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ARTICLE

Contemporary Parliamentary History and Petitioners in the Long Parliament, c. 1640–1642

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Abstract

Studies of petitioning activity in the early years of the Long Parliament (1640–2) have often focused on the large-scale petitions which engaged with issues of high politics and religion in the charged atmosphere prior to the outbreak of Civil War. However, many subjects were drawn to petition the Commons and the Lords for relief in much more particular economic disputes. Utilizing overlooked manuscript petitions in the parliamentary archives and papers of the MP Bulstrode Whitelocke, this article re-examines petitioning activity between 1640 and 1642. It finds that, despite the absence of parliament during the Personal Rule, subjects eagerly embraced the calling of a new parliament, their perceptions of it shaped by its contemporary history. As MPs and peers increasingly utilized and preserved records, petitioners too evoked and confronted the parliamentary past. While some like the Merchant Adventurers' Company glossed its presentation tactically, others including London-based glassmakers and merchants were driven by ideological beliefs in the historic role of parliament as a protector against arbitrary fiscal policies. This article contributes to post-revisionism by showing that subjects viewed parliament not as an event, but as an institution, fostering connections between past and present sessions as they petitioned for redress.

> *That this Pet[itione]r in 1629 was enforced to enter into Bond for the payment of 700li to the then Farmers of the Subsidy of Tonnage and Poundage…which this Pet[itione]r in obedience to the Parliament refused to pay being the first Merchant of London that did deny the payment of the said Subsidy after the vnhappy dissoluc[i]on of the Parliament…*[1]

In 1641, the Levant merchant Thomas Symonds petitioned the House of Commons to complain of the costs and damages he had incurred earlier in Charles I's reign. Symonds described his refusal to pay customs duties on imported currants in 1629, lamenting his subsequent imprisonment by customs farmers. While his petition was successful in securing a referral to committee on 5 August 1641, delays in business

[1]British Library (BL), Harley MS 158, fo. 279r.

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forced him to send yet another copy of his petition as he remained hopeful that the Commons would remedy his grievances.[2]

Symonds's petition shows the care taken by supplicants to capture the attention of MPs in a climate where the volume of petitioners approaching this 'most High Court of Parliament' was particularly dense.[3] Symonds made a bold boast to have been the 'first Merchant of London that did deny the payment of the said subsidy', acting 'in obedience to the Parliament', a clear reference to MPs' objections to Charles's levying of tonnage and poundage in the parliament of 1628–9.[4] Not only had he opposed the crown following parliament's dissolution in March 1629, but he presented himself as a valiant defender of subjects' liberties. He had, he claimed, spent £100 'in defence, of the publique right of the Subiect and of himselfe to his vtter overthrowe'.[5] While Charles's Personal Rule (1629–40) had witnessed eleven years without a parliamentary session, this petitioner harkened back to the events of a parliament which had sat over ten years before, to remind MPs of their stalwart defence of merchants' property.

By invoking the memory of this tense episode between parliament and the king, Symonds presented himself as a defender of key parliamentary values, namely, the belief that taxation required the consent of the people, acquired through parliament. He portrayed himself as a committed member of the merchant community which had responded to MPs' objections, made in their Intended Remonstrance (June 1628) and in Sir John Eliot's declaration of March 1629 that customs granted without parliamentary consent were anathema to liberties, and any merchants who paid them were 'traitors' to the realm.[6] Symonds presented himself as the 'first' to join this opposition following parliament's dissolution as he described his participation in a collective mercantile protest which continued until the close of 1629.

Symonds's suit was carefully framed around the past as he attempted to garner the sympathy of MPs, presenting his interests as aligned with the actions of the Commons in a previous session. While certainly bold, his suit was not atypical, but representative of a growing willingness by petitioners to appeal to parliament's institutional memory as they sought redress for their grievances.

The English parliament was increasingly concerned with its recent past: developments in record-keeping practices and the spread of manuscript copies of speeches from past and contemporary parliaments created a political climate saturated with texts.[7] Paul Seaward has traced the important ways through which records of

[2]*Journal of the House of Commons* (*CJ*), II, p. 237. There were two Thomas Symonds in the Levant Company. It is likely that this is Thomas Symonds, 'draper' and merchant, brought before the council for stealing his currants from the customs house in January 1628, see The National Archives (TNA), SP 16/132, fo. 25; TNA, SP 16/133, fo. 40; TNA, SP 16/135, fos. 84r–85v, 86r–87v.

[3]BL, Harley MS 158, fo. 279r.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Ibid.

[6]N. Millstone, *Manuscript circulation and the invention of politics in early modern England* (Cambridge, 2016), ch. 7; J. P. Sommerville, *Royalists and patriots: politics and ideology in England, 1603–1640* (2nd edn, Abingdon, 2014), pp. 145–6; R. Ashton, *The city and the court, 1603–1643* (Cambridge, 1979), pp. 129–30; *CJ*, I, p. 919.

[7]Millstone, *Manuscript circulation*, pp. 94–5; N. Popper, *The specter of the archive: political practice and the information state in early modern Britain* (Chicago, IL, 2024), pp. 4–5; K. Peters, "'Friction in the archives":

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contemporary history were used to present particular narratives about parliament.[8] The early Stuart period also saw the development of a historicized mode of thinking about politics. As Noah Millstone has argued, subjects drew connections between past events while constructing 'politic histories' of plots and conspiracies to undermine the constitution.[9] The result was a heightened understanding of parliament as a bulwark protecting subjects' liberties in the face of arbitrary encroachments.[10]

Overlooked is the way these developments impacted petitioners, whose suits reveal a similar propensity to utilize contemporary history to draw connections *between* parliamentary sessions, as they too contributed to processes of institutional development. The Long Parliament presented an opportunity for subjects to proffer their demands to a new body of authority, disappointed as they were by the swift dissolution of the preceding Short Parliament (April–May 1640). Much work has presented the Long Parliament as a liminal moment in the run up to the Civil Wars, with a particular focus on the large-scale or printed petitions calling for root and branch reforms of the church and articulating concerns with popery and evil counsel.[11] However, for many subjects the appeal of this parliament was rooted in their desire to lobby and petition for relief in much more particular disputes.[12] As James Hart has shown, the revived judicial role of the Lords saw a flood of suitors approaching parliament in the 1640s for redress from the injustices of the Personal Rule.[13] Overlooked manuscript petitions in the collections of individual MPs and the Parliamentary Archives allow an assessment of patterns and changes in petitioning practice.

This article analyses petitioning activity in the early years of the Long Parliament (1640–2) with a particular focus on manuscript petitions presented by economic

access and the politics of record-keeping in revolutionary England', in L. Corens, K. Peters, and A. Walsham, eds., *Archives and information in the early modern world* (Cambridge, 2018), pp. 168–9.

[8]P. Seaward, 'Institutional memory and contemporary history in the House of Commons, 1547–1640', in P. Cavill and A. Gajda, eds., *Writing the history of parliament in Tudor and early Stuart England* (Manchester, 2018), p. 212.

[9]Millstone, *Manuscript circulation*, p. 313.

[10]D. R. Como, *Radical parliamentarians and the English Civil War* (Oxford, 2018), p. 16. For developments in the 1620s, see C. R. Kyle, *Theater of state: parliament and political culture in early Stuart England* (Stanford, CA, 2012).

[11]C. Russell, *The fall of the British monarchies, 1637–1642* (Oxford, 1995), ch. 5; J. Peacey, *Print and public politics in the English Revolution* (Cambridge, 2013), ch. 8; A. Fletcher, *The outbreak of the English Civil War* (London, 1985), ch. 6; K. Lindley, *Popular politics and religion in Civil War London* (Aldershot, 1997), chs. 1, 3; P. Lake, 'Puritans, popularity and petitions: local politics in a national context, Cheshire, 1641', in T. Cogswell, R. Cust, and P. Lake, eds., *Politics, religion and popularity: early Stuart essays in honour of Conrad Russell* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 259–89. This has led to a neglect of the 'everyday' business of parliament, see P. Little, 'The business of the House', in S. K. Roberts, ed., *The history of parliament: the House of Commons, 1640–1660* (*HoP 1640–1660*) (9 vols., Woodbridge, 2023), I, p. 233.

[12]D. Scott, '"Particular business" in the Long Parliament: the Hull letters 1644–1648', *Royal Historical Society Camden Fifth Series*, 17 (2009), pp. 273–341. For later work on petitioning on 'bread and butter' issues, see D. Hirst, 'Making contact: petitions and the English Republic', *Journal of British Studies*, 45 (2006), pp. 26–50. For lobbying, see D. Dean, 'Public space, private affairs: committees, petitions and lobbies in the early modern English parliament', in C. R. Kyle and J. Peacey, eds., *Parliament at work: parliamentary committees, political power and public access in early modern England* (Woodbridge, 2002), pp. 169–78.

[13]J. S. Hart, *Justice upon petition: the House of Lords and the reformation of justice, 1621–1675* (London, 1991), pp. 64–5, 69.

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interests and corporations. The intensification of processes of parliamentary record-keeping and the volume of information emanating from its chambers meant that, by the 1640s, petitioners could utilize these sources to present particular narratives of parliament and its actions. Experiences of petitioning in the 1620s were key as petitioners negotiated, contested, and manipulated their presentation of this decade in petitions designed to curry the sympathy of MPs and peers. Others could not shy away from their previous dealings with parliament, which remained inscribed in its Journals and penned in corporate court books. In the process, subjects contributed to wider processes of institutional development as they too produced petitions which posited certain narratives of parliament's roles, in which the recent past loomed especially large.

Petitioners' appeals to the past could be tactical, but they were not always so. Petitions provide insights into what Jason Peacey and Brodie Waddell have termed 'political imaginaries', subjects' own perceptions of parliament as an institution.[14] They offer another avenue through which to challenge revisionist interpretations of parliament as an event, while pushing post-revisionism forward to consider the role of economic grievances in fostering subjects' reflections on political processes.[15] Despite delays in the petitioning process, subjects like Symonds approached parliament time and again.[16] Their alignment of their interests with parliament, and celebrations of its role defending liberties, should be seen as evidence of their beliefs of its place in the polity, ideas developed through repeated encounters with MPs and peers. Subjects' attitudes to the Long Parliament were firmly rooted in previous interactions with the institution. And petitioners were not the only ones to look backwards. MPs and peers also returned to the investigation of religious, political, and economic issues addressed in the Petition of Right (1628) and even earlier.[17]

This article begins by examining the developments in parliamentary record-keeping which necessitated and enabled petitioners' engagement with its contemporary history, causing the 1620s to loom large in perceptions of the body. However, petitioners were also forced to reckon with aspects of change, namely, the growth of bicameral factions in 1640–2.[18] This article explores the mechanics and dynamics of petitioning in these early years, before analysing two case-studies which show the differing ways subjects appealed to the past. Glassmakers penned petitions complaining of the monopolization of glass by the courtier Sir Robert Mansell, influenced by the memory of their successful protest in James I's reign. By contrast,

[14]B. Waddell and J. Peacey, 'Introduction: power, processes and patterns in early modern petitioning', in idem and idem, eds., *The power of petitioning in early modern Britain* (London, 2024), pp. 13–14; J. Peacey, 'Parliament, printed petitions and the political imaginary in seventeenth-century England', *Parliaments, Estates and Representation*, 38 (2018), pp. 350–63, at p. 352.

[15]R. Cust and A. Hughes, 'Introduction: after revisionism', in idem and idem, eds., *Conflict in early Stuart England: studies in religion and politics* (London, 1989), p. 10; A. Wood, 'Beyond post-revisionism? The Civil War allegiances of the miners of the Derbyshire "Peak Country"', *Historical Journal*, 40 (1997), pp. 23–40.

[16]J. Peacey, *The Madman and the Churchrobber: law and conflict in early modern England* (Oxford, 2022), p. 158.

[17]*CJ*, II, pp. 8, 10–11, 46–7.

[18]D. Scott, 'A plea for the Lords: party, power and the Westminster peers, 1640–9' (paper presented at the History of Parliament colloquium: Parliament and Revolutionary Britain, April 2024). I am grateful to David for discussions on the impact of faction on petitioners.

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the Merchant Adventurers' Company manipulated the past far more dubiously in a petition designed to protect their corporate privileges.

I

In the seventeenth century, parliament was touched by a developing culture of 'inscription', which saw the creation, circulation, and use of records in what Nicholas Popper has described as an 'information state'.[19] Both the Commons and the Lords took an increased interest in the penning and housing of their archives; in March 1621, the Lords ordered the enrolment of its Journals, acts, and orders, and a sub-committee was charged with perusing its Journal weekly.[20] Petitioners were acutely aware of the importance attached to records. In January 1641, London merchants petitioned the Commons to complain of the monopolization of the production of gunpowder. They appealed to MPs by claiming that the storage of gunpowder in the Tower posed a risk to parliament's records. As the MP Simonds D'Ewes recorded in his diary, they asserted that this was where 'the Recordes lay, which if a sparke should but fall weere in danger of ruine'.[21] In this, they successfully secured the impassioned support of D'Ewes, himself a regular user of Elizabethan records, and the Commons' pronouncement that this was a pernicious monopoly.

Petitioners were aware that they were operating in a climate where their past interactions with the institution were etched into its records. Simultaneously, the volume of manuscript and oral news emanating *from* both chambers was expanding, a process which became more pronounced in the later 1620s.[22] This included official and unofficial documents relaying speeches and debates, while the accessibility of parliament allowed news of its proceedings to spread throughout the city. D'Ewes criticized 'loose beggarly scholars who did in alehouses invent speeches and make speeches of members in the house' to sell.[23] There was also a commercial market for historical speeches which resonated with current political concerns. Elizabeth I's 'Golden Speech', which saw the queen denounce monopolists in 1601, was reprinted in 1642, while circulating woodcuts and ballads referenced the impeachment of monopolists in 1621.[24] It was not just writings but also the memory of MPs which harkened to the past. During debates on the gunpowder monopoly in January 1641, D'Ewes referenced a speech of the MP for Surrey Sir George More in 1601, in which he criticized the oppressions of saltpetre men and monopolists in the county.[25]

[19]Popper, *Specter*, p. 4.

[20]Peters, '"Friction"', pp. 169–70; A. Beeton, 'Recording a revolution: the clerk of the parliaments and the Journals of the House of Lords, 1640–9', *Historical Research*, 98 (2025), pp. 229–43; Kyle, *Theater*, pp. 66–7.

[21]W. Notestein, ed., *The journal of Sir Simonds D'Ewes: from the beginning of the Long Parliament to the opening of the trial of the earl of Strafford* (*Journal of D'Ewes*) (New Haven, CT, 1923), p. 297.

[22]Millstone, *Manuscript circulation*, p. 98. For the costs of official and unofficial materials, see pp. 107, 111; Kyle, *Theater*, p. 107; Peacey, *Public politics*, p. 17.

[23]W. H. Coates, A. S. Young, and V. F. Snow, eds., *The private journals of the Long Parliament* (*PJ*) (3 vols., New Haven, CT, 1982–92), I, pp. 165–6.

[24]*Queene Elizabeths speech to her last parliament* (London, 1642); H. Pierce, *Unseemly pictures: graphic satire and politics in early modern England* (New Haven, CT, and London, 2008), pp. 88–92.

[25]*Journal of D'Ewes*, pp. 299–300; T. E. Hartley, ed., *Proceedings in the parliaments of Elizabeth I* (3 vols., London and New York, NY, 1995), III, p. 376; Seaward, 'Institutional memory', p. 214.

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Subjects also contributed to the growth of paper in Westminster. Petitioners and lobbyists circulated printed petitions and breviates summarizing their plights, a process which began in 1621.[26] As Peacey has shown, these documents could be printed for 'discreet' circulation amongst MPs and peers, but as the proceedings of an inheritance dispute between Benjamin Crokey and John Smyth reveal, these materials could make their way to country taverns, travelling along personal networks to inform subjects in the localities of parliamentary affairs.[27]

While not all subjects had the means to pay for access to peruse official records in the Tower, they were exposed to parliamentary affairs through these varied media. The very experience of attending Westminster in the pursuit of redress contributed to subjects' politicization, exposing them to news as they waited in the metropolis for hearings. Corporate bodies also utilized their own archives. In January 1629, the Levant Company ordered the reading of a 'Petic[i]on & reasons preferred to the Parliam[en]t in Aprill last concerninge the Impost of Currence', to assist in penning a response to a council request to pay customs.[28] For the generality and assistants attending this meeting, including Symonds, this informed and reminded them of past petitioning activity.

Almost immediately on parliament's opening in November 1640, subjects eagerly embraced the opportunity to petition a new body of authority. In a later printed petition, the London merchant Richard Chambers, imprisoned for his failure to pay tonnage and poundage, celebrated the moment when 'speech and hope of a blessed Parliament' reached his ears.[29] The sheer number of petitions presented reflected these expectations. Hart has shown that in December alone, at least 83 petitions were sent to the Lords, and a further 125 were presented in January 1641.[30] The Commons and Lords appointed committees for petitions (on 12 December and 6 November respectively) to vet suits and refer them to committees.[31] By 3 March 1641, the Commons decided that petitions could be received by committee chairs directly.[32] Such was the volume of petitions that both Houses issued periodic orders against the submission of new petitions until backlogs cleared.[33]

Petitioners were also drawn to parliament given the absence of other channels for redress. Approaching the Lords in August 1641, the governors of the New River Company noted that 'Since the beginninge of this parliam[en]t there hath beene little or noe Sittinge att the councell board but all or most of the busines of this nature haue beene agitated before yo[u]r Lo[rdshi]pps in this hono[ra]ble assemblie.'[34] The decline of the privy council rendered parliament the main space for petitioning subjects, yet the decision to approach the institution was not merely a response to the lack of alternative spaces for redress. Perceptions of parliament's

[26]Kyle, *Theater*, pp. 163–73.

[27]Peacey, 'Parliament', p. 351; Peacey, *Madman*, pp. 160–3, 171–83.

[28]TNA, SP 105/148, fo. 196r.

[29]*To the right honourable the lords; knights, citizens, and burgesses assembled in both houses of parliament. The humble petition of Richard Chambers merchant and alderman of the city of London* (London, 1646).

[30]Hart, *Justice*, pp. 66–7.

[31]Little, 'Business', p. 239; *CJ*, II, pp. 49–50.

[32]*Journal of D'Ewes*, p. 430.

[33]*Journal of the House of Lords* (*LJ*), IV, pp. 158, 260.

[34]London, Parliamentary Archives (PA), HL/PO/JO/10/4/4, fo. 144.

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role as a court of justice and the increased ease with which it could be approached were pivotal. Institutional developments in the 1620s, including the development of standing committees, rendered parliament a more accessible space for petitioners. As Andrew Thrush and Chris Kyle have shown, these committees provided a cheaper and quicker means for redress than submitting bills, especially as chairmen do not appear to have charged for introducing petitions.[35]

In the opening months of the Long Parliament, the Commons' committees for grievances and for trade (chaired by John Glynne and Sir Robert Harley respectively) examined petitions, called witnesses, and perused documents. Many suitors were drawn to both chambers by their economic concerns, as MPs investigated the decline in the cloth trade and the proliferation of monopolies.[36] Minutes from the committee for trade reveal that it received petitions from across the realm: inhabitants in Chester lamented a monopoly for the export of leather, while a petition was presented in the name of '20 Thousand Mynors' in Derbyshire.[37] The reputation of parliament as an enemy to monopolists had grown in James's reign, consolidated by the passage of the Statute of Monopolies (1624), which declared all monopolies as illegal, exempting corporations.[38] As such, it is no surprise that subjects saw parliament's sitting as an opportunity to complain of the corrupt patentees who had thrived during the Personal Rule.[39] The Commons prohibited any patentee MPs from sitting in the House, and on 23 November 1640, many patents were ordered to be brought in for examination.[40] A committee was appointed to consider specific patents for salt, soap, and leather.[41] These investigations generated a stream of paperwork; records were copied and petitions penned, adding to the volume of papers at MPs' and peers' disposal.[42]

Individual petitioners recognized the usefulness of records, practically using them (alongside other tactics) to draw links to the 1620s. For the merchant Richard Chambers, this included ensuring that copies of a past petition were entered anew. On 2 December 1640, D'Ewes recorded the re-reading in the Commons of a petition presented by Chambers in the parliament of 1628–9, complaining of arrest for non-payment of tonnage and poundage.[43] Chambers entered yet another petition 'by

[35]Kyle, *Theater*, pp. 141–2; A. Thrush, 'Legislation and petitions', in A. Thrush and J. P. Ferris, eds., *The House of Commons, 1604–1629* (6 vols., Cambridge, 2010), I, p. 332.

[36]B. E. Supple, *Commercial crisis and change in England, 1600–1642: a study in the instability of a mercantile economy* (Cambridge, 1959), p. 125. Ben Coates argues that the crisis should not be exaggerated, B. Coates, *The impact of the English Civil War on the economy of London, 1642–50* (London, 2016), pp. 20–1.

[37]Appendix A, in *Journal of D'Ewes*, pp. 525–7. For a large petition on the stannaries, see PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/66, fo. 181.

[38]C. Russell, *Parliaments and English politics, 1621–1629* (Oxford, 1979), chs. 2–3; E. R. Foster, 'The procedure of the House of Commons against patents and monopolies, 1621–1624', in W. A. Aiken and B. D. Henning, eds., *Conflict in Stuart England: essays in honour of Wallace Notestein* (London, 1960), pp. 57–86.

[39]PA, HL/PO/JO/10/4/5, fo. 134; PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/49, fo. 9; PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/75, fos. 121–4; PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/69, fos. 145–6.

[40]*CJ*, II, pp. 24, 34.

[41]*Journal of D'Ewes*, pp. 174, 312.

[42]For a petition penned upon the Commons' order, see BL, Stowe MS 132, fos. 298r–299v; Appendix A, in *Journal of D'Ewes*, p. 523.

[43]*Journal of D'Ewes*, p. 93; *CJ*, I, p. 931.

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which hee shewed the wrongs offered him since the peticion in 1628'.[44] Both were 'subscribed with his name and oath, written in one paper'.[45] By physically joining his previous and current petition, Chambers reminded MPs of his past petitioning activity and their pronouncements against unparliamentary taxation. Chambers showed flexibility in the adoption of new tactics to gain parliament's attention, utilizing both manuscript and printed forms of communication.[46] By 1646, he presented a printed petition wherein he mirrored Symonds's claims to have been the 'first Merchant which denyed undue pretended Customes', a resolute defender of the 'Rights of the Parliament'.[47] Remaining as a petitioner into the 1650s, and having served as a customs officer for parliament, Chambers's later activity suggests that his appeals in 1640, though perhaps exaggerated, were not merely tactical, but evidence of ideological commitment to parliament's cause.[48]

Evidence from James's reign suggests that parliamentary pronouncements were seen as possessing real clout, explaining subjects' willingness to secure parliamentary judgements despite these delays and the costs of the petitioning process.[49] In 1621, the Commons declared a patent for glass held by Sir Robert Mansell as a grievance.[50] However, Mansell's service abroad on naval service led James to order that the patent remain in force pending further examination. This did not stop glassmakers from using the Commons' orders to free themselves from Mansell's domineering influence. The council complained that 'divers persons' acted as if the patent were cancelled 'for that the said patent hath ben lately questioned in Parliament'.[51] It was not only glassmakers who took parliamentary orders as authoritative pronouncements. In June 1621, Secretary Calvert complained to the lord mayor of London that officers had stopped collecting money due to the patentees for lighthouses 'by coulor of an order supposed to bee made' by the Commons.[52] In a period where legislation was declining, petitioners viewed parliamentary judgements as definitive enough to legitimize their actions.[53]

At other times, petitioners responded to signals from the centre, encouraged by politicians to send complaints which supported their agendas.[54] As Coleman Dennehy has shown, petitions complaining of the earl of Strafford's tobacco monopoly were integral to the campaign against his actions as lord lieutenant of

[44]*Journal of D'Ewes*, p. 93.

[45]Ibid., p. 94.

[46]For the earlier use of this tactic by Benjamin Crokey, see Peacey, *Madman*, pp. 160–3, 193.

[47]*The humble petition of Richard Chambers.*

[48]R. Ashton, 'Chambers, Richard (c. 1588–1658)', *ODNB*; *To the parliament of the common-wealth of England, Scotland, and Ireland. The brief remonstrance and humble petition of Richard Chambers merchant, late alderman and sheriffe of the city of London* (London, 1654).

[49]Peacey, *Public politics*, pp. 270–5.

[50]W. Notestein, F. H. Relf, and H. Simpson, eds., *Commons debates, 1621* (*CD 1621*) (7 vols., New Haven, CT, 1935), II, p. 373.

[51]J. R. Dascent et al., eds., *Acts of the Privy Council of England. New Series* (*APC*) (46 vols., London, 1890–1964), XXXVIII, pp. 8, 17.

[52]The London Archives, COL/RMD/PA/01/005, fo. 129r.

[53]Thrush, 'Legislation and petitions', p. 328.

[54]For this in the eighteenth century, see P. Loft, 'Involving the public: parliament, petitioning, and the language of interest, 1688–1720', *Journal of British Studies*, 55 (2016), pp. 1–23, at p. 11.

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Ireland in the Irish parliament in 1640.[55] Petitions were also deployed in the campaign against Strafford in Westminster: on 20 November 1640, the MPs John Pym and Sir John Clotworthy called for the register of petitions to the Irish council and parliament to be sent for, to peruse complaints against Strafford and his monopoly.[56] On 3 December, D'Ewes reported that petitions against his oppressions were read in the committee for Irish affairs.[57] That this was a politically motivated use of petitions is evident by Clotworthy's past history with Strafford in Ireland. Not only had Clotworthy, a holder of lands in Ulster, come to blows with the lord lieutenant over Laudian religious reforms, but he also held a monopoly to license alcohol in Down and Antrim which he staunchly defended.[58] The call for petitions to be read was not driven by a zealous dislike of monopolists, but occurred while Clotworthy, Pym, and their factional allies were simultaneously leading the charge to draw up the articles which would lead to the earl's impeachment.[59]

This was partly a reflection of the changed nature of the 1640s; as politics became increasingly partisan, bicameral factions deployed petitions to advance their respective agendas. David Como has described the 'direct, symbiotic coordination' between leaders in Westminster and the world of popular politics, which saw 'monster' petitions utilized to serve the agendas of Junto MPs and peers, who sought thorough reforms of the church and state.[60] This allowed petitions to cross the boundaries between both Houses, as they became tools utilized in the partisan (and vertical) interactions between MPs and peers which David Scott has shown were essential in the 1640s.[61]

On 17 January 1642, Captain Venn presented a petition in the Commons from merchants and goldsmiths in London who demanded the removal of the lieutenant of the Tower Sir John Byron.[62] They were concerned that he was an unknown individual who had refused to appear before parliament when summoned and requested that a new one be appointed 'as the Parliament approves of'.[63] On 15 January, there had been murmurings that there was £300,000 worth of silver arriving from Spain, which would not be landed if the demands for a more suitable lieutenant were not met.[64] MPs had expressed their desire for Byron's removal just days before.[65] They forwarded the petition to the Lords with a request for the appointment of Sir John Conyers 'as we had formerly desired'.[66]

[55] C. A. Dennehy, *The Irish parliament, 1613–89: the evolution of a colonial institution* (Manchester, 2019), p. 41.
[56] *Journal of D'Ewes*, p. 47.
[57] Ibid., pp. 102–3. For the political nature of this committee, see D. Scott, 'Committees of the House of Commons', *HoP 1640–1660*, I, p. 171.
[58] P. Little, 'Clotworthy, Sir John (d. 1665)', *HoP 1640–1660*, IV, p. 199.
[59] Ibid., p. 200. For a similar proposal to use county petitions to prove the need to put the realm in a posture of defence, see *PJ*, I, p. 163.
[60] Como, *Radical parliamentarians*, pp. 89, 107, 114–17.
[61] Scott, 'Plea', pp. 2, 6.
[62] *PJ*, I, p. 94.
[63] LJ, IV, p. 521.
[64] *PJ*, I, p. 76.
[65] Ibid., pp. 51, 56.
[66] Ibid., p. 95.

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While the Lords voted against supporting this petition, the Journals recorded that votes in favour of it were made by peers including Viscount Saye and Sele and the earl of Warwick, who were insistent that this remain on record.[67] These peers have been recognized as participants in an aristocratic-colonizing faction, working with merchants and with MPs like Pym in pursuit of the parliamentary cause.[68] Earlier in December 1641, merchants had presented a petition calling for the removal of the then lieutenant of the Tower Colonel Lunsford, with the help of Pym.[69] By January 1642, they escalated their tactics to ensure that this new petition, which was anything but spontaneous, receive the support of Junto allies in both Houses. And by placing the issue of bullion at the heart of their demands, the merchants and goldsmiths raised the stakes even higher by including an overt threat to withhold precious supplies from a parliament desperate to find funds for affairs in Ireland. Such close collaboration between petitioners and the Junto was also essential for the introduction of petitions calling for root and branch reform.[70] While not always documented, it is likely that similar collusions between members and private petitioners helped to ensure that petitions were heard in committees and on the floors of both chambers.[71]

II

Petitioners approaching parliament for aid in more particular disputes showed an awareness of the need to draw connections between sessions while also responding to current political anxieties. A pertinent example of this can be found in the controversies surrounding Mansell's patent for glass. For the realm's glassmakers, the experience of receiving favourable parliamentary judgements in the 1620s informed their decision to approach not just parliament, but the Commons specifically.

The English glass industry had been monopolized from Elizabeth's reign as the crown sought to develop the native industry.[72] Perhaps most contentious had been a patent awarded to courtiers in 1615, which Mansell later acquired for his sole use, providing him with monopoly rights to make glass using coal for fuel. This triggered objections from various quarters – glassmakers were forced to disassemble their wood-fuelled furnaces and to enter Mansell's employ, while city glaziers lamented the quality and price of Mansell's product. Glassmakers petitioned the Commons against the patent in 1614 and 1621, leading the committee for grievances to declare it a monopoly.[73] However, Mansell received a new patent in 1623 which was later exempted from the Statute of Monopolies on the grounds that this proviso would

[67] *LJ*, IV, p. 521. Some peers also voted against the Lords' decision not to petition with the Commons on this in December, see Scott, 'Plea', p. 5.

[68] R. Brenner, *Merchants and revolution: commercial change, political conflict, and London's overseas traders, 1550–1653* (London and New York, NY, 2003), pp. 317, 370.

[69] Ibid., pp. 364–6; Scott, 'Plea', p. 5.

[70] See for example Pym's favourable response to an anti-episcopacy petition by women, as recorded in its printed copy, *A true copie of the petition of the gentlewomen and tradesmens-wives...* (London, 1642), p. 6.

[71] For earlier activity, see I. W. Archer, 'The London lobbies in the later sixteenth century', *Historical Journal*, 31 (1988), pp. 17–44.

[72] E. S. Godfrey, *The development of English glassmaking, 1560–1640* (Oxford, 1975), ch. 2.

[73] *CD 1621*, VII, pp. 539–49.

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ensure the smooth passage of the bill in the Lords.[74] Despite continued opposition to Mansell's grant he was awarded an expanded patent in 1635.[75]

Both sides in this dispute approached parliament, albeit they directed their complaints to different chambers.[76] Glassmakers, glass traders, and glaziers sent 'three severall petitions' to the Commons in January 1641.[77] It is likely that the glassmakers and glaziers Isaac Bungard, Francis Bristow, and Jeremy Bagg were involved as all were identified in a breviate of the case as staunch opponents.[78] Their decision to approach the Commons over the Lords likely resulted from the judgements they had received from MPs in 1614 and 1621 against the glass monopoly, especially via the committee for grievances. This also contrasted with their lack of success in other spaces. King and council had upheld Mansell's monopoly, sometimes going so far as to order individuals to cease their petitioning protest.[79] Bungard had been central to the petitioning opposition against Mansell throughout the 1620s, facing imprisonment for his rejection of the grant.[80] In addition, MPs' moves to investigate monopolies with a similar zeal to the 1620s likely emboldened petitioners to seek redress for what they perceived as public grievances, the patent touching on subjects' liberties. The choice of which House to petition was shaped by this awareness and reflected subjects' knowledge (and experience) that the standing committees for trade and for grievances were especially effective and accessible spaces for redress against patentees.[81]

Meanwhile, Mansell petitioned the Lords on 12 May 1641, criticizing 'Inconsiderable persons' who had petitioned the Commons to overthrow his patent, emboldened 'vnder pr[e]tence of the power of Parlyam[en]t' to rebel against it by illegally importing glass.[82] He cited the names of seven men who had broken into the customs house to steal seized glass. His complaint was referred to the Lords' committee for petitions on 13 May, alongside an order demanding that his patent stand in force pending a hearing.[83]

This battle continued to be waged in both chambers, albeit intermittently. The glassmakers succeeded in having their petitions read in the Commons on 10 February 1641 and a hearing was appointed for '8 weekes following', yet given the outbreak of 'great and important affayres', proceedings stalled.[84] Their disappointments were further compounded by the cessation of the business of the committee

[74]'1 May 1624', in P. Baker, ed., *Proceedings in parliament 1624: the House of Commons* (2015–18) (*PP 1624*), accessed at http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/proceedings-1624-parl (30 June 2025).

[75]For his petition for it, see TNA, SP 16/282, fo. 189.

[76]Godfrey, *Glassmaking*, pp. 132–3.

[77]These petitions, whilst not entered in the Journals, are described in Longleat House, Whitelocke papers, VIII, no. 108, fo. 253v (microfilm copies consulted at the Institute of Historical Research). All quotes are included by kind permission of the Marquess of Bath, Longleat.

[78]Ibid.

[79]Godfrey, *Glassmaking*, p. 124.

[80]*APC*, XXXVII, p. 343; *APC*, XXXVIII, p. 91.

[81]For Benjamin Crokey's repeated default to the Lords, see Peacey, *Madman*, pp. 60–5.

[82]PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/57, fo. 105.

[83]Ibid., fo. 106; PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/118, fo. 80; *LJ*, IV, p. 248.

[84]Whitelocke papers, VIII, no. 108, fo. 254r.

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for grievances on 1 June 1641.[85] Mansell had more success in the Lords, who continued to investigate his complaints that one Richard Batson was rejecting his grant.[86] Others remained similarly obstinate in their resistance to the Lords, with one deponent claiming that Bristow, upon hearing of their order of May, had 'utterly refused' it, as he 'Cared not for the said order'.[87]

By 23 April 1642, Bagg and Bristow complained to the Lords of persistent delays. They claimed to be facing financial ruin as they remained in the custody of a messenger from the Lords due to Mansell's complaints.[88] Both left their marks to a petition which called for their discharge, or for their case to be referred to the Commons, 'where they are humble petic[i]oners for releife'.[89] Their appeal was successful and they were allowed to return home upon entering bonds promising to return when summoned via 'an order of this Howse left at theire Dwellings'.[90]

By 16 May 1642, Bagg and Bristow petitioned the Lords once more, this time to persuade them of Mansell's corruptions. Bagg claimed that, while present in the city to attend the Lords in July 1641, Mansell did

> fall upon your Petic[i]oner in most fearfull wordes and evill Acc[i]ons, swearing he would ripp your Petic[ione]rs Gutts out of his Belly, and your Petic[i]oner making away from the said S[i]r Robert, he did runn and take the Petic[i]oner by the Coller, giueing him very hard Language, to the great afrightment of your Petic[i]oner and his Wife.[91]

Presenting Mansell as an aggressive and violent force, Bagg pleaded with the Lords to issue them a speedy hearing, or else leave their case for examination in the Commons.

The glassmakers' appeals for their case to be heard by the Lower House was not simply an effort to delay proceedings, but a result of their own experience securing MPs' condemnation of the glass monopoly in the 1620s. This appears in a manuscript breviate of the case in the papers of the MP Bulstrode Whitelocke, penned sometime in 1642.[92] This was in the third person, but it is likely that the glassmakers were involved in its construction; it was not a neutral summary of their case, but lobbied the Commons to re-summon the committee for grievances to finally order a hearing, while allowing them to return home to follow their vocations. This breviate blended an account of their recent parliamentary agitation with appeals to past parliamentary decisions to present the Commons as the House best suited to examine the case. The glassmakers had used breviates in the 1620s.[93] As one merchant in Newcastle recognized, breviates were a means to render 'verie tedious' accounts into

[85] Scott, 'Committees of the House', *HoP 1640–1660*, I, p. 184.
[86] PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/67, fo. 24r; PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/69, fo. 55; *LJ*, IV, pp. 322, 333, 335.
[87] PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/118, fo. 80 (1).
[88] PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/120, fo. 88; Whitelocke papers, VIII, no. 108, fo. 255v.
[89] PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/120, fo. 88.
[90] PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/122, fo. 80.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Whitelocke papers, VIII, no. 108, fo. 257v.
[93] Hampshire Archives, political papers: Sir Thomas Jervoise, 44M69/G2/31. This focused on their quo warranto proceedings in 1626, but did mention parliamentary opposition; TNA, SP 14/162, fos. 110r–111r.

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a convenient form, and evidence suggests they were shared amongst members.[94] The glassmakers' breviate presented not an entire history of their opposition, but a focused account of their plight since the beginning of the Long Parliament which made frequent reference to the decisions of Jacobean sessions, blending these with comments on current affairs.

The breviate referenced not only their recent petitions of 1641, but also their earlier parliamentary activity, noting that 'Two former Patents of the same Nature had bene Complayned against and Condemned in Two severall Parliaments' as 'Illegal and obnoxious to the Common Wealth'.[95] They lamented that their case had still not received a hearing in the Commons. In the interim, Mansell 'fearinge or at least declining the Justice of the house of Commons' had petitioned the Lords, an entirely inappropriate decision as peers was 'unacquainted w[i]th the proceedings in the house of Commons'.[96] As the Commons was perceived as the House best suited to deal with popular grievances, the authors may have been suggesting that Mansell's actions were not only a means to avoid the justice of the House, but also a breach of usual practice and perhaps of the Commons' privileges.

The glassmakers included a bold reference to current events to force MPs into action. Mansell's decision to approach the Lords, they claimed, was influenced by his 'great interest in the B[isho]ps whose votes were then numerous', their support allowing him to secure the Lords' order of 13 May.[97] As David Scott has shown, other petitioners cited the partisan nature of the Lords and their 'popish' influence as disrupting their pursuit of justice.[98] This was a lobbying document designed to discredit Mansell and persuade the Commons to revive the committee for grievances to hear their cause. Evidently, petitioners attempted to steer suits not just to particular Houses, but through specific committees. Their eagerness to ensure their plight was reviewed by this committee was likely motivated, firstly, by the memory that it was the committee for grievances which had ruled against Mansell's monopoly in 1614 and 1621. Yet, the reference to Mansell's alliance with the bishops also shows a remarkable ability to engage in party politics, to persuade MPs to be sympathetic to what might appear a rather particular industrial dispute, and to revive their halted case in the Commons.

Their inclusion of this reference suggests that the glassmakers were exposed to, and likely absorbed, the anti-episcopacy sentiments spreading in the city, undermining their confidence in the Lords.[99] Their decision to include this was also a clever tactic to appeal to specific MPs. The breviate's survival in Whitelocke's papers, an

[94]TNA, SP 16/449, fo. 71r; *Journal of D'Ewes*, p. 495.

[95]Whitelocke papers, VIII, no. 108, fo. 253v. This referenced parliaments in the first and nineteenth regnal years of James, but it is likely this reference to James's first year was an error given condemnation of an earlier glass patent which occured in 1614. Earlier lobbying documents by glassmakers in 1624 referenced the parliaments of 1614 and 1621, see TNA, SP 14/162, fo. 111r.

[96]Whitelocke papers, VIII, no. 108, fo. 254r.

[97]Ibid., fo. 255.

[98]Scott, 'Plea', pp. 3, 14. For a reported false printed speech by MPs on the bishops, see *PJ*, I, p. 326.

[99]Lindley, *Popular politics*, pp. 96, 102, 124; J. Walter, '"This infamous, scandalous, headless insurrection": the attack on William Laud and Lambeth Palace, May 1640, revisited', *English Historical Review*, 139 (2024), pp. 1059–87, at p. 1063.

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MP concerned with commerce, suggests that it circulated amongst interested members.[100] The previous chair of the committee for grievances, John Glynne, had sat on a committee appointed in October 1641 to consider the bishops' rights to vote in the Lords.[101] It is therefore possible that this attack on Mansell, and the reference to bishops' 'votes' in particular, reflected not only the glassmakers' concerns with popery and corruption, but also their deployment of particular tactics to appeal to specific committee members, and more widely, to Junto MPs.[102]

The glassmakers' experience using breviates means that it is likely that they were involved in its construction, perhaps with the aid of a lawyer or an MP who supported their cause. The case suggests that, despite delays, petitioners were prepared to lobby as they waited in Westminster for their hearings. This appears to have contributed to their politicization. The glassmakers claimed that Bagg waited to attend the Lords for fourteen days in July 1641, and for a further twenty days alongside Bristow in April 1642. As they waited in Westminster, they were likely exposed to the broader grievances circulating in this charged political atmosphere, including the anti-popery fervour gripping the capital. This enabled them to combine their long-standing dispute with current political events, linking Mansell's corruptions to those of the bishops in the Lords.

The glassmakers' request that their case be heard by the Commons was also shaped by their historical engagements with the House. They ended their appeal by reminding MPs that Mansell's patent had been condemned 'by the Two former Parliament[e]s before menc[i]oned', found to be 'expressly against...the right and the Liberty of the Sub[jec]t'.[103] The implication was clear: to uphold the patent would be to impugn the judgement of MPs in previous sessions. Ultimately, the glassmakers' efforts bore fruit: on 15 April 1642 the Commons received a petition from Mansell and ordered the revival of the committee for grievances to examine his patent, leading to its later surrender.[104]

III

The past was also utilized by supplicants debating a rather different trade: cloth. As parliament investigated the economy, the Adventurers' Company were anxious to persuade MPs of the necessity of their organization. The Adventurers specialized in the export of undressed broadcloths to their mart towns (principal trading centres) in Germany and the Low Countries. They had a chequered history with James's parliaments. In 1604, they came under scrutiny within larger free trade agitation.[105] They also faced significant crown interference with the Cockayne Project (1614–17), a scheme which saw the Company replaced with a new organization to alter the cloth trade by establishing the export of dyed and dressed cloths.[106] The project's

[100]'Whitelocke, Bulstrode (1605–75)', *HoP 1640–1660*, IX, p. 686.

[101]'Glynne, John (1603–1666)', *HoP 1640–1660*, V, pp. 258, 261.

[102]D. Scott, 'Politics and party in the House of Commons', *HoP 1640–1660*, I, p. 267.

[103]Whitelocke papers, VIII, no. 108, fo. 256.

[104]*CJ*, II, pp. 523, 529–30; Godfrey, *Glassmaking*, p. 133.

[105]T. Leng, *Fellowship and freedom: the Merchant Adventurers and the restructuring of English commerce, 1582–1700* (Oxford, 2020), pp. 193, 196.

[106]A. Friis, *Alderman Cockayne's project and the cloth trade: the commercial policy of England in its main aspects, 1603–1625* (Copenhagen and London, 1917).

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momentous failure saw James issue a new charter to the Adventurers in 1617, providing them with enhanced rights to export a new type of cloth, the 'new draperies', which were lighter and cheaper than the undressed broadcloths they traditionally exported.[107] Yet, their celebrations were brief: parliamentary protest in 1621 and an investigation by a royally appointed commission for trade from 1622 led MPs and commissioners to reduce the Company's privileges in 1624, to the export of white, undressed cloths only.[108] This severely limited the scope of their privileges, allowing all merchants to export new draperies to Germany and the Netherlands, and merchants based in the outports to export dyed and dressed broadcloths to these territories.[109] This undermined the Company's monopolistic model of trade.

As Robert Brenner notes, the decline in the Company's privileges caused the number of merchants in this trade to nearly triple between 1624 and 1632, as members and non-members (interlopers) alike exported cloth outside of the mart towns to locations including Amsterdam.[110] In addition, the rise of import-led trades saw the Company's dominance of London's aldermanic bench eclipsed by merchants in the Levant–East India trades.[111] As a regulated Company, the Adventurers also represented a form of mercantile organization which was seen as outdated in comparison to the new associations of merchants trading under conditions of free trade in colonial enterprises from the 1630s.[112]

The Adventurers enjoyed a brief reversal of fortunes under Charles. By December 1634, Charles restored their privileges via proclamation, responding to a company petition complaining of the reduction of their privileges in 1624.[113] All white cloths, coloured cloths, and new draperies were to be exported to their mart towns, and all mere merchants were to pay entrance fees to join the Adventurers.[114] In 1639, their charter was confirmed via a proclamation which limited trade to the mart towns and to members.[115]

Yet, on the calling of the Long Parliament, the Adventurers were in a somewhat vulnerable position. Just as in 1624, the Commons were investigating the cloth trade and calls for a 'free trade' were vocal. And unlike the glassmakers, the Company's history with parliament was strained. As Thomas Leng notes, the Adventurers were soon investigated, targeted in petitions penned by clothiers, rivals, and interloping merchants.[116] A remarkable supplication was presented by clothworkers in

[107]D. C. Coleman, 'An innovation and its diffusion: the "new draperies"', *Economic History Review*, 22 (1969), pp. 417–29.

[108]Leng, *Fellowship*, p. 225. Previously, the role of the commission in this attack had been overlooked. See D. Pennington, "'Free passage" for the "king's true liegemen": the meaning of free trade in a corporate age, 1555–1624', *Journal of British Studies*, 63 (2024), pp. 282–300.

[109]Leng, *Fellowship*, p. 226.

[110]Brenner, *Merchants*, pp. 60, 85; Leng, *Fellowship*, pp. 230–1.

[111]Brenner, *Merchants*, p. 51.

[112]Ibid., p. 92.

[113]TNA, SP 16/277, fos. 226r–227v.

[114]J. F. Larkin, ed., *Stuart royal proclamations*, II: *Royal proclamations of King Charles I, 1625–1646* (Oxford, 1983), pp. 443–4.

[115]Ibid., pp. 676–9.

[116]Leng, *Fellowship*, pp. 240, 272–3; M. James, *Social problems and policy during the Puritan revolution 1640–1660* (New York, NY, 1966), pp. 148–50. This included petitions from Worcester and Norfolk, Whitelocke papers, VIII, nos. 37–8; Appendix A, in *Journal of D'Ewes*, pp. 522, 526–7.

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Somerset, signed with the marks and names of 549 petitioners.[117] Drawing on their 'experience', they blamed problems in trade on both the Adventurers' policies and the practices of their clothier employers.

Common to these supplications was the identification of the proclamations of 1634 and 1639 as turning points, leading to the stagnation of the cloth trade as it fell into the monopolizing hands of the Company. Clothiers in Wiltshire, Somerset, and Gloucestershire expressly mentioned the 'Proclamac[i]ons in the tenth and fifteenth yere of his now Ma[jes]t[ie]s Raigne', while petitioners from London criticized the 'Proclamac[i]ons to prohibite all persons but those of their owne Company to shipp or transport' Spanish cloths and kerseys.[118] The Adventurers' rivals, the Staplers' Company, requested that 'the said trade may be free', while the aforementioned clothiers decried the Company's patents and proclamations as 'contrary to the libbertie of free borne Subiects and the freenes of Trade'.[119] The Commons investigated these complaints through the committee for trade and later, via a select committee for the Adventurers.[120] Both were given permission to peruse the Company's 'Grants, Patents, Petitions, or other Books or Writings'.[121]

In response, the Company penned petitions, one of which reveals a sensitivity to the need to address their chequered history with parliament by presenting an edited version of the censure they had faced in the 1620s. On 5 January 1641, they delivered a remonstrance to the committee for trade which offered a narrative account of their trials and tribulations, creating in the process a mini-Company history.[122] Tackling this past parliamentary censure head on, they admitted that in 1624 interlopers had

> Made great Complaints vnto seuerall Parliaments, and in ye 21th of the King James, so farre prevayled w[i]th the House of Comons at that tyme, that at the end of the Session, the same House petic[i]oned his Ma[jes]ty, that freedome might bee giuen vnto all the Kings subjects, as well as the Fellowship, to trade into any the parts of Germany and the Low Countryes, in color'd Clothes and all other Comodityes, except white Cloth.[123]

The Adventurers argued that the Commons had been persuaded by petitions from those who sought to break into the trade for their private gain. They acknowledged that the decision to reduce their monopoly had been led not merely by MPs, but also by James's commissioners for trade. The Commons' petition, they claimed, was

> referred to the then Commissioners for Trade; who there vpon making report unto the Lords of his Ma[jes]t[ie]s Privy Councell, that It was their opinion also That all the Subjects of this Realme should lawfully trade into any of those

[117]Whitelocke papers, VIII, no. 81, fos. 191v–199r.
[118]Whitelocke papers, VIII, no. 35, fo. 96, and no. 39, fo. 104. See also nos. 40–1, fos. 106–108r.
[119]Whitelocke papers, VIII, no. 31, fo. 80r, and no. 35, fo. 96.
[120]*CJ*, II, p. 210. The select committee was regularly revived, see *CJ*, II, pp. 296, 415, 480.
[121]*CJ*, II, pp. 56, 214; Appendix A, in *Journal of D'Ewes*, p. 523; Whitelocke papers, VIII, no. 22, fos. 46v–49v.
[122]Whitelocke papers, VIII, no. 28, fos. 64v–73r. For a more readable copy, see no. 29, fos. 74v–77r.
[123]Whitelocke papers, VIII, no. 29, fo. 75r.

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parts, except only in white Cloth, the same was then allowed and passed into an Act of State.[124]

The Adventurers shaped the narrative of these events, suggesting that the council had not truly understood the motivations of MPs and commissioners. It was not, they claimed, 'the mind of the House of Com[m]ons', nor of the commissioners, that this liberty of trade 'should bee so absolute, as the Interloper would haue it'.[125] They claimed to draw on the 'expresse words' used by MPs in their petition to James in 1624. The Commons, they argued, had asserted that 'without order and Gouerment, the great Marchandize of Cloth cannot possibly bee managed'.[126] The Adventurers explained that MPs' desire to see trade properly ordered was thwarted by the 'shortnesse' of the session.

The Company's explanation of these decisions is even more notable when one compares this suit to that which they sent to the council in November 1634, just before Charles restored their privileges. While acknowledging that MPs and commissioners had restricted their rights in 1624, they here did not attempt to explain the motivations of MPs. Instead, the Adventurers admitted this was intended as a 'tryall', a 'provisionall' test of the benefits which 'liberty' of trade might occasion.[127] It is clear then, that in moving to petition the Commons in 1641, the Adventurers saw it as necessary to present a glossed account of this parliamentary censure. Rather than present this as a 'trial', they claimed that MPs had remained steadfast in their belief that corporate organization was necessary. Their efforts to explain the actions of MPs from over ten years before attests to their perception that MPs would be sensitive to, and aware of, the previous condemnation of the Company by their colleagues and predecessors. The awareness that they were interacting with an institution so focused on its records forced these lobbyists to pen a remonstrance which posited themselves as loyal followers of past orders and decrees.[128]

The Adventurers' claims were, on the most basic of points, correct. The Commons had not called for their dissolution in 1624; Sir Edwin Sandys had referred to the state of the Company as akin to religion, 'not to be quite taken away but to be cleansed of the abuses that had crept it'.[129] The House had condemned the Adventurers' patent as a grievance, including it in their petition to James on 28 May 1624, yet they had suggested in debates that the Company be granted a new charter.[130] Sandys had called for articles to be passed to ensure the 'better government of trade'.[131] However, the Company undoubtedly brushed over the very real derision they had faced in the House, which had been articulated not only by interloping merchants, but by MPs and complaining clothiers.

[124]Ibid.
[125]Ibid.
[126]Ibid.
[127]TNA, SP 16/277, fo. 226r. See also their account in TNA, SP 16/277, fos. 224r–225v, which was censored in its description of their internal controversies.
[128]Popper, *Specter*, p. 138.
[129]'30 April', *PP 1624*.
[130]'28 May', *PP 1624*; '19 May', *PP 1624.*
[131]'19 May', *PP 1624.*

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Within their petition, the Adventurers acknowledged that MPs had also worked with the royal commission for trade, who had penned a report on the cloth trade following an investigation in July 1624. They too, the Company claimed, had wanted 'liberty & Gouerment' to 'goe together', thus suggesting that all mere merchants be free to join the Company.[132] They accurately noted that the commissioners had left the trade of the outports and new draperies free, concerned as they were that the charges of erecting government over the new draperies would 'eate up the gaine' and hinder the trade.[133] The mistake of the commissioners, the Adventurers now claimed, was in failing to see that the outports and the new draperies could be governed not by the erection of 'severall' governments, but through the auspices of the Adventurers' Company.[134]

The Adventurers identified the problems which had consequently grown in their trade between 1624 and 1634. However, they claimed that these had resulted from what was a *misunderstanding* of parliament's actions, thereby avoiding criticizing MPs. When these aspects of the trade had been free and 'w[i]thout Gou[er]ment', there had been an 'unorderly liberty'.[135] They presented these problems not in the past tense, but in the present, showing that these were dangers which might well come to fruition if the Commons reduced their privileges again. Interlopers would trade with Amsterdam using Dutch ships, the mart towns would be destroyed, and this 'scattering Vent' of cloth would drag down its price and reputation.[136] Here, the Adventurers recycled issues they had identified in their petition of 1634, at times almost verbatim, changing only the tense.[137] It appears as if this section of the supplication was penned with reference to their earlier petition, attesting to petitioners' ability to add narrative glosses onto suits which recycled past petitions.

The Adventurers did not skirt away from their difficult history with the Commons – they could hardly ignore the fact that MPs in 1624 had contributed to the issuing of a substantial blow. Nor could they admit that MPs and commissioners had been prepared to experiment in a freer trade. Instead, they spent a significant portion of their suit explaining these events. They were selective in their presentation of this censure, drawing on the 'words' of the Commons to suggest that both had aligned interests. In doing so, they displayed a sensitivity to the institutional pride held by MPs for the Commons. Their ability to quote so extensively is further evidence of the proliferation of manuscripts spreading news of debates and parliamentary petitions, as those with vested interests secured copies of materials relevant to their causes.[138]

However, this also suggests that parliamentary memory had its limits: the brief nature of entries in the Journals meant that some of the details of the attack against them on the floor of the chamber in 1624 were omitted. The Journals did not contain

[132]Whitelocke papers, VIII, no. 29, fo. 75r.

[133]*APC*, XXXIX, p. 268.

[134]This had been investigated by the commission for trade. See M. Zell, 'Walter Morrell and the new draperies project, c. 1603–1631', *Historical Journal*, 44 (2001), pp. 651–75.

[135]Whitelocke papers, VIII, no. 29, fos. 75r–76v.

[136]Ibid., fo. 76v.

[137]TNA, SP 16/277, fo. 226v.

[138]Millstone, *Manuscript circulation*, p. 95.

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the full text of the Commons' petition of grievances to James, which was an amalgamation of multiple petitions, so the Company's claim to use its 'express' words was more dubious. This uncertainty allowed the Company to refer to the past while skipping over some of these more uncomfortable details, as they participated in the formation of a particular narrative of the proceedings of 1624.

The Adventurers successfully secured parliamentary confirmation of their charter in 1643, in part due to their provision of loans, a relationship which Leng has described as largely 'pragmatic'.[139] Interesting is the way through which this pragmatism was reflected not only fiscally, but in petitions which demonstrate their ready attempts to draw on and manipulate history to survive this parliamentary 'offensive'.[140]

IV

Between 1640 and 1642, economic grievances pushed subjects to lobby and petition parliament much as they had done in previous years. The absence of parliament during the Personal Rule only increased the eagerness with which they approached the institution. By analysing overlooked manuscript petitions, this article has revealed that many subjects saw their interests as strongly aligned to parliament, perceptions which were undoubtedly shaped by their own interpretations of parliamentary actions in the 1620s. Parliament's increased importance in the early Stuart period was not merely because it served as a bulwark against the corrupt influence of the council, nor was the Long Parliament only welcomed as an opportunity to protect the state from evil counsellors.[141] For many subjects, parliament was seen as a historic defender of their rights to trade as they made connections between sessions.

This raises an important methodological issue: the need to disentangle tactical utterances from evidence of an actual alignment of interests between petitioners and MPs/peers. The above analysis has demonstrated that petitions can be read for evidence of both. Many subjects chose to bring their causes before parliament, and we need to take seriously the recourse of subjects to specific institutions.[142] Why, despite facing perennial delays, did subjects continue to petition here? Important was the weight which appears to have been attached to parliamentary pronouncements and orders. These judgements were viewed as strong enough that subjects used them post-1621 to ignore the restrictions of monopoly patents, even if they failed to secure legislation. As parliamentary directives became more authoritative in the run up to the Civil Wars, and as other spaces for redress lapsed, subjects were even more willing to bring their cases before the Lords and the Commons.[143]

Important too were previous interactions with the institution which loomed large in subjects' minds. The continued optimism of Symonds, Chambers, and the glassmakers in the ability of parliament to offer redress was undoubtedly garnered

[139]Leng, *Fellowship*, p. 229. Brenner argues they were largely royalist, though some younger members moved to parliamentarianism, *Merchants*, pp. 382–3, 386–7. For negotiations for loans, see *CJ*, II, pp. 358, 363, 380, 557.

[140]Brenner, *Merchants*, p. 347.

[141]Millstone, *Manuscript circulation*, p. 276.

[142]Peacey, *Madman*, p. 158.

[143]I am grateful to David Scott for discussions on this point.

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through their own experiences, something which needs to be given far greater attention in efforts to reconstruct popular perceptions of institutions.[144] Eleven years without a parliament led subjects to reflect fondly (perhaps at times with rose-tinted glasses) on the relief parliament had offered them in the 1620s, as they saw the Long Parliament as possessing a similar time and inclination to settle long-standing disputes.

Petitioners were able to blend their accounts of the past with references to current events, showing their ability to frame their demands in such a way as to further their chance of success. The glassmakers' inclusion of utterances against bishops, while likely reflecting the impact of this mobilizing rhetoric on them, also served to link a particular economic dispute with a larger cause designed to persuade MPs. Similarly, Chambers and Symonds ramped up claims to be the 'first' merchants fighting to protect the values enshrined in the Petition of Right. These petitions were useful for politicians seeking to use them to pursue their own agendas, and for those subjects who consequently ensured they received attention in either House. Yet, these should not be dismissed as only tactical. Chambers's continued activity and radicalism into the 1650s suggests that his celebration of this 'blessed' parliament was not mere rhetoric alone.

By contrast, the Adventurers' remonstrance involved a much more disingenuous interaction with the past. That they were forced to engage with it shows that even corporations were aware of the need to utilize records at a time when parliament's own development was based so heavily on the perusal and preservation of its archives. By introducing petitions, they also contributed to the number of papers at MPs' and peers' disposal. Parliament's institutionalization was a process which petitioners adapted to, but one which they also directly contributed towards. Through petitions, even those which were heavily glossed, supplicants played a role in conveying a particular narrative of parliament as a 'historical entity'.[145]

Subjects did not see parliaments as one-off occurrences. Instead, they saw sessions as *connected* despite temporal distance, retaining beliefs in its power and role redressing their grievances. Their views were shaped not merely by high politics or current events, but by historic interactions with the body which helped to develop their perception of the institution as the ideal space to protect rights to trade. And while petitioners were in many ways approaching this as a session like any other, there were some features of petitioning in 1640–2 which were certainly new. Important was the growth of partisanship and bicameral factionalism, creating new political dynamics which petitioners were forced to adapt to. For the merchants calling for the removal of Byron and for the glassmakers attacking popish bishops, there was an awareness that their causes would be best advanced by MPs and peers who might join with them to pursue their own agendas. This created both new challenges and opportunities for petitioners who were forced to deal with an altered political landscape in which co-ordination was key.[146]

[144]See J. Peacey, 'Radical thought and political practice: officeholding and accountability in seventeenth-century Britain', *Journal of Social History*, 58 (2024), pp. 100–23, at p. 102.

[145]Seaward, 'Institutional memory', p. 213.

[146]D. Scott, 'Party politics in the Long Parliament, 1640–8', in G. Southcombe and G. Tapsell, eds., *Revolutionary England, c. 1630–c.1660: essays for Clive Holmes* (London, 2017), p. 34.

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But perhaps most important was the role played by petitioners in developing certain narratives of parliament's place in the polity. It has been argued that the increased volume of news emanating from parliament led to an increased awareness of, and reflection on, its role.[147] Subjects' practical recourse to records and accounts of contemporary history allowed them to participate in processes of institutional development as they provided evidence which bolstered the sense that parliament had long protected liberties in the face of arbitrary crown encroachments. The need to make links to the 1620s, and indeed the very ability to do so given the proliferation of manuscript materials and records from this time, became a more distinctive feature of petitioning practice during these years. Through their petitions, subjects fostered connections between parliaments as they reflected on its actions in recent decades. In the 'political imaginary' of Charles's subjects, parliament, and its Jacobean predecessors, loomed large.

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[147] Como, *Radical parliamentarians*, p. 16.

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