

THE SUSSEX GENERAL ELECTION OF 1695: A CONTEMPORARY ACCOUNT BY ROBERT MIDDLETON, VICAR OF CUCKFIELD

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As long ago as 1835, W. D. Cooper in his appendix to Horsfield's pioneer *History, Antiquities, and Topography of the County of Sussex* first drew attention to the great interest exercised by 'the large landed proprietors and older families of the nobility' in parliamentary elections. So much, he observed, could be seen at a glance from the list of the members of parliament who had represented the county.¹ Their names do indeed speak for themselves. Some appear four or five times and for as many parliaments; others descend successive generations as though seats in the House of Commons were subject to the same laws of inheritance as patrimonial estates and family pews. Yet, as Cooper realized, there was more—far more—to the ebb and flow of electoral politics than mere names, illustrious though these frequently were. Elections were by no means automatic acts of registration. Whatever the narrowness of the politically privileged class before the great Reform Acts it was never so tiny that rivalries were naturally absent or contests necessarily precluded. Moreover, the width of the franchise in the county and in not a few of the ancient boroughs made the business of persuasion both a complex art and a precarious science.

Often, behind the candidates, there lay genuine differences of attitude and a real and significant diversity of support. Of no period was this more truly the case than the twenty-five years stretching from the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688-89 to the accession of the House of Hanover in 1714. These years, we have recently been reminded, saw 'more general elections, and more contests . . . than . . . the rest of the eighteenth century.'² Although other historians have done a good deal, since Cooper wrote, to elucidate the intricacies of electioneering in eighteenth-century

¹ William Durrant Cooper's essay on 'Parliamentary History' is Appendix No. III in T. W. Horsfield, *The History, Antiquities, and Topography of the County of Sussex* (London 1835, 2 vols.), II, Appendix, p. 23. Cited below as Cooper, 'Parliamentary History.'

² J. H. Plumb, *The Growth of Political Stability in England 1675-1725* (London 1967), p. xv.

Sussex, particularly with respect to the contests of 1734¹ and 1741,² research has still to move forward to the ravaged era of party warfare. It is as a modest step in this direction that the following item of literary correspondence is published.

Among the extant papers of Dr. Symon Patrick, successively Dean of Peterborough, and Bishop of Chichester and Ely,³ now preserved in the Old Library of Queens' College, Cambridge,⁴ there survives an interesting letter sent to him by his brother-in-law, Robert Middleton, vicar of Cuckfield.⁵ In it we are given a first-hand description of the Sussex general election of November 1695, which returned representatives to sit in William III's second Parliament, and of the accompanying election of a proctor for Convocation. By that date, Bishop Patrick had already passed on to Ely from Chichester and in so doing had gained a richer for a poorer see.⁶ However, the affection engendered by his brief episcopate at Chichester—one of the shortest on record⁷—coupled with the fact that the family of his only sister continued to reside in the vicarage at Cuckfield,⁸ gave him an abiding interest in the affairs both of the county and diocese. It was, therefore, quite natural, that Middleton should wish to keep his brother-in-law and patron abreast of the heats occasioned in church and state by the elections of 1695; all the more because these had led him along with others

¹ See H. Wyatt, 'The Sussex Election Poll-Book of 1734', in *Sussex Archaeological Collections* (hereafter abbreviated to *S.A.C.*), vol. 23 (1871), 71-81, and B. Williams, 'The Duke of Newcastle and the Election of 1734,' *English Historical Review*, XII (1897), 448-88.

² See G. H. Nadel, 'The Sussex Election of 1741,' in *S.A.C.*, vol. 91 (1953), 84-124 and R. L. Hess, 'The Sackville Family and Sussex Politics: the campaign for the By-election, 1741,' in *S.A.C.*, vol. 99 (1961), 20-37. All four articles neatly illustrate the patronage aspect of politics.

³ The best short account of Patrick's life is in the *D.[ictionary of] N.[ational] B.[iography]*.

⁴ I am obliged to the President and Fellows of Queens' College, my former colleagues, for permission to publish the letter.

⁵ Patrick Collection, item 55. This *cache* of original letters does not represent the entirety of Patrick's papers even as they were known to historians of last century. It is not known how they came to Queens'. A number of other letters survive in transcript in the University Library at Cambridge.

⁶ Patrick was translated to Ely on 2 July 1691.

⁷ Nominated to Chichester on 17 September, he was not consecrated to the see until 13 October 1689, which meant that he held it for considerably under two years.

⁸ This was Mary Patrick, about whom even less is known than her husband. She was buried at Cuckfield on 1 November 1708. See W. C. Renshaw, 'Some Clergy of the Archdeaconry of Lewes and South Malling Deanery', in *S.A.C.*, vol. 55 (1912), 251; also see the Patrick pedigree in A. Taylor (ed), *The Works of Symon Patrick, D.D., Sometime Bishop of Ely. Including his Autobiography* (Oxford 1858, 9 vols.), I, clx (facing). Cited below as Taylor, *Patrick's Autobiography*.

of the clergy to take sides against his new diocesan, Dr. Robert Grove, Patrick's successor in the bishopric.

Of Patrick's correspondent himself we know little beyond the barest outlines of his career. The son of Richard Middleton, he was born in 1631 and educated at Horsham before going up to Cambridge, where he was admitted a sizar at Christ's College on 10 June 1650. Graduating three years later, he was eventually ordained priest by Bishop Laney of Ely, shortly after Charles II's restoration when the old Church returned with the hereditary Stuart monarchy. Thereafter, he disappeared, somewhat mysteriously, from view until after the Revolution of 1688-89, when he re-emerged as one of the first to benefit from Dean Patrick's long-delayed elevation to the episcopate, in October 1689. On 27 May 1690 the Bishop collated his brother-in-law to Cuckfield in the deanery and archdeaconry of Lewes, a living entirely in the gift of the see, into which he was inducted on 6 June. He was to hold his vicarage until his death in May 1713. His ministry at Holy Trinity was distinguished after the usual Anglican fashion by his making improvements to the fabric of the parish church and by maintaining a roof over the heads of his congregation. Only one further salient fact is known about Middleton's public activities and that is, that he was involved in several of the most exciting developments within the Church of his day, having a true concern for the education of poor children in his parish and being 'a liberal supporter' of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, of which Patrick was a founder¹.

The letter reveals another facet to the vicar of Cuckfield. It shows him to have been a political animal, by nature alive to the issues and personalities of his times. One of the rare, if miscellaneous, details of information that we have of him is that he seems to have acted as newsmonger to the more intelligent and influential of his parishioners². This in itself should come as no surprise, for he belonged to that species of inveterate politician, the beneficed clergy of the established Church. The proud possessor of a stake

¹ This reconstruction is based upon the following authorities: J. and J. A. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, pt. I: *From the Earliest Times to 1715* (Cambridge 1922-27, 4 vols.), III, 184. Taylor, *Patrick's Autobiography*, I, clvi; IX, 675. W. V. Cooper, *A History of the Parish of Cuckfield* (Haywards Heath 1912), pp. 55-57. Cooper unfortunately confuses Middleton with a namesake, see J. Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses: The Members of the University of Oxford, 1500-1714* (Oxford 1891-92, 4 vols.), III, 1010. W. C. Renshaw, *The Parish Registers of Cuckfield, Sussex, 1598-1699* (Sussex Record Society, XIII, 1911) adds very little to the picture.

² R. W. Blencowe, 'Extracts from the Journal and Account-Book of Timothy Burrell, Esq., Barrister-at-law, of Ockenden House, Cuckfield, from the Year 1683 to 1714,' in *S.A.C.*, vol. 3 (1850), 149, 158. This affords a few meagre personal details of Middleton, the man.

in the Church, which to a later age became notoriously known as the parson's freehold, and the educated well-connected pastor of his flock, which numbered other freeholders, he was firmly caught up in what we should nowadays term 'secular' politics. In the circumstances of the later seventeenth century it could hardly have been otherwise for the Church was deeply entrenched in the governmental structure of the country, whether she liked it or no. While it is indisputable that the passage into law of the Toleration Bill of 1689 and, perhaps still more telling in its impact, the heavy blow to parochial discipline dealt by James II's policy of Indulgence had broken the monopoly of the established faith in England for ever,¹ the Church's political establishment remained basically unimpaired. Churchmanship—or to use our current phrase, communicant membership—was still the test of political orthodoxy and the standard of eligibility for public office. In consequence, the Revolution government was forced to exact from the clergy an oath to bear 'true Allegiance' to William and Mary, the supplanters of James II.² Here Middleton's sympathies are plain. He was a devoted supporter of the new *régime*. Not only had he stepped out of obscurity to accept preferment from Patrick's hands—Patrick being a dependable Williamite—but he had also entered his living by the deprivation of its former incumbent, William Snatt, a Non-juror who remained steadfast in his loyalty to the displaced monarch.³

Given the vulnerability of the Revolution Settlement, especially in its initial years, and the internal disturbance occasioned by the Non-juring Schism, it continued to be difficult for men to draw any meaningful line of distinction between the secular and ecclesiastical order in everyday life. What normally proved difficult was often found well-nigh impossible at election time, when passions and fears, and the sensibilities upon which they rested, were all too frequently aroused. So long as the Church Militant occupied an embattled position in the political arena, politics retained their original ecclesiastical cast. Before the age of political parties

¹ This is argued in my 'William Sancroft, as Archbishop of Canterbury, 1677-1691' (unpublished Oxford D.Phil., dissertation), pp. 136-38, 149-60. James's activities in this direction began well before his famous Declarations of Indulgence issued in 1687 and 1688.

² See the Legalization of the Convention Act (1 Will. & Mar., c. 1) and the Oaths of Supremacy and Allegiance Act (1 Will. & Mar., c. 8), 1689, printed in W. C. Costin and J. Steven Watson (ed), *The Law and Working of the Constitution: Documents 1660-1914* (London 1952, 2 vols), I, 54-55, 60-61.

³ For Snatt, see J. H. Cooper, 'The Vicars and Parish of Cuckfield,' in *S.A.C.*, vol. 46 (1903), 111-12 and W. V. Cooper, *A History of the Parish of Cuckfield*, pp. 53-55. He was censured by the archbishops and bishops for his part in absolving Sir John Friend and Sir William Parkings in 1696, see D. Wilkins (ed), *Concilia Magnae Britanniae* (London 1737, 4 vols.), IV, 627.

proper, which may be dated from the precocious developments to which the Exclusion contest gave birth, the sole parties to exist were ecclesiastical parties—reformers, papalists, Cantaburians, puritans, Arminians and Laudians, Presbyterians and Independents, and so on and so forth. Even when the first Whigs and Tories came to the fore in the fight for and against the exclusion of James, Duke of York, they both bore a decidedly ecclesiastical character. Despite the confusion wrought by subsequent events these overtones survived the Glorious Revolution and lingered on into the eighteenth century. Like Charles II they were an unconscionable time a-dying. For a long time, to come Englishmen were as quick to sense those nice distinctions of churchmanship with which the Church was so richly endowed, as they were to stigmatize popery and dissent as politically dangerous and socially unacceptable. It is noteworthy that the labels of 'Whig' and 'Tory' are conspicuously absent from Middleton's narrative of the 1695 election. His terms are of an overwhelmingly religious connotation. He links 'Papist' and 'Jacobite' together, as becomes a declared Williamite. He identifies 'a Derider of all religion, & so of y^e Clergy' as an 'Atheist,' as befits a minister of an hierarchical Church. He denotes those clergy and gentry of whom he approves by the epithet, 'sober,' and reserves the word, 'Libertine,' to damn one whom he dislikes. Such expressions, of course, came readily enough to a man of the cloth. Yet, they are not to be dismissed as pure, professional jargon, for they came aptly to many men's minds. After all it was second nature to Christian gentlemen to see their friends and allies as being of the godly, and their enemies and adversaries as of the unregenerate. There was—and is—a strong spice of Augustinianism in English politics. In this respect Middleton only possessed to a heightened degree the common attitudes of the political nation. The language of political distinction has in the past been ignored, though it is never—I suggest—of negligible importance to the historian in arriving at a full understanding of political behaviour in any generation.

The most ample description which the letter affords is that of the election of two knights of the shire to represent the county. In the event, the former knights, who had sat in the Convention Parliament¹, were returned to Westminster with a large majority. But this was not without a fair tussle having first taken place, in which considerable effort was expended in behalf of Sir John Pelham of Halland and Sir William Thomas of Westdean by their backers among the aristocracy and gentry, as well as by the anonymous mass of the freeholders of the county. A fortnight before the actual polling day an opponent of the sitting knights, Robert Orme,

¹ They had been returned on 17 January 1689, see A. H. Stenning, 'A Return of the Members of Parliament for the County and Boroughs of Sussex,' in *S.A.C.*, vol. 35 (1887), 128.

esquire of Woolavington, assisted by the 'proud' Duke of Somerset, had attempted to take the poll by surprise at Chichester. So intense was the feeling against Orme that many freeholders, of whom Middleton was one, rode all the way to Arundel 'to prevent it,' and were only dissuaded from riding on to Chichester by the news of the sheriff's having adjourned the court for two weeks. On the day appointed, weather and ease of travel conspiring to aid them, there was a vast turn-out for Pelham and Thomas from all three divisions of the county; the middle and eastern parts being led in by the Earl of Sussex and Lord Abergavenny, and the western by another landowner, the recently created Earl of Tankerville, better-known as the Exclusionist peer, Lord Grey of Warke.¹ The whole of the proceedings at Chichester was strongly reminiscent of the far off days of bastard feudalism, when the territorial magnates had fought among themselves for power and prestige at the head of private armies drawn from their tenants and retainers. Liveries were no longer worn, but maintenance indubitably survived, albeit in a slightly different guise.

However, even when faced with insuperable odds, Orme refused to concede the poll by quitting the field along with his men. Instead he became aggressively assertive. He demanded a count, which he contrived in such a way as to protract the election unreasonably. He thereby hoped that those of his opponents who had come from the furthest end of the county and whose livelihood depended on reaching Battle Fair would back out and 'return home unpollled.' This tactic and the threat of assault from the populace of the city, whom Orme had treated after a high rate, brought about yet another adjournment. A week later, when the poll re-opened at Lewes, in the heart of their support, the partisans of Pelham and Thomas came out in force. Orme for his part affected not to recognise the transference of the court of election—in reality because his situation was hopeless—and, according to common form, prepared to dispute the validity of the election at Westminster.

Meanwhile, the epistolary labours of Bishop Grove of Chichester in Orme's behalf had not escaped criticism,² especially among the gentry of east and middle Sussex who had voted for Pelham and Thomas. That the Bishop had given his blessing to the candidate who had attracted 'ye odium' of Roman Catholic and Jacobite support was not reckoned to his credit. The clergy had themselves been deeply divided by the election. Though courtesy, not to

¹ For his earlier career, see J. R. Jones, *The First Whigs. The Politics of the Exclusion Crisis 1678-1683* (London 1961), pp. 98-99, 180, 210. All three lords were sizeable landowners and landlords in the areas which they led to the polls.

² For the similar action of Bishop Hare of Chichester in the 1734 election, see B. Williams, 'The Duke of Newcastle and the Election of 1734,' *English Historical Review*, XII, 467-68.

mention policy, demanded that those of the inferior clergy who had disobeyed the Bishop's directive should wait on Dr. Grove to explain the reasons for their opposing his candidate, there were no such restraints on the disdain which they had conceived for their brethren who had been of 'Mr Ormes's Party.' Middleton's tone makes it clear that they took exception to the 'somewt uncivil' treatment which they had had of them. Certainly, the choice of George Barnsley, rector of Sedlescombe, to represent the Lewes arch-deaconry in Convocation, was a further vote of confidence in Sir John Pelham, who we are told had 'a great kindness' for him. That Pelham went out of his way to show his respect to 'ye sober Clergy' by making them a present of venison at election time indicates the importance he attached to his clerical devotees.¹ Middleton's taunt to the clergy 'near Chichester,' who had probably responded to their diocesan's lead, that they were opposed to Pelham just 'because he was a Lover only of ye sober Clergy & Gentry', neatly underlined his belief that Church and State stood square upon the same bottom and had either to swim or sink together. The customary practice of holding elections to Parliament and to Convocation within calling distance of each other must have contributed significantly to the *odium theologicum* which attached to the politics of the later seventeenth century, at the regional and national levels. Moreover, the political rifts in the clerical estate, particularly when these led to the inferior clergy taking sides against their diocesan bishop, boded ill for the future peace of the Church. They undoubtedly prepared the battleground for the infamous Convocation controversy, which like a thundercloud was so soon to break over their heads.

If the clerical vote was important in the county election, it was absolutely crucial in the contest for the city of Chichester. Middleton expressly states that the vote of the Cathedral Close swung the poll in favour of Lord Ranelagh and John Elson, one of the common councillors of the town. Like the majority of ancient cathedral cities, Chichester's corporation had been regulated under James II. While it is usual for historians to lament royal interference in what they are pleased to style 'civic liberties,' it is also worthwhile to notice that more often than not careful provision was made in the new charter for the safeguarding of the separate jurisdiction of the cathedral precincts. This would appear to have been one of the benefits of the renewed alliance between crown and mitre in the period of the Tory Reaction.² By the charter of 27 March 1685,

¹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 467: 'In estimating the resources employed by the duke in his campaigns hardly too much weight can be attached to the influence of the clergy.'

² For a new discussion of this *rapprochement*, see R. A. Beddard, 'The Commission for Ecclesiastical Promotions, 1681-84: An Instrument of Tory Reaction,' *The Historical Journal*, X, i (1967), 11-40.

James guaranteed that the Church of the Holy Trinity and the Close that encompassed it should 'be in all things free, as well in their persons houses and lands . . . to God's glory and service'.¹ Thereafter, the civil magistracy had no authority over the Close and its inhabitants, who were nevertheless able to take an active role in politics, whether parliamentary or strictly municipal. With the existence of an exempt place in the midst of a busy city there was bound to be friction between the town and the Close. However, against their legal rights the denials of the trouble-making Precentor of the Cathedral, Dr. Henry Edes, a former supporter of Monmouth and Exclusion² and now one of William III's chaplains, were worse than useless. It is perhaps significant to remark that had Edes been successful in disputing his colleagues' votes, it would have worked to the advantage of Major Braman and Richard Farrington, the leaders of the opposition, both of whom had represented the city in the Exclusion Parliaments. In the course of the next few decades the elder repose of the Close was repeatedly to be disturbed by the clamour of political and legalistic dispute. So long as ecclesiastical interests were entangled with secular concerns in the counties, cities and parishes of rural England, their separation remained an impossibility at the centre of government. Thus it was, amid an ever-increasing air of incongruity, that the marriage of Church and State tottered on.

My Ld

Knowing that an account of our proceedings here in this County in electing members of Parliament & Convocation will not be ungrateful to y^r L^p, as being once your Diocese, I have sent yt w^{ch} follows; & y^e rather yt I might also, together with my Wife, congratulate y^e continuance of your health both in y^e Countrey, & in y^e City, since we last saw you, & since y^r coming to Town; of w^{ch} we were very glad to hear both by letter from our Good Brother,³ & also by our Cousin Waterhouse, who is now with us.

The Election of Knights of y^e Shire was last Thursday was a fortnight begun at Chichester, after an attempt of M^r Ormes's

¹ A. Hay, *The History of Chichester* (Chichester 1804), pp. 579-601; Appendix, 'The Charters of Chichester.'

² For the extraordinary welcome which he gave to the 'Protestant Duke' and the scandal which it gave to the bishop and loyal party, see 'Reception of the Duke of Monmouth at Chichester in 1679,' in *S.A.C.*, vol. 7 (1854), 168-172. In this connection, it is interesting to note that the opposition to Ranelagh and Elson included two members of the Exclusion Parliaments.

³ Probably Bishop Patrick's brother, John, preacher at the Charter House in London. Also see below, p. 157, note 2.

Party,¹ assisted by y^e Duke of Somersett,² to steale an Election there a fortnight before; w^{ch} drew many, among whom I was one, to ride as far as Arundel to prevent it; where we heard of y^e Sheriffs adjourning y^e Court for a fortnight, yt y^e Countrey might haue due notice. On y^e said Thursday therefore, y^e weather & way's favouring us, there was a great appearance for S^r John Pelham³ & S^r Wm Thomas,⁴ y^e former Knights, frō y^e middle & eastern parts of y^e County, conducted by y^e Earle of Sussex,⁵ & Lord Abergavenny⁶. Yea & y^e Earle of Tankerville⁷ in y^e West brought in two or three hundred Freeholders of y^e West for S^r John, who was chiefly struck at. And tho hereupon we had a vast odds in y^e View, while we were in y^e field, yet M^r Ormes, & his party, would have a Poll. And this was insisted on, and y^e Poll was also taken only in one narrow place, in all likelyhood to protract y^e Election, & force thereby multitudes of our Side to return home unpoll'd, they having many three score mile, some a litle more, & some less, to ride, to gett to Battle-fair on munday, on w^{ch} their winter provision of Cattle did depend. For these reasons, & also because y^e Sherriff,

¹ Robert Orme, esquire, who is noticed in the sale of a Graffham lease, as lord of the manor, E. E. Barking, 'Some Woolavington and Wonworth Leases,' in *S.A.C.*, vol. 94 (1956), 49. He was the son of Robert Orme of Peterborough, who had married Mary Garton, the heir of the Gartons, owners of Woolavington. W. H. Godfrey, 'An Elizabethan Builder's Contract,' in *S.A.C.*, vol. 65 (1924), 211. His son, Garton Orme was later M.P., for Arundel, for him see *S.A.C.*, vol. 91 (1953), 106-7; 115. See also Francis W. Steer (ed), *The Lavington Estate Archives: a Catalogue* (1964).

² Charles Seymour, 6th Duke of Somerset, who by his marriage in 1682 with Elizabeth Percy, the heir of Josceline, 11th and last earl of Northumberland, became master of Alnwick, Petworth, Syon House and Northampton, as well as the Percy estates. At the Revolution he was chosen Chancellor of Cambridge University in succession to the reluctant Archbishop Sancroft. His welcoming of Princess Anne to Syon in April 1692 was to be the foundation of greater political favour. *D.N.B.*

³ Sir John Pelham of Halland, 3rd baronet, and knight of the shire for Sussex in 1660 and the succeeding parliaments. Horsfield, *The History, Antiquities, and Topography of the County of Sussex*, I, 184-85. Also Cooper's 'Parliamentary History,' p. 28. His estates lay between Lewes and Hastings for the most part.

⁴ Sir William Thomas of Westdean, near Seaford, baronet and knight of the shire, 1661-79, 1679, 1680 and 1685. The patronage of the Thomas family extended over the borough of Seaford, which adjoined their seat. M. A. Lower, 'Memorials of the town, parish, and cinque-port of Seaford,' in *S.A.C.*, vol. 7 (1854), 109-111. See also Francis W. Steer (ed), *Records of the Corporation of Seaford: a Catalogue* (1959).

⁵ Thomas Lennard, Lord Dacre, who had been created Earl of Sussex on 5 October 1674.

⁶ George Nevill, 13th Lord Abergavenny, took his seat in the Lords on 1 May 1695. He was a Gentleman of the Bedchamber to George, Prince of Denmark.

⁷ Ford Grey, Baron Grey of Warke, Privy Councillor to William III, was created Viscount Glendale and Earl of Tankerville on 11 June 1695.

& those of our party, when grown thin, were threatned to be assaulted by ye Mobb, whom M^r Ormes feasted prodigiously; & also because ye Sherriff and ye Knights had it under ye hands of ye best Lawyers yt it was legal, the court was for ye Convenience of ours, & ye Eastern Countrey adjourned to Lewes ye Thursday following, where ye Poll was Concluded. Wee had 9 hundred & odd to M^r Ormes[']s 4 hundred & odd at Chichester, & at the Poll at Lewes we had 6 hundred and odd more. M^r Ormes brought none there, not only because he had few to bring, but also because he had a mind to protest agst ye adjournment of ye Court to Lewes, wch he did in Company of Eleven more.¹ And therefore they intend, as was giuen out, to dispute ye Election in Parliament.

And now I write of ye Election for ye Shire at Chichester I think fitt to adde some account of yt for ye City. My Ld Ranelagh² & M^r Elston (*sic*)³ are returned, but I am assured, by some of ye Townsmen I was in company with at Chichester, yt ye Election will be disputed in Parliament, not only because 'twas Carried by ye Votes of ye Clergy of ye Close, whose right to vote is much questioned there, and denyed too by Dr Eed's⁴ in open Court, but also because of a Riott committed by M^r Elston's party on Major Bremens⁵ & M^r Faringtons⁶ in wch M^r Elston is said to be in Person,

¹ The removal of the poll to Lewes was an obvious disadvantage to Orme, whose chief strength lay in the west. The inconvenience of holding the county election at Chichester, in the extreme west of Sussex, was increasingly felt. Equally, the convenience of the more centrally placed town of Lewes was demonstrated in the closely fought contest of 1705; so much so, that a Bill was introduced into the Commons on 10 February 1707 to stop further elections at Chichester. It was claimed that the eastern freeholders were 'deprived of their right of voting by reason of the distance and the badness of the roads,' no small hazard for those who lived in the Weald. The Bill was eventually abandoned because of opposition. See Cooper, 'Parliamentary History,' p. 24.

² Richard Jones, Viscount Ranelagh, created Earl of Ranelagh on 11 December 1677. He had been M.P., for Roscommon (Ireland) 1661-66; for Plymouth, 1685-87 and for Newtown, 1689-95. He was a Privy Councillor to William III from 1 March 1692.

³ William Elson, son of John Elson of Barnham, and a common councillor of Chichester. Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses, 1500-1714*, II, 460. Also *S.A.C.*, vol. 52 (1909), 120; vol. 35 (1887), 131. His daughter, Ann, was the second wife of Sir John Miller, baronet, of Chichester, *S.A.C.*, vol. 74 (1933), 181.

⁴ Dr. Henry Edes, canon and precentor of Chichester cathedral, 1662-1703, and Rector of Felpham, 1670-96. J. and J. A. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, pt. I, II, 84. Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses, 1500-1714*, II, 444.

⁵ John Braman of Chichester, who sat for the city in the three Exclusion Parliaments, was always known as 'Major.' He had fought for Parliament in the Great Rebellion. P. S. Godman, 'Itchingfield,' *S.A.C.*, vol. 41 (1898), 96.

⁶ Richard Farrington of the well-known Chichester family also sat for the city in the last two Exclusion Parliaments. He was implicated in the death of the informer, Habin, in 1682. E. Levett and W. Page, 'The City of Chichester' in *The Victoria County History of Sussex* (ed) L. F. Salzman, vol. III (London 1935), 88.

& because of his & his Parties great Tampering & threatning honest Tradesmen, (great Treats also being made) to encrease his party, & lessen y^e other. And this I heard frō divers has made a mighty feud in the Town, the effects of wch among y^e Neighbours are said to be deplorable.

And to adde to this my Ld of Chichester is looked upon with an ill eye by the Generality of y^e Gentry here in our Parts, & by others, because he is said to have acted much by letter, & otherwise for M^r Ormes, who tho I have heard not much amiss of, yet sustains y^e odium of having all y^e Papists & Jacobites to be much on his side. For this I am very sorry, & y^e rather because my Lord purges himself frō having any way reflected on S^r John [Pelham], appealing to his Letter: & to shew this was as kind & hospitable to twelve of y^e Clergy of our side, yt waited on him to give y^e reasons of their Voting contrary to his letter, as to those of the other, who were somewt uncivil to us.

☐ To be briefer in my following account, as knowing to whom I write, M^r Cook of Petworth (as I take it)¹ is happily shutt out at Arundel, he being as divers worthy persons yt know him have told me, a Derider of all religion, & so of y^e Clergy, & little better than an Atheist². D^r Ratcliff³ also, a Libertine enough, & one yt I have heard speak contemptibly of the present Government, & those yt are chief in it in Church & State, is shutt out at Bramber [.] S^r Thomas Dyke a known Jacobite, tho a Learned & sober Gentleman, is also shutt out at East-Grinstead, tho he will as was said dispute y^e Election in Parliament, as having lost it by y^e floor or Populace, tho gained it, (and a very little) by y^e Chief Townsmen. And yet he, as is credibly said, has heretofore gained the Election by y^e said Populace, whose interest he now questions.⁴

¹ John Cooke, esquire, of Petworth. J. and J. A. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, pt. I, I, 385. Probably a descendant of the John Cooke in Miss G. M. A. Beck, 'Some Petworth Inns and Alehouses,' *S.A.C.*, vol. 99 (1961), 137.

² John Cooke had been elected for Arundel on 20 January 1694, on the death of the sitting member, William Morley. In this election the successful candidates were Henry, Lord Walden and Edmond Dummer, esquire. Cooke regained his seat in August 1698. A. H. Stenning, 'A Return of the Members of Parliament for the County and Boroughs of Sussex,' *S.A.C.*, vol. 35 (1887), pp. 130-32.

³ John Radcliffe, M.D., of Oxford and London. Physician to Princess Anne. He had represented Bramber from 1690 to 1695. He was unseated by Nicholas Barbon and William Stringer. *Ibid.*, pp. 130-31. Foster. *Alumni Oxonienses, 1500-1714*, III, 1228.

⁴ Sir Thomas Dyke, Knight, of Waldram, created 1st baronet on 3 March 1677. M.P. for Sussex, 1685-87, and for East Grinstead, 1690-98. Commissioner of public accounts, 1696. *Ibid.*, I, 438. For the election of 19 November 1695 and the struggles that ensued over the return, see W. H. Hills, *The History of East Grinstead* (East Grinstead 1906), pp. 44-45. Dyke was opposed by two of the nominees of the Earl of Dorset, Lord Orrery and Sir Spencer Compton, who petitioned Parliament against a wrongful return and the arbitrary proceedings of the bailiff, which in turn raised the question of the type of franchise. The decision was in favour of the burgage holders only.

As for a Convocation-man in our Archdeaconry wee have chosen one Mr Barnsley of Selscomb¹ (*sic*) near Battle, having near fifty for him to thirteen yt were for Dr Sanders of Acton, & of Buxted in our parts.² The Choice was at Lewes last Thursday where were divers of yr Lordships former Clergy that humbly give their duty to yr LP, as Mr Wood,³ Mr Graves,⁴ Mr Harris, Mr Carr⁵ &c. together with Justice Newdigate, who always speaks of your LP with great respect wherever I meet him.⁶ Sr John Pelham there sent us Venison to express his respect to ye sober Clergy, & particularly Mr Barnsley for whom he has a great kindness. And I told, I believe, a truth to some of ye Clergy near Chichester, yt there sett upon me, & most of ye Clergy on our side for being for Sr John, yt I was e'en of ye mind, that divers both Clergy & Gentry, were therefore so sett against him, because he was a Lover only of ye sober Clergy & Gentry. As for Mr Barnsly we Chose him not only as being a man of excellent piety, humility, & Learning, but also of known temper & moderation, by ye relation of all yt know him.

And I hope yt ye Choice of Parliament men & Convocation-men, if it be elsewhere as tis with us, will be of very good Consequence at ye Sitting of both. And I the more rejoyce at ye prospect of it, especially of a good Convocation, because I hear on divers hands yt it will sitt.⁷ I pray God bless their endeavours, & your Lps in particular, with many more, I hope, yt will make such alterations and Rules as may express great wisdom, & piety & good temper, and infuse ye same into ye Clergy in General, & also ye Laity.⁸

¹ George Barnsley, Rector of Sedlescombe, 1674, and of Northiam, 1677. J. and J. A. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, pt. I, I, 94.

² Dr. Anthony Saunders, Chancellor of S. Paul's, Rector of Buxted, 1674, and of Acton, Middlesex, 1677. Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses*, IV, 1314.

³ John Wood, M.A., Rector of Horsted Keynes, 1681-1705. W. C. Renshaw, 'Some Clergy of the Archdeaconry of Lewes and South Malling Deanery,' in *S.A.C.*, vol. 55 (1912), 276. J. and J. A. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, pt. I, IV, 452.

⁴ Joseph Grave, M.A., Rector of S. Anne or S. Peter Westout, Lewes, 1679. Renshaw, *op. cit.*, p. 239. Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses, 1500-1714*, II, 594.

⁵ William Carr, M.A., Rector of Jevington, 1670-90. Renshaw, *op. cit.*, p. 229. J. A. and J. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, pt. I, I, 297.

⁶ Thomas Newdegate, of Trinity College, Oxford, and of Gray's Inn. Barrister-at-law, of Lewes, Sussex, and Hawton, Nottinghamshire. Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses, 1500-1714*, III, 1060.

⁷ Convocation's failure to implement Comprehension in 1689 marked a return to formal meetings, in which business could not be transacted; no royal licence being granted.

⁸ The Revolution and Non-juring Schism had one very important side-effect. It had frustrated Archbishop Sancroft's attempts to reform the internal organisation and the external boundaries of the Church. See R. A. Beddard, 'Observations of a London Clergyman on the Revolution of 1688-9,' *The Guildhall Miscellany*, II, No. II (August 1967), 409-11.

With all duty to y^r L^p fr̄o me & my Wife, & our hearty recommendation of our selves to y^r Prayers & Blessing, & all Love & service to our Good Sister & Brother, & to our Nephew,¹ & y^e young Ladies, & D^r Perkins, & M^r Malabar, & M^r Wilson & Mrs I conclude, & am

Cockfield Nov. 23^d—95.

Y^r L^{ps} most humble & Dutiful
son & serv^t

R. Middleton.

My Wife sent a letter to y^r L^p
a month agoe w^{ch} shee suspects
you did not receive, as not
hearing of it.—

Wee have lately heard fr̄o our Brother
& rejoyce much to hear yt his health
is restored to him in so good a degree.²

¹ Symon Patrick, the Bishop's son.

² John Patrick died on 19 December 1695.