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**Colonel Edward Cooke of Highnam (c. 1622-1684) and Henry
Somerset, First Duke of Beaufort: Client and Patron**

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Colonel Edward Cooke of Highnam (c. 1622–1684) and Henry Somerset, First Duke of Beaufort: Client and Patron

By N.R.R. FISHER

Colonel Edward Cooke, second son of Sir Robert Cooke of Highnam near Gloucester, was buried in the chapel at Highnam on 2 February 1684. His grandfather Sir William Cooke, grandson of Sir Anthony Cooke of Gidea Hall (Essex), had finally acquired the Highnam estate in 1605 through his earlier marriage to Joyce Lucy, the great-granddaughter of Sir Nicholas Arnold of Highnam.¹ Edward Cooke was to be friend and client of Henry Somerset, successively Lord Herbert, third marquis of Worcester (1667) and first duke of Beaufort (1682), whose family seat had effectively been moved from Raglan castle (Mon.) to Badminton in the 1650s.² As we shall see, in Edward's last years, this relationship was to be complicated by a third party, whose activities derived much of their potency from the political and religious crisis of the late 1670s and early 1680s. Nonetheless, the bond between Edward and Henry Somerset does illustrate the continuing importance, in the middle to late 17th century, of patronage—the giving of service by a client to someone regarded as more powerful by reason of wealth, class or political position, in return for help and influence. It shows also the enduring strength of family ties: the obligation felt to help kinsmen in difficulties, even though this might compromise one's own position or clash with the duties of clientage. Finally, it illustrates the impact of what was regarded as the threat of Catholicism not only to English religious life but to the English state. All those concerns can be seen as operating within the Gloucestershire context of Edward Cooke's life.³

Edward was born c. 1622, his mother being Sir Robert Cooke's first wife Dorothy, daughter of Sir Miles Fleetwood of Aldwinckle (Northants.). That meant that Edward was to enjoy the particular benefits of Fleetwood influence until the Restoration. Dorothy's brother Charles was to become a New Model Army colonel held in regard both by its commander-in-chief Sir Thomas Fairfax and by Oliver Cromwell, whose daughter he married in 1652. He became commander-in-chief and lord deputy in Ireland in 1654 and commander-in-chief in England in 1659. Charles's elder brother Sir William Fleetwood was, however, a royalist. He acted for Edward Cooke as a link to other royalists which was to help provide him with an insurance policy against the restoration of the monarchy.⁴

Edward Cooke was admitted to Emmanuel college, Cambridge, in February 1639 but what little formal education he had he owed mainly to the Middle Temple which he entered in November that year. His later literary and professional skills were attributed by his funeral eulogist to his 'natural parts' being 'excellently good'.⁵ The Civil Wars were to provide him with opportunities in keeping with his personality and interests. The elegy published at his death says

In War he was nurs'd up, Arms his delight,
Gentle in peace, and Terrible in Fight . . .
Nor did old Age abate the Martiall Flame,
'Twas always great, and always was the
same.⁶

Even in old age he continued to be known by his parliamentary army title of 'colonel'.

Edward's father Sir Robert Cooke, a deputy lieutenant of Gloucestershire, took a lead in organizing parliamentary opposition to the king in the county and in late December 1642 Edward was recruiting for the earl of Stamford, then in command of parliamentary forces in the area. In March 1643 it was reported that in a skirmish around Highnam 'Captain Edward Cooke was shot into the arm... but they hope in no danger'.⁷ Like his father, Edward was then absorbed into Sir William Waller's command. He remained under Waller's aegis until 1645, becoming a regimental colonel in August 1643 and publicly identifying himself with Waller's stand against Nathaniel Fiennes, governor of Bristol. Fiennes was regarded by some as following those in the 'peace party' who had misgivings about defeating the king—misgivings which Edward showed no signs of sharing while war lasted.⁸

By early 1645 Waller's army was being reconstituted under other commands and, on 10 April, Waller was ordered to make up a regiment of 600 men under Edward's command and send it to relieve Edward Massey, whose garrison at Gloucester was under royalist threat. However, the relief of Taunton then took military priority and Edward's regiment was diverted from Gloucester to that end.⁹ On 24 May, Massey was made commander of the troops of the Western Association under the overall command of Fairfax. Edward's regiment of cavalry formed part of Massey's brigade and was engaged in the reconquest of the west country where Edward remained until the last months of the first Civil War.¹⁰ For at least the eight months before its final disbandment in October 1646 Edward acted in Massey's absence in London as the brigade's commanding officer, a fellow-colonel reproaching him in March 1646 for forgetting his old friends 'since you have commanded as general'. During that summer Edward had striven by allegedly savage discipline to impose order on his notoriously unruly charges.¹¹ However, he should not be identified with Massey's political and religious opinions.

By the summer of 1647 Massey, and indeed Waller, were among the leaders of a group of Presbyterians in religion who sought to disband the New Model Army and effectively restore the king on unconditional terms. Edward Cooke's closest links were with the opponents of those men. Both Cromwell and Fairfax had been his military colleagues in the west and he had apparently cooperated directly with them in November 1645 in arranging the desertion to Parliament of a royalist general, George Porter, son of Endymion Porter of Aston Subedge.¹² At least of equal importance to Edward at this time was his Fleetwood family connection. Following the king's seizure by the New Model Army in June 1647 its officers enjoyed an apparently warm relationship with the king, some of them assisting his access to his Church of England chaplains. The Army had indeed been thought close to agreeing terms with the king which might finally have settled the issues dividing the kingdom. At the very centre of the negotiations were Edward's Fleetwood uncles: Charles, close to Fairfax and to those negotiating on behalf of the Army, and William, one of the two friends of the king permitted to be with him at this time. If the negotiations were successfully concluded, Edward could expect much from his relationship to both men.¹³

Instead, the discussions failed and, unlike Massey who went into exile and later joined Charles II, on 20 July 1647 Edward was granted a new commission under Fairfax's overall command.¹⁴ In November 1647 the position of trust he then occupied was demonstrated by his employment as a confidential messenger between Cromwell and the king in the delicate parleying which followed Charles I's flight and imprisonment on the Isle of Wight. Between 1647 and 1648 Edward remained however at least nominally in command of a regiment stationed in Worcester-shire. Some of its officers took part in a plot to seize Gloucester and other garrisons in January 1648. Edward was evidently not regarded as personally culpable, since he was recommissioned in charge of a regiment of horse, paid for by the Gloucester committee, at the start of the second Civil War. His regiment appears to have been finally disbanded in June 1648.¹⁵

The commitment of the rest of the Cooke family to the *de facto* ruling powers was meanwhile also being strengthened. Sir Robert had died, probably in June 1643, and in the following November the House of Commons had ordered the sequestration of the Highnam estate, since William, the heir, was 'with the enemy and a delinquent'. William's delinquency (i.e. allegedly royalist activities) apparently followed his earlier exclusion—along with that of his father—from royal pardon for supporting Parliament. That William lacked much zeal towards either side is suggested by the fact that in 1647 it was reported that his royalism consisted of going 'awooing to his mistress at Woodstock before Edghill fight', that is, presumably, being seen too near royalist quarters. Edward and Lady Cooke were appointed to administer the Highnam estate until the sequestration order was lifted on 23 March 1647.¹⁶ The two brothers, probably acting together as they usually did in such matters, had already taken advantage of a parliamentary ordinance of November 1646 to enlarge the estate by buying episcopal land at Lassington, while their uncle Thomas Hodges, another of Parliament's warmest supporters in the county, bought 'the Bishop of Gloucester's Palace and other lands'.¹⁷ Whether this palace was that in Gloucester or possibly the episcopal house at Over called the Vineyard is unknown. In May 1648 William was appointed a militia commissioner for the county, the first of numerous appointments to local office he was to hold during the Interregnum.¹⁸ The Cookes' personal links with the now Lord Fairfax were strengthened by William's marriage in March 1648 to Anne, daughter of Margaret, Lady Cholmely, by her first husband Dennis Rolle of Bicton (Devon). Lady Cholmely was sister of Sir John Poulett of Hinton St. George (Somerset), whose wife Catharine was Lady Fairfax's sister. Fairfax-Poulett links remained strong during and after the Civil Wars despite the Poulett family's royalism. Edward Cooke was himself to marry Lady Cholmely during the mid 1650s.¹⁹

Those further personal bonds with Fairfax help to explain Edward's appointment as guard and liaison officer to Charles I during the negotiations between the king and Parliament in the autumn of 1648. On 29 November at Newport on the Isle of Wight, Edward allegedly tried to persuade the king to attempt an escape, having provided a ship to make this possible. Subsequently he was also said to have tried to prevent or delay the king's execution by furthering the offers of various peers who were prepared to serve as hostages on the king's behalf.²⁰ Edward is not listed among officers of his rank known to have been on the island in autumn 1648. No independent confirmation of those alleged episodes survives and no specific mention of Edward's part in either of them has been found before their relation in his funeral sermon in 1684. However, no repudiation of his own account of the Newport incident, which was published posthumously, ever appears to have been made by contemporaries present on the island in 1648 and still alive in 1684.²¹ Edward also apparently found it easy to win the trust of members of royalist families who might well have heard the story from two witnesses to his alleged dealings with Charles I on 29 November, the second earl of Lindsey and James Stuart, duke of Richmond, both of whom died before 1684. Indeed, as early as January 1649, the king's loyal servant Lindsey was himself prepared to use Edward as trustee for his wife's estates.²² In early 1663 Christian, countess of Devonshire who had known and trusted Edward for at least the past ten years and who had lost a son fighting for the king, attested in general terms to Edward's endeavours to serve both Charles II and, more importantly, his father. She, like John Grobham Howe (of the Gloucestershire family) and the third Lord Poulett and others, who subsequently used Edward as a trustee for themselves and their children, clearly did not doubt his essential honesty and the 'virtue' applauded in his obsequies.²³ However, if Edward had a brief flirtation with royalist allegiance in 1648 and 1649, there is no surviving evidence to prove that he had become, in the term subsequently used of him, a 'loyal convert' to royalism. While his eulogist claimed that Edward's subsequent role during the Interregnum was adopted merely to help his friends, his

real motivation remains obscure. However much he might try to help those royalists who, like Lady Devonshire, became his friends—perhaps partly with an eye to their potential value to him should the political scene change—at no time thereafter until February 1660 did he apparently make any move to promote a royal restoration. From the spring of 1649 he is to be found working with, not against, the interregal governments, actively engaged on the fringes of political power and accepted as a man of influence.

An early example of this involved him with another leading Gloucestershire parliamentarian, Nathaniel Stephens of Eastington. Stephens was a fellow deputy lieutenant of Sir Robert Cooke's and close friend of Edward's uncle Thomas Hodges. Edward's former colleague in Massey's brigade, Colonel John Fitzjames of Dorset, had married Stephens' daughter Margaret. In 1649 Fitzjames was struggling to obtain the arrears of his army pay. To that end he marshalled the support of Edward and Stephens 'at the west end of the Abbey Church in Westminster' to help get in parliamentary votes on his behalf. In December 1649 Fitzjames applauded Edward's ability to use, in that context, 'the powerful hands' of the two soldier-politicians, 'Sir Arthur Hesilrigge and Col. Fleetwood'.²⁴ Even before the establishment of the Protectorate in December 1653 Edward's potential usefulness also appears to have been recognized in Gloucestershire. A few weeks earlier, he was in London to present a petition (whose contents are unknown) on behalf of the county.²⁵ During the Protectorate Edward's influence was attested also by foreign observers.

Although he may have considered service under Cromwell in Ireland in 1649—the occasion, perhaps, when, according to his eulogist, he received 'importunate offers' from Cromwell of another commission—Edward did not act as a serving officer after 1648.²⁶ He did however engage himself between 1652 and 1658 in levying troops for foreign governments including France, Sweden and Venice. The letters of foreign observers involved in such transactions make clear the nature of Edward's position at Cromwell's court where he is spoken of as having 'much influence and is much esteemed' and as being 'in great credit with the Protector'.²⁷ Possibly the gift of a portrait of Cromwell said by Ralph Bigland in the late 18th century to have been given by the Protector to 'Colonel Cooke' may date from that period.²⁸ Edward's uncle Thomas Hodges was also regarded with favour by Cromwell who, as his 'very loving friend' and in 'an opinion of his honesty', asked Hodges to be one of the Council of Ireland in September 1657. Together with Hodges, William Cooke was one of the Gloucestershire magistrates empowered in 1654 to enforce laws to prevent waste and spoil in, and to preserve the timber of, the Forest of Dean. William was also one of those paid as *verderer* (forest law officer) by the then administrator of the forest, John Wade, in 1655.²⁹

Concern with the forest was not new to the Cooke family. Both Sir William (in 1618) and Sir Robert (in 1639) had been made commissioners to enquire into its condition. Hunting, either in the forest or elsewhere in Gloucestershire, appears to have been the initial bond between Edward and Henry Somerset, Lord Herbert. They had become companions in the chase by 15 October 1656, when Edward wrote, from Badminton, to another young nobleman, Lady Devonshire's nephew Lord Bruce who shared the same passionate interest. Another component in the friendship of Edward and Henry Somerset seems likely to have been Edward's own character. Liking an orderly life and always serious about religious matters, his letters reveal him as cheerful and humorous, though never overstepping the bounds of propriety. His elegy described his conversation as

pleasant, gay and young,
But then his Mirth was still from folly free
And such as Nuns without a blush might be.³⁰

Both Somerset and Lord Bruce had later reputations for appreciating such a balance.

As we have seen Edward was regarded with approval by the Protector. So too was Henry Somerset, son of the second marquis of Worcester. Brought up as a Catholic and the son and grandson of deeply committed royalists, Somerset had spent the war years in France as little more than a child. After his return to England he settled down comfortably under the Protectorate. Having renounced his Catholicism, he was granted an allowance by Cromwell to whom he was said to be 'altogether acceptable' and with whom he remained on good terms until Cromwell's death. Edward and Somerset were kinsmen: they shared a common great-grandfather in Sir Anthony Cooke of Gidea, a relationship acknowledged by Somerset's wife in 1678.³¹ Somerset had become one of the circle of young aristocrats with a primarily royalist background with whom Edward was already becoming friendly by 1653. This appears to have been at least partly the result of official policy. Cromwell was anxious to promote the country's 'healing and settling' after the recent upheavals. He looked with initial favour on the so-called Court of Articles established in 1649 to see that formal promises made to former royalist officers by their military opponents were honoured. The court was only active between 1652 and 1655 but Edward was one of its commissioned members throughout its existence.³² He was also officially appointed trustee of the large estates of two heirs to Catholic royalist families, and, less formally, he had some semi-official, watching brief over other young royalists likely to cause trouble by plotting or other mischief.³³ Lord Chandos of Gloucestershire was one of the two former plotters of whom Edward wrote in December 1653 'I understand it is expected I should be accountable'. It is clear from a letter to the Protector from an officer involved in clearing up the plot led in 1655 by Colonel Penruddock that the officer and Cromwell and the latter's chief of intelligence, John Thurloe, were accustomed to deal with Edward on confidential matters involving young royalists. On this occasion Edward was expected to be able to provide information about Hugh Smyth of Long Ashton, near Bristol, a Poulett kinsman.³⁴

Edward Cooke thus inhabited a shadowy world where true allegiance was difficult to ascribe. On the one hand he was a trusted deputy of Cromwell's administration, on the other he was trusted by some royalists, at least, to get them out of difficulties. From 1655 onwards aristocratic royalists looked to him for their release from prison following their incarceration on grounds of specific action or generalized suspicion. The threatened collapse of central government in 1659 resulted in particular demands upon him. In October 1659 he wrote to Lord Bruce of his 'now being importuned by some here . . . in Limbo [the royalist name for prison] not to leave them till they can leave their strong quarters'.³⁵ The ambivalence of Edward's position had been illustrated earlier in February 1659 by his election as M.P. for Tewkesbury in Richard Cromwell's Parliament, a candidature approved by Thurloe and General John Desborough, the former major general of Gloucestershire. Perhaps unsurprisingly, not all royalists trusted Edward. A leading plotter on the king's behalf, Lord Mordaunt, regarded him as an uncompromising opponent of his own attempt to wreck Richard Cromwell's government. On the other hand, neither Edward nor his brother William were viewed with approval by members of the Rump Parliament, restored after Richard's fall: neither of them were named among the militia commissioners for Gloucestershire that summer.³⁶

Edward still remained apparently unconvinced that the time for direct action to help the king had come. In the copious correspondence between Edward Massey and the royal authorities over Massey's scheme in the summer of 1659 to raise Gloucestershire for the king, coincidentally with Sir George Booth's rising in the north, there is no mention of any contact with Colonel Cooke.³⁷ Even though in December 1659 Edward was prepared to help royalists like John Ashburnham with letters of protection, in January 1660 he was still regarded with caution as, in royalist terms, 'prudential' in his approach to a restoration—that is unwilling to join in plots to that end. Other royalists labelled him a 'Presbyterian'—someone willing to restore the king only on his acceptance of certain conditions.³⁸ Edward in particular was accused of demanding the

king's confirmation of previous sales of royal and church lands such as the Cooke and Hodges purchases in Gloucestershire. Working in London in January 1660 with a group of such 'Presbyterians' Edward refused to co-operate with Mordaunt's moves to promote a 'free' Parliament which, it was hoped, would sweep the king back to power on a tide of popular and unconditional enthusiasm.³⁹

By late February 1660, however, 'Col. Ned Cooke' was being regarded in a more favourable light by royalists in touch with the king's closest advisor, Sir Edward Hyde.⁴⁰ Of equal importance to his future was his reputation with Henry Somerset. Somerset had been arrested in Gloucestershire in July 1659 as a participant in Massey's plot and he remained in prison until the following November. Despite Edward's own evident failure to join the conspirators, Somerset's trust in him was specifically confirmed by a royalist commentator in February 1660.⁴¹ By early March Edward, who had by then clearly decided that a restoration was inevitable, had received from Charles II a cypher to facilitate direct communication between them and a promise that he would find the king 'very kind'. By 13 March Hyde was prepared to defend Edward as trustworthy and potentially useful.⁴²

In Gloucestershire, however, Mordaunt's suspicions of Edward were still shared. In February he was regarded there by some as unwilling to permit the accession to 'his own party' of 'any suspected Cavalier', and on 20 April it was reported that the Gloucestershire militia 'goes not forward because Ned Cooke is made colonel of the horse surreptitiously and most of the gentry opposes him'.⁴³ On 12 March Edward and his elder brother William had been appointed militia commissioners for the county and Edward had been nominated as prospective commanding officer of the force by Edward Harley, a former family friend and army colleague and now a councillor of state, and by Thomas Hodges. Former 'Cavaliers' might well be opposed to a Cooke-Hodges faction, not least because of their Cromwellian links and land purchases. The situation in Gloucestershire was complicated further by the infighting between the hitherto principal resident peer Lord Berkeley, who in March 1660 put in a claim to be supreme commander of the militia, and Henry Somerset, permanently settled at Badminton since at least 1658. On 22 April, 'to prevent all growing animosities among the gentlemen', Edward and Thomas Hodges asked Harley to back Somerset's appointment to the post, withdrawing any claim from Edward Cooke.⁴⁴ Edward might well now regard the cultivation of his interest with Somerset as a more realistic concern than his own potential leadership of any party. On 30 July Somerset was made lord lieutenant of Gloucestershire, Herefordshire and Monmouthshire and the cities of Gloucester and Hereford.⁴⁵

Edward had played his cards skilfully in the later years of the Interregnum. Nonetheless in 1660, and to some extent for the rest of his life, he remained vulnerable as that always suspect figure, an 'old colonel'. Early in 1663, for example, Lady Devonshire sought the help of James Butler, first duke of Ormonde, in protecting Edward against charges 'which possibly may render him liable to a censure'.⁴⁶ Moreover, as a younger son, he still had to make his own way in the world. Family status meant that it was William who was regarded as eligible to be made Knight of the Royal Oak, the order of chivalry proposed (though never established) for those viewed as having assisted the Restoration. William would be made deputy lieutenant and, in 1663, sheriff of Gloucestershire.⁴⁷ Moreover, it was William whose estate at Highnam had so successfully survived the Civil Wars and Interregnum as to leave him in 1660 in a position to lend money. As a potential Knight of the Royal Oak, his income was estimated at £1000 a year even though the Cookes' had been faced with rebuilding their battle-damaged mansion at Highnam. By August 1656 this had been so far accomplished that Edward, writing from there, described it as capable of entertaining, besides family and friends, 'millions of unknown guests'. Despite this in

1660 William could offer to lend Lord Bruce '£400 for £50 per an., or £800 for £100 or £1600 for £200 per an . . . with as much or as little as you please'.⁴⁸

Edward's own financial position may have been reasonably secure. He had inherited from his father a half share in a Northamptonshire estate said by him in 1668 to be capable of producing £600 a year. He had retained at the Restoration at least one, probably lucrative, trusteeship—that of Lord Lindsey's son, Lord Norreys. Even though twice widowed, as a Poulett daughter Lady Cholmely is unlikely to have come empty-handed to her marriage with Edward. The lifestyle he enjoyed was however expensive, based as it was around the hunting seasons, with country house visits, stables, packs of hounds and a hunting lodge of his own at Woodstock Park in Oxfordshire.⁴⁹ If all this was to be paid for and himself safeguarded from political attack, Edward needed employment and he needed one or more patrons to help him.

Henry Somerset was to be one these patrons. Edward's post-Restoration relationship with Somerset had a dual aspect. He was his client and as such enjoyed the benefits and performed the services of that role. He also acted with Somerset in an official capacity as verderer of the Forest of Dean. Sometimes, however, it is difficult to draw a clear distinction between the public and private aspects of their relationship. Thus on Somerset's appointment to the Gloucestershire lord lieutenantcy, 'our Gloucestershire Lord Paramount', as Edward called Somerset, retained Edward's services in an unofficial capacity over the militia despite the earlier opposition to him in the county.⁵⁰ It was also with the backing of Somerset and his wife Lady Herbert that Edward fought for the seat at Marlborough (Wilts.) in the election to the Cavalier Parliament of 1661. However, despite the fact that Lady Herbert's agent wrote to the burgesses who formed the electorate and had read to them her letters supporting 'Colonel Cooke', the agent was forced to inform her that 'I blush to express how guilty they have made themselves. All were unanimous in opposing'.⁵¹ Edward's relationship to the previous M.P., Charles Fleetwood, now in disgrace, his past reputation as a Cromwellian, a show of borough independence and a quarrel in progress in Lady Herbert's own family, all may be reflected in the failure. It demonstrates, however, that, whatever the future political power of Henry Somerset, his present influence was limited. Edward must look elsewhere for additional support.⁵²

With the help of Lady Devonshire and the former Sir Edward Hyde, now Lord Clarendon, Edward found a new and powerful patron in the duke of Ormonde, whom he accompanied to Ireland in July 1662 in the office of commissioner to put into effect the Act of Settlement. The Act aimed at sorting out the conflicting claims of Catholics and Protestants to the lands in Ireland whose ownership had been disrupted during the Interregnum.⁵³ Edward's relationship with Somerset was, however, maintained throughout his service in Ireland which ended in January 1669. By that time he had apparently lost any desire for a political career and on his return to England his life appears once more to have revolved, to a considerable extent, around his sporting activities which now included judging dog-races. They kept him in the company of the leading nobility of the day and, on occasion, of the king who, when Edward was on leave from Ireland in 1667, had 'graciously dispensed half an hour's hunting discourse on' him. In 1681 Edward, who had by then become, in the words of Thomas Bruce (son of his old friend Lord Bruce, now earl of Ailesbury), 'so well-known and beloved by the king and all the nobility', took the king hawking near Oxford.⁵⁴

Edward's wife seems to have died early in January 1671 and from then on Highnam was apparently his permanent base. Already a J.P., although only active after his return from Ireland, in 1671 and 1672 he was also responsible for the eradication of tobacco planting in Gloucestershire and Worcestershire.⁵⁵ He had also been made a verderer of the Forest of Dean and was thus one of the forest officials traditionally subordinate to the authority of the constable of St. Briavels, a post held by Henry Somerset since the Restoration. The verderers supervised forest

administration by way of courts, the lesser of these being held at six-weekly intervals, the superior courts—swanimotes—once or twice a year.⁵⁶ His office engaged Edward's attention on such matters as the royal timber nursery, the extent of encroachments in the forest, poaching, damage by fire and sheep pasturing and the location of a new Speech House for the administration of forest affairs. In 1672 he was also made a commissioner to examine the possible re-establishment of royal ironworks in the forest. In 1671, Edward was among those urging the holding of a Justice Seat, a forest court at which royal justices in eyre would participate—like those held in 1634 and, in the presence of Cromwellian judges and Cromwell's attorney general Evan Seys, in 1656. Such a court was viewed by Edward and others in 1674 and later as the best hope of keeping a check on bad practice, but it was apparently not revived. Edward worked with Somerset as a verderer and as commissioner appointed in 1671 and 1679 to report generally on the condition of the forest. Somerset used him, at least in 1671, to communicate with other verderers and Edward was summoned to meetings at the Treasury with Somerset on forest affairs throughout the decade 1669–79. He continued to attend swanimote courts in 1680 and 1681. William Cooke was still attending forest courts in December 1684.⁵⁷ By 1680 however, the relationship of both brothers with Henry Somerset had come under increasing strain because of their dealings with John Arnold of Llanfihangel Crucorney (Mon.) who had married William's daughter Margaret in 1666. No evidence of further official dealings between Somerset and Edward Cooke has been discovered but their unofficial relationship as patron and client, upon which Arnold's affairs were to have a marked effect, continued.

While evidence abounds of Edward's care for his patron, specific favours performed by Somerset for Edward and his family can only be deduced. As in the case of his other patrons, Edward probably derived his principal satisfaction from the bond between them in being treated by these aristocrats as a personal friend. He stayed as a guest at Badminton before and after the Restoration. He was privy to the Somerset family's intimate domestic affairs—in 1677 advising the marchioness on the reciprocal relationship of her daughter and her daughter's personal maid.⁵⁸ The Somerset family's regard meant that there was open to Edward the influence of a man who in 1672 was not only lord lieutenant of Gloucestershire and the surrounding counties but also lord president of the Council of Wales and a privy councillor. In January 1680, indeed, he was accused in Parliament of, in effect, having established a private empire stretching from Pembrokeshire to within 60 miles of London.⁵⁹ Such power meant that within his territorial range all the offices which gave a gentleman social cachet, such as deputy lieutenant, M.P. or J.P., were subject to Somerset's influence. This, although not constant in degree, was still of potential benefit not only to Edward but to all members of his family. Conversely, the withdrawal of Somerset's favour could mean removal from local office or loss of support during parliamentary elections. Somerset's awareness of his own power over elections was made explicit when he wrote to his wife in 1679 congratulating himself 'in the way I work' about those in Monmouthshire. In June 1681 he told the official concerned with the appointment of magistrates that 'you have the list of those whom I find it absolutely necessary to be left out of both commissions'.⁶⁰ Moreover, the withdrawal of favour might have serious repercussions if a client's patrons were related to one another, as was the case with Edward's patrons, Somerset, Ailesbury and Ormonde. He might risk losing them all by offending one.

We have seen the efforts of the family at Badminton to effect Edward's election as M.P. for Marlborough. While William Cooke's appointment by Somerset as a Gloucestershire deputy lieutenant in 1662 might be regarded—as in the case of his father in the 1630s—as an accepted prerequisite of county status, William's appointment as lieutenant colonel of Somerset's own militia regiment was a more personal mark of esteem. The appointment of William's son-in-law John Arnold as a Monmouthshire magistrate and deputy lieutenant was certainly attributed by an agent of Somerset's to his master's favour towards the Cooke family.⁶¹

That family connections could prove embarrassing, even before Arnold achieved notoriety, is demonstrated by evidence that Somerset's support for William was not unvarying. Appointed sheriff of Gloucestershire in 1663, William was subsequently accused of withholding around £600 of tax returns from the Treasury. Although he was eventually exonerated, those events may have led to his removal from the Bench between 1664 and 1670 and damaged his reputation with Somerset.⁶² In 1672, when the question arose as to who should be nominated as aldermen and councillors for the city of Gloucester on its grant of a new charter, Somerset as lord lieutenant drew up a list of nominees which omitted William. That other of Edward Cooke's patrons were active on the family's behalf is suggested by the fact in the accepted list of nominations prepared by, among others, the archbishop of Canterbury, William was named as second alderman of the city, thereby becoming mayor by rotation in the autumn of 1673.⁶³ Somerset accepted the *fait accompli* and William was for a time regarded as his henchman, acting in city council affairs as his mouthpiece in a way resented by another alderman, Henry Fowler, who complained about it to the secretary of state. However, the activities of John Arnold were almost certainly behind the fact that in the second parliamentary election of 1679 William lost, through Somerset's adverse influence, the seat at Gloucester which he had won the previous spring.⁶⁴ Four days before his death in 1684 Edward expressed to Somerset his own awareness of what was at stake if his own attempt to reconcile their two families was to fail:

I hope I have wrote what will satisfy your grace, and that I may see a prospect thence, that will make us all again (who can only be sufferers on his [Arnold's] account) resume your grace's favour, of which I am sure I have neither wittingly nor willing, in thought, word or deed made any forfeiture, but in all things made it my great design to assign myself your grace, your duchess, and whole family, a most faithful, humble servant.⁶⁵

Edward's previous efforts to gain and keep that favour had covered a wide field of activity. When in Ireland he supplied Somerset with hawks and arranged for him to be sent Irish marble. He advised Somerset's wife on her domestic arrangements and, in 1671, acted as her son's chief mourner. Even on Edward's deathbed he felt it a part of his duty to recommend to Somerset a servant 'very ingenious, very honest, and loves a good horse very well'. He also helped Somerset with his sporting arrangements. In 1660 he was 'going down with my lord Herbert to prepare [Lord Bruce] a walk in Dean forest, that is to surpass the Forest's'.⁶⁶ As an experienced soldier, he continued to act as Somerset's unofficial advisor on matters to do with the county militia. In June 1667, at the time of the Dutch attack up the Medway and when he was on leave from Ireland, Edward informed Ormonde that

I am this morning going down with my lady Worcester after her lord, who made me promise him to do so, he going yesterday to embody his militia, and to add to it a standing regiment of foot. I have determined to do my lord Worcester the best service I can in those parts both as to the levying of his forces, and management of them after, his lordship making me believe, that he believes I may be useful to him

A week later Edward reported from Badminton that both the 'whole militia force' and Worcester's own 'new raised regiment' were being mustered.⁶⁷ Whatever the Gloucestershire gentry's earlier reservations about Edward, there was little they could do when faced with their lord lieutenant's backing for his old friend. The Cooke family status was thus protected.

Edward also acted, as he did towards his other patrons, as a purveyor of news. In 1663 he was sending Somerset accounts of Irish affairs. Back in England in the 1670s, he kept him informed about parliamentary activities whenever Somerset, a member of the House of Lords,

was unwilling or unable to attend.⁶⁸ Edward did more. He regarded it as one of his tasks as a client to promote not only the interests of his various patrons, but their harmonious relationship, one with another. As, from 1667, marquis of Worcester, Somerset was a peer with wide territorial influence as well as high rank in the House of Lords. The duke of Ormonde, lord lieutenant of Ireland and owner of great estates in that island, was, despite his status, under constant political attack and wanted Somerset's support. On 15 June, 1667 Edward wrote to Ormonde from London, mentioning his engagement to go with Somerset to Gloucestershire about the militia and adding

now I mention that noble lord, I must give your grace some account of myself in relation to you both. I communicated your grace's frank offer of yourself to serve him, which with great gratitude he was possessed of . . .

Edward told Ormonde that Somerset had discussed with him his hopes of advancement. These included a dukedom 'because that had been promised', the Garter, a privy councillorship and a post as one of the king's intimate courtiers. Edward believed that Somerset's present efforts regarding the militia would help his claims and added that if Ormonde could further them also 'I know from his own mouth he had much rather owe his obligations to your grace than any other person'. Edward subsequently always encouraged the relationship now established and his part was recognised by Ormonde who in 1668 thanked Somerset for 'so many testimonies of your favour and friendship as have been conveyed to me by Colonel Cooke'.⁶⁹

By 1674 Edward had found yet another patron in the person of Thomas Osborne, earl of Danby and, since June 1673, lord treasurer. Danby was an old hunting companion whom Edward had known since before the Restoration. Edward looked to him for favours to old friends and family members. In 1677 a Chancery case was in progress against William Cooke over his alleged misdemeanours as sheriff. On 7 March that year Edward appealed for Danby's help in the matter and the treasurer ordered a stay, and later a supercession, of proceedings against William.⁷⁰ The letter in which Edward's appeal was made is both an example of his attempts to harmonize relations between his patrons and evidence of the remarkable reputation and position of access in society which he now enjoyed. As well as mentioning William's affairs it also refers to Henry Somerset. Edward had recently visited the latter at Badminton and he wrote

in that freedom of discourse his lordship allowed me I am sufficiently confirmed in my confidence not only of his lordship's unquestionable loyalty to his majesty but also of his true friendship to your lordship . . .

Edward had taken it upon himself to tell Somerset that Danby would treat him as one

loyally and orthodoxly principled, which joined to his real respect for your lordship makes him (as I suppose) *subjectum capax* for real friendship.⁷¹

Despite Edward's effort, Somerset was to prove only an intermittent and untrusted supporter of Danby. Edward's own relationship with Somerset was to founder on the question raised about the genuine nature of Somerset's devotion to 'orthodox principles', that is, to the established Church of England. John Arnold was to be the catalyst of the rift.

In mid December 1682, Arnold was arrested in Gloucestershire on a writ *de scandalis magnatum* (by which peers could sue their defamators) issued by Henry Somerset, now duke of Beaufort. Bail was offered on Arnold's behalf by William Cooke and John Langley, a Gloucester

man and a witness to Edward's will of 1679. Langley, for whom Edward had acted as official surety, was receiver general of forfeitures from local Catholics. In 1680 he had, at the Treasury, charged Benjamin Hyett, Somerset's agent in Gloucestershire, with not pursuing local Catholics with sufficient zeal. In December 1682, Hyett was acting as deputy county sheriff, and, refusing Arnold bail, ordered his detention in Gloucester castle. Bail was eventually accepted on a bond of £2000, as Arnold later claimed, and he was put on trial in the King's Bench on 22 November 1683. He was found guilty of having slandered Somerset by calling him a papist, a protector of papists and involved in the Popish Plot, and of having done this out of 'settled and fixed enmity and malignity'. At that point Edward Cooke attempted to intercede on behalf of his nephew, initially with some success. Somerset agreed to forego all damages save £350 for legal costs, providing Arnold would sign a statement to be worded by Edward. The problem was how Arnold, who was bankrupt, could find even £350. Edward produced £200 and, on his deathbed, finally persuaded Somerset to accept Arnold's bond against a repeated offence. His death however produced stalemate and Arnold remained in prison for six years.⁷²

Edward was thus prepared to risk losing Somerset's favour by helping a man whom he himself described to Somerset as 'that heinous malefactor'. Although Edward had come to regard his nephew's activities as 'crimes' he did 'not palliate', that was a later development in a series of events which was to reveal much about the religious and social insecurities of its participants.⁷³

Whatever their opinion of his religious beliefs, there is no doubt that Somerset was regarded as a threat to the economic livelihood and the independence of action of many gentlemen living in the areas under his control. Since the Restoration he had been steadily engaged in reclaiming his family's former estates and, as important, its ancient rights—such as the levying of river tolls—in South Wales, Monmouthshire and the Severn estuary, including the southern shore between Sheperdine and Tewkesbury. He thus came into conflict with others who were increasingly aware of the economic potential of their own lands, especially in mineral exploitation, for which they needed access to river transport and to forests like Wentwood in Monmouthshire for fuel.⁷⁴ The dice were firmly loaded in Somerset's favour not only because of his feudal powers as 'lord' of large areas but because of his wealth. Between 1682 and 1686 his income was such that his steward had £26,000 to dispose of. On the occasion of Arnold's trial, it seems unlikely that the course of justice was unaffected by the steward paying out the following sums on Somerset's behalf: £55 0s. 9d. to the 17 jurymen at 3 guineas a head; £19 13s. 0d. to entertain them at dinner; £3 4s. 1d. to the sheriff; £9 18s. 4d. to the court officers; £33 to the witnesses and £53 19s. 2d. to the attorney general, the solicitor general and three leading barristers—the last sum presumably for professional fees.⁷⁵ A further instance of what could be perceived as Somerset's threatened economic autocracy was his involvement in an attempt to preserve fish stocks in the Severn—a parliamentary bill reported by his brother-in-law Lord Powis in 1678. On 30 November 1680 Edward Cooke told Ormonde that the Commons had read a bill to repeal one 'surreptitiously obtained last Parliament very injudiciously to restrain our Severn fishery'. Among Somerset's opponents on the committee to consider the repeal was Sir John Guise of Elmore. On that occasion both he and the Cookes were united in opposition to Somerset's purposes. On top of all his economic power, Somerset had the benefit of his membership of House of Lords, privy councillorship and of his various offices, one of which, the presidency of the Council of Wales, he had been trying to extend to cover the former marcher shires, including Gloucestershire.⁷⁶

One dangerous weapon which could be employed against such formidable power was to resuscitate the old image of Raglan castle as a centre of Catholic intrigue and foreign alliance. In 1642 and 1643 Sir Robert Cooke's defensive strategy as a deputy lieutenant in Gloucestershire had been a response to that perceived threat, which had apparently materialized when Somerset's

father had come from Raglan to attack Highnam. Sir Robert's will mentioned no names but had nonetheless encapsulated his understanding of the situation. He asked for compensation for his losses 'out of the estates of such persons of quality especially of the popish religion, as held my house almost five weeks'.⁷⁷ In the 1670s Catholic militancy abroad, the duke of York's conversion and suspicion about the king's own inclinations awakened old fears, some, at least, genuine. Once again they centred on the Somerset family. Raglan was a ruin and Henry Somerset was a Protestant, but his kinsmen remained Catholic and he still dominated the area. Furthermore, Catholics formed an unusually large proportion of its population and there was a Jesuit college, with six priests attached to it, at Cwm, on the Monmouthshire-Herefordshire border.⁷⁸

There is no reason to doubt that, as Edward Cooke bore witness in 1677, Somerset remained a loyal member of the Church of England, but he did appear ambivalent in his attitude to Catholicism. He was a friend of the duke of York and in February 1679 could refer in a letter to the 'papists that are my friends' in Monmouthshire. He employed a Catholic steward, Charles Price, and Catholic servants at Badminton and there had apparently been Catholic soldiers in the garrison at Chepstow which he controlled and commanded.⁷⁹ In his view the threat to public safety in his lieutenancies was not from Catholics but from Protestant nonconformists and those who had been in his opinion, 'against the king' in the Civil Wars. His disapproval of both groups lay behind the removal of most of the thirteen (at least) magistrates he had dismissed between 1674 and 1677 and their replacement by his own friends. Two magistrates, one of whom was John Arnold, were dismissed for 'misdemeanours' and 'affronts' to the duke of York.⁸⁰

Whether motivated by personal venom against Somerset for his dismissal, or by religious zeal, or both, Arnold was to present a different view of the situation, and thus a different interpretation of 'misdemeanours' and 'affronts'. With the encouragement of other leading gentlemen of his area who had come into economic or political conflict with Somerset and, together with another Cooke kinsman, John Scudamore of Kentchurch (Herefs.), whose estate lay near Cwm, in late March 1678 Arnold presented information to Parliament about Catholic priests and Jesuits in his locality and persons 'that do countenance and support them'.⁸¹ The inference to be drawn from the information given was that, had Somerset wished to remove the magistrates sympathetic to Catholicism from the Bench, he would have done so. He had instead effected the removal of those, including Arnold, who had committed the 'misdemeanour' of enforcing existing laws against Catholics and 'affronted' the duke of York. Somerset could thus be presented as a favourer of papists.

Somerset was not in a position to, and did not, dismiss the attacks as insignificant. Arnold was not at that time an M.P. but he had access to those in the Commons who were in dispute with Somerset over the Forest of Wentwood and over his dismissal of justices. Arnold himself was regarded at that stage as having presented a report to Parliament 'so sober and significant' and his kinsman, Lord Anglesey, was lord privy seal. Furthermore, that summer localized allegations about papist sympathies were to be overtaken and partly absorbed into the 'revelations' of the Popish Plot, a scheme allegedly masterminded by Jesuits to assassinate the king and replace him by the duke of York.⁸² Even in April 1678 Somerset was worried by the reluctance of some of his fellow peers to speak up on his behalf for fear of being seen to encourage popery. In November he dared not absent himself from Parliament or the Privy Council 'as something happens to make him repent his being away'. The panic engendered by the Plot produced a situation when, as Somerset's wife wrote to him, a common informer 'now has it in his power to ruin any man' and indeed to threaten his life. Throughout the rest of 1678, and into 1679, Somerset was at the mercy of those, like Lord Shaftesbury, who was in alliance with the originators of the Plot allegations but whose purpose was to effect the exclusion of the duke of York from the succession. As Somerset wrote to his wife in December 1678, 'Lord Shaftesbury will have it that

all the garrison of Chepstow are papists'. Somerset was also accused of being the freeholder of Cwm and his steward accused of being a priest involved in the Plot. Somerset's wife believed at that time that rumours such as that current in Gloucestershire of her husband's imprisonment in the Tower were being deliberately disseminated. One informer, William Bedloe, told Somerset in March 1679 that at 'Bristol, Gloucester and Hereford and many other places' he had seen accusations against him 'in the coffee houses'. The real danger of this climate of panic was demonstrated when five Catholic peers, including Lord Powis, were sent to the Tower, one being subsequently executed.⁸³

Arnold continued to harass Somerset. In February 1679 Somerset reported seeing 'no less than three letters from Arnold to the Lord Privy Seal . . . Arnold's are the malicioussest and most opinionated ones that ever I saw'. He also found 'there is an ill impression remaining in most of the Lords' concerning the allegations.⁸⁴ The difficulty for Somerset was that even in the summer of 1679 someone like Edward Cooke could write to the duke of Ormonde in terms which make clear the approval of both men of the activities of Arnold, who had gone on to pursue Catholic priests in Monmouthshire and was largely responsible for the execution of two Jesuits amongst them. The duke had been a consistent supporter of the episcopalian church in Ireland. Neither he nor Edward could be accused of being covert Protestant nonconformists.⁸⁵

Despite Sir Robert Cooke's family background and reputation as a 'puritan' he had lent no support to sectarianism. During the 1630s he had married as his second wife, Jane, widow of the poet George Herbert, renowned for his support for the church of England. In 1641 Sir Robert had pressed for the publication of a book by Herbert—'whose memory I love'—stressing the need for uniformity and order in an episcopalian church in which nonconformists were to be reduced to the 'common faith'.⁸⁶ Edward remained within that tradition. In December 1653 he had appointed 'Dr. Fleetwood next Sabbath to administer the Sacrament at my lady Cholmely's'. James Fleetwood, a former minister of the Church of England, was an episcopalian and, for the rest of his life, Edward followed this path. His funeral eulogist described him as treading 'in the strait middle path which the Church of England hath in all respects very judiciously prescribed, neither inclining to the dissenting sectaries upon this hand, nor to the superstitious papists upon that'.⁸⁷ The evidence suggests that William Cooke followed the same course. One of his sons became vicar of Churcham and a daughter married John Seleck, son of an archdeacon of Bath and brother to a canon of Wells. In 1674 Arnold had himself presented a 'chalice with a paten cover' to his local parish church—hardly the act of a nonconformist.⁸⁸

In the 1670s supporters of the Church of England like Edward had seen in Catholicism a threat to their religion. They were encouraged because, by spring 1679, their view was apparently shared at the highest levels. The Privy Council had, in the strongest terms, exhorted the J.P.s of Monmouthshire, as elsewhere, to enforce the existing laws against Catholics and it participated in the legal processes leading to the execution of Catholic priests.⁸⁹ Edward was not unusual in being convinced of the rightness of such actions and evidently agreed also with those of John Langley in Gloucestershire. Partly this was because he remained permanently convinced of the reality of a French threat to these islands, a threat indissolubly linked with militant Catholicism. Writing from Ireland in 1667, he had assured Lord Bruce that, in the event of a French attack, he would not leave 'this kingdom as long as there is one armed monsieur left in it'. In 1679 he told Ormonde that 'if a small officer be wanted when the French assault Ireland, I am ready mounted to attend the summons'. He regretted that the words 'Frenchman' and 'Papist' had become interchangeable terms of abuse, but he acknowledged that this was inevitable, for a papist, according to Edward, 'must endeavour the propagation of his heresy, and no expedient is so proper to carry on that great damnable work as that lawless prince [Louis XIV] and his irresistible power'.⁹⁰

Edward's views on Catholicism were however rather more subtle than might appear. This was largely the result of his Irish experience and helps to explain his attitude to Henry Somerset. Sharing his father's views on the dangers of 'papists', in 1647 Edward had contemplated service in Ireland to 'revenge the innocent bloodshed' of Protestants slain during the Irish rebellion of 1641. In 1662 he had found the native Irish to be 'in absolute slavery to their priests, who keep them in ignorance'.⁹¹ Acquaintance with Ormonde had however given Edward a more sophisticated outlook. Ormonde, like Somerset a Protestant convert whose family had remained Catholic, differentiated sharply between those—to be encouraged—who 'whilst they retain their faith, have given some engagement for their loyalty', and those he called 'papists', whose allegiance was to the pope, not to the king, and who were to be opposed. In the latter category came, especially, the Jesuits.⁹² Influenced by such views, in August 1679 Edward might well feel that Arnold had done no more than his duty in alerting the country to the dangers inherent in Jesuit enclaves and from their sympathizers. Equally, however, the fact that Somerset had a Catholic past, Catholic relations and a Catholic steward was not necessarily more relevant to his allegiance to the king than in the case of Ormonde—that paradigm of loyalty—who also had the same adjuncts. Somerset had himself in late 1678 accepted the guilt of Edward Coleman, one of the alleged Plot conspirators, and Edward Cooke had apparently been in touch with him about the Catholic servants at Badminton. Moreover in spring 1679, as a privy councillor, Somerset had been at least a nominal encourager of firmly anti-Catholic policies and, in April, he had accepted the readmission to the Bench of John Arnold.⁹³ In August that year Edward might well envisage a return to their old pattern of friendship.

By 1680, however, the scene had changed and it was about to alter radically. Arnold, who became M.P. for Monmouth in November 1680, thus displacing Charles Somerset, Henry's son, became an adherent of Lord Shaftesbury. He made parliamentary attacks on Somerset as the duke of York's henchman and as an 'evil counsellor' who should be removed from the king's presence.⁹⁴ Edward Cooke, like many others, had become increasingly convinced that to remove the duke of York from the succession or to criticize the present establishment in Church and State was to risk civil war. Still politically vulnerable as an old Cromwellian and as an old acquaintance of Shaftesbury, partly for safety's sake, he firmly identified himself with the Court and its policies including the retention of the duke of York as heir to the throne.⁹⁵ Attacks on the duke (as well as on Somerset) were, surely, the 'crimes' he could not 'palliate'. Furthermore, not only did it now seem his avuncular duty to try and win over his nephew Arnold to his own views but such a policy represented the best hope of family security. By the time of Shaftesbury's death in January 1683, Edward had apparently succeeded in that, according to Arnold himself a year later, Shaftesbury had persuaded his other supporters that Arnold was 'Col. Cooke's convert' and, as such, no longer one of their number.⁹⁶

Arnold's activities could call into question the political affiliations of his father-in-law William Cooke. William was said by Thomas Bruce to have been in the 1670s 'so little addicted to the Court that he was of what they called the Country part'. Bruce dated William's conversion to Court policies from the time of Arnold's claim in April 1680 to have been the victim of an attempted Catholic assassination, a claim which thereafter identified him in public estimation with the policies of Shaftesbury.⁹⁷ It is clear, however, that William had recognized earlier the dangers of alienation from his brother's—and hence by extension—his family's patrons, who were all supporters of the Court and opponents of Lord Shaftesbury. After the spring parliamentary election of 1679, when all the other M.P.s returned for the city and county of Gloucester were denoted by Shaftesbury as 'honest' or 'worthy', he marked William down as 'base'. In July that year Shaftesbury gave a favourable reference on those who wished to attack William's record as sheriff. William absented himself from the Commons before the debate on exclusion. In

August 1679 the politically well-informed duke of Ormonde clearly had no anxieties about William's loyalties and sent him warm good wishes.⁹⁸

Although Arnold's activities were almost certainly the reason for Somerset's refusal to support William's election in the autumn of 1679, neither William nor Edward was subsequently removed from county office. In this respect they differed from others in Gloucestershire. Sir John Guise, Sir Duncombe Colchester and Evan Seys, an exclusionist, were removed from the Bench, and Guise and Colchester from their deputy lieutenancies in 1681, apparently at the king's instigation. Guise and Colchester both supported the 1688 revolution and Charles II's earlier peripience about the allegiance to the Crown of his subjects, whatever their interpersonal relationships, was demonstrated by the fact that, as an M.P. for Gloucester, in 1689 William Cooke refused to support the presupposition that there was a vacant throne for William and Mary to occupy.⁹⁹

In 1682 the fate of Arnold still had to be resolved. Somerset was not naturally inclined to letting erring subordinates escape lightly. In 1665 he had called for the secretary of state to impose the 'shame and punishment due' on deputy lieutenants with whom he was displeased. Whatever the truth of Arnold's 'conversion', he had previously grossly insulted Somerset, indeed had allegedly encouraged men to 'stab and kill' all who defended him or the duke of York and had compromised Somerset's position with his peers and his standing in his own county. In 1682 Arnold had also been accused of republican and nonconformist sympathies.¹⁰⁰ The king's determination from March 1681 onwards to end the attempt to prevent his brother's succession and to impose limits on his own powers might well have encouraged Somerset to believe that, as an enemy of Shafesbury, friend of the duke of York and upholder of the king's rights, his own authority would be unfailingly upheld, particularly at a time when his control of Bristol's corporation and its loyalty to the Court was constantly at issue. Such a belief was not entirely justified. He was apparently to find it impossible to have Arnold dismissed as a J.P., despite repeated attempts to have this done. Although the lord chancellor had been told by March 1682 that the king disapproved of Arnold and another of Somerset's opponents had been dismissed, Arnold was not. In June that year, the chancellor was still only considering Arnold's dismissal, and he was apparently never technically removed from the Bench.¹⁰¹ Somerset did however still have available to him the weapon of the writ *de scandalis magnatum* and he now employed it against Arnold and other of his political opponents.

In moving Somerset to take such actions, the influence upon him of his wife should not be discounted. Daughter of a royalist, Lord Capel, who had been executed by Parliament, Mary Somerset was an energetic, practical woman whom Somerset used as his deputy when he was in London. She shared his views about the relative dangers of Catholicism and nonconformity. In 1678 she wrote to him, evidently from Badminton, about 'the terrible fright I and indeed all this part of England hath been in with this alarm of the French'. Having alerted the deputy lieutenants about what turned out to be mere rumour of an attack, two days later she still found it 'hard to describe the disorder all people were in'. She was disposed not to see a Catholic menace behind these events but rather to blame 'the nonconformists who in all places were very brisk upon the rumour and spread it everywhere'. Twelve days earlier Mary Somerset used a derogatory royalist phrase 'old leaven' to describe a local justice who failed to reprove a watchman at Wickwar who stopped a messenger from one of her husband's Catholic cousins, the Winters, 'because he was carrying it [the message] to Badminton'. The Winters were a family suspect since before the Civil Wars of Raglanite activities in the Forest of Dean. Constantly mindful of the Civil Wars, Mary Somerset viewed the turmoil of 1678 as a battle in which her husband was engaged against the 'king's enemies'. Like her husband, she saw the latter as more likely to include Protestant than Catholic nonconformists. In 1682 she would surely have

included Arnold amongst them, especially given the presence of that malevolent gadfly in Gloucestershire.¹⁰²

In November 1683 Edward tried once more to play the conciliator but, despite his awareness of the dangers of losing Somerset's favour if he failed, he may also have been aware of the limits of Somerset's power. Edward's own reputed personal standing with the king may well have been the reason for the lord chancellor's unwillingness to dismiss Edward's nephew from the Bench. Moreover, Edward felt confident in his other patrons—also leading figures in Church and State. He could feel free in November to write to Ormonde: 'on Tuesday, in discontent that I found the duke of Beaufort inexorable, I wandered through the snow to dine' at the earl of Devonshire's house. The earl of Abingdon (formerly Lord Norreys) displayed unremitting affection for him. His final recorded social engagement was at dinner at Lambeth palace with the archbishop of Canterbury on 9 January 1684. His eulogist was to refer to 'his majesty lamenting his great loss'.¹⁰³ Later that year the Chancery action against his brother, outstanding since 1677, was dismissed. William's refusal as an M.P. in 1689 to take a more enthusiastic attitude to the revolution of 1688 did not mean reconciliation with Henry Somerset who had at first opposed it actively. William was on the committees to abolish Somerset's court of the Marches, an organ of the Council of Wales, and to deprive him of the benefits of his actions *de scandalis magnatum*. Initially successful in a limited form in the Commons, the latter bill was defeated in the Lords in 1690.¹⁰⁴

The relationship of Edward Cooke and Henry Somerset over nearly thirty years demonstrates the accepted nature of the patron/client bond at that time. It shows the desirability of having more than one patron and the value of possessing particular skills such as those which might promote harmony between parties. It shows also the effect of the relationship in obscuring the demarcation between public and private office. Help with the Gloucestershire militia or the despatch of hawks to its lord lieutenant were equally part of Edward's duties as Somerset's client. While some of Edward's concern for Arnold may be attributed to his wish to keep control of a maverick who endangered family safety, Edward's deathbed efforts on his behalf denote a belief in the overriding obligations of the family tie, a belief also manifested in his behaviour towards William.

The Arnold affair and Edward's attitude to it suggest that while at that time the Catholic issue could be manipulated as a weapon by political or economic opponents faced by an otherwise apparently invincible foe, anti-Catholicism also had roots in genuine fear of external, particularly French, attack encouraged by a covert internal presence exemplified by the Jesuits. The question of loyalty to the Crown was acute, especially in the panic-ridden years 1678–81. Edward Cooke and Mary Somerset could both fear not only the French but a return to what Edward then called the 'times so evil' of his youth—to civil war and the disruption of the ordered society from which both their families derived the influence and favour necessary for their comfortable existence.¹⁰⁵ The religious differences between the duke and duchess of Beaufort and Edward Cooke probably were largely of emphasis and due to the encircling traditions of their families—Catholic and Protestant. Furthermore, Edward's experience in Ireland had allowed him to accept the possibility that loyalty and Catholic sympathies could co-exist. An old and well-established friendship permitted Somerset to allow Edward to try his skills as a mediator in 1683. The obduracy of the slighted duke and the venom of John Arnold severely tested these skills but Edward was perhaps only finally defeated by death.

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Note: Spelling and punctuation in quotations have been modernized.

Notes

1. E. Thorne, *Funeral Sermon upon the much lamented death of Col. Edward Cooke, who died in London upon January the 29th and was buried in the Chapple at Highnam near Gloucester on February the 2nd 1683/4* (1684); *Visitation of the County of Gloucester, 1682, 1683*, ed. T. FitzRoy Fenwick & W.C. Metcalfe (Exeter, priv. print. 1884), 47–8; Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts (Hist. MSS. Com.) 9, *Salisbury (Cecil)*, xviii, p. 8.
2. G.E.C[ockayne], *Complete Peerage* 12(2), 857–63. The future first duke will be referred to as Henry Somerset in this paper.
3. The principal source of evidence for this are his letters. Those printed are to be found in Hist. MSS. Com. 36, *14th Rep. VII, Ormonde*, i–ii; *Ormonde*, new ser. iii–vii; and *ibid.* 43, *15th Rep. VII, Ailesbury*.
4. *Visit. Glos. 1682–3*, 47; *Dictionary of National Biography (D.N.B.)* (1921) 7, 261–2.
5. *Alumni Cantabrigienses to 1751*, ed. J. & J.A. Venn, i, 383; *Middle Temple Records: Minutes of Parliament*, ed. C.H. Martin (1904–5), ii, 888; Thorne, *Funeral Sermon*, 28.
6. *An elegy upon the death of that worthy gentleman Col. Edward Cook who departed this life the 29th January 1683/4* (1684).
7. J. Corbet, ‘Hist. Relation of the Military Government of Glouc.’ *Bibliotheca Gloucestrensis*, ed. J. Washbourne (1825), i, 16–18, 26–9, 37; *Glos. R.O.*, D 2510/28; *Jnls. of Sir Samuel Luke*, ed. I.G. Philip (Oxfordshire Rec. Soc. 29, 1947), 53–4.
8. R. Hopton, *Bellum Civile*, ed. C.E.H. Chadwyck Healey (Somerset Rec. Soc. 18, 1902), 89; P[ublic] R[ecord] O[ffice], SP 28/36, pt. v, ff. 476–7; SP 28/34, pt. iii, ff. 441, 438; *The testimony of Col. Edward Cooke delivered in writing* (1644): Thomason Tract E 255(17); J. Adair, *Roundhead General: a military biog. of Sir William Waller* (1969), 106, 151, 178.
9. *Letter Books of Sir Samuel Luke*, ed. H.G. Tibbutt (Bedfordshire Hist. Rec. Soc. 42, 1953), 475, 521; *A copie of Sir William Waller’s Letter* (1645): Thomason Tract E 274(4); *Cal. State Papers Domestic, 1644–5*, 397–400, 416–18.
10. *Cal. S.P. Dom. 1644–5*, 433, 438, 457–60, 474–6, 617; *Jnls. of the House of Commons* 4, 145, 152–3; J. Sprigge, *Anglia Rediviva* (1647), 17–19, 64, 181, 184, 187–8, 199–200; A.R. Bayley, *Great Civil War in Dorset 1642–60* (1910), 295–300.
11. B[ritish] L[ibrary] BM film 330 (Duke of Northumberland MS. 547, Fitzjames letter book, f. 22); *Truth discovered from the West* (1646): Thomason Tract E 349(18).
12. E.B. de Fonblanque, *Lives of the Lords Strangford* (1877), 77; *Memorials of the Civil War*, ed. R. Bell (1949), i, 283.
13. A. Woolrych, *Soldiers and Statesmen* (1987), 112–14, 141, 153.
14. *D.N.B.* 13, 2–5; *P.R.O.*, SP 28/50, pt. ii, f. 252.
15. Sir John Berkley, *Memoirs* (1699), 75–6; Worcester Coll. Oxford, Harvester microfilm 8 (Clarke MS. 66, ff. 7–8, 16v.); *Two letters read in the House of Commons*: Thomason Tract E 423(20); *P.R.O.*, SP 28/50, pt. ii, f. 252; SP 28/54, pt. v, ff. 733, 735; SP 28/53, ff. 329, 331; *Commons Jnls.* 5, 526.
16. *P.R.O.*, C 8/101/47; *Commons Jnls.* 3, 300; 5, 120; *Glouc. Public Library, Glos. Collection 3166(9)*; F.P. Verney, *Memoirs of Verney Family* (1892), ii, 264.
17. Bodleian Library (Bodl.) MS. Rawlinson B. 239, f. 2.

18. *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum*, ed. C.H. Firth & R.S. Rait (1911), i, 1136, 1237; ii, 299, 644, 1069; P.R.O., C 231/6/145; C 181/7/30.
19. *Visit. Glos. 1682-3*, 47; P.R.O., C 8/95/113; Wilts. R.O., MS. 1300 (Ailesbury MSS.)/463.
20. B.L. Harleian MS. 4705, ff. 93-100; Thorne, *Funeral Sermon*, 34.
21. P.R.O. E 351/303. For much evidence on Charles I's captivity, C.W. Firebrace, *Honest Harry, Sir Henry Firebrace 1619-91* (1932); E. Cooke, *Certain Passages which happened at Newport in the Isle of Wight November 29 1648 relating to King Charles I* (1690).
22. Cooke, *Certain Passages*, 14-21; House of Lords R.O., Norreys estate main papers 1 Dec. 1670.
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25. Wilts. R.O., MS. 1300/428.
26. Thorne, *Funeral Sermon*, 35.
27. *Cal. State Papers Venetian, 1657-9, 156-7; Swedish Diplomats at Cromwell's Court 1655-6*, ed. M. Roberts (Camden 4th ser. 36, 1988), 181 [index misidentifies Edw. as Thos. Cooke].
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29. *Glos. Notes & Queries 1* (1881), 361; W.C. Abbott, *Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell* (1937-47), iii, 514-15; C.E. Hart, *Royal Forest: A Hist. of Dean's Woods as Producers of Timber* (1966), 146.
30. *Cal. S.P. Dom. 1611-18, 555*; W.R. Williams, *Parliamentary Hist. of the County of Glouc.* (Hereford, priv. print. 1898), 53; Wilts. R.O., MS. 1300/446; *Elegy upon the death of Edward Cook*.
31. *D.N.B. 18, 650-2* (for corrections and emendations to this, *Complete Peerage 2, 51-2*); Hist. MSS. Com. 27, *12th Rep. IX, Beaufort*, p. 77.
32. *Acts & Ordinances*, ii, 148-9, 618-19.
33. *Cal. Committee for Compounding*, iii, 1898-1904; National Register of Archives 8636: list of Bolton (Orde-Powlett) MSS. pt. ii, northern estates, *passim*.
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35. Verney, *Memoirs*, iii, 240-1, 258; Wilt. R.O., MS. 1300/474.
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37. e.g. *Nicholas Papers*, ed. G.F. Warner (Camden 3rd ser. 4, 1920); *Letter Book of John Viscount Mordaunt 1658-60*, ed. M. Coate (Camden 3rd ser. 69, 1945); *Cal. Clarendon State Papers*, ed. F.J. Routledge (1932), iv.
38. Bristol R.O., AC/C74/9; Bodl. MSS. Clarendon 68, ff. 204-5; 70, f. 23; 69, ff. 7, 8, 24 and v.; *Cal. Clarendon S.P.* iv, 535.
39. Bodl. MSS. Clarendon 68, f. 175v.; 69, ff. 7, 8; 71, f. 78.
40. *Ibid.* MSS. Clarendon 68. ff. 204-5; 70, ff. 23, 81.
41. *Ibid.* MS. Rawl. A. 259, ff. 83, 183; MS. Clarendon 69, f. 151; Underdown, *Royalist Conspiracy*, 262-4.
42. Bodl. MS. Clarendon 70, ff. 55-6, 81.
43. *Cal. Clarendon S.P.* iv. 611; Bodl. MSS. Clarendon 69, f. 151; 71, f. 343.
44. *Acts & Ordinances*, ii, 1425; Hist. MSS. Com. 4, *5th Rep.*, p. 347; B.L. Additional MS. 70113: Edw. Cooke to Edw. Harley 22 Apr. 1660.
45. Badminton MS. FmE 2/4/11.
46. Bodl. MS. Carte 214, ff. 416-17.
47. F. Protheroe, 'Glos. Knights of the Royal Oak', *Glos. N. & Q. 2* (1884), 12; P.R.O., C 8/250/30; Badminton MS. FmE 2/4/11; Glos. R.O., Q/SIB 1, f. 20.
48. Wilts. R.O., MSS. 1300/441, 542 [the latter is dated 1665 in a later hand but internal evidence suggests the earlier date].
49. P.R.O., PROB 11/194/142; PROB 11/207/45; Bodl. MSS. Carte 215, ff. 545-6; 35, f. 173; Wilts. R.O., MS. 1300/485.
50. Wilts. R.O., MS. 1300/479.

51. *Ibid.* MSS. 1300/225A–B, 226.
52. *Cal. S.P. Dom.* 1660–1, 380.
53. Edward's Irish career is recorded at length in his letters to Lord Bruce (Ailesbury MSS.) and the duke of Ormonde (Carte MSS.).
54. *Hist. MSS. Com.* 36, *Ormonde*, new ser. v, pp. 6–7, 75, 102, 239–40, 475, 618–19; vi, pp. 418–19; vii, p. 163; Bodl. MS. Carte 35, ff. 459–60; T. Bruce, earl of Ailesbury, *Memoirs Written by Himself* (1890), i, 43.
55. See his letter appended to House of Lord R.O., Norreys estate main papers 1 Dec. 1690. *Glos. N. & Q.* 5 (1891–3), 145; *Cal. S.P. Dom.* 1671, 37; *Acts of Privy Council, Colonial Series*, 1613–80, 568; P.R.O., C 193/12/3, f. 42.
56. Hart, *Royal Forest*, 152–69, 173–5, 298–9; *idem*, *Verderers and Speech Court of Forest of Dean* (1950), 1–10, 28, 35–41; *Cal. Treasury Books*, 1667–8, 594; *Cal. S.P. Dom.* 1660–1, 72; *Glos. R.O.*, D 2026/X 22; D 36/Q 2.
57. *Cal. Treas. Bks.* 1669–72, 90, 170, 262, 308, 354, 372–3, 531; 1672–5, 150, 222, 227–8; 1676–9, 50; 1679–80, 196; Badminton MSS. FmF 1/8/31–2; B.L. Stowe MS. 745, f. 46; *Glos. R.O.*, D 2026/X 14, X 22; P.R.O., PC 2/64, f. 261; Hart, *Verderers*, 32, 36–41, 43.
58. Wilts. R.O., MS. 1300/697.
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61. Badminton MSS. FmE 2/4/9, 11; FmE 3/18: 'The Duke of Beaufort plt. agst. John Arnold Esq.'
62. P.R.O., C 8/250/30; C 193/12/3, f. 41; *Cal. Treas. Bks.* 1681–5, 1188; A.B.S., 'Glos. Justices of the Peace', *Glos. N. & Q.* 5, 145.
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65. Badminton MS. FmE 3/16: letter 25 Jan. 1684.
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67. Bodl. MS. Carte 215, ff. 351–3, 490.
68. *Ibid.* MS. Carte 130, ff. 16–20 (pencil foliation). Of the group ff. 14–20, f. 14 is headed 'Extracts from papers among the First Duke of Beaufort's Letters'. Those evidently from Edw. are variously attributed to 'Coll. Cooke', 'Coll. Edw. Cooke' and 'E. Cooke'.
69. *Ibid.* MSS. Carte 215, ff. 351–3; 219, f. 84.
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