

JEFFREY NEVE, CHARLES I AND GREAT YARMOUTH

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SUMMARY

Jeffrey Neve's quarrel with Great Yarmouth is seen against the background of Charles I's attempt to narrow the basis of town government in the 1620s and '30s. Deprived of his alderman's place in 1626 for financial irregularities, Neve used his position as a royal servant both to secure his reinstatement and to gain patent rights over the Yarmouth fishery that would work to the prejudice of the town. Frustrated in these attempts, he turned to quack doctoring and astrology. Yarmouth's defiance of the king over Jeffrey Neve was a significant reversal for the royal policy.

Numerous boroughs in early modern England, and especially after Charles I's accession in 1625, could testify to royal intervention in municipal affairs. Such intervention was often motivated by the Crown's fear of urban disorder. Order, discipline and religious conformity must be maintained by urban governments which also had to respond to other royal demands. The Crown supported municipal authorities but also consistently acted against popular government. It preferred to work with a small group of trusted men. Narrow, oligarchic rule was favoured over broader, more popular, franchises. London, Abingdon, Norwich, Nottingham, Rye, Barnstaple, Chester and Shrewsbury, to name but a few, found themselves attracting the attention of the King and Privy Council.¹ So did Great Yarmouth. Indeed, Charles I might be excused if he thought Yarmouth the most factious borough in his realm. On three different occasions, the port's assembly dismissed one of its aldermen and, in each case, its action provoked a royal response. The heated controversy over Yarmouth's charter led the assembly to sack alderman George Hardware in August 1629; the Privy Council promptly ordered his restoration. Benjamin Cooper, alderman and bailiff, who tried to overturn Yarmouth's charter, was dismissed in September 1630. The Crown, despite Yarmouth's bitter resistance, saw to his reinstatement in the summer of 1631. Cooper, Hardware and their allies had tried to narrow Yarmouth's municipal government through a new charter and while that explained the Crown's support, it does not account for the King's backing of Jeffrey Neve. In Neve's case, the fact that he was a royal servant, in attendance on the King, must explain the royal action. Beyond that he was an alderman and former bailiff. He personified urban government and, so the Crown believed, appeared to have been the victim of an unruly popular faction that threatened urban order and authority. However, the assembly's decision to dismiss Neve stuck, in spite of royal efforts to force his restoration.²

Neve's early political career at Great Yarmouth followed a routine course for a man who could be categorised as a leading citizen. He became a freeman at the appointment of 'Mr. Bailiff Gray' in May 1605, was a member of the 'forty-eight' or common council by December 1611 and, in March 1614, became an alderman. He was already an author, having published his 'Almanacke and Prognostication' in London, where it first appeared in 1607. On scattered occasions, his building and home improvement projects were reviewed by Yarmouth's assembly but, beyond that, nothing suggested his subsequent, and rather dramatic, career at Yarmouth. Indeed, in 1620, Neve gained the pinnacle of local ambition: he was chosen as bailiff and, as such, found himself delegated to entertain the Bishop of Norwich should that worthy prelate visit the town.³

However, by the autumn of 1624, Neve's financial problems were becoming a matter of concern for Yarmouth's assembly. In late October, the assembly considered Neve's debts to the

town and decided that, as payment, it would take from Neve 'so much good, sweet & merchantable made fish' as two of its members, Henry Davy and William Moulton, adjudged to be equal to 'his debts due to the town'.⁴ But Neve's money troubles grew and by January 1625 the assembly was very worried indeed. Neve had borrowed money from the town; Isaac Cooper had provided surety for Neve's obligations. The assembly decided to require them either to renew their bonds or settle the debt. If Neve and Cooper refused, the assembly agreed 'that the bonds shall be put in suit without further delay'.⁵ Neve had other problems as well, getting mixed up with John Seaman in an effort to avoid a town ordinance but it was his financial difficulties that led to serious trouble. In April the town, still unpaid by Neve, ordered that 'Mr. Tompson shall presently put in bond in suit against Mr. Neve and Mr. Issack Cooper whereby they stand bound to the town'. Neve found himself in further hot water when, in late 1625, he, along with three other merchants, Thomas Horth, Benjamin Cooper and Seaman, failed to bring in 'their bills of lastage & herring', local dues which ought to have already been paid.⁶

Neve was dismissed, as an alderman of Great Yarmouth, on 22 September 1626; Thomas Green was chosen by the assembly in his place. The assembly book, however, was silent on the reasons for Neve's discharge. Two weeks later, Neve appealed to the assembly 'for a certificate under the town seal' but the assembly deferred any decision on his request and the matter apparently never came up again.⁷ By the autumn of 1626 Neve's privileges were lost, his role in Yarmouth's affairs apparently over.

But Neve had another career at court. It is unclear when it began but, in January 1626, he was identified by Yarmouth's minister, Thomas Reeve, as the king's 'servant in attendance a quarter waiter', a lower ranked gentleman usher, who attended the King three months a year. Neve tried to use his court connections to improve his shaky financial situation and, eventually, to win back his place as alderman. In November he was appointed a deputy to Dover's water bailiff and in early January 1627 Neve and one Henry Sparks embarked on a more ambitious scheme. They wanted the King's approval for a plan to increase royal revenue based on a statute that required all foreigners to pay duties on imported salted fish which they allegedly evaded by transferring such fish into English ships while still at sea, thereby cheating the Crown of its customs duties. Neve wanted the Crown to grant them 'the custom of all fish so deceitfully brought in for £50 a year' and, in return, they promised to guarantee the King's revenue.⁸

Neve's request, based on a statute passed in the 39th year of Elizabeth I, was an example of a growing royal abuse. The crown, always anxious to increase its revenue, would grant a patent, license, commission or monopoly to a client, servant or influential courtier who could then exercise control over a commodity or, as in Neve's case, a right to enforce a statute for the Crown's, and the client's, benefit. Neve and Sparks claimed foreigners avoided the statute while Englishmen paid foreign duties 'on every last of herrings.' The statute was prejudicial to the fishing industry and failed to produce revenue for the Crown. They would pay the Crown £50 a year for 21 years and, in return for guaranteeing the Crown that annual sum, they would attempt to profit through the enforcement of the statute. They urged the Crown to refer their petition to its legal advisers for consideration. Their proposal, if approved, would enhance their incomes, end an allegedly unfair practice and provide a certain income for the Crown.⁹

The King turned the petition over to the Lord Treasurer for study in early April 1627. It included many arguments illustrating the harm Englishmen suffered 'by the free trade of the Aliens & Strangers' who escaped royal customs. The foreigners, arriving as fishermen off the English coast, avoided the royal officers and brought into England 'many prohibited goods' which damaged the economy. It was even claimed that the foreigners freely exported gold and silver contrary to law. English fishermen were being ruined by such trading; Neve and Sparks alleged that

some '200 fishing boats' from Kent, Suffolk and Norfolk had abandoned their trade for want of sales and employment. As a result, between 200 and 300 seamen were without work in the very ports which were centres of navigation. Furthermore, the strangers enjoyed a free trade since they sold their fish at 'every little village upon the coast' which allowed them to 'carry away either money or commodities without paying any customs'. Such advantages only harmed the English fishing industry and increased unemployment among the poor. Neve and Sparks readily admitted that to collect the duty would be both difficult and expensive because they had to enforce the law over a 150 mile long coast line and inspect every small village. The Lord Treasurer, after reviewing their plan, decided that London's customs farmers, leading London financiers who paid an annual rate to the Crown for the right to collect its customs duties, could offer an expert opinion on Neve's proposal.¹⁰

Yarmouth, although still unaware of Neve's petition, was hardly unaware of Neve. Sometime in May 1627 the assembly apparently became aware that the King intended to intervene to reinstate him. The assembly promptly ordered Edward Owner, among others, to prepare a letter for Yarmouth's recorder, Miles Corbet, then in London. Corbet was urged to secure a copy of the royal directive restoring Neve so that it could 'be opposed, stayed, hindered or answered &c'.¹¹ But it was too late; nothing could be done to stop the King's involvement on Neve's behalf.

Neve's complaint to the King was skillfully done; he had lost his place as alderman solely because of 'his absence in his Majesty's service'. His enemies at Yarmouth, 'a factious party,' secured his dismissal. And, as the King informed the assembly in mid-July 1627, it was all the fault of Yarmouth's former bailiff, Edward Owner, who had 'unduly, unorderly & without legal proceeding' removed Neve. The King had already appointed commissioners to investigate the affair, naming Dr. Clement Corbet, chancellor of Norwich Cathedral, one Mr. Hall and Benjamin Cooper, an alderman of Yarmouth, to conduct the inquiry. They had already interviewed 'divers aldermen & others of Yarmouth' who had testified in Neve's favour. However, the assembly would later dispute the report because the commissioners only questioned Neve's supporters. The King was convinced that Neve 'behaved himself soberly & honestly & performed good & beneficial offices to the public of that town'. He had only been dismissed because of his absence in the King's service and was never even heard in his own behalf, an unprecedented action. Owner was responsible; he had illegally sacked Neve and immediately elected another in his place. In short, the King was certain that Neve's discharge 'was plotted by Owner & his assistants without cause or offence given by the petitioner'. Charles I ordered Yarmouth's government to end all faction and to concentrate its attention on the public good; private anger, passion and selfishness must end. The King found it curious, indeed, that 'service near our person should be made the reason or pretext' for removing Neve. Owner's actions deserved rebuke; none of his friends could be excused, either. Neve should be restored at once; his replacement, Green, should be discharged. The town should report its compliance and, should any oppose the royal command, the bailiffs were to 'advertise their names with the manner of their opposition' to the Crown.¹²

Yarmouth stalled for time, basing its action on a legal technicality. The King's letter was improperly addressed; it was not directed to the 'whole corporation whom such business by custom & charter did only concern'. The assembly, therefore, postponed any immediate action. One week later, the royal letter was read again to the assembly and provoked a very mixed response. Only eight of the fifteen aldermen present were willing to accept the royal order but nothing more could be done because the common council, or forty-eight, refused to join the eight aldermen in agreeing to the royal command. The corporation was badly split. The aldermen were divided; the common council united against Neve's restoration.¹³

The corporation tried again to reach a decision in late August 1627. Two bailiffs and nine aldermen, Benjamin Cooper, George Hardware, Leonard Holmes, John Warren, Nicholas Cutting, Nicholas Bright, John Trundle, John Stevenson and Ezechias Harris, agreed to restore Neve. But that was not enough; the other aldermen and the common council, citing 'the charter of King James' and 'ancient custom' argued that no member of the corporation might be dismissed or restored 'without the consent of the whole assembly or more part of them'. Neve's restoration seemed impossible since the majority of the assembly was ready to defy the King. A compromise was finally worked out. Letters would be sent to the Crown explaining why Neve was removed so the King would be accurately informed about the case. The assembly deeply regretted its refusal to accept the King's command but remained determined to maintain Yarmouth's 'liberties & customs'.¹⁴ Neve's restoration, ordered by the King, had not only divided the corporation but set it on a collision course with Charles I.

The letters were a comprehensive statement of Yarmouth's position. They included the assembly book entries about Neve's discharge and the names of all the corporation's members who were present and debated the dismissal. The case against Neve was presented in detail. He had, on many occasions, 'defrauded divers of his oasts [hosts] herring fishers of their moneys' and had, in unidentified ways, taken the money and property of many citizens and had spent almost as much money again 'in defending suits as the debts came unto' which forced his creditors to initiate costly legal actions to recover their money. Neve had sold or mortgaged his lands and houses in both Yarmouth and the 'country' but, even worse, had done so underhandedly 'to deceive his creditors' and then secretly entered the King's service. He was presently outlawed 'at many men's suits & had deceived divers of their means of living to their utter ruin and extreme poverty, some of them to the value of about three hundred pounds, by means of former conveyances & otherwise'. He refused to pay numerous town charges, including the 'half doles and others', nor would he fulfill his responsibilities as other aldermen did. And there was more as bailiff Echard could testify. Neve paid nothing toward Yarmouth's defence costs, poor relief or the repair of its haven and piers. He had not even paid his share of the forced loan.¹⁵ The assembly urged the King to appoint new commissioners to investigate the affair who would give the King a 'true & strict account' of Neve's dismissal. The first commissioners, procured by Neve, were biased in his favour and only interviewed 'some few persons . . . upon some articles suggested' by Neve which meant that the King was given a partisan account.¹⁶

But, while a majority of the assembly was ready to challenge the King, at least one member, bailiff Echard, was not. On 29 August, just a week after the stormy and defiant assembly had decided against Neve and appealed for a new investigation, Echard accepted the royal command. He listed Neve amongst Yarmouth's aldermen and nothing the common councillors could do would change his decision which, he claimed, was supported by 'the aldermen'. He had to admit, however, that Neve's reinstatement was done without common council approval.¹⁷ If Echard was right, any split amongst the aldermen was healed but they were now sharply divided from the common council which remained unanimously opposed to Neve's return. But was Echard right? That seems very doubtful since, about a week later, the assembly appointed Owner, allegedly Neve's principal enemy, Hardware and William Buttolph, among others, as a committee to provide instructions for Thomas Johnson who was going to London about the Neve case. Johnson was specifically charged to continue the town's action, 'formerly begun by Mr. Edward Owner' against Neve.¹⁸ Apparently, some of the aldermen had second thoughts about Echard's action and, no doubt encouraged by the common council, decided to oppose Neve's reinstatement and challenge the King's command.

But there was a surprise in store for Yarmouth. In late September, the farmers of the customs,

who had been studying Neve's proposed patent, notified the bailiffs of Neve's petition and the King's order to the Lord Treasurer. They had yet to make their report and invited Yarmouth's opinion on Neve's scheme and its potential effect on Yarmouth or any other port.¹⁹ The assembly wasted no time; it set up a committee, including Owner, Buttolph, Hardware and Cooper, to study the proposal.²⁰ It produced a comprehensive and persuasive critique of Neve's plan.

Yarmouth accepted that alien fishermen visited the ports for the purchase and sale of fish but also noted that, in such ports, customs officers were vigilant and efficient. Was Neve ignorant of this? There were, as well, advantages to the foreigners' trade since it forced the Dutch to employ their warships 'which continually scour those seas & safeguard our fishers, fishing amongst theirs', which encouraged Yarmouth fishermen and prevented any decay in English fishing or decrease in the number of English fishing boats. Given Yarmouth's constant trouble in finding escorts for its fishing fleets, it was a pointed comment about the inadequacies of the royal navy. Fishing boats were fully employed, the breeding of seamen continued unabated, poor people were busy net-making and none of these activities had been, in any way, harmed. The port protested that it had never heard of foreign fishermen selling their fish in small villages. Indeed, Neve had not even identified the villages. The practice was highly unlikely since such villages could neither provide the markets or commercial facilities the alleged sales required. Furthermore, despite the free trade the foreigners had in fish, English fishermen still had, within the past seven years, enjoyed a 33 per cent price rise for their herrings, the best price they had garnered in two decades. There was no need to restrain the foreign trade; the herrings taken by aliens were for their domestic market. The new imposition proposed by Neve would be difficult to collect but would be far more 'burdensome to the commonwealth' and especially to Yarmouth's economy which was so dependent on the fishing industry. Yarmouth also claimed that Neve and his partner had misread the statute they had cited to justify their scheme, denied English fishermen were harmed by foreign fishermen and absolutely rejected the allegation that 'fraudulent or indirect practices' were employed by foreigners 'in taking their herrings out of one ship into another at sea' to avoid duties. Yarmouth depended heavily on its trade with foreigners and, if a new duty was imposed, it feared they would leave the trade to Yarmouth's ruin.²¹ Yarmouth's arguments must have been effective; nothing more was ever heard of Neve's proposal.

Neve suffered another setback in his fight to win back his place as alderman. The King, perhaps to Echard's relief, accepted Yarmouth's appeal for another investigation and ordered the Privy Council to review the matter again. The Council appointed Sir Thomas Woodhouse, Sir Hammond L'Estrange and Francis Brewster as commissioners to question witnesses and report back to the Council. They were to meet, with all interested parties, including Neve and the first commissioners, Corbet, Hall and Cooper, in Norwich on the 9th of January 1628.²²

Given this opportunity, Yarmouth's assembly was determined to make its case against Neve. Early in December, the bailiffs wrote to the new commissioners promising that witnesses would be sent to Norwich and that Yarmouth would do everything it could to preserve its good reputation. And its reputation was, in fact, to be preserved.²³

The commissioners met at Norwich and spent two days examining witnesses and assessing the claims and counter-claims of the two parties. Yarmouth's assembly, following the inquiry, reinforced its position against Neve by sending bailiff Henry Davy to London to put its case, again, before the Privy Council. Davy probably took with him an undated petition to the Council which summarised the case against Neve, the appointment of the commissioners and their work in Norwich. Yarmouth wanted its authority upheld against Neve who had disturbed the

peace of the town and 'by pretence of being his Majesty's servant does also prevent many poor creditors of their due debts'.²⁴ Davy's mission, however, was unnecessary.

Neve's restoration was opposed by the commissioners. Their investigation had revealed that the first commissioners, including alderman Cooper, had only examined three aldermen 'and some other witnesses produced' by Neve and, not surprisingly, their testimony had supported Neve. However, the second inquiry showed that Neve was sacked 'at a full assembly and by the common council of the town . . . according to the custom and usage of the town'. His dismissal won the approval of the assembly and had nothing to do with his royal service since that point was never raised during the discussion of his fate. The commissioners had also discovered that at two preceding assemblies, when complaints were raised against Neve, alderman Harris was ordered to warn Neve of the charges and urge him to attend an assembly to answer the complaints. Neve ignored the warning and claimed, when he was dismissed, that he would 'come in again in despite of them'. Neve was discharged because of his continued and prolonged absences and for many other reasons. He had ignored his responsibilities to the town and refused to pay legitimate town charges. He was, the commissioners observed, 'outlawed at the common law after judgment given against him at the suit of several persons'. He was indebted to many and owed, amongst others, Isaac Cooper more than £200. He had given Cooper fraudulent security for the loan, conveying a house to Cooper that he had already used as security for another loan to another person. Neve, in fact, had gone even further, pretending 'some title under some other person to the said house, does by force keep him out of possession, whereof he has been indicted at a sessions' in Yarmouth 'for a forcible detainer'. He had also not paid his share of the forced loan.²⁵ Everything claimed by Neve's opponents had been proved, at least to the commissioners' satisfaction. It was now up to the Privy Council.

The Council, at the end of January, accepted the commissioners' conclusions. Neve was out; Yarmouth's decision against him stood.²⁶ The port was fully vindicated and the assembly was so gratified that it ordered that the Council's order and the commissioners' report be recorded for posterity.²⁷ The case against Neve was a strong one and, once it was clear that his royal service had no bearing on his dismissal, the Council had little choice but to agree with Yarmouth's decision to remove him.

At the next assembly, however, confusion arose over Thomas Green's status. Was he, in fact, an alderman? The confusion grew out of his election, in Neve's place, in September 1626. The assembly rehashed the affair all over again and, to clarify Green's position, decided that a vote must be taken to determine if Green was an alderman. The assembly voted in Green's favour and agreed that he had never been dismissed despite the King's letter for Neve's restoration and subsequent assembly action. In short, Echard's reinstatement of Neve in August 1627 was formally overturned and Green's status confirmed.²⁸

Victory had its price and Yarmouth paid up. In March 1628, Edward Owner, bailiff at the time of Neve's dismissal, presented his bill for the expenses he had incurred in the subsequent quarrel. The assembly was generous; Owner received the rather handsome payment of 'one hundred marks' (£66. 13s. 4d.).²⁹

Neve's career in Great Yarmouth was over but he continued to enjoy royal favour. Late in March, he was granted a commission, with several others, 'to put in execution an Act of Parliament of the 33rd Henry VIII, for the maintenance of artillery, archery, and shooting in long bows'. It was, no doubt, another way to help restore his financial situation but it only lasted some three years. In August 1631, Neve's commission was revoked by the Crown because 'of exactions and abuses committed under colour of that Commission'.³⁰ But there was more to come, and it directly involved Great Yarmouth.

Neve petitioned his royal master for a new patent. For many years, Yarmouth had secured the right from the Crown to export 600 lasts of herrings in foreign ships. Neve claimed that its merchants never exported herrings in those ships but only 'sold their own herrings' to the foreigners which enabled its inhabitants to profit from 'an imposition upon the strangers giving them liberty to export' the herrings in their vessels. This was contrary to the licence and against the King's interests. In 1624, the licence had been denied as it had been, on occasion, in the past. Still, however, the foreigners bought herrings at Yarmouth and shipped it out in their ships by what Neve described as a 'cunning practice'. English ships were hired in the 'old town' to load herrings for export to Holland but when the English barks sailed the herrings were off loaded at sea 'into the stranger's ships and so by that means paid nothing for their liberty of exportation'. Neve recognised the importance of herring sales to Yarmouth's economy and assured the King that would continue under his scheme but, as might be expected, he promised the King profit as well. He would pay the King £50 a year for 21 years for the licence to export 600 lasts of herrings for Great Yarmouth. Benefits would accrue to the King, to Great Yarmouth since it would be relieved of its annual expense in renewing the licence, and, no doubt, to Neve. The King referred Neve's petition to the Council for review; Yarmouth apparently never discovered that Neve was trying to take its licence away. It was an excellent example of Neve's fiscal opportunism, just another plan to revive his fortunes through his court connections and at Yarmouth's expense.³¹

Neve's scheme failed. It is interesting to note, however, that his petition was very similar to one submitted to the King in August 1626 by 'one Mr. Henry Stanley,' an auditor of the mint. Yarmouth opposed Stanley's effort although it was of the opinion that should such a patent become available, the port should have it.³² Nothing came from Stanley's venture in 1626; however, in February 1628, he tried again. On that occasion, Yarmouth expressed no interest in securing the patent for itself but, instead, did what it could to block Stanley's proposal and presumably succeeded since nothing came of it.³³

Ironically enough, some ten years later, in 1638, the patent that Stanley and Neve had sought was won by Yarmouth. After protracted negotiations involving the Turkey Company and Trinity House over Yarmouth's export licence, in July the Crown granted Yarmouth a licence to export 600 lasts of herring each year for ten years for an annual payment of £50. The port's assembly quickly agreed to the royal plan.³⁴

Neve's subsequent career, following his failure to secure his patent in 1630, was remarkable, indeed. He moved to the Low Countries, took a medical degree and returned to England. He settled in London and 'established himself . . . as a quack doctor and astrologer'. Loyal to the King in the Civil War, he lost everything and joined the royalists at Oxford. He died in London in January 1654.³⁵

Charles I's reign was marked by persistent royal intervention in the affairs of many English boroughs. And Great Yarmouth was no exception. However, Neve's quarrel with the port was different. It was the only time that Yarmouth succeeded in enforcing its will against a royal command. Two other aldermen, Hardware and Cooper, were sacked by the corporation during its struggle with the Crown over its charter, a quarrel that divided the corporation and led to repeated royal intervention. But the King had his way over Hardware and Cooper even though, in the end, Cooper's bid to alter Yarmouth's charter failed. Neve played no role in that controversy but, had he been able to do so, he would probably have backed Cooper. Cooper had, after all, favoured Neve against the corporation but, with his dismissal confirmed, Neve's subsequent career was at court, in the Low Countries and London and not at Yarmouth. Indeed, his financial practices, shady property transactions and bad debts in Yarmouth left him little alter-

native. He turned to the court where he held a place that enabled him to entertain hopes of winning potentially rewarding gifts, licences or patents from the Crown. Neve's dismissal was a defeat for royal interference in Yarmouth's affairs and, although perhaps but a minor skirmish, it suggested the groupings that would fight it out, more vigorously, during the charter battle that occupied Yarmouth's attention from 1629 to 1632.³⁶

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1. Peter Clark and Paul Slack, eds., *Crisis and Order in English Towns, 1500-1700*, London, (1972), 21, 22-23, 25; Derek Hirst, *The Representative of the People?*, Cambridge, (1975), 7, 19-20, 47, 48-50, 55; John T. Evans, *17th Century Norwich*, Oxford, (1979), 63, 64-65, 69-73, 73-77; Robert A. Ashton, *The English Civil War*, soft-cover ed., London, (1978), 93-97; David Stevenson, *The Scottish Revolution, 1637-1644*, (Newton Abbot), 1973, 51. The references preceded by Y/C are among the Great Yarmouth borough archives. The assembly books (Y/C 19) are at Yarmouth Town Hall and the rest are deposited in the Norfolk Record Office.
2. Great Yarmouth, Assembly Book, Y/C 19/6, fols. 130-131v, 132-132v, 133, 165-168, 170v, 171, 171v, 172, 179, 181v, 182, 198-198v, 199v-200; Great Yarmouth, Book of Entries, Y/C 18/6, fols. 250v-251, 253, 257-259; British Library, Additional MS 23,012, fols. 109v-110, 114-117v; Order in Council, 29 July 1629, Public Record Office, State Papers Domestic, 16/147:59; *Acts of the Privy Council, 1629-1630*, vol. 45 112-113; *APC 1630-1631*, vol. 46, 140, 384; Benjamin Cooper, bailiff of Great Yarmouth, to the Privy Council, 14 Aug. 1629, P.R.O., SP 16/148:58; the same to Secretary Dorchester, 14 Aug. 1629, P.R.O., SP 16/148:61; Robert Heath, attorney general, to Secretary Dorchester, 16 Aug. 1629, P.R.O., SP 16/148:74; the King to the Bailiffs of Gt. Yarmouth, 23 Aug. 1629, BL, Add. MS 36,540, f. 10; the King to the town of Yarmouth, 23 Aug. 1629, P.R.O., SP 16/148:88; Nicholas Cutting and John Stevenson, Bailiffs of Gt. Yarmouth, to the Privy Council, 28 June 1631, P.R.O., SP 16/195:16; P.R.O., PC 2/41, 10 (misdated) June, 8 July 1631, 30, 84.
3. G.Y. Assembly Bk, Y/C 19/5, fols. 47v, 84v, 93v, 94, 123v, 149v, 160, 161, 167v, 227; 'Neve or Le Neve, Jeffery,' *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. xiv, 240.
4. G.Y., Assembly Bk, Y/C 19/5, f. 309.
5. G.Y., Assembly Bk, Y/C 19/5, f. 315.
6. G.Y., Assembly Bk, Y/C 19/5, fols. 317, 320v, G.Y., Assembly Bk, Y/C 19/6, fols. 1, 7. 'Lastage' was a fee exacted by Great Yarmouth on each last of herrings used to pay for the protection of Yarmouth's fishing fleets when convoyed by local ships fitted out by the port.
7. G.Y., Assembly Bk, Y/C 19/6, fols. 39, 41; Particulars of Neve's dismissal, 22 Sept. 1626, Historical Manuscripts Commission, *The manuscripts of Earl Cowper, K.G.*, vol. i, 283.
8. Document entitled 'To move his Majesty,' (Jan.) 1627, P.R.O., SP 16/52:27; Reeve hoped Neve would act to bring Reeve's pre-election sermon given at Great Yarmouth to the King's attention, Thomas Reeve to the King, 23 Jan. 1626, P.R.O., SP 16/19:31; G.Y., Bk of Entries, Y/C 18/6, f. 236v.
9. G.Y., Bk of Entries, Y/C, 18/6, f. 236v.
10. G.Y. Bk of Entries, Y/C 18/6, fols. 236v-237. 'Customs farming' was an accepted practice by 1605. By then, most customs had been farmed to one syndicate which paid an annual rent to the Crown for the right to collect customs duties. And, although the rent was substantially increased by the Crown, the farmers stood to gain substantial profit for any money collected, over the fixed rental paid to the Crown, was theirs. The Crown gained a guaranteed annual income regardless of the state of trade.
11. G.Y., Assembly Bk, Y/C 19/6, f. 67v.
12. G.Y., Bk of Entries, Y/C 18/6, fols. 239, 239v; G.Y., Assembly Bk, Y/C 19/6, f. 71v; 'Corbet, Clement,' *D.N.B.*, iv, 1123-1124.
13. G.Y., Assembly Bk, Y/C 19/6, fols. 71v, and unnumbered folio entry for 13 August 1627; G.Y., Bk of Entries, Y/C 18/6, f. 239v.
14. G.Y., Bk of Entries, Y/C 18/6, f. 239v.
15. G.Y., Bk of Entries, Y/C 18/6, fols. 239v-240; Particulars of Neve's dismissal, 26 Sept. 1626, the Bailiffs of Yarmouth to Sir John Coke, 1 Sept. 1627, H.M.C., *Cowper*, vol. i, 283, 319. 'Hosts' is the term for a freeman who hosted foreign herring boats as non freemen could not sell their herrings in Yarmouth save through a freeman of the port. The freeman involved in the transaction had to divide his purchase of herrings into two equal portions, one for himself and one for public sale to other Yarmouth freemen. The buyer paid the original price to the host, the excess or surplus over that price went to the corporation. Neve was charged for not paying for the herrings he had bought. Nor had he paid the 'half dole' which was the fee that equalled half the tithe exacted on fishing which at Yarmouth was divided between the port and clergy.

16. G.Y., Bk of Entries, Y/C 18/6, f. 140.
17. G.Y., Assembly Bk, Y/C 19/6, f. 73.
18. G.Y., Assembly Bk, Y/C 19/6, f. 74v.
19. G.Y., Bk of Entries, Y/C 18/6, f. 236v.
20. G.Y., Assembly Bk, Y/C 19/6, f. 79.
21. G.Y., Bk of Entries, Y/C 18/6, fols. 236v, 237, 237v.
22. G.Y., Bk of Entries, Y/C 18/6, fols. 240, 240v; *APC, 1627-1628*, vol. 43, 133-134; H.M.C., *Duke of Beaufort, K.G., et. al.*, the mss of John Henry Gurney, 7 Nov. 1627, 142; Conway's Letter Book, P.R.O., SP 14/214, 3 Jan. 1628, 295. Sir Thomas Woodhouse of Kimberley had been knighted in 1603 and was a gentleman of the bedchamber to Prince Henry until the Prince's death when he retired to his Norfolk estates. A man of considerable wealth, Woodhouse served Norfolk as a justice of the peace, sheriff and loan commissioner in 1627. He was elected, for Thetford, to both parliaments in 1640 and was a supporter of parliament. He died in March 1658. L'Estrange, of Hunstanton, had been knighted in 1603, served in parliament for Norfolk in 1621 and was a justice of the peace and sheriff. A royalist, L'Estrange was governor of King's Lynn in 1643 for the King and died at Hunstanton in May 1654. Mary Frear Keeler, *The Long Parliament*, Memoirs of the American Philosophical Society, vol. 36, Philadelphia, (1954), 398-399; J. H. Gleason, *The Justices of the Peace in England 1558 to 1640*, Oxford, (1969), 151, 154, 157, 158; 'L'Estrange, Hamon', *D.N.B.*, xi 994.
23. G.Y., Assembly Bk, Y/C 19/6, f. 82v.
24. G.Y., Assembly Bk, Y/C 19/6, f. 85; G.Y., Bk of Entries, Y/C 18/6, f. 241.
25. Ro. Townsend, Tho. Hobbs, Francis Brewster, Tho. Woodhouse to the Privy Council, 10 Jan. 1628, P.R.O., SP 16/90:47; G.Y., Bk of Entries Y/C 18/6, fols. 240v-241.
26. *APC, 1627-1628*, vol. 43, 258; G.Y., Bk of Entries, Y/C 18/6, f. 241v; G.Y., Assembly Bk, Y/C 19/6, f. 87.
27. G.Y., Assembly Bk, Y/C 19/6, f. 87.
28. G.Y., Assembly Bk, Y/C 19/6, fols. 88v-89.
29. G.Y., Assembly Bk, Y/C 19/6, f. 95v.
30. *Calendar of State Papers Domestic, 1628-1629*, 43; *CSPD 1631-1633*, 19.
31. 'The humble petition of Jeffrey Le Neve your Majesty's servant' to the King, 30 March 1630, P.R.O., SP 16/163:56.
32. G.Y., Bk of Entries, Y/C 18/6, fols. 226v, 227; G.Y., Assembly Bk, Y/C 19/6, fols. 34, 45v; *CSPD 1619-1623*, 251, 335; *CSPD 1627-1628*, 15.
33. G.Y., Assembly Bk, Y/C 19/6, f. 87v.
34. G.Y., Assembly Bk, Y/C 19/6, fols. 409v, 410v-411; G.Y., Bk of Entries, Y/C 18/7, fols. 26-27.
35. 'Neve or Le Neve, Jeffrey,' *D.N.B.*, xiv, 240.
36. Cooper, who tried to overturn Yarmouth's charter, was also deeply involved in the long-running quarrel between the Dean and the Chapter of Norwich cathedral and the corporation over the right of presentation to Yarmouth's church, St. Nicholas, which haunted Yarmouth's affairs from 1624 to 1642.