

APPENDIX 3

Dr John More and the Sale of Peerages

James I sought to raise cash from the gentry from the outset, the sale of baronetcies from 1611 augmenting more traditional devices such as fines for refusals of knighthood, the sale of monopolies and patents, the farming of judicial functions and the like, i involving various Crown servants and courtiers in one way or another. The sale of titles replaced Parliamentary grants as a source of funding, some 45 peers being created in England between 1615 and 1628, bringing the total number to 126 - double the number under Elizabeth I - with yet more in Scotland and Ireland. However Linda Levy Peck observes that while Robert Carr, and initially Villiers, were used by James I as coarse filters, responsible to James who made the ultimate decisions, Villiers (Buckingham) grew into the only British 'favourite to reach a level of power equivalent to that of Richelieu or Olivares'. ii

Buckingham's career as royal favourite began in 1616. Within a year, he embarked on land purchases in the East Midlands, as did Dr More in the year following – the likeliest time for his entry into Buckingham's service. His roots lay elsewhere, and it is highly suggestive that his activities on Buckingham's behalf in regard to the sale of peerages were mainly concentrated in the East Midlands area.

Unsurprisingly, the information that survives on confidential negotiations that even at the time would be considered sensitive, not to say shady, is piecemeal and incomplete, and it is not clear at what date More began this work. In 1622 he bought some property from Lawrence Leeke, gent.,ⁱⁱⁱ who may well have been a connection of Sir Francis Leake,^{iv} an up-and-coming Derbyshire magnate who obtained a barony some two years later. Buckingham wrote to tell James I that Leake, 'well-born and of good estate and religion, is prepared to pay £8000 for a barony' - he was created Baron Deincourt of Sutton (Scarsdale) in Derbyshire.

By 1618 the usual price for a barony was £10,000, centred around Buckingham who pocketed much of the fee for himself or his supporters - however Leake was able to bargain the price down at a time when Buckingham was short of money.^v

John Holles, having already obtained the barony of Haughton, added the earldom of Clare that year for £5000, while claiming - as did Mansfield - that he'd overpaid compared with others! and indeed admitting that the purchase of titles was 'temporal simony':

'I have heard the Earl of Clare...often inveigh bitterly against it, and he would usually call it temporal simony....' 'I remember I once took the liberty...to ask him why he would purchase himself, seeing he condemned the King for selling. He answered that he observed merit to be no medium to an honorary reward, that he saw divers persons whom he thought deserved it as little as he...by that means leap over his head, and therefore seeing the market open, finding his purse not unfurnished for it, he was persuaded to [use] his money as other men had done'.^{vi}

The sale of honours was little disturbed by James I's death in 1625 - the next year another Derbyshire landowner, Henry Harpur of Calke, paid £1095 to the Exchequer, and £300 to 'Dr John Moore, the dispenser of royal patronage', for a baronetcy.^{vii}

Buckingham had his eye on a more ambitious target, directing William Cavendish, Viscount Mansfield, to tackle his cousin and Nottinghamshire neighbour Robert Pierrepont of Holme Pierrepont and Hodsock about buying an honour. Pierrepont, replies Mansfield, says that 'Dr Moore told him, in King James' time, that he might be a baron for £4000, soon after that creation a viscount for £4000 more, and within a little space an earl for £4000 more'. Further, he says that 'a Scotch knight offered him to be a viscount' for £5000. Not a moneyed person, he cannot pay any great sum down on the nail. 'He will hardly be a baron because there are so many before him, but would be a viscount if it come somewhat easy.'

Mansfield lobs the ball back to Buckingham: though he has never known Pierrepont 'willing to receive honor than he is, at this present', he can get no more out of Pierrepont, who swears that he will never be a peer but by the Duke's favour. ^{viii}

Mansfield, soon to be earl and then duke of Newcastle, owed his lord lieutenancy of Nottinghamshire to Buckingham, so no doubt was indeed trying his hardest. ^{ix}

The bargain was struck just a few months later, Mansfield's cousin Robert becoming Baron Pierrepont and Viscount Newark of Newark-on-Trent in Nottinghamshire. Clearly, Buckingham was behind More's hint that he could progress even further, to an earldom, as within months Mansfield wrote again to tell Buckingham that Newark was willing to 'parte with a resonable sum of money', but 'could not be induced to sell land to Dr Moore, having made a solemn vow to the contrary'. More was acquiring his own portfolio of land holdings not far away, and the new peer was not prepared to sell him some land which the doctor had his eye on - Buckingham having earmarked this promotion for More's benefit - even though More was never a threat to Newark's local ascendancy. Again an accommodation must soon have been reached, as in July 1628 Newark was named earl of Kingston upon Hull. ^x

The process is strikingly exemplified by the case of Sir George Chaworth, who at the time the offer was made was MP for Arundel, but who was a Nottinghamshire man born, formerly MP for the county, later its high sheriff, and taken there to be buried after dying at Bristol. ^{xi} His diary for March 1625 records

'The Message sent me by the D. of Buckingham touching my having ye Tytle of a Vice Count, ye Sundaie before King James died. Doctor More came to me at 9 a clock in ye morning, and after some talk about ye bush (as we saye), he tested me yf or noe I desyred honor, sayeing how proper it was for me; and I to his generalls giveing generall denyals, att last he sayeth, "Well, because I will be short, and because I have so good a wittnes as my Ladie, I will deal trulye with you. I am nowe sent to you fro' ye D. of Buckingham, to knowe yf you wilbe a Scotish V. Count, and give him £2500 for procureing it, or not?"'

Chaworth sent More back to ask if Buckingham and the King had not both promised him an English viscountcy (which indeed he mentions earlier in the diary). Two hours later, More came back saying that the duke did not deny this -

'"yet I must take ye tymes as they were, and yf I wold not nowe give him £2500 for yt tytle offered, with expectation of getting ye other for me hereafter, by God I shold never have anie tytle, whylst he lived".'

Chaworth dug in, but after James' death, revived his application, obtaining an Irish peerage for £1500 - half as cash down, half to be paid within six months - as well as the expectation of a future English peerage, which however never materialised, despite his approaches to Charles I in 1629. ^{xii}

Without denying Buckingham's overall domination of the national honours market, when utilising his local connections to the full he was following established custom and practice. Linda Levy Peck observes that prior to Buckingham's domination of patronage in the 1620s, several privy councillors had their own patronage networks, in their regions, linking country to court. However, she finds that in general terms, the hegemony of royal favourites with their own agendas strained the court-country alliance to breaking-point: 'the dysfunctional patronage system alienated those local élites it was designed to conciliate....'

This raises the intriguing question as to how far that can be said of Buckingham's own East Midlands clients, advanced in some cases through More's agency. John Holles, with his barony of Haughton and earldom of Clare, was a prominent example. His purchases exemplified that 'temporal simony' which he affected to despise – he must have feared, and no doubt resented, appearing hypocritical as the cost of baulking at turning down the opportunities and so condemning himself to being leapfrogged over by others. Life in Court circles had proved too heady for Holles to fancy returning to the vegetative life of the country gentleman – ironically, as an ex-Carr supporter, his hopes of preferment to high office failed to materialise. xiii Peck observes that Holles, whose cash Buckingham had wanted, took his revenge by becoming (with his son Denzil) one of the chief accusers when Buckingham himself came under fire.

Whether Dr More played any part in Holles' purchase of his earldom has not emerged; in any case it could well be that Holles was not alone in feeling at best ambivalent towards the facilitators of his ennoblement. However this may be, Buckingham's sudden death in 1628 was to prove momentous for Dr More, and appears to have brought his involvement in the sale of peerages to an immediate end.

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- i Some examples and more detail are given in Conrad Russell, *Parliaments and English politics 1621-1629*, 1979; Koenraad Wolter Swart, *Sale of offices in the seventeenth century*, 1980; G.E. Aylmer's standard work *The King's servants: the civil service of Charles I, 1625-1642*, 1974 mentions the rôle of John Packer, clerk to the Privy Seal and Buckingham's patronage secretary. See also Linda Levy Peck, 'Court patronage and Government policy: the Jacobean decline' in (ed.) G.F. Lytle and S. Orgel, *Patronage in the Renaissance*, 1981, reflecting increasing pressure on Crown resources with Parliamentary grants becoming more constrained
 - ii L.L. Peck, *Court patronage and corruption in early Stuart England*, 1990, and 'Monopolising Favour' in (eds.) J.H. Elliott and L.W.B. Brockliss, *The World of the Favourite*, 1999
 - iii HD HEN 6/5 dated 3 Dec. 1621. Leeke is described as a gentleman of Osmondthorpe, Notts.; the price paid by More was £280
 - iv Letter of October 1624 from Buckingham to James I (Harl. 6987, f.219) quoted in Hugh Ross Williamson, *George Villiers, first duke of Buckingham: a study for a biography*, 1940
 - v Charles R. Mayes' 1957 article 'The Sale of Peerages in early Stuart England', *Journal of Modern History* vol. XXIX, pp. 21-37. Roger Lockyer, *Buckingham: the life and political career of George Villiers, first Duke of Buckingham, 1592-1628*, 1981, contends that Buckingham's income did not exceed £20,000 at most. J.P. Somerville, *The mental world of the Jacobean court*, 1991 agrees with the argument of Russell, op. cit., that in 1621 Buckingham encouraged discussion of the royal marriage negotiations by Parliament so as to precipitate a dissolution, in order to stave off pressures for his own impeachment as a monopolist - anticipating the dissolution by Charles I in 1626 for the same purpose
 - vi (ed.) A.C. Wood, 'Memorials of the Holles family 1493-1656', *Camden Society 3rd series*, vol. 55, 1937, p.99; also Linda Levy Peck, *Court patronage and corruption in early Stuart England*, 1993

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- vii Gladwyn Turbutt, *The History of Derbyshire*, vol. 3, p. 1036. More's signed receipt, otherwise apparently not in his own hand, is in the Derbyshire Record Office as D2375/M/147/16. John Oliver, gentleman of Chellaston near Derby, wherein Harpur had estate, acted as go-between, paying More in instalments in recognition 'of the accomplishment of certain articles made between me and the said John Olliver for the giving of a Baronetship for Sir Henry Harpur of Calke Baronett late esq.' A Richard Oliver was named in Buckingham's will: Part 1, endnote ⁶¹
- viii CSP (Dom.), Charles I, vol. LV, p. 68, no. 26, 27/2/1627; Mayes, 'The Sale of Peerages..'.cit. sup.
- ix Lynn Hulse, *Cavendish, William, first duke of Newcastle upon Tyne (bap. 1593, d. 1676)*, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, 2004
- x CSP (Dom.), Charles I, vol. CVIII, p.186, no.72, June 1627; Mayes, 'The sale of peerages...'.cit. sup.; Stone, op.cit.; for the scale of Pierrepont's purchases of land which was the cause of his being 'not a moneyed person', see P. R. Seddon, *Pierrepont, Robert, first earl of Kingston upon Hull (1584-1643)*, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, 2004. Mayes mentions that Lucy Hutchinson referred to Pierrepont as 'of vast estate, and no less covetous'. The spat apparently blew over sufficiently to allow some direct land dealing between More and Kingston, as witness an indenture whereby Kingston conveyed to Dr More, and his nephew-in-law Richard Rawson, Pigot Manor or Hall at Kirklington with appurtenances at Hockerton and Normanton, Notts. for £1300 - HD HEN 6/5, 19 Oct.1631
- xi see Part 1, endnote ³²
- xii A. J. Kempe (ed.), *The Loseley Manuscripts*, 1836
- xiii Patricia Crawford, *Denzil Holles 1598-1680: a study of his political career*, 1979 recounts Holles turning late to Villiers when Carr was already a spent force, but being left out on account of Holles' support for Elizabeth Hatton, who opposed her daughter's marriage to Villiers' elder brother John; Holles' continuing relationship with Gondomar after the marriage negotiations stalled (see Part 1, endnote ⁵⁴) made matters worse