<sup>13</sup> Most are to her brother Charles Townley (1737-1805), some are from her second husband Jarrard to Charles, some to her son Thomas and a few are to Thomas West. West as mentioned earlier resided at Sizergh for a few years before his death there in 1779. Her brother, Charles, was perhaps the best known of the Townley family and was referred to as

“The Connoisseur”. He had a classical sculpture collection which was bought by the British Museum after his death, and was displayed there in the Townley Gallery. There is a painting by Zoffany at Townley Hall near Burnley showing Charles and his collection in his home in Park Street, Westminster.<sup>14</sup> The Towneley family name usually had two “e”s, but Charles’ generation chose to spell it with one “e”.

### **The arson attempt**

Cecilia and Jarrard had been in Liège in June 1780, presumably to see the children who were at school there. Writing to her brother Charles Townley on 19 June, she expressed concern about the “troubles” in England:

we propose to go to Bruxelles on thursday next, & wish to get to Sizergh as soon as possible after, but as Mr J Strickland fears there may be danger for me travelling in England on account of the troubles, and still more to fear for me, if they should reach Sizergh, that he has not determined wheather or not I shall accompany him to England at this time, but says he will stay at Bruxelles a few days to hear more news, as to how the disturbances go on, & wheather likely to be in the North this year & accordingly will go allone or take me – we have heard nothing of you, & conclude you & house safe where we left you – but beg the favor of you to direct a line to Mr J.Strickland to be left at the Post office Margate, that we may know if we may call on you or not in our way – we all joine in affection & compliments to you Dear Brother – C. Strickland<sup>15</sup>

By 30 June they were at Ostend and she wrote again to Charles:

we arrived at Brugus on Tuesday in our way to England, all things seemingly quiet in our unhappy Country at presant, had determined my going home – & we have met with an excelant Marchent Ships, Neutraill bottome returning empty to Hull, on board of which, we Came here from Brugus yesterday & propose going in it by this evenings Tyde for Hull, the wind is fair, & I hope there is every reason to think we shall get safe, which if we do, will take off the infinite fatigue of traveling in hack carryages across the kingdome, which to me at presant is allmost too much for tho I am as well as I can expect, yet I am easily overdone – I do regrett exceeding the not going by London, because we are deprived the pleasure of seeing you; & I believe J – S can hardly reconcile himself to the not seeing you at this time, because he says he has no other chance of that pleasure the Lord knows when. You shall hear from us when we land God Willing affectionately Yours C. Strickland<sup>16</sup>

On their return to Sizergh, Cecilia and Jarrard discovered that an attempt had been made to burn Sizergh down. Writing from Sizergh on 15 July 1780 to his brother in law, Jarrard described what they found on their return:

Dr Brother

Allow me to thank you for the favour of yours of the 5th Inst: which I found here on our return home on Thursday night. shall endeavour without further prelude, to give you some Idea of our present Situation at this place, still relying on your wonted goodness in Giving us the Comfort of your help & advice. we find ourselves Embarassed how to Act, in order to preserve this Old Mansion & its contents. The same spirit that so lately showed its power in London & Elsewhere seems to be gathering in this part of world amongst the lower Class of people; this house was broken into on the night between Sunday & Monday the 9th & 10th Inst: with an Intent of reducing it to Ashes. it had been said publicly in Kendall on the Saturday before (it being Market day) that Sizergh should be burnt within two days, with many other threats of destruction to all papers &c &c, which had occasion’d Wm Ellison the steward here to secure as much, as in his power, the plate, papers, & valuables & be a little on his guard with some loaded guns in the house, & so disposed the few men in it, that they might hear if any attempt should be made, & give the proper alarms. Accordingly at the time above mention’d & between the hours of 12 & one ‘o clock the gardiner hearing a noise in the Hall & vestibule, he got up & went to the door & was then

Convinced he heard people there, finding the door locked he called aloud but received no answer & the noise ceased, he then called again for Immediate Entrance, at the same time calling out to his fellow servants by name to come & help him to open the door, he then heard a bustle in the Hall of men running to the Door leading to the Garden Stairs, on the arrival of the other servants the door was got open and that part of the house searched but the rogues were all fled, horses were heard to Gallop of & soon after one of the maids saw out of a window 5 or 6 men run away on foot from the back part of the house, the print of horses feet were traced from the peat house into the high park (there having been a shower of rain that evening) where they lost the traces, it being a large stocked pasture. there were the marks of horses feet in the deer park near the Ha-Ha! On searching the house a heap of peats (the common fuel of this country) was found on the Hall floor, others on the carpet in the bed chamber within the drawing room, two chests of books & papers in the vestibule turn'd out ready for firing another in the same place containing tapestry & furniture partly emptied which they must have been at work at when alarmed. the window curtains in Drawing room & bed chamber let down, I suppose with an intent that the fire might not be seen by any body till to late to be saved they had gathered a large bundle of dried pea sticks which were found on the stairs leading from the Garding to the Hall, several heaps of peats were made ready in the peat house for bringing up stairs, they were so nice as to have picked out the dryest & threw any that were moist aside. they had broke the glass in the Hall door by which means they got the power of unbolting it. This is all that has already happened for ever since several of our neighbours have lain in the house, others keeping watch at night. We found Sizergh on our arrival more like a little Garrison'd fort than a Gentlemans house. part of the guard we think it necessary to continue as yet. these Incendiarys must be composed of some of the Miscreants of this neighbourhead, tho' I believe they are join'd by some of those wretches that were released from your London Jails by the Mob, as several of that stamp are supposed to be lurking in this County there having been other Attempts at House breaking & high way robberys of late, a thing before very unusual in these parts. Now after having this summ'd up the facts the next thing is, what is to be Done? as a correspondance on the subject cannot but take some days, shall therefore give you my opinion of what occurs to be the first steps to be taken and begging your assistance in them, but desire you will freely assent or reject the whole or any part, if any other method should appear more eligible to you.- We think the most likely method of detecting these Incendiaries, bringing them to Justice, & preventing any future attempts of the like nature, would be to obtain from the Secretary of State, a rewards from the king to any Accomplice, or other person, who shall give such information so as to convict one or more of the offenders, & his Majestys pardon to any accomplice so informing except the Identical person that actually committed the fact of breaking into the house (for he must have been a person of the neighbourhead by knowing where the bolt was). I understand it is necessary that when thees kings reward & pardon is issued, that a reward from the persons attack'd should be added, I therefore think that your sister as guardian will be fully justified in offering one. do you think so? & if so, do you think fifty pounds the right sum, but do that as you find right. What renders this advertisement from above the most expedient way of rendering this place safe in future is that persons are now going about (but who they are we cannot as yet ascertain) Endeavouring to persuade the country people, that giving any aid or protection to Sizergh is contrary to the Laws of England. this has had some weight with the common people already. such an advertisement will fully contradict such malevolent Insinuations, will deterr these fellows from such attempts, & will render our neighbours much more willing to protect us. If you think as we do, & do apply to the Secretary of State on our behalf, & it is granted, wish you would have it inserted in Bates's & Almon's papers (they being the most General ones in this County) & send me down the original one from his office sign'd by himself, so that I may have hand bills struck off here from that authority, and cause the same to be put in the County papers. - when this affair happend at Sizergh we were at Mr Stapleton's at Carlton, but on receiving an account by express we hurry'd home immediately.

I fear you will begin to dread the very sight of a letter from me, it has been unfortunately my fate to give you so much trouble.

I thank you for mentioning my papers, I am in no hurry for them, but when occasion offers to get a frank, will be obliged to you for them.- my wife is vastly well & in good spirits & says she will have arms in her room at night for her own use being determined not to loose the premises without a stout resistance she desired to be most affectionately remembered to you

I remain Dr Br yours most sincerely Jd Strickland Junr.<sup>17</sup>

By 23 July, there had been no reply from Charles Townley and Jarrard was getting anxious, for rumours of further attacks were still circulating, and he was getting no support from the Kendal magistrates. Jarrard wrote again to Charles:

Sizergh July the 23rd 1780

Dr Brother

I wrote to you on the 15th Inst. giving a detail of the incendiary attempt which had been made on this house, & our then apprehensions of future attacks. – Am in hopes that this days post or tuesdays, will bring your answer, & that you have succeeded in your application for Royal reward & pardon to some one of the offenders, on the discovery of his Accomplices. What makes me trouble you again without waiting for yours, is, that we are still threatened by the talk of the Common people, who are always the instruments of such attempts, nor can we get people, who ought to be active in checking such Attempts, to stirr at all in the affair. We are given to understand they are waiting to see, if Government will show us protection; & the Common people are only waiting to see whether the Magistrates will appear for us, or if any countenance will come from above. But if neither of these happen soon, I am confident we are lost, & if so, it will not stop with us, it being visible that Popery is only the pretense, as it was in London. that universal levelling is the spirit of the people. it is said, but I cannot as yet prove it, that some people have been heard to threaten a gentleman's house in the neighbourhead, because he came here to protect this, when it was attack'd. Upon the same, as yet, uncertain authority, people are said to threaten to destroy the protestant church in the neighbourhead. Upon all I can collect the people are ripe for mischief of any sort & want only to be heeded. This being the only R.C. gentlemans house in the County, will be the first sacrifice to the fury of the times.

If the advertisement should not be come out before this reaches you, would it not be advisable to mention Sizergh as belonging to Thos Strickland a Minor

There are but two residing & acting Justices in the whole barony of Kendal, they are old people & almost superannuated & fearfull of acting. I applied to one of them as wishing to have the public houses watched & searched, & for him otherwise to show any willingness to detect the past offenders & prevent future ills. All I could obtain, was that if this house should be attack'd again, & I would send him word, he would give me what assistance he could. Kendal is three miles from thence, so that we might be murder'd & the house burnt before his assistance could arrive.

There was a Court of Aldermen held on friday at Kendal & I prevail'd on one of them to propose that they should, as magistrates of the town, put out hand bills, intimating that as divers robberies had been committed in the neighbourhead, mentioning also the attempt here, that they would take every step towards discovering the offenders. This equitable & proper motion was opposed, & negatived in the Court.- whether from fear or a worse motive, I will not take upon myself to say. The recorder who has always been a bitter enemy to this family, was the most active opposer. I should think if application was made to the proper person (but who that is I do not know) to write a letter to the town & country Justices here, recommending vigilance & activity to them in these tumultuous times, towards apprehending all offenders & suppressing all disorder, would have a wonderful effect your sister has just started a quere in the above which I think deserves some consideration, I shall mention it & leave to you to decide. That as there are people endeavouring to discredit the truth of any attempt having been made to burn Sizergh, now if application should be made, or inquiry of any sort, to those people or any who feel themselves conscious of not having acted with the spirit their duty required, that they would not hesitate to deny the whole, which would bring on a finding & proving that would take up a deal of time & might create much mischeif.

whatever you do about this, must beg that if the obtaining a reward & pardon seems to meet with interruption, that you will be so good to do all possible to accomplish it soon, being fully convinced that any long delay will so embolden these villains that Sizergh must be burnt in spite of any efforts we can make of ourselves.

we are still necessitated to keep nightly watches which becomes very disagreeable. Madam S: continues very well, and joins me in apologies for the many troubles we have given you, & thanks for your many kindnesses to us & believe me Dr Br. Yours affectionately

J: Strickland Junr<sup>18</sup>

On 24 July Cecilia wrote to Mr Welton, a former Chaplain at Sizergh telling him of the arson attempt:

Sizergh July 24 1780

Dear Sir [to Mr Welton]

tho it is now ten days since we arrived at Sizergh from Liège I have realy not had time to write to you, or should certainly have done it sooner because I know it will give you pleasure to hear that we had a very good journey thither by London & Ostend & returned in a Marchant Ship to Hull, had a favourable voyage & got safe home but had the disagreeable intelligance whilst we stay'd at Carlton that an attempt had been made to Burn Sizergh it happened that in the night of the 9th instant the Gardiner lying in the Pantry Chamber, heard a noise in the Hall & Vestibule & going upstairs to the passage was convinced there were men in the Hall but on the Allarme being given they made off instantly – who they were, or what Number there were is not known but Horses were plainly heard to ride of & after some time 5 or 6 Men were seen to run off on foot Up the back lane. that to burn the House was evident, by heaps of dry Peats being brought up on to the Hall & Drawing room floors, & pea sticks – besides that the Common talk of the Country & of Kendal for some time before was, that Sizergh should be burnt, & even on the Saturday before, was, that Sizergh should be burnt within 2 days.

we have wrote to London for advice on how to proceed – & in the mean time to get all the information we can & to Guard the house.<sup>19</sup>

The rest of this letter was more concerned with Cecilia's troubles with her brother in law the Revd William Strickland.

By 25 July, Jarrard had received a reply from Charles Townley which gave the bad news that Charles had been unsuccessful in his efforts to persuade Ministers to take action to find and punish the arsonists. Jarrard wrote again to Charles as follows:

Sizergh July 25

Dr Brother

last night I received the favour of yours of 21st Inst & must own I was much hurt at the contents, on many accts; That you should have had so much trouble, that you should in person have received a refusal to so just a request, & lastly the consequences I apprehend here from the refusal. – I am certain similar requests have formerly been granted for Incendiary letters only, which are only threats; here are much more than threats, a positive Burglary perpetrated, part of the fuel already brought into the house, more prepared for bringing up, dayly accounts of threats being still used that the house shall as yet be burnt.

Things being thus I see nothing but submitting to our fate, a hard one it is, when one is confident, so slight an assistance would produce the effect desired. I can add nothing more to my two last letters, that would give any further information, only that the threats continue, that Sizergh shall be burnt.

We will keep our ground, & stand or fall with the place. we continue to have people in the house, labourers, & neighbours, but whether they are wholly to be depended on, is not very certain, for instance, there is a neighbour that has been here, as a Guardian by his own offering, that we have since heard had talked strangely on this affair some time before the attempt happened; I would willingly persuade myself, if I could, that it is false, for if true, that he was either active as passive in any thing against this family he must be the most ungratefull wretch upon Earth, himself & family before him having been bred & fostered under it, & received many obligations from it

Any further applications to the Magistrates here is useless, unless back'd from above, we can therefore only add to what we have already done, to get the Kings proclamation of the 9th of June (which I suppose to be that you alluded to in yours) printed in hand bills & dispersed & which we have this morning sent to have done whether there is a chance of obtaining either of our first request (viz the reward & Pardon, or the letter to rouse the Magistrates,) by applying thro' either persons you only can be judge, & we shall rest confident that every thing is done to the best, that you do.

If I was to quit the place it must immediately fall a sacrifice, but I must own I wish your sister would but there is no persuading her to that step. – one good at least will accrue from our applications that if the house is burnt some indemnity to the Minor, whose house it is, cannot be

refused after such early application for protection both here and in London. I must conclude as the [post] is just a going out & I would not willingly miss it therefore beg you will believe that we are & always will be most grateful for all your kindnesses to us & am

Your affectionate Br

J: Strickland Junr.<sup>20</sup>

By 3 August the tension was clearly abating for Jarrard wrote again to Charles thanking him for his help and support with respect to the attack on Sizergh.<sup>21</sup>

### **The attack in context**

Cecilia's letters and the family histories give no indications that in the years prior to 1780 they were unpopular locally because of their religion. While there is no study of Catholic history specific to the Kendal area, a review of Catholicism in the Furness Peninsula gives no strong evidence of anti-Catholic feeling apart from the regular venting of bigotry on 5 November.<sup>22</sup> Hilton, in his study of the subject in Lancashire, similarly finds little evidence of overt hostility in the second half of the eighteenth century.<sup>23</sup> The history of the Catholic Church in Kendal, Holy Trinity and St George, shows that a house in Stramongate, Kendal, contained a chapel in disguise in the 1760s, and it became the new chapel in 1793.<sup>24</sup> The history makes no reference to any hostility or antagonism to Catholics. The situation in the country seems to be best summed up in the words of Leys:

There is ample evidence that both the clergy who feared, and those who tolerated Catholicism knew perfectly well that the laws were not likely to be enforced, and that in the mid eighteenth century Papists formed a permanent element in English Society, recognised, if not approved. A toleration based on indifference rather than charity prevailed; religious controversy continued, but with far less bitterness and without the political overtones of the seventeenth century.<sup>25</sup>

This pattern was broken by the Riots of 1780.<sup>26</sup> The trouble was largely confined to London, but where it occurred in the provinces, there were local factors which probably provoked the incidents. In Bath, the town had developed as a centre for Catholic gentry, perhaps to facilitate marriages.<sup>27</sup> There was also a substantial Irish element and the imminent opening of a new Catholic chapel, which was attacked and burnt on 11 June. In Hull, a recently opened Catholic chapel was burnt also on 11 June,<sup>28</sup> and an attempt was made to attack Burton Constable Hall, the home of William Constable who had long links with recusancy. Haydon in his study of anti-Catholicism in eighteenth century England noted the existence of local branches and groups of anti-Catholics.<sup>29</sup> No evidence of such groups in the Kendal area has come to light.

However, the fact that Cecilia and Jarrard were apprehensive about travelling in England in the summer of 1780 shows that they were aware of possible danger. This may be because several close connections suffered directly because of their Catholicism. Cecilia's brother, Charles Townley, was perhaps most severely affected. He had to flee from his London house in Park Street when it was threatened by the mob.<sup>30</sup> Cecilia also had a relative, a Mr Hornyold. She had arrangements with him over payment of money due to her from nuns in Dunkirk.<sup>31</sup> Mr Hornyold was a packer, and had carried out work for Charles Townley in the carriage of items purchased on the continent. On 21 June 1780 Mr Hornyold made a deposition to Stormont, one of his Majesty's Principal Secretaries of State as follows:

I, Thomas Hornyold of Coleman Street Buildings, Packer, dipose that my House was attacked on Wednesday the Seventh by two different Parties of Rioters. The first at about half an hour after four the second at about five. The first party judged to consist of about 150 the second not more than 20. As many of the first party entered the house as could but the Principals & Leaders with others pushed them out again and ordered the door to be barred that no lady might sufer. One of the three remaining in the House looked into the books asking for those that related to Popery but did not seem to understand these which were shown to them. They went away without doing any mischief.

The second party which consisted of about 20 seemed to be under the Direction of Two persons, who entered the House and ordered the remainder to stay at the Door, & not to come in. One of these asked for books of Popery & on looking into several English and French Books immediately knew what they were. They chiefly consisted of history. When he had examined as many as he thought proper he told me, with an oath that I must not be surprised that he had done so, as his Orders & Instructions were to examine books. I believe he must have been a Man of Education, & his rough behaviour seemed to be forced and not natural. He said he was a sailor, but I considered this assertion as a blind to conceal who he really was. They all went off swearing that I had deceived them, & think they would return again.

Sworn before one of his Majesty's principal Secretary's of State Stormont.

June 21 1780

Thomas Hornyold<sup>32</sup>

It might also be suggested that Jarrard could have had intelligence on the extent of the troubles from having lived at Willitof, near Selby<sup>33</sup> before his marriage to Cecilia, and would probably have been told of the attacks in Hull.

An interesting aspect of the correspondence exchanged during the above events is the light it throws on the speed of communication at the time. The arson attempt occurred on the night of 9/10 July 1780. Cecilia and Jarrard were staying with "Mr Stapleton at Carlton". This location has not been identified, but may have been on their return route from Hull. They received news of the attack "by express" and were back at Sizergh by the 15 July. In his correspondence with Charles Townley, Jarrard received a letter from Charles in London written on 21 July, by the evening of the 24 July at Sizergh. Cecilia, writing from Brussels on 19 June clearly knew of the London riots which had occurred on the 9 June. It appears written information about events could be expected to be known elsewhere within a very few days.

Cecilia and Jarrard would thus have had ample reason to be anxious about their safety, and would have known the extent of the dangers they faced.

### **Reaction to the attack**

Jarrard appears to have believed that the "common people" were to blame, and that as his was the "only RC gentleman's house in the County" it had been an obvious target. He also believed that anti-Catholicism was only a pretence and the trouble reflected a more general malaise and discontent, motivated more by a spirit of "universal levelling". In the age of Thomas Paine it was perhaps easy to feel that the whole social fabric in the country was under threat. Certainly accounts of the 1780 riots in other places suggested that the violence represented more than anti-Catholicism, which was just a convenient excuse.<sup>34</sup>

Jarrard's practical reaction to the attack was to suggest that they should advertise for information leading to the arrest of the perpetrators. He presumably knew that such arrangements had been made elsewhere. In Bath a handbill had been issued which read as follows:

## GUILDHALL BATH

June 11, 1780

Whereas a man about Twenty-three Years of Age, about five Feet and ten Inches high, stoutly made, and has a patch over one of his eyes, and is employed by one *Mr Saunders* who lives in or near *Slippery Lane*, in this City, in the carrying of Milk, was on the 9th Instant principally concerned and assisting in the unlawfully and feloniously pulling down and setting fire to the Roman Catholic Chapel, in this City, and other Houses and Buildings thereto adjoining and has lately absconded from and left this City:

Therefore, whoever will give Information to the Justices of this City, of the man above described, or of any other Person or Persons who were aiding, assisting, or in any Manner concerned in the pulling down and setting Fire to the said buildings so that he or they may be brought to Justice, shall on Conviction of each of such Offenders receive a reward of TWENTY GUINEAS, to be paid them by the Chamberlain of the City.

JOHN CHAPMAN, Mayor

FRANCIS BENNETT, Justice

SIMON CROOK, Justice

printed by COOPER & KEYNES, King's Mead-street<sup>35</sup>

Another had been issued in Bristol which offered a £50 reward from the Secretary of State for information leading to the conviction of rioters.<sup>36</sup> It was endorsed by the Mayor and Aldermen of Bristol who offered an additional £10 10s.

Writing to Charles Townley, Jarrard expresses concern that lack of action would result in further attacks.<sup>37</sup> He complains that the Justices in Kendal have been uncooperative and ineffective. Jarrard particularly identified the Recorder as being a bitter enemy of the family. The Recorder of Kendal from 1777 until his death in 1797 at the age of 82 was Myles Harrison, described as the “blind lawyer”.<sup>38</sup> Jarrard was very disappointed when Charles wrote to say that his request for Government rewards for information about the attack on Sizergh had been refused. No further mention of the arson attack occurs in Cecilia’s correspondence. The 1780 attempt is not mentioned in either Daniel Scott’s<sup>39</sup> or Henry Hornyold’s<sup>40</sup> history of the house and family. No other references to local hostility occur in Cecilia’s correspondence. Indeed in a letter of 25 August 1790 she describes Jarrard playing sixpenny whist at a “rout” in Kendal, and also mentions Jarrard having joined the Arching Society. An advertisement reproduced in Curwen’s *Kirkbie Kendall* shows both Jarrard and Myles Harrison as sponsors of a concert in the town.<sup>41</sup> The incident does not appear to have had any long term effect on the social acceptance of Roman Catholics in Westmorland.

Modern visitors may be grateful that the attack on the house failed: had it been successful the family’s circumstances at the time would probably have meant it would not have been rebuilt.

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### Notes and References

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- <sup>15</sup> British Museum, Townley Archive, TY7/855.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, TY7/856.
- <sup>17</sup> LRO, Towneley Archive DDT to Box J.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*
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