

THE STORY OF A GENTLEMAN'S HOUSE IN THE ENGLISH REVOLUTION

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The disturbed time of the Civil War and Commonwealth saw a widespread disruption of the established order. Military requisitioning and plunder brought hardship and instability to the lives of many, while the common people took advantage of the situation to seize back enclosed commons, refuse rent payments, and generally assert themselves against the ruling classes. Parliamentary supporters temporarily acquired the estates of Royalists and Catholics. The present article tells the story of one particular gentleman's house, that of Humfrey Noye, during this period.

Humfrey was the second son of William Noye of Carnanton in Cornwall. William had made his career in law, and was Charles I's Attorney General from 1631 until 1634. As such he was one of the supporters of the 'Eleven Years Tyranny', Charles's rule without Parliament in the 1630s. Also a supporter of the moderate Anglican church establishment, he was responsible for the imprisonment of the Puritan William Prynne who was to play a role in the 1640s' revolution. Increasingly plagued by illness, William Noye retired in 1634 to his house at Brentford in Middlesex, where he died the same year. He left the bulk of his estate to his eldest son Edward, but the latter died in a duel two years later, and the estate then passed to Humfrey¹.

Humfrey Noye supported the King in the Civil War, both in the raising of troops as a Commissioner of Array and subsequently as colonel of a Royalist

regiment². The Parliamentarians took upon themselves power to seize, or 'sequester', the estates of such Royalists, as also Catholics, or indeed anyone who evaded his war taxes or moved house without permission. A sequestration committee was established in each county to administer the process, and to let out such estates 'to the best advantage of the State'. Most offenders were subsequently allowed to 'compound', or have their estates back in return for a fine set at a fraction of the estate's value. For this it was necessary to apply to the Committee for Compounding in London. Also, the Committee for the Advance of Money levied a tax, the 'fifth and twentieth part' (one-fifth of the personal, and one-twentieth of the real estate), on all those who had failed to lend voluntarily to Parliament's cause. It had power to sequester the estates of those who did not pay, to lease them out, and to return them once the money had been extracted³.

Noye's estate at Carnanton was seized after the Parliamentary victory in the Civil War. But before this, in 1643, his house at Brentford was sequestered for his failure to pay his fifth and twentieth part⁴. On 21 March 1644 the Committee for the Advance of Money let the house with its grounds to Richard Angell of neighbouring Isleworth for a year. He was to pay £10 in two half-yearly instalments⁵.

Angell turned his tenure to better advantage than had perhaps been anticipated. In January 1645 the Committee was making an order for 'The house to be

viewed, and a report made of the waste said to have been committed, by whom done, and in whose hands are the goods and materials said to be sold and taken away'⁶. Subsequent testimony claimed that the house 'was very much wasted, and made scarce habitable, by Angell and others'⁷. In March the Committee summoned Angell 'to answer for the wastes committed on the house'⁸.

Who was this Richard Angell? Living as he did in a Thames-side village, he may possibly have been the waterman of that name who petitioned Parliament in 1641⁹. Angell died intestate in 1659, his probate inventory revealing that he was—by then at least—a cooper, or barrel maker. His estate was then valued at £23 16s, making him a modest, though not impoverished, craftsman¹⁰. Thus, if he reaped any long-term benefit from his occupation of the Noye house, it was not great.

One wonders why the Committee for the Advance of Money should have let out a gentleman's house to such a poor man in the first place. Perhaps, with their great volume of work, they sometimes let out estates with less care than required. Or possibly they sought to undermine their enemies in an alliance of convenience with the common people.

At any rate the Committee were not prepared to continue Angell in his lease. On 5 April 1645 they let the house to Humfrey Hurleston, a barrister at Temple Bar, again for the yearly rent of £10. Damages awarded against Angell were to be employed in its repair¹¹. Hurleston's lease was subsequently renewed¹², and he continued to hold the house until the early 1650s.

However, Hurleston himself was later in trouble for paying no rent during his tenure¹³. His wife Katherine, who had made the representations before the Committee to 'get . . . Angell out of Mr Noye's

house', seems to have taken the actual responsibility for the house¹⁴. According to testimony made on Mrs Hurleston's behalf, the Committee offered to abate her the costs of repairs—which she said would come to more than £10 a year—from the rent and taxes due on the house¹⁵. The surviving papers of the Committee (sparse as they are) do not mention this, stating rather that repairs were to be funded from the damages due by Angell¹⁶. There is of course no proof that Angell ever paid these damages, but neither do the Hurlestons seem to have used their tenure to make improvements, for in 1652 the Middlesex sequestration commissioners described the house as 'unfit to be inhabited'¹⁷.

When Humfrey Noye applied to compound for his estate in 1646, he failed to mention his Brentford house, no doubt to evade the composition fine on it¹⁸. In June 1651 Katherine Hurleston, departing for Devon, left the house in the charge of an agent for the purpose of sub-letting it¹⁹. Noye, taking advantage of Mrs Hurleston's absence, claimed that he had compounded for his house, and promptly appropriated it²⁰.

Noye's trick did not succeed in restoring him to any more than temporary possession, however. In April 1652 the Middlesex sequestration committee, recognising the house to be still under sequestration, contracted with George Pike, gent., for a seven-year lease at £14 *per annum*. Noye or Hurleston may have subsequently attempted to regain possession by legal means, since at the end of the year Pike petitioned the Committee for Compounding for confirmation of the contract. This the Committee gave, adding the rider that if Hurleston did not pay his rent arrears within fourteen days, they were to be levied on his estate²¹.

And this is as far as the Parliamentary records take the story. We can only pre-

sume that, in common with other property appropriated during the Revolution, Humfrey Noye's Brentford house was restored to him after the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660.

ABBREVIATIONS, AND MAIN REFERENCES CITED

PRO	Public Record Office
SP19	Public Record Office, papers of the Committee for the Advance of Money
SP23	Public Record Office, papers of the Committee for Compounding
CCAM	Mary Anne Everett Green, ed., <i>Calendar of the Proceedings of the Committee for Advance of Money, 1642-1656</i> . . . (1888)
CCC	Mary Anne Everett Green, ed., <i>Calendar of the Proceedings of the Committee for Compounding, etc., 1643-1660</i> . . . (1888-93)
DNB	<i>Dictionary of National Biography</i>

NOTES

1. *DNB*, vol. 41 (1895), 253-5.
2. SP23/209, p. 253; Joseph Foster, *Alumini Oxoniensis*, vol. 3 (rep. 1968), 1082.
3. See the introductions in the *CCC* and the *CCAM*.
4. SP23/162, p. 401. This would have been after 4 October, on which date he had been assessed (at £100) (*CCAM*, 256). While the house is often said (as in the *DNB*) to have been in New Brentford, various evidences show that it was in fact located in Brentford End, in Isleworth parish: eg map of Isleworth hundred, 1635 (1876 facsimile in British Library, Maps 189. a.11); PRO, E179/142/303, subsidy roll for Elthorne, Spelthorne and Isleworth hundreds, 1629.
5. *CCAM*, 256. The house had fifteen acres of grounds, consisting of gardens, an orchard and eleven acres of farmland including three in the 'common' (ie open) fields (SP23/162, p. 401; *CCAM*, 256; SP23/108, p. 1116).
6. *CCAM*, 256. Unfortunately no copy of a report on this order survives amongst the Committee's papers.
7. SP23/106, p. 441, deposition of Owen Fuller, servant to Humfrey Hurleston, the subsequent holder of the house. It should be noted that excuses were being made for the subsequent tenant not having paid any rent during his tenure.
8. *CCAM*, 256.
9. PRO, SP16/480, f. 124, petition of William Jordan, David Parry, Richard Angell and other watermen against the rulers of the Company of Thames Watermen. The petition is calendared in W. D. Hamilton, ed., *Calendar of State Papers Domestic, 1640-41* (1882, rep. 1967) 583-4. See my article 'The Democratic Revolution in the Company of Thames Watermen, 1641-2', *East London Record*, no. 6 (1983), 17-27.
10. Transcript of Isleworth parish register at the Society of Genealogists; PRO, Prerogative Court of Canterbury, Act Books, Prob 6/36, f. 2a.
11. *CCAM*, 256; SP23/162, p. 401, quoted in *CCC*, 1217.
12. *CCAM*, 256.
13. *CCC*, 1217.
14. SP23/106, p. 441; SP23/62, p. 331.
15. SP23/106, p. 441.
16. *CCAM*, 256.
17. SP23/162, p. 401.
18. SP23/209, pp. 257, 67, 68.
19. SP23/62, p. 331. The agent was Joseph Ayliffe of Gray's Inn, esq.
20. *Ibid*. This happened three weeks after Mrs Hurleston's departure. Ayliffe was showing a Mr Burrell (also of Gray's Inn) the house when Noye turned up, claiming that he had previously shown a certificate of composition for it to Mrs Hurleston. Ayliffe, with perhaps surprising ease, relinquished the house to him.
21. SP23/62, p. 331; SP23/162, p. 401; *CCC*, p. 1217.