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“GIVE US OUR ELEVEN DAYS!”: CALENDAR REFORM IN EIGHTEENTH- CENTURY ENGLAND*

For generations, there has been no better illustration of the collective idiocy of the crowd than the story of the English calendar riots of 1752. At the trial of Henry Hunt and others for treason in 1820, James Scarlett, the prosecuting counsel, had this to say:

The ridiculous folly of a mob had been exemplified in a most humorous manner by that eminent painter, Mr. Hogarth. It was found necessary many years ago, in order to prevent a confusion in the reckoning of time, to knock eleven days out of the calendar, and it was supposed by ignorant persons that the legislature had actually deprived them of eleven days of their existence. This ridiculous idea was finely exposed in Mr. Hogarth's picture, where the mob were painted throwing up their hats, and crying out "Give us back our eleven days". Thus it was at the present time; that many individuals, who could not distinguish words from things, were making an outcry for that of which they could not well explain the nature.¹

Curiously enough, the extensive literature on eighteenth-century riot has yielded not one study of this most famous of episodes. Furthermore, amidst much debate about time-awareness in the same period, the calendar has received little direct attention. This article aims to address both these areas.

Time was one of the contested terrains of the eighteenth century. The techniques of measuring it were becoming ever more sophisticated, the practice of measuring it was growing ever more widespread, and the means of measuring it, in the form of clocks and pocket-watches, ever more widely owned.² Progress, regula-

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¹ *The Trial of Henry Hunt . . . with the Addresses of the Several Defendants* (Manchester, 1820), p. 12. Scarlett's point was to demonstrate the wilfully inflammatory character of some of the slogans on the Peterloo banners. In reply, Hunt claimed that the defendants had been "confined for eleven days and nights", and cried "Give us back our eleven days of sweet liberty": *ibid.*, p. 90.

² Notable among much literature are D. S. Landes, *Revolution in Time* (Cambridge, Mass., 1983); G. J. Whitrow, *Time in History* (Oxford, 1988).

tion, regularity: this was the age of the pendulum. By 1800, it has been claimed, even the crowds were observing regular hours.³ E. P. Thompson has shown how widespread were conflicts over time and work-discipline in the eighteenth century, and sees this as part of a clash between two different types of social consciousness, the one time-aware, the other not: "Recorded time (one suspects) belonged in the mid-century still to the gentry, the masters, the farmers and the tradesmen".⁴ The common people did, however, have their own measure of recorded time: the calendar.

Amongst the reforms of measurement proposed during the Enlightenment, that of the calendar was the first to be carried through in England. Mid-eighteenth-century England was still more a society of the almanac than of the clock.⁵ The reform of clock time, when Greenwich mean time became the national standard, had to await the unifying effect of the railway; in the late eighteenth century, stage-coaches travelling east and west observed local time, practising the strange, relativistic exercise of carrying with them clocks set to gain or lose in conformity with the migrating sun.⁶ Weights and measures were reformed somewhat earlier, but despite much debate it was the late eighteenth century before any real start was made.⁷ The calendar, however, was reformed as early as 1752, in an act of some complexity which brought British dating in line with that used on the Continent. This content of the reform is less well understood than it might be.

Calendar customs have received attention from a variety of directions in recent years. Reinterpretations of the Reformation have brought out the extent of the cultural losses sustained when the old ritual calendar was overturned, with popular resistance to Puritanism being centred around the attempt to preserve elements of the old festive culture within what Christopher Haigh

³ M. Harrison, *Crowds and History* (Cambridge, 1983).

⁴ E. P. Thompson, "Time, Work-Discipline and Industrial Capitalism", *Past and Present*, no. 38 (Dec. 1967), p. 67.

⁵ B. Capp, *Astrology and the Popular Press: English Almanacs, 1500-1800* (London, 1979).

⁶ A. C. Davies, "Greenwich and Standard Time", *History Today*, xxviii (1978), pp. 194-9; see also D. Howse, *Greenwich Time* (Oxford, 1980), *passim*. The essential legal measure was the Determination of Time Act, 1880.

⁷ J. Hoppit, "Reforming Britain's Weights and Measures, 1660-1824", *Eng. Hist. Rev.*, cviii (1993), pp. 82-104.

has termed "parish Anglicanism".⁸ "The fall of merry England", in Ronald Hutton's account, was roughly coterminous with that of the Stuart dynasty.⁹ Society no longer ran according to a common public calendar encompassing religious, social, festive and agricultural activities; rather, there were many calendars. Each major town or city had its own civic calendar of public holidays, feasts, fasts, guilds, processions, elections, fairs and anniversaries, differentiated from both agricultural and liturgical calendars.¹⁰ The religious calendar of the established church continued, but it encompassed a shrinking proportion of the population as Dissent expanded at the expense of Anglicanism, and as parish wakes, feasts and saints' days were themselves disowned by many parish clergy.¹¹ The Protestant national calendar of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had been based on a potent and unstable mixture of royalism and anti-popery; its eighteenth-century successor was attuned to the political requirements of the Hanoverian regime, marked by royal anniversaries and military commemorations.¹² Hutton's "fall of merry England" coincides with the rise of E. P. Thompson's "rebellious traditional culture", a popular culture marked by traditionalism but also largely independent of the patronage of church and gentry. The calendar of popular customs and festivals became increasingly the common property of the labouring classes, and increasingly also a matter of local custom, rooted in a plebeian way of life that was under attack from moralists, employers and agricultural improvers.¹³ The seasonal cycles into which this calendar was woven have been used by historians of the rural economy as a way of analysing patterns of seasonal employment and of marriage, of the sexual division of labour and the spread of industry.¹⁴

⁸ R. Whiting, *The Blind Devotion of the People* (Cambridge, 1989); E. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (New Haven, 1992); C. Haigh, *English Reformations* (Oxford, 1992).

⁹ R. Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England: The Ritual Year, 1400-1700* (Oxford, 1994).

¹⁰ P. Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance* (Oxford, 1989), esp. ch. 11; J. Barry, "The Cultural Life of Bristol, 1640-1775" (Univ. of Oxford D.Phil. thesis, 1985), ch. 4.

¹¹ R. W. Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations in English Society* (Cambridge, 1973).

¹² D. Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells* (London, 1989); L. Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven, 1993), ch. 1.

¹³ E. P. Thompson, *Customs in Common* (London, 1991), p. 9; B. Bushaway, *By Rite* (Brighton, 1982).

¹⁴ K. D. M. Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor* (Cambridge, 1985); A. Kussmaul, *A General View of the Rural Economy of England, 1538-1840* (Cambridge, 1990).

Although the calendar reform of 1752 has been little regarded, the notorious calendar rioters are the subject of numerous passing textbook references. Their main function, one suspects, is to provide some light relief in that Sargasso Sea of the eighteenth century, the rule of the Pelhams. Behind the simple phrase “reform of the calendar”, however, lies an unacknowledged cultural agenda. The English calendar as it appeared in the mid-eighteenth century was a great reef of religious, economic, social, ritual, customary and natural elements, the by-product of centuries of cultural accretion; it could not simply be reformed by a stroke of the legislator’s pen, like the pottle or the prayer book. This article will attempt to recover the significance of that episode. It will examine changing thinking about the calendar among the educated classes between the initial English rejection of the Gregorian reform of the calendar in the 1580s and its final acceptance in 1752, and the way in which this helped determine the shape of the revision. Next, the content of the legislation will be discussed, and then its impact. It will be argued that the reform was in effect half-done, and that this had important cultural repercussions. Finally, the character and extent of resistance to the calendar reform will be examined, and the possibility of links with Jacobitism considered.

We begin, however, with a small historiographical excursion. As with other aspects of the eighteenth century, a good riot is the best way in.

I

“Give us our eleven days!” must be one of the best-known slogans of the eighteenth century. It was bequeathed to history by William Hogarth in his print of 1755, “An Election Entertainment”, where the words appear on a broken placard, snatched from a Tory mob by a Whig bludgeon-man. (Plate.) The story of how the mob rose in protest against being cheated out of eleven September days by the calendar reform of 1752 features in numerous older textbooks as a symbol of popular ignorance in the age of Enlightenment, and in more recent ones as an example of the gulf between élite and plebeian perceptions. Basil Williams’s volume in the *Oxford History of England* notes that “the bill . . . passed without difficulty in parliament, but aroused much antagonism outside . . . for some time the most



Hogarth, *The Election*, Plate 1: "An Election Entertainment" (February 1755), detail.
(Photo © The Photographic Unit, Lancaster University)

popular cry in the country was 'give us back our eleven days'".¹⁵ G. J. Whitrow's more recent *Time in History* conveniently summarizes the main elements of the episode as generally understood, with a striking addition:

In 1752, when the British government decided to alter the calendar, so as to bring it into line with that previously adopted by most other countries of Western Europe, and decreed that the day following 2 September should be styled 14 September, many people thought that their lives were being shortened thereby. Some workers actually believed that they were going to lose eleven days' pay. So they rioted and demanded "Give us back our eleven days!" (The Act of Parliament had, in fact, been carefully worded so as to prevent any injustice in the payment of rents, interest, etc.) The rioting was worst in Bristol, in those days the second largest city in England, where several people were killed.¹⁶

For J. B. Owen in *The Eighteenth Century*, the passage of the Act "despite the howls of the uninformed mob" provides an instance of the superior political resolve of the Pelham ministry.¹⁷ For Dorothy Marshall in *Eighteenth-Century England*, the episode demonstrates how "eighteenth-century society, particularly at its lower levels, was held together by tradition. Change was suspect just because it was change".¹⁸ Derek Jarrett refers to "violent protests", Peter Quennell to "the cry . . . taken up by the conservative mob".¹⁹ Such references could be multiplied, from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* to the most recent textbooks and monographs, with the mob's absurd belief that their lives were being shortened set against the careful way the Act was drafted to avoid injustice.²⁰

Recent historians have shown greater sympathy towards the rioters. W. A. Speck comments that the outcry was not simply "the blind reaction of an ignorant mob", but that "the change

¹⁵ B. Williams, *The Whig Supremacy, 1714-1760* (Oxford History of England, xi, Oxford, 1939), pp. 354-5.

¹⁶ Whitrow, *Time in History*, p. 1.

¹⁷ J. B. Owen, *The Eighteenth Century* (London, 1974), p. 74.

¹⁸ D. Marshall, *Eighteenth-Century England*, 2nd edn (London, 1974), pp. 227-8.

¹⁹ D. Jarrett, *England in the Age of Hogarth* (London, 1974), p. 27; P. Quennell, *Hogarth's Progress* (London, 1955), p. 249.

²⁰ C. A. R[onan], "Calendar: The Western Calendar and Calendar Reforms", in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th edn, 32 vols. (Chicago, 1985), xv, p. 468; G. Holmes and D. Szechi, *The Age of Oligarchy* (London, 1993, p. 240); R. Paulson, *Hogarth*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, 1992-3), iii, p. 164 (quoted p. 103 below); for the transposition of the eighteenth-century English story to the sixteenth-century continent of Europe, see J. R. Hale, *The Civilization of Europe in the Renaissance* (London, 1993), p. 569 ("... popular resentment against what was seen as a filching of ten days from a man's life").

gave reasonable ground for concern at all levels of society, necessitating nice calculations about rents, leases, debts and wages, as well as superstitions about saint's days and holy days".²¹ Roy Porter uses the occasion to remark that "where traditional and new, popular and polite, culture confronted each other, there was often objectively little to choose between them", and suggests that fears about loss of wages may have been well grounded.²² Paul Langford (who avoids mentioning actual riots) also warns against drawing simple conclusions about "a dislocation between popular and patrician culture". For the educated classes:

the reform of the calendar had a certain symbolic significance in terms of the conflict of enlightenment and bigotry, . . . [but] the hostility which it aroused was not merely unreasoning atavism. The Act caused complications for the celebration of birthdays and anniversaries and irritated many who saw no necessity even for a minor inconvenience in the cause of conformity to Continental practice. It also worried Churchmen . . . There were political undertones . . .²³

John Stevenson also offers understanding remarks on the "furore" of 1752, suggesting that it "can be rendered at least comprehensible by a closer examination of the impact of a particular piece of legislation", although such an examination is not offered.²⁴

All this is interesting, but there is a hand-me-down phrasing running through decades of references to the calendar riots which suggests that what is suspect about the traditional version is more than just the way it has been interpreted. The riots, like the Snark, are universally known but defy detection. The riot depositions in the Public Record Office are silent on the subject. So is the contemporary press. In the pamphlet literature, the occasional clergyman or almanac-maker can be overheard grumbling about the cursed refusal of the lower orders to relinquish their Old Style festivals, but of actual riots at either the passage or the implementation of the reform there is not a ripple. Nor do the earliest histories of the period record any calendar riots. Nicholas Tindal's 1759 continuation of Paul de Rapin-Thoyras's *History of England* merely notes deferentially that "the act was modelled

²¹ W. A. Speck, *Stability and Strife: England, 1714-60* (London, 1977), pp. 254-5.

²² R. Porter, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century* (Harmondsworth, 1982), pp. 294-5.

²³ P. Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England, 1727-1783* (New Oxford History of England, Oxford, 1989), pp. 283-4.

²⁴ J. Stevenson, *Popular Disturbances in England, 1700-1832*, 2nd edn (London, 1992), pp. 3-4.

with great skill and learning by the earl of Macclesfield and has been productive of many excellent consequences".²⁵ Horace Walpole in his memoirs of the period (which may have been drafted as early as 1752) relates only that "the bill passed easily through both houses".²⁶ Matthew Maty's respectful memoir of Lord Chesterfield (1777) also notes its smooth passage.²⁷ The dominant tone of contemporary comment was one of self-congratulation, coupled occasionally with exasperation or amusement at the presumed refusal of the vulgar and the reactionary to understand progress when it was presented to them. The superior astronomical accuracy of the new calendar was widely emphasized, along with the general convenience, especially for foreign trade, of at last being in line with the rest of continental Europe.²⁸ Most tales of calendar riots can be traced back to just two sources: a journal conducted by Lord Chesterfield, the parliamentary architect of the reform, and Hogarth, the supposed illustrator of the riots.

In the aftermath of the calendar reform, Horace Walpole, writing in Chesterfield's satirical journal the *World*, mocked those who had predicted "what a confusion would follow if Michaelmas-day, for instance, was not to be celebrated, when stubble geese are in their highest perfection". Another writer in the *World* derided the vulgar who looked to the Glastonbury thorn to arbitrate on the issue of which was the real Christmas Day:

The alarm was given, and the most fatal consequences to our religion and government were immediately apprehended from it. The opinion gathered strength in it's course, and received a tincture from the remains of superstition still prevailing in the counties most remote from town. I knew several worthy gentlemen in the west, who lived many months under the daily apprehension of some dreadful visitation from pestilence or famine. The vulgar were almost everywhere persuaded that nature gave evident tokens of her disapproving these innovations . . .

The objection to this regulation, as favouring a custom established

²⁵ N. Tindal, *The Continuation of . . . Rapin's History of England*, 21 vols. (London, 1757-63), xxi, p. 436.

²⁶ H. Walpole, *Memoirs of the Last Ten Years of the Reign of George II*, 2 vols. (London, 1822), ii, pp. 44-6, i, p. vii.

²⁷ *Miscellaneous Works of the Late Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield . . . to which are prefixed Memoirs of his Life*, ed. M. Maty, 2 vols. (London, 1777), i, pp. 197-9.

²⁸ For example, Adam Anderson, *An Historical and Chronological Deduction of the Origin of Commerce*, 4 vols. (London, 1787-9), iii, pp. 283-6; John Potter, *A System of Practical Mathematics*, 2nd edn (London, 1757); "Astronomy", in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1st edn, 3 vols. (London, 1773), i, p. 464.

amongst papists, was not heard indeed with the same regard as formerly, when it actually prevented the legislature from passing a bill of the same nature; yet many a president of a corporation club very eloquently harangued upon it, as introductory to the doctrine of transubstantiation, making no doubt that fires would be kindled again in Smithfield before the conclusion of the year. This popular clamour has at last happily subsided, and shared the general fate of those opinions which derive their support from imagination, not reason.²⁹

Here we find evidence of “apprehension” and “clamour”, but surely rather more evidence of the *World’s* superior variety of satire, and of the cultural condescension of a confident Hanoverian élite.

The only eighteenth-century source for actual riots is Hogarth’s famous print “An Election Entertainment”, issued in February 1755, more than four years after the calendar reform Act was passed and more than two years after it was implemented. Modern commentators have assumed that the broken Tory placard depicted in it, bearing the famous slogan, refers to recent calendar riots. Most recently, for example, Ronald Paulson has written that “the Oxfordshire people . . . are specifically rioting, as historically the London crowd did, to preserve the ‘Eleven Days’ the government stole from them in September 1752 by changing the calendar”.³⁰ The earliest commentators on the print, however, noted merely that the slogan “alluded to the alteration of the stile”, which “gave great displeasure throughout England”.³¹ The earliest commentary of all, a poem from 1759, portrays the disturbance as an election riot, not a calendar riot.³² The circumstances of the Oxfordshire election are discussed below, in the context of the political reaction to the calendar reform (for the county was one of the last strongholds of Jacobite Toryism). What is relevant here is that Hogarth’s print is a composite satire on the ignorance and deceit of the electoral process, drawing upon printed propaganda rather than upon observed crowd behaviour. It is not a depiction of a real riot, electoral or calendrical. The famous slogan, like so much else in Hogarth’s work, is an

²⁹ *World*, no. 10 (8 Mar. 1753), p. 56; no. 82 (25 July 1754), pp. 491-2. The reference to an earlier bill probably relates to 1699; see section II below.

³⁰ Paulson, *Hogarth*, iii, p. 164.

³¹ J. Trusler, *Hogarth Moralised* (London, 1768), p. 43. See also J. Nichols, *Biographical Anecdotes of William Hogarth*, 1st edn (London, 1781), p. 121; *ibid.*, 2nd edn (London, 1782), pp. 365-6.

³² Nichols, *Biographical Anecdotes of William Hogarth*, 3rd edn (London, 1785), pp. 338-44 (where it is also reported that Hogarth had said that only one of the characters was intended for a real portrait).

inspired invention, and perhaps also a product of Hogarth's life-long preoccupation with the symbolism of time.³³

It can be asserted with confidence that the calendar riots are a myth. In fact, the truth about "the legendary English time riots" was sniffed out some time ago by Paul Alkon, in the course of an essay arguing for a sophisticated time-awareness amongst the educated classes of eighteenth-century England.³⁴ It is more difficult to say where the riot myth came from, except that it seems to have developed by accretion as it was turned to different purposes. The weak eighteenth-century version of the myth, with "clamour" and "superstition" rather than actual rioting, emphasized the enlightened character of the measure by contrasting it with the ignorance and superstition of its opponents; in time, Hogarth's slogan made a natural addition to this tale.³⁵ It may be that the strong version of the myth, with real riots, was first aired by the barrister Scarlett, for whom sight of Hogarth's picture suggested a rhetorical opportunity to help damn the Peterloo defendants.³⁶ In the mid-nineteenth century, the Protestant mathematical writer Geoffrey de Morgan identified anti-popish sentiment as the cause of the riots, adding the picturesque detail that "the mob pursued the minister in his carriage, clamouring for the [eleven] days". This version probably gained its currency in the scientific world through being repeated in C. R. Weld's *History of the Royal Society* a few years later.³⁷ The still wider popularity of the story may well, as Alkon suggests, be traceable to its inclusion in W. E. H. Lecky's much-reprinted *History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, first published in 1878. Lecky,

³³ S. L. Macey, "Hogarth and the Iconography of Time", *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, v (1976), pp. 41-53.

³⁴ P. Alkon, "Changing the Calendar", *Eighteenth-Century Life*, vii (1981-2), pp. 1-18. Alkon's ground-breaking article came to hand during the course of my own work, and comes to similar conclusions in the context of a study of public awareness of science. Alkon points out that the problem with the modern commentators on Hogarth is not that they take Hogarth's depiction as one of a real election riot, but that they assume that Hogarth's portrait was inspired partly by real calendar riots elsewhere: *ibid.*, p. 18 n. 25. As will become apparent, however, while I agree with Alkon that "the English time riots" are a myth, I differ from his view that the reform was efficient and uncontroversial.

³⁵ See, for example, W. Coxe, *Memoirs of the Administration of Henry Pelham*, 2 vols. (London, 1829), ii, pp. 178-9.

³⁶ Scarlett specifically refers to the painting, which now hangs in Sir John Soane's Museum, London, rather than to the engraving.

³⁷ G. de Morgan, "On the Ecclesiastical Calendar", in *Companion to the [British] Almanack for 1845* (London, 1845), p. 12; C. R. Weld, *A History of the Royal Society*, 2 vols. (London, 1848), i, pp. 514-18.

however, may simply have been adding a rationalist gloss to a passage in an earlier work by Lord Mahon, a descendant of Chesterfield, for whom the episode illustrated the absurdity of anti-popery.³⁸ It is interesting to note that the strong version of the riot myth emerged at around the same time as another Protestant myth, characterized by Jeffrey Burton Russell as “the story of Christopher Columbus, the bold young rationalist who overcame ignorant and intractable churchmen and superstitious sailors” to prove that the earth was round.³⁹ Clearly, what is most interesting about the tales of calendar mobs is not what they show about the plebeians, but what they reveal of the attitudes of their educated authors and readers to the calendar issue.

To understand what really happened in the eighteenth century, four questions can be posed. First, how did thinking about calendar reform develop from rejection in 1583 to acceptance in 1752? Secondly, what did the calendar reform actually aim to do? Thirdly, what effect did the reform have on society? And fourthly, how much opposition did it generate?

II

First, then, how did thinking about the calendar change to enable the reform of 1752 to take place? The calendar is a complicated construction with a complex history, but an outline of the main lines of debate over the previous two centuries will be helpful.

The Gregorian calendar which England belatedly adopted in 1752 was in essence that promulgated in 1582 by Pope Gregory XIII. Issued as a papal bull carrying out part of the programme of the Council of Trent, the Gregorian reform has been described as “an act of the Counter-Reformation”. Owen Chadwick makes the same point: “The successful introduction of the Gregorian calendar”, he writes, “. . . is one test of the progress of the Counter-Reformation”.⁴⁰ The whole Christian church had

³⁸ W. E. H. Lecky, *A History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, 8 vols. (London, 1878-90), i, pp. 267-8; Alkon, “Changing the Calendar”, pp. 14-15; P. H. Stanhope (Lord Mahon), *History of England*, 7 vols. (London, 1836-54), iv, pp. 21-2.

³⁹ J. B. Russell, *Inventing the Flat Earth* (New York, 1991), p. 5.

⁴⁰ A. Ziggelaar, “The Papal Bull of 1582 Promulgating a Reform of the Calendar”, in G. V. Coyne, M. A. Hoskin and O. Pedersen (eds.), *Gregorian Reform of the Calendar: Proceedings of the Vatican Conference to Commemorate its 400th Anniversary, 1582-1982* (Vatican City, 1983), p. 227; O. Chadwick, *The Reformation* (London, 1964), pp. 302, 313.

adopted the Julian calendar at the Council of Nicaea in 325, as part of a project to fix a common date for Easter (an unfathomable issue which had long caused contention and even schism). The Julian calendar, however, was eleven minutes a year too long, and by the sixteenth century the error had accumulated to ten days. Compounded by lunar discrepancies, this meant that the Easter of the church often failed to correspond with that indicated by the heavens. The Gregorian reform removed the unbidden ten days from October 1582 to bring the calendar back into the same relationship with the heavens which it had borne in 325, and introduced a modified pattern of leap years to keep it there, as well as a new method of calculating the date of Easter (which remained the chief concern). Most Protestant states ignored the reform; even the Catholic ones for the most part adopted it at dates of their own choosing, and by civil decree.

In sixteenth- and seventeenth-century debates over the calendar, correct astronomical measurement was seen as an essential tool, but it was not the central issue. The key questions were theological: how important was exactitude in the observance of Christian festivals? Was the time of the Council of Nicaea an appropriate starting-point for the new calendar, or was the time of Christ more suitable? Above all, who had the authority to alter the calendar in the first place: the pope, the monarch, the national church, or only another general council? Despite this religious mine-field, England in fact came remarkably close to adopting the Gregorian reform the first time round. John Dee, the court magus, was asked by the privy council for his opinion. He responded with a substantial treatise which argued for a super-reformed Elizabethan calendar, corrected to the first century rather than the fourth by omitting eleven days rather than the Gregorian ten. Dee was optimistic that his calendar would in time oust the Gregorian, given an evolutionary advantage by its superior rationality, by its Protestant assumptions, and by England's imperial destiny. The council, however, was attracted by the diplomatic convenience of harmony with the Continent, and resolved to adopt the Gregorian calendar as it stood. A proclamation was drawn up, but the scheme was sunk by the opinion of the bishops consulted, who argued that "seeing all the reformed Churches in Europe for the most part do hold and affirme and preach that the Bishop of Rome is Antichrist, therefore we may not communicate with him in any thing", and held up the

possibility of a schism between England and the rest of the Protestant world.⁴¹ The English calendar was not, after all, reformed, and there the matter lay for another sixty years.

The next proposal to adopt the Gregorian calendar came, significantly, from the Laudian astronomer John Greaves during the Civil Wars. Dee's work had somehow come to his notice, and although he acknowledged the force of Dee's arguments for a distinctive English Protestant calendar he felt that the unity of Christian Europe came first, and urged that the Gregorian calendar be adopted. The privy council apparently approved of Greaves's proposal, but royalist Oxford in 1645 did not provide the ideal opportunity for the king to try to impose a popish calendar on his rebellious subjects, and once again the matter went no further.⁴²

The defeat of the king in the Civil Wars saw moves to reform the calendar in a Protestant and rational direction. The parliamentary religious calendar of the 1640s was entirely aseasonal, a monotonous round of monthly fast-days broken only by Guy Fawkes night.⁴³ A scheme for a radically reformed calendar had been mooted by the chronologer Thomas Lydiat as early as 1605,⁴⁴ but by the middle of the century the agenda had moved on to the abolition of saints' days and even of the pagan names of months and days, "as that instead of January, February, etc., Sunday, Monday, etc., we shall only say the first, second, etc., month or day". In the new Commonwealth, the dating of documents issued under the great seal was carried out according to a chronology in which 1649 was "the first year of freedom", but other schemes for calendar reform came to nothing; in the end,

⁴¹ John Dee, "A Playne Discourse and Humble Advise concerning the Needful Reformation of the Vulgar Kalender" (1583), Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS. Ashmole 1789, fos. 3-32. Other documents are conveniently reprinted in "Historical Notice of the Attempt Made by the English Government to Rectify the Calendar, A.D. 1584-5", *Gentleman's Mag.*, new ser., xxxvi (1851), pp. 451-9. The episode is dealt with in R. Poole, "John Dee and the English Calendar", unpubd paper, York Conference on Cultural History, "Imagining Nations", Apr. 1995.

⁴² "An Extract of Two Letters, from Dr. John Wallis", *Phil. Trans. Roy. Soc.*, xxi (1699), pp. 343-54; "The Report Made by the Lord Treasurer Burleigh . . . of the Consultation had, and the Examination of the Plain and Brief Discourse by John Dee", *ibid.*, pp. 355-6; John Greaves, "Reflexions Made on the Foregoing Paper", *ibid.*, pp. 356-9; copies of the two preceding documents in Bodleian Lib., MS. Savile 47, fos. 61-2; *Miscellaneous Works of John Greaves*, ed. T. Birch (London, 1737), p. xii.

⁴³ Hutton, *Rise and Fall of Merry England*, p. 212.

⁴⁴ F. A. Johnson, *Astronomical Thought in Renaissance England*, 2nd edn (New York, 1968), p. 321; for a later version, see Bodleian Lib., MS. Bodley 671, fos. 1-18.

it was only the Quakers who adopted a numerical calendar purged of all un-Christian associations.⁴⁵

Calendar reform next became a major issue at the end of the seventeenth century. 1700 was a leap year in the Julian calendar but not in the Gregorian, so the difference between the two was set to widen from ten days to eleven. During the period of relative political and religious calm which followed the Peace of Ryswick, the Protestant states of the Empire decided to adopt a reformed calendar. The imperial Diet, however, insisted that its reform could not "be interpreted as accepting of the Gregorian *cyclus*", since its basis was claimed to be improved astronomical observations — which just happened to be in line with those of the Vatican. Crucially, the Protestant Easter was to be determined astronomically rather than by the Gregorian formula; the Roman Catholic concept of a unified civil and liturgical calendar under ecclesiastical authority was thus rejected.⁴⁶

The German measure touched off widespread debate in England, and there was talk at Westminster of a calendar reform bill as imminent in the autumn of 1699. The Diet contacted William III to encourage England to follow suit. When this failed to elicit a response, they approached the Royal Society for support through Leibniz, who had recently persuaded the Elector Frederick to set up an academy of sciences in Berlin to be funded by a monopoly on the new almanacs.⁴⁷ Newton became interested enough to produce his own scheme for a radically reformed calendar, as well as a draft bill which was in important respects similar to that which was actually successful fifty years later.⁴⁸ The religious alarms of the period, however, hampered calendar reform. Crucial interventions were made by John Wallis, former Puritan, a mathematician, theologian and veteran controversialist, and now a formidably well-connected Savilian professor of geometry at Oxford. Wallis's basic objection to the Gregorian

⁴⁵ J. Brinsley, *Calendar-Reformation* (London, 1648); D. Underdown, *Pride's Purge* (Oxford, 1971), pp. 260-1.

⁴⁶ *The Philosophical Transactions and Collections . . . Abridg'd*, 3 vols. (London, 1700-5), iii, pp. 408-9; but see also the fuller text in Royal Society, London, Classified Papers xvi, item 10, "The Conclusion of the Protestant States of the Empire of the 23^d of 7^{ber} [i.e., 23 Sept.] 1699 concerning the Calendar".

⁴⁷ Roy. Soc., Letter-Book Copy xii, pp. 314-15, Leibniz to Sloane, 20/30 Jan. 1700; *Biographia Britannica*, 6 vols. (London, 1747-66), iii, pp. 137-8.

⁴⁸ Newton's writings on the calendar are collected on Cambridge University Library, microfilm 890; for a list, see D. Brewster, *Memoirs of Isaac Newton*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1855), ii, pp. 311-12.

calendar was the “latent Popish Interest” which lay behind it; he argued forcefully that the Church of England should remain faithful to the exact rule laid down by the Council of Nicaea. He also pointed out that the English calendar would, if reformed, differ from that of the Scots, so that the need to maintain two reckonings would remain.⁴⁹ Amongst supporters of calendar reform, Dee’s improved version remained the favoured option, perhaps because of anxieties over the distinctive identity of the Church of England.⁵⁰ Once again, no agreement could be reached on reforming the calendar.

The first half of the eighteenth century saw a broad trend in calendrical writings away from the religious and towards the astronomical. Too much should not be made of all this for the early part of the century. This age of religious insecurity was also the age of Anglican devotional manuals, works characterized by a minute interest in the correct observance of fasts and festivals and by an encyclopaedic approach to the problems of the calendar.⁵¹ A number of broadly sympathetic works on calendar reform did appear, but most continued to mix astronomy with theology and chronology, and the solutions offered varied accordingly.⁵² The mid-1730s, however, saw a distinct change in the prevailing tone, and several works appeared whose main purpose was to enable the reader to outflank the complexities of the calendar by means of astronomical explanation, conversion tables

⁴⁹ I plan to write about this episode elsewhere. Wallis’s manuscripts are in the archives of the Royal Society and in the Bodleian Library; key items are reprinted in James Hodgson, *Introduction to Chronology* (London, 1747), pp. 63–79, and in “A Letter of Dr. John Wallis, of May 14. 1698. to Sir John Blencowe . . . concerning the Observation of Easter for this Present Year”, *Phil. Trans. Roy. Soc.*, xx (1698), pp. 185–9. See also n. 42 above.

⁵⁰ Roy. Soc., Classified Papers xvi, item 11 (also Register Book ix, pp. 68–71), [Thomas Smith, M.P.], “The Case of the Style or Kalendar Stated and humbly Offered to the Consideration of the Honourable House of Commons”; Bodleian Lib., MS. Smith 66, fos. 45–9, Thomas Smith to John Wallis, Jr, 6 Dec. 1699, 24 Dec. 1700; MS. Smith 54, fo. 65, John Wallis, Jr, to Thomas Smith, 9 Jan. 1701.

⁵¹ Robert Nelson, *Fasts and Festivals of the Church of England* (London, 1704); J. Johnson, *The Clergy-Man’s Vade-Mecum* (London, 1706); “N. B. Philomath”, *Observations on Time, Sacred and Profane* (London, 1709); Charles Wheatly, *A Rational Illustration of the Book of Common Prayer* (Oxford, 1710).

⁵² “Philichronos”, *The Reformed Kalendar* (London, 1701); John Keill, *Introduction to the True Astronomy* (Oxford, 1721); Edmund Weaver, *The British Telescope: An Almanack* (London, 1721); “Duncan Campbell” [i.e., Daniel Defoe], *Time’s Telescope* (London, 1734); Robert Browne, *Propositions for Correcting our Calendar* (London, 1736).

and perpetual calendars.⁵³ The term “calendar” became less likely to signify the whole cultural edifice and more likely to refer simply to the chronometrical framework. For the basic system of numbering the days and years the neutral term “style” (or “stile”) came to be used, and to “alter the style” implied much less than to “reform the calendar”. Less was heard of the divine symmetry of the heavens and more of their complex irregularity: inexplicable, perhaps, but certainly measurable. The emphasis was not on theological correctness or temporal synthesis but on simple conversion — from Julian to Gregorian, civil to religious, solar to lunar, with planetary motion as measured by astronomers the only reliable common currency.

Convenience at length prevailed over idealism. The first major impulse towards calendar reform came through its least controversial aspect: the difference between the start of the civil year on the Continent on 1 January and that in England on 25 March. Strictly speaking, this was not part of the Gregorian reform but a matter of local custom; indeed, Presbyterian Scotland had readily adopted this aspect of the continental calendar in 1600, in line with “all utheris weill governit commoun welthis and cuntreys” (England, of course, excluded).⁵⁴ In England, 1 January was regarded as New Year’s Day by diarists and almanac-makers, and also marked the start of the liturgical year; 25 March was “the lawyers’ computation”.⁵⁵ The union of the two countries in 1707 thus created one state with two different legal calendars. The purely secular issue of the confusion which the different starts to the year caused within Great Britain, and between Britain and other countries, prompted the chronological handbook *The Remembrancer* to call in 1735 for calendar reform, a call taken up

⁵³ Henry Wilson, *The Regulation of Easter* (London, 1735); Charles Leadbetter, *Uranoscopia* (London, 1735); Robert Tailfer, *True and Correct Tables of Time* (London, 1736); *The Complete Pocket Companion and Universal Almanack* (London, 1738).

⁵⁴ *Register of the Privy Council of Scotland*, ed. J. H. Burton and D. Masson, 1st ser., 14 vols. (Edinburgh, 1877-98), vi, p. 63.

⁵⁵ A. F. Pollard, “New Year’s Day and Leap Year in English History”, *Eng. Hist. Rev.*, lv (1940), pp. 177-93; W. W. Greg, “Old Style — New Style”, in his *Collected Papers*, ed. J. C. Maxwell (Oxford, 1966), pp. 366-73. Against this, there were occasional complaints that the feast of the circumcision was not an appropriate start to the Christian year, or that starting the year on 1 January miscounted the number of years since the nativity: Johnson, *Clergy-Man’s Vade-Mecum*, 3rd edn (London, 1709), p. 198, citing the examples of 1705-6 and 1706-7; Keill, *Introduction to the True Astronomy*, pp. 365-6; Wilson, *Regulation of Easter*, pp. 25-7.

by the *Gentleman's Magazine*.⁵⁶ As for the calendar as a whole, as late as the 1740s the Protestant reform of John Dee seems to have been more strongly favoured than the Gregorian, but in practice writers were by now willing to allow pragmatic considerations, particularly those of foreign trade, to override this. The old calendar with its complications and controversies had not gone away, but it was outflanked by its younger relation, the style.

The immediate instigator of the calendar reform of 1752 was Lord Chesterfield, notorious as a wit, cynic and importer of foreign culture and fashions. During a recent term as ambassador in Paris, he had found it tiresome to work with two styles of dating, and his rationalist and cosmopolitan inclinations led him to seek to remove "the inconvenient and disgraceful errors of our present calendar" by simply bringing Britain in line with the Continent.⁵⁷ Chesterfield was careful to enlist an impressive array of scientific authorities to help draft the Act, including Martin Folkes, the president of the Royal Society, his successor-to-be Lord Macclesfield, the eminent amateur astronomer, and James Bradley, the Astronomer Royal. Crucially, however, the issue was taken up by Edward Cave, the editor of the influential *Gentleman's Magazine*, who encouraged debate about calendar reform and canvassed various schemes of rationalization before coming down in favour of the Gregorian option on the grounds of simple harmony with the Continent.⁵⁸

The principal parliamentary debate on Chesterfield's bill took place in the House of Lords on 18 March 1751, with seventy-three bishops and peers present to hear Macclesfield and Chesterfield explain the measure.⁵⁹ Two of the three main components of the Act⁶⁰ required little explanation. The commencement of the official year on 1 January instead of 25 March was a convenience in line with common practice, with no real ideological

⁵⁶ *The Remembrancer* (London, 1735); "Urbanus Sylvan.", *Gentleman's Mag.*, original ser., v (1735), pp. 3-4.

⁵⁷ *Letters of Lord Chesterfield to Lord Huntingdon*, ed. A. F. Stewart (London, 1923), p. 39; see also *The Letters of Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield*, ed. J. Bradshaw, 3 vols. (London, 1892), i, pp. 410, 417-20 (Chesterfield to his son, 28 Feb., 18 Mar. 1750-1 O.S.), ii, pp. 984-5 (Chesterfield to Mme de Monconseil, 11 Apr. 1751 N.S.).

⁵⁸ See n. 67 below. As late as 1753, Cave published a proposal for a rationalized calendar: "H. J.", *The Pancrometer, or Universal Georgian Calendar* (London, 1753).

⁵⁹ *Lords Jls*, 18 Mar. 1751; for press reports, see, for example, *General Evening Post*, 19, 23 Feb., 30 Mar., 4 Apr. 1751.

⁶⁰ 24 Geo. II, c. 23.

implications. The new Easter, more surprisingly, did not feature in public debate, perhaps because few people understood how Easter worked anyway. Care was taken, however, to defuse the issue. The papal origins of the calendar were glossed over, and whilst the involvement of British experts was trumpeted, that of the Roman Catholic mathematician Father Charles Walmesley was hushed up.⁶¹ Further to conceal the Roman connection, a peculiarly British system for determining the date of Easter was drawn up to be inserted in the Book of Common Prayer, different from the Gregorian in execution but identical in effect: “the papal calendar with the papal moon omitted”, as a later writer put it.⁶² All this had been carefully squared by the astronomers with Archbishop Herring of Canterbury, to whom it had been explained as a technical correction which left intact the traditional Anglican method of calculating Easter by golden numbers.⁶³ As for the provision to remove eleven days, Chesterfield avoided engaging with past debates about the calendar, relying instead on his oratorical ability and on Macclesfield’s reassuringly weighty astronomical exposition. The whole package was designed to avoid all possible cause for controversy by appealing to their lordships’ sense of progress, science and even patriotism, and to the interests of British trade and influence.⁶⁴ Minor amendments were made in the Commons. The Act applied to the whole of Great Britain, the colonies and dominions.⁶⁵

The management of the bill was certainly a success, and it has been accepted ever since as a straightforward and rational piece of legislation. The élite consensus of the period over the correct measurement of time has parallels in the drawing together of the legal, political and religious language of time into an ordered awareness of a common historical “public time”, perceived by

⁶¹ On Walmesley, see Langford, *Polite and Commercial People*, p. 281; G. Scott, “‘The Times are Fast Approaching’: Bishop Charles Walmesley OSB (1722-1797) as Prophet”, *Jl Eccles. Hist.*, xxxvi (1985), pp. 590-604.

⁶² De Morgan, “On the Ecclesiastical Calendar”, p. 3.

⁶³ Lambeth Palace Library, London, MS. 951, items 2-3.

⁶⁴ W. Cobbett, *The Parliamentary History of England from the Earliest Period to the Year 1803*, 36 vols. (London, 1806-20), xiv, cols. 979-92; George Parker, earl of Macclesfield, *Remarks upon the Solar and Lunar Years* (London, 1751).

⁶⁵ In Ireland, where the old style was also in use until 1752, it is reported that “exception was taken to the inclusion of Ireland in the British Act”, but the parliamentary opposition decided not to pursue the issue: J. L. McCracken, “Protestant Ascendancy and the Rise of Colonial Nationalism, 1714-60”, in *A New History of Ireland*, iv, *Eighteenth-Century Ireland, 1691-1800*, ed. T. W. Moody and W. E. Vaughan (Oxford, 1986), p. 119.

Pocock for the earlier eighteenth century.⁶⁶ However, whilst the intellectual problem of the calendar had been simplified and overcome, the solution still had to be applied to a messy reality. There was not one calendar in Britain but many — legal, financial, courtly, civic, liturgical, agricultural, manorial, recreational — and one rule would not necessarily do for all.

III

Our second question was: what did the calendar reform actually aim to do? The start of the year was easily changed, and since it was in line with everyday practice no objections whatsoever were recorded. Easter was harder to change on paper, but once achieved the alteration was little noticed in practice, for it continued to circulate within the same range of dates in the same more or less incomprehensible way. The adjustment of the date was what caused the real problems. The beginning of the first reformed year in 1752 was the occasion for a bout of self-congratulation in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, which published an engraved frontispiece with a poem lauding Cave's role in the affair; he had, it was claimed, found a stile fallen awry and set it straight again, to the eternal benefit of travellers.⁶⁷ The actual reform, however, was not quite so simple. The eleven days from 3 to 13 September inclusive were omitted in 1752, a period chosen to avoid conflict with any major festivals and with the law-terms. Wednesday 2 September was followed by Thursday 14 September. The basic principle was that all events fixed to a particular date stayed on that date, while the calendar itself was pulled forward eleven days. Thus Guy Fawkes Night still fell on 5 November, but 5 November itself fell eleven days earlier in

⁶⁶ J. G. A. Pocock, "Modes of Political and Historical Time in Early Eighteenth-Century England", *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, v (1976), p. 88.

⁶⁷ "T. W.", *Gentleman's Mag.*, original ser., xiv (1744), p. 140; "Hirossa Ap-Iccini", "An Essay on the British Computations of Time, Coin, Weights and Measures", *ibid.*, xv (1745), pp. 377-9; W. Chapple, "An Enquiry into the Imperfections of the English Calendar", *ibid.*, xvii (1747), pp. 125-8; "A Summary of the Disquisitions relating to the Church of England", *ibid.*, xx (1750), p. 165; "Historical Chronicle, February 1751", *ibid.*, xxi (1751), p. 89; "Substance of the Bill Brought into the H. of Peers, for Regulating the Commencement of the Year, and Correcting the Calendar", *ibid.*, pp. 105-7; "Properantia", "To the Rambler", *ibid.*, pp. 127-8 (see n. 130 below); "Christophil Philochrone", letter, *ibid.*, pp. 167-9; "Substance of a Letter in the General Evening Post, March 30", *ibid.*, pp. 169-70; "Objections to the Preceding Arguments", *ibid.*, pp. 170-2; "Publicola", letter, *ibid.*, p. 610; frontispiece and preface, *ibid.*, xxii (1752), unpaginated.

the autumn, on what had been 25 October. However, a second and contrary principle operated, that no property rights were to be affected. All financial transactions would run their full *natural* term, regardless of the eleven missing days, and expire eleven *nominal* days later. "Property" was defined widely in the eighteenth century, so this provision applied not only to rents, wages and bills but also to grazing rights, and even to inheritance on attaining the age of majority. It also, crucially, applied to all fairs, which were to maintain their place in the natural year and thus change their nominal date. Thus (for example) a labourer hired at Michaelmas 1751 (29 September) would receive his final instalment of wages a full 365 days later (9 October 1752) and then attend a hiring-fair at Old Michaelmas (10 October) to begin his next year's contract.

Financial considerations were not the only reason for effectively exempting fairs from the calendar reform. Another was set out in an explanatory pamphlet of 1753, *A Letter to a Person of Scrupulous Conscience about the Time of Keeping Christmas, according to the New-Style*. The author, William Parker, explained that although the change of style was a mere technicality, "no more than setting your clock forward when it was too slow", it was inappropriate to apply the New Style universally:

The Fair, for instance, may be appointed, by the stated day in the almanack, for the sale of his wool, before the sheep are fit to be sheared: A Fair may be appointed for the sale of fruits before they are fit to be gathered; or for cheese, or cattle, before they are come to their perfection, fit for sale. Therefore you may observe, it is provided, upon the present alteration of Stile, that the [nominal] days of many fairs shall be changed in proportion to that alteration.⁶⁸

In effect, then, the calendar was half reformed. Social and legal activities of all sorts were to be moved forwards with the New Style, but economic and agricultural activities, including fairs, stayed with the Old. This somewhat artificial division caused unforeseen problems, and there was a flurry of legislative tinkering even before the reform had taken effect. The original Act had failed to state what should happen to events due to fall on the eleven missing days in September; an amending Act laid down that, for 1752 only, these were now to take place according to the old calendar.⁶⁹ There was also a drafting ambiguity to be

⁶⁸ [W. Parker], *A Letter to a Person of Scrupulous Conscience about the Time of Keeping Christmas, according to the New-Style* (London, 1753).

⁶⁹ 25 Geo. II, c. 30.

cleared up relating to the special case of fairs linked to Easter: should they move with the new Easter, or stay with the old? They were told to move. A separate "Act to Abbreviate Michaelmas Term" chose the occasion of the calendar reform to remove the unproductive opening days from the Michaelmas law-term, bringing its start almost in line with the old calendar once more.⁷⁰ Next, an unforeseen consequence of the combined provisions of the calendar Act and the Michaelmas term Act was that the City of London's two-day mayor-making ceremonies were split asunder. Traditionally the new lord mayor was sworn in the day before the Michaelmas term began and presented to the Court of Exchequer on the following day. The swearing-in of the new lord mayor now had to take place on 28 October New Style, while his presentation moved back with the shortened law-term from 29 October to 9 November. The amending Act moved the swearing-in to 8 November. Something similar happened to Chester's mayoral ceremony on the Friday after St Denis's Day (9 October), rudely divorced from its associated fair which now took place on the Friday after Old St Denis's Day (20 October). The measure to remedy this in 1753 was hurriedly tacked on to an Act for preventing the spread of cattle distemper.⁷¹ Finally, the calendar reform upset the white-herring-fishing season. The recently incorporated Association of Free British Fisheries found that under the Act its boats were obliged to put out and return eleven natural days earlier than intended. Whilst the movements of British boats could be subjected to the reformed calendar, those of foreign boats apparently could not, and the more productive end of the season was lost to foreign competition. This, too, needed legislation to correct it.⁷² The legislators' concern with the rights of property had outreached their desire for a neat reform.

IV

Our third question was: what effect did the calendar reform have on society? Here one must draw a distinction between the surface

⁷⁰ 24 Geo. II, c. 48. The start was put back by ten days.

⁷¹ 26 Geo. II, c. 34.

⁷² 26 Geo. II, c. 9; *Commons Jls*, 23 Feb., 5 Mar., 28 Mar. 1753. The relevant clause stated only that the fisheries "ought to be regulated by the calendar now in use". It is not clear whether it was intended that the fishing season should be treated as a species of property right and returned to the Old Style time, or that foreign boats should also be subject to the earlier New Style season.

adjustment to the change in date — the style — and the more profound readjustment of the calendar as a whole that took place around it. In so far as it concerned the change of style alone, the reform went ahead smoothly, as Alkon has shown. Redating caused few problems and the need for adjustment was appreciated throughout the literate classes.⁷³ Nearly every journal, newspaper and almanac carried a detailed official summary of the provisions of the Act. Few educated people can have failed to be aware of the change, or of the legislators' intention for it to be an exercise in recalibration which would have no effect on actual events. Astronomers themselves had little use for the vulgar calendar; the duty observer at Greenwich silently noted the start of the New Style in the ledger.⁷⁴ Diarists and correspondents incorporated the change without fuss; 1 January was already commonly regarded as New Year's Day. For the Quakers, who numbered the months rather than using their "heathen" names, January had to become "the first month" instead of "the eleventh month", but the governing meeting in London adopted the new convention without demur, and it was efficiently disseminated on both sides of the Atlantic.⁷⁵

Ironically, it was government that first ran into trouble with the new calendar. Despite explicit instructions in the Act that anniversaries should be observed according to the New Style, on the King's personal decision his official birthday was put back from 11 to 22 June to avoid shortening the regnal year. The royal printer held out for a sign-manual warrant for the necessary alterations to the Book of Common Prayer, and the new edition waited on the presses for over a fortnight as the archbishop of Canterbury waited vainly at court to catch the sleeve of the duke

⁷³ Alkon, "Changing the Calendar", p. 12.

⁷⁴ Cambridge Univ. Lib., Royal Greenwich Observatory MS. RGO 3/5, fo. 50^r. I am grateful for this item to the archivist of the Royal Greenwich Observatory, A. J. Perkins. Ironically, astronomers, whose authority was cited for the calendar reform, themselves kept up the idiosyncratic practice of starting the day at mid-day until the twentieth century.

⁷⁵ *To the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of the Friends in Great Britain, Ireland and America* (London, 1751). See also, for example, the diary of James Backhouse and the minutes of the Tortola meeting in the West Indies: "The Diary of James Backhouse, 1747-1752", *Jl Friends Hist. Soc.*, xv (1918), p. 24; C. F. Jenkins, *Tortola: A Quaker Experiment (Jl Friends Hist. Soc. Suppl. xiii, London, 1923)*, p. 40. A side-effect of this was that Friends ceased to use the names of the months from September to December, since their position in the reformed year conflicted with their literal Latin meaning. My thanks are due to Dr R. H. Poole for help on this point.

of Newcastle.⁷⁶ In the Treasury, joint secretary James West considered the effects of the Act on the public purse. Old salaries, he deduced, would fall due on the Old Style feast-days and quarter-days, but new ones on the New: “this will make an odd jumble in Annuities and other payments at the Exchequer”. Furthermore, different taxes were voted from different dates, while the navy estimates, traditionally covering thirteen months, defied recalculation. West eventually drew up a table of abatements for the eleven missing days, amounting to sevenpence in the pound, which would shorten the financial year 1752-3 and allow payments to keep to their existing nominal dates. This, he noted, would save the Treasury £29,166 13s. 4d. in every £1,000,000 paid out. Further deducting fractions of a farthing would yield another £887 19s. 6¾d. This scheme, however, ran against the provisions of the Act that financial transactions should run their full natural term, so the national accounts continued to be made up to end on the Old Style quarter-days of 5 January, 5 April, 5 July and 10 October, creating the unique British financial year whose basis continues to defy general comprehension.⁷⁷ The excise commissioners for Scotland decided on a similar scheme and began to make up the returns for the duties on malt and other commodities to 23 June New Style, abating salaries and other bills accordingly; after correspondence with London, however, this decision too was abandoned.⁷⁸

Government officials were not alone in appreciating the convenience of a system of abatements.⁷⁹ Tables of abatements for the eleven missing days were widely published in the press and reprinted by popular demand, notwithstanding the provisions of

⁷⁶ Public Record Office, London (hereafter P.R.O.), S.P. 36/116, fo. 310; 36/117, fo. 120; 44/156, fos. 106-8.

⁷⁷ Brit. Lib., Add. MS. 34,736, fos.46-50, James West Treasury papers; P.R.O., Treasury Board Papers, T30 12, national accounts, 1750-5, bearing numerous marks of confusion. The twelve- rather than eleven-day discrepancy between the start of the old year (25 March) and that of the modern financial year (6 April) has caused puzzlement, with “deeply conservative tax accountants” and the leap year of 1752 ingeniously offered as explanations: *Guardian*, 3 Sept., 15 Oct. 1990. In fact, 25 March was first day of the year but the last day of the financial quarter, corresponding to 5 April; the difference was thus exactly eleven days.

⁷⁸ P.R.O., Treasury Board Papers, T1 351/33; 352/33.

⁷⁹ Indeed, Newton’s draft scheme for calendar reform (mentioned above) had envisaged payments being abated to fit the New Style dates, although the abortive 1583 scheme did not: *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic, 1581-90*, p. 107, draft proclamation, 28 Apr. 1583.

the Act.⁸⁰ Such information, like notes of the old quarter-days and festivals, was part of the basic equipment of the well-organized gentleman and tradesman.⁸¹ The loss of sevenpence in the pound, or three per cent, on an annual wage was quite significant, and that of two-and-fourpence in the pound on a quarterly wage, or twelve per cent, even more so. The logic would doubtless have escaped servants who simply found their pay nearly a fortnight light. Only the Jacobite *True Briton* queried this.⁸² An anonymous Bristol poet analysed the possible confusions with exaggeration, but also with some percipience:

*Three Market Days unto the Farmer's lost,
Yet three per Cent. is added to his Cost:
The Landlord calls for Rent before 'tis due,
King's Tax, and Windows, Poor, and Parson too;
With Numbers more, our Grandsiers never knew.
Domestick Servants all will have their Pay,
And force their Masters e're the Quarter Day.*

How shall the Wretch, then glean his Harvest in,
His Cash expended e're he does begin; . . .
Or how the Miser cram his Bags with Pelf,
If that he don't receive it first himself?⁸³

A correspondent in the *London Magazine* reported that landlords in his county were letting 1751-2 leases expire at Old Michaelmas but beginning 1752-3 leases at New Michaelmas, effectively charging twice for the overlapping eleven days, and claiming the authority of parliament for doing so; the writer blamed "lawyers, astrologers and conjurors" for "this jumping September".⁸⁴ In Colchester, the burgesses of the town took advantage of the calendar change to prosecute a dispute over grazing rights with poor squatters on the common. Contrary to the Act, the burgesses began exercising their rights from New Lammas Day (1 August),

⁸⁰ *Felix Farley's Bristol JI*, 16, 21 Sept. 1752, 10 Mar. 1753.

⁸¹ R. Dodsley, *The New Memorandum Book Improved, or Gentleman's and Tradesman's Daily Pocket Journal for the Year 1753* (London, 1753).

⁸² *True Briton*, 20 Sept. 1752. The end-point of a rather tortuous argument was that the abatements should have been greater. The journal adopted the New Style and supported the reform, pointing out only that the Gregorian calendar was still slightly inaccurate.

⁸³ *Felix Farley's Bristol JI*, 23 Aug. - 16 Sept. 1752 ("Miracles proved not to be ceased . . . by a gentleman of Bristol").

⁸⁴ "Roger Plowland", "From the *London Gazetteer*, to the Fool", *London Mag., or Gentleman's Monthly Intelligencer*, original ser., xxi (1752), pp. 418-19.

rather than Old Lammas (12 August), turning their cattle out on to the standing corn of the squatters.⁸⁵

It is hard to tell how widespread was such sharp practice. The point to be made about such examples, however, is that they expose a significant dislocation between the calendar year and the natural year. Supporters of the reform argued that the calendar had already run out of line with the seasons, and that if not corrected Christmas would eventually be held at Midsummer. The eighteenth-century calendar, however, was of more recent vintage than its Julian framework. The agricultural, civil and ecclesiastical calendars had developed symbiotically in recent centuries, since when the drift in date had been only slight. (Why, asked one pedant, should the anniversary of the great fire of London be moved eleven days when it had barely drifted by one since 1666?)⁸⁶ A pamphlet published against the calendar reform objected that it would make “a chasm in the year”:

Poetical astronomy has long been disused . . . by this the Ancients were made sensible of the Return of the Seasons, their proper Seed and Harvest Time, without so much as knowing the Day of the Month; But now every Sign and Season of the Year is known of Course, by the corresponding Day of the Month; but should we remove all those Land-Marks, with which we are so well acquainted, and fix new and very distant Ideas to every Degree of the Solar Circle . . . and till we are perfectly acquainted again with the identical State of Nature, even the Brute Creation may be reasonably supposed superior to us.⁸⁷

Allowing for rhetoric, the author had a point. As Bernard Capp has observed:

In the early modern period, awareness of the passage of time still came primarily from nature . . . Holy days often had a wider significance, in marking the date when a fair was held, a lease expired or rent was due. They often provided the basis for the farming calendar, reminding the countryman when ploughing or some other task should be begun or ended.⁸⁸

Eleven days were quite a long time in the agricultural year, and their removal marked a significant dislocation between the human

⁸⁵ Essex Record Office, Chelmsford, D/Y/2/2, cited in S. D’Cruze, “The Middling Sort in Provincial England: Politics and Social Relations in Colchester, 1730-1800” (Essex Univ. Ph.D. thesis, 1979), pp. 373-4. My thanks to Shani D’Cruze for this reference.

⁸⁶ Revd John Lindsay, *The Happy Interview* (London, 1756), pp. 9-10.

⁸⁷ *A Defence of the Old-Style, or Julian Account of Time, in a Letter to a Member of Parliament* (London, 1751). The pamphlet is anonymous, but was published by William Owen, an anti-establishment figure who would eventually capitalize on the calendar change to compile his standard *Book of Fairs* (see pp. 125-6 and n. 107 below).

⁸⁸ Capp, *Astrology and the Popular Press*, pp. 283-4.

and natural calendars.⁸⁹ In the first edition of the popular *Gardener's Kalendar* to be published after the reform, the author explained:

In this edition, I have through the whole made an allowance for the eleven days which are abated in the *New Style*, so that the times of performing the works as also of the products, &c. are adapted to the present times of the Almanack; for as the success of some crops depends upon their seeds being sown, on or near particular days, so the alteration of eleven days in their performance would be attended with a total miscarriage.⁹⁰

As late as the 1960s, the dean of Ripon found his gardener using *Old St Barnabas's Day* (22 June) as a guide to planting: "Can't help what they do up in t'Cathedral. Allus plants spuds on Barnaby-bright — longest day, shortest night".⁹¹

This was not merely a rustic problem, to be solved by rewriting proverbs. The seasonality of agriculture had knock-on effects throughout the economy. In south-eastern England, the advancing practice of seeding immediately after harvest was already proving difficult to complete before the Michaelmas hirings. Had these come forward to New Michaelmas, the task would have been more difficult; as it was, William Marshall in Essex found even Old Michaelmas too early.⁹² Ann Kussmaul has demonstrated how the peak marriage seasons in rural areas followed the main seasons for labour hiring: Michaelmas (29 September) and Martinmas (11 November) in arable districts, Lady Day (25 March) and May Day in pastoral districts. Ninety per cent of all labour hirings in the eighteenth century ran from one of these four major festivals. The effect of the calendar reform in pushing back the nominal date of marriage complicated her work on marriage patterns, as people continued to be hired and married according to the season rather than the date.⁹³

⁸⁹ At this period, the Japanese agricultural year was divided into fortnights, each with a seasonally appropriate name: R. M. Brandon and B. Stephan, *Spirit and Symbol: The Japanese New Year* (Honolulu, 1994), pp. 11–12.

⁹⁰ Philip Miller, *The Gardener's Kalendar . . . Tenth Edition, Adapted to the New Style* (London, 1754), pp. xi–xii.

⁹¹ T. S. Pattie, "An Unexpected Effect of the Change of Calendar in 1752", *Brit. Lib. Jl*, ii (1976), pp. 27–8.

⁹² A. Kussmaul, *Servants in Husbandry in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 50–1; W. Marshall, *Minutes of Agriculture Made on a Farm near Croydon* (London, 1778), entries for 10–12 Oct. 1775, 10 Oct. 1776. Kussmaul identifies these problems as stemming from the the calendar change, but in fact Marshall is writing at *Old Michaelmas*; it is the forward drift in seed-time (noted by Kussmaul) that is the problem, not the New or Old Style hirings.

⁹³ Kussmaul, *General View of the Rural Economy of England*, chs. 1–2, esp. pp. 23–4. Kussmaul regards the difference for three of her four sets of average dates as not statistically significant, but statistical "cloud cover" may be obscuring the view here.

(cont. on p. 121)

The practice of almanac-makers in continuing to note Old Style festivals is an interesting pointer, and the way that their practice took a few years to settle down after 1752 is an indication of the difference between expectations of the effects of the calendar reform and actual practice. Before 1750, around half had carried dual columns of dates, typically headed "English account" and "foreign" or "Roman account". In 1753 all of them dropped this practice, carrying instead standard explanations of the reform. The next year, however, dual columns began to appear once more, and for the next twenty-five years or so around a quarter of all almanacs carried dual dates. The demand, however, was not so much for direct conversion as for information about the main Old Style festivals and quarter-days. The Graph shows the frequency with which the main national almanacs mentioned ten Old Style festivals in the second half of the eighteenth century: Christmas Day, New Year's Day, Twelfth Day, Candlemas, Lady Day, May Day, Midsummer Day, Lammas, Michaelmas and Martinmas. These had been mentioned almost universally in the almanacs before 1752. Over the sixteen almanacs published in 1753, the Old Style dates of these festivals, taken together, received 123 mentions out of a possible 160: 77 per cent. By 1755 this had declined to 61 per cent, as if such information was felt to be less useful once the change was assimilated.⁹⁴ This perception did not last, however, for the rate of mentions soon recovered, and remained at over 80 per cent until c.1780. The reason for this becomes clearer if we look at the types of festivals that were noted most often. Mentions of the four old quarter-days (Christmas, Lady Day, Midsummer and Michaelmas) were running at over 90 per cent during this period. The author of *A Supplement to the Several Almanacks for 1752*, whilst attacking the observance of popish holy days, explained the value of recording the old quarter-days:

And it is to be remembered that this Act does in no wise effect [*sic*] the Quarter Days, although the Feasts on which they depend, are altered eleven days sooner in the New Style, yet the old Days are marked in the

(*n. 93 cont.*)

The biggest shift of 0.16 months is equivalent to five days, quite significant as an average difference in terms of time.

⁹⁴ This count is based on the bound volumes of almanacs in the Bodleian Library and the British Library, numbering sixteen in 1753 and eight in 1800. Owing to varying availability, the composition of the sample varies slightly, and the choice of years, whilst frequent, is not regular, but there appears to be no particular bias in the results.

Almanacks with Red Letters, and called Old Michaelmas, Martinmas, &c., which are to be observed in settling of Estates, Payments of Annuities, Rents, Bonds, Notes, &c. till such Accounts are become void, or agreed upon according to the New Style.⁹⁵

The other six old saints' days (Candlemas, May Day, Lammas, Martinmas, Old New Year's Day and Old Twelfth Day) were mentioned less frequently, some 70-80 per cent of the time overall. Their significance was more festive and less economic than that of the old quarter-days, but many fairs also clustered around these dates.⁹⁶ The fiercely Protestant almanac-maker Henry Season urged others to follow his example and delete Old Style feasts from their almanacs and denounced those of his parishioners who observed them as "apes", but most did not follow his lead and ten years later the almanac bearing his name was more or less back in line with the rest.⁹⁷ The almanac *Old Poor Robin* continued to print the standard explanation of the calendar reform into the 1780s, and revived it as late as 1800, explaining that "people expect now to pay their rents and other matters on the 5th of April, the 10th of October, &c. just as they did before on the 25th of March, the 29th of September, &c.", a state of affairs which had "gone on very smoothly and regularly from the year 1752 to the present time".⁹⁸

Fairs, as we have seen, were specifically exempted from the calendar reform; that is, they were to change their nominal date to retain the same place in the season, thus in effect observing the Old Style. Most did so, but many did not. Whichever course was taken, a public notice was necessary; the provincial press enjoyed an advertising windfall for two years afterwards. The following announcement from Oxford is typical:

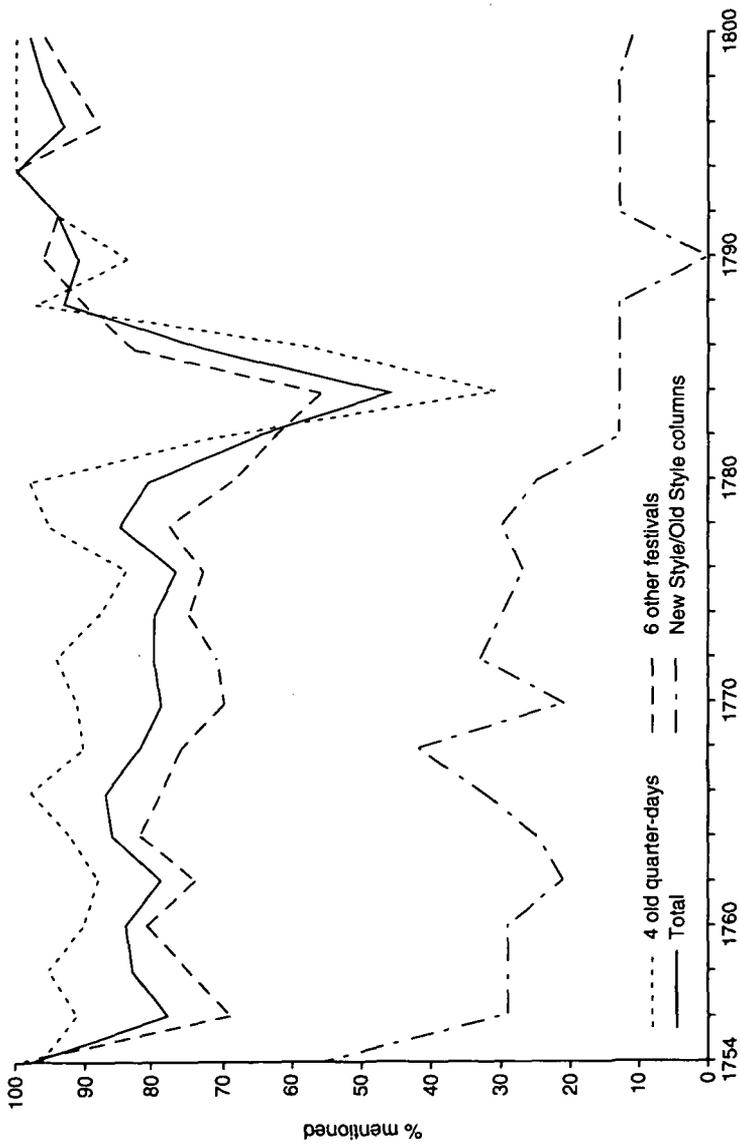
The FAIR formerly held on the 29th Day of *September*, will be holden on the 10th Day of *October*. The fair formerly held on *St. Thomas's Day* [21 December] will be holden on the first Day of *January*. *Lent Fair* will be holden on the second *Friday* in *Lent*. The Fair formerly held on the

⁹⁵ C. Brown, *A Supplement to the Several Almanacks for 1752* (London, 1752), pp. 1-13, 17.

⁹⁶ *Old Poor Robin's Almanack*, 1786, pp. 3-4, also classified Candlemas, May Day, Lammas and Martinmas as "quarter-days"; they fell around the middle of each quarter.

⁹⁷ *Henry Season's Almanack*, 1754, 1763, 1765, 1775. Season's doggerel calendar of anniversaries regularly commemorated the time "Since Men of Skill corrected our faulty Stile" (1772, sig. C1'; see also 1758, p. 7).

⁹⁸ *Old Poor Robin's Almanack*, 1800, sig. A2'. The occasion for the revival was the theoretical increase in the gap between the Julian and Gregorian calendars from eleven days to twelve, 1800 being a leap year in the former but not the latter.



PERCENTAGE OF ENGLISH ALMANACS MENTIONING TEN SELECTED OLD CALENDAR FESTIVALS 1754 1800

second *Friday in May*, will be holden on the second *Friday* after *Old May Day*, unless when the 12th of *May* falls on a *Friday*, then to be holden on the *Friday* next following; and so to be continued, unless any of the above days falls on a *Sunday*, and then to be held on the *Monday* following.⁹⁹

Confusion would be understandable. What has happened here is that the Lent Fair, linked to Easter, is now linked to the new Easter, whilst all the others are observing the old calendar. In the case of St Thomas's Fair, this has sent it jumping over Christmas, from 21 December to New Year's Day. Perhaps fortunately, midwinter fairs were a rarity in England and Wales ("probably owing to the Foulness of the weather", suggested the *Gentleman's Almanack*).¹⁰⁰ Confusingly for the general public, continuity was stressed whichever way the fairs moved. Announcements for Old Style fairs often stated that they were being held "on the same natural days as before", or at "the old time on which the Fair hath been usually held", whilst those for New Style fairs chose formulations such as "the Monday after New Martinmas-Day", "the same day of the month", or "as usual, being St. Matthias Day". No one wanted to appear to be changing anything; either way, however, there was a new rule to be learnt.

The decision was not always an easy one to make, and there were some conflicts. Stafford Colt Fair had at first been widely advertised for St Matthew's Day, New Style:

But the Breeders and Farmers having apply'd to the Mayor to desire that the Fair may be held at the usual Time of the Year, as their Colts will not be in proper Condition sooner; and are determined not to bring them before that Time. This is therefore to give Notice, That the said Fair will be held at the usual Time of the Year, which, by the Alteration of the Calendar, will fall upon the Second of October.¹⁰¹

On the other hand, Ashbourne Nine Nights' Fair and Chesterfield Fair, both in Derbyshire, followed the New Style because of pressure from horse-dealers, farmers and gentry, Ashbourne Fair having first been announced by the town crier to take place Old Style.¹⁰² Although thought had clearly gone into such decisions, some of the muddles over dates that took place suggest that the

⁹⁹ *Jackson's Oxford JI*, 15 Sept. 1753.

¹⁰⁰ *Gentleman's Almanack*, 1754, under "December".

¹⁰¹ *London Evening Post*, 8 Sept. 1753.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 29 Aug., 16 Nov. 1752; *Derby Mercury*, 28 Aug., 3 Nov. 1752. By 1756, Ashbourne Fair was back at the Old Style date: *Owen's Book of Fairs* (see pp. 125-6 and n. 107 below), p. 20.

calendar reform had not been understood.¹⁰³ Occasionally there are signs of real conflict. Ripley Meeting in Derbyshire (a horse-fair) found its terrain contested by two competing discourses struggling for hegemony through the columns of the *Derby Mercury*. On the one hand, a publican and one of the lords of the manor, claiming the support of “several Chapmen”, “several Freeholders and Tradesmen of Ripley, and also neighbouring Farmers”, advertised the fair to take place on the New Style date of 23 October 1753, promising “proper entertainment”. On the other, “the Lords of the Manor, and a great number of the Dealers in foals” insisted that the fair would take place on the Old Style date, 3 November, claiming that last year’s New Style fair had been a flop. The promoters of the nearby Belper Old Fair, which fell neatly between the two dates, took advantage of the dispute. “A house divided against itself cannot stand”, warned a press notice; chapmen and dealers in foals were advised to opt instead for the “certainty” of Belper Fair, which boasted an all-weather fairground capable of accommodating fifty thousand people.¹⁰⁴ The following year the dispute was renewed, the Old Style lobby this time claiming the support of three-quarters of the lords of the manor, as well as most of the dealers in foals, as against “three or four of the Lords of the Manor” and “two or three Publicans” for the New Style, and pledging to block the erection of stalls on their ground on the new date. Belper counter-advertised once more.¹⁰⁵ What seems to have been happening here is that the publicans of Ripley were seeking to expand the pleasure side of Ripley meeting by bringing it before the larger and older fair at Belper, and were being opposed by most of the dealers in foals, for whom the Old Style date offered longer to get their animals into fettle.

The chaos caused by the change was responsible for the birth of the most important perennial directory of fairs, *Owen’s Book of Fairs*. In the aftermath of the calendar reform, the publishers William Owen of Temple Bar and Richard Goadby of Sherborne advertised for information for a new directory of fairs, publication

¹⁰³ For muddles, see *Western Flying-Post*, 31 Aug. 1752, 24 Sept. 1753 (Bridport Fair); *London Evening Post*, 17 Oct. 1752, 24 Apr., 7 July 1753 (Dunstable Fairs), 20 Aug. 1752 (Westerham Fair, whose proprietors, perhaps confused by the annihilation of its 8 September date in 1752, at first moved it back by twenty-two days to 30 September).

¹⁰⁴ *Derby Mercury*, 14 Sept., 5, 12, 19 Oct. 1753.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 11, 19 Oct. 1754.

of which was announced the following spring.¹⁰⁶ In the event, the first full edition did not appear until 1756. In the preface, the publishers explained what happened next:

What by the proprietors of fairs, at first, after the alteration of the style, fixing their fairs on one day in one year, and on a different one in the next, and by other misinformations, great errors were crept into their account: they, therefore, when they found this, made waste paper of the unsold books.¹⁰⁷

Only when protected by a royal licence did Owen and Goadby feel secure enough to proceed further. The first *Book of Fairs* gave details of over three thousand fairs, almost three times as many as the previous best list (that published in Rider's almanac for 1750).¹⁰⁸ Half of those in Rider are traceable in Owen, of which 73 per cent followed the Act and the Old Style calendar, 25 per cent followed the New Style, and 2 per cent were altered in other ways.¹⁰⁹ A seasonal breakdown of these changes yields interesting results. The proportion of fairs observing the Old Style was above average in May (77 per cent), August (79 per cent), March (80 per cent) and September (87 per cent). It would have been difficult to move spring and late summer fairs forward with the New Style into the lambing, calving or harvesting seasons. Fairs on the main quarter-days in March and September, and hiring-fairs generally, were particularly likely to stay on their Old Style days; 87 per cent of Michaelmas fairs and all the Martinmas fairs, the main autumn hiring seasons, did so.¹¹⁰ Only 62 per cent of July fairs, on the other hand, stayed Old Style; an eleven-day move forward to the New Style date would have helped keep them clear of the start of the harvest. Fairs coinciding with certain Church of England saints' days and observances were also comparatively prone to go New Style, including Lammas (1 August, 63 per cent Old Style), St Peter's Day (29 June, 61 per cent), Candlemas (2 February, 60 per cent) and St James's

¹⁰⁶ *York Courant*, 26 Dec. 1752; *Western Flying-Post*, 26 Nov. 1753, 1 Apr. 1754.

¹⁰⁷ William Owen, *An Authentic Account of all the Fairs in England and Wales, as they have been Settled to be Held since the Alteration of the Stile* (London, 1756).

¹⁰⁸ Cardanus Rider, *The British Merlin* (London, 1750).

¹⁰⁹ A count of press announcements yields a similar proportion, as does a count of the hiring-fairs listed by Kussmaul: of 88 post-1752 Michaelmas fairs, 33 (75 per cent) can be identified as Old Style and 11 (25 per cent) as New Style: Kussmaul, *Servants in Husbandry in Early Modern England*, app. 4, pp. 150-63.

¹¹⁰ These figures are arrived at by comparing Owen's 1756 list with Rider's for 1750. Both directories are now on a computer database at S. Martin's College, Lancaster.

Day (25 July, 48 per cent). The church itself, of course, followed the new calendar, and the desire to maintain the link between fair and saint's day may have been important here. Nevertheless, over half the fairs on these days became divorced from their associated saints' days, breaking any remaining religious link between fair and feast. London's Bartholomew Fair was an example, now proclaimed by the city magistrates on the Old Style Bartholomew's Eve, ten days after Bartholomew Day itself.¹¹¹

Wakes holidays or feasts, marking the saint's day of a parish church, also seem widely to have stayed on their Old Style dates. Thompson has suggested that, in relation to the eighteenth-century popular festive calendar, "the agrarian seasonal calendar was the hub and the Church provided none of the moving force", although (as Mark Smith has shown) in some areas the church's role remained significant in the mid-eighteenth century.¹¹² The calendar reform, in finally separating saints and seasons, would have provided an impulse to a long-term process of secularization. In Northamptonshire, Robert Malcolmson has found a marked shift in the seasonal distribution of wakes between the 1720s and the 1840s, from late August and early September to later in September. Not a single wake remained at Michaelmas.¹¹³ In the nineteenth-century Lancashire cotton district, the modern stronghold of the wakes holiday, there is widespread evidence of an eleven-day discrepancy between the date of the wakes and that of the local saint's day. As late as 1879, Shaw Wakes near Oldham was remembered as taking place "first Saturday after Old Lammas Day".¹¹⁴ In this region, unusually, the church seems to have followed the people, and special wakes services were common in the early nineteenth century (in Samuel Bamford's Middleton, for example).¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ Lindsay, *Happy Interview*, pp. 9-10.

¹¹² Thompson, *Customs in Common*, pp. 49-55; M. Smith, "The Reception of Richard Podmore: Anglicanism in Saddleworth, 1700-1830", in J. Walsh, C. Haydon and S. Taylor (eds.), *The Church of England, c.1689 - c.1833* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 110-26; J. Walsh and S. Taylor, "Introduction: The Church and Anglicanism in the 'Long' Eighteenth Century", *ibid.*, pp. 26-9.

¹¹³ R. W. Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations in English Society, 1700-1850* (Cambridge, 1973), pp. 16-18.

¹¹⁴ R. Poole, "Wakes Holidays and Pleasure Fairs in the Lancashire Cotton Districts, 1790-1890" (Univ. of Lancaster Ph.D. thesis, 1985), pp. 34-5, 44, 59-63; *Oldham Chron.*, 9 Aug. 1879.

¹¹⁵ R. Poole, "Samuel Bamford and Middleton Rushbearing", *Manchester Region Hist. Rev.*, viii (1994), pp. 14-22.

There is evidence, again from Derbyshire, of conflicts over parish feast dates. Matlock Feast was at first advertised to take place Old Style, on 12 September rather than 1 September, but a counter-advertisement was issued for the New Style date, claiming that the previous announcement “was publish’d, without the approbation, or consent, of the minister, church-wardens, or other officers, as well as most of the better sort of families, in the said parish”. Ten parishioners, including the constable, responded by signing an advertisement to the effect that the Old Style date had been agreed at a properly constituted vestry meeting. Sadly, the evidence dries up at this point, but the suspicion must be that this was part of a contest for control, with the minister and “the better sort of families” seeking to maintain the link between the parish feast and the New Style church calendar and the other parishioners seeking to preserve its traditional relationship with the cycle of fairs and seasons.¹¹⁶ Judging by the press advertisements, most wakes and feasts in Derbyshire, as in Lancashire and Northamptonshire, stayed with the Old Style dates. Darley Feast, which tried going New Style, gave up the attempt after only a year as “inconvenient and detrimental to the inhabitants”, “a great number” of whom resolved to revert to the Old Style in 1754.¹¹⁷ It is worth noting here that the case of wakes and fairs stands on its head the usual argument that popular pressure for the old calendar indicated a lack of acceptance of the calendar reform and attachment to popish saints’ days. In staying Old Style, wakes and feasts were following the precedent set by the Act for fairs. A Leicestershire clergyman, in a sermon published for cheap distribution, tied himself in knots trying to explain to his argumentative parishioners why:

... appointments of this nature are not like *fairs*, or other public meetings on civil occasions; which . . . are to be suited to the times and seasons of the year most appropriate to that purpose . . . the true order of the year is settled by lawful authority. — The keeping it according to the *Old Stile*, is not a keeping of the *old Wake*, but a *new one* . . .¹¹⁸

His point was that fairs existed for a community purpose, but wakes were the property of the church. In departing from the official saints’ days, wakes keepers were indeed exhibiting a

¹¹⁶ *Derby Mercury*, 27 July - 17 Aug. 1753.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 12 June 1754.

¹¹⁸ Revd T. Green, *A Sermon Preached to a Country Congregation . . . to Reconcile the People to the New Stile* (London, 1753), pp. 20-1.

secular preference for seasonal and social continuity over liturgical exactitude.

Old Christmas Day was probably the most widespread and persistent Old Style festival, appearing perennially in the almanacs. In 1753 it was reported from Bristol: "Yesterday being Old Christmas Day, the same was obstinately observed by our Country People in general, so that yesterday (which was Market-Day by order of our Magistrates) there were but few at Market, who embraced the Opportunity of raising their Butter to 9^d. and 10^d. a Pound". There was a similar report from Worcester.¹¹⁹ At Horn, Bucks., two thousand people were reported to have gathered to see if the local Glastonbury thorn flowered on New Christmas Day; when it failed to do so, they refused to come to church and the local minister was obliged to announce Christmas sermons for Old Christmas Day as well. Reports of the supposed flowering of the thorn at Glastonbury itself on Old Christmas Day were influential, although the vicar of Glastonbury later announced that it had in fact flowered nearer New Christmas Day; so too did the Glastonbury thorn at Parham, Suffolk. Such episodes illustrated for some the absurdity of popular superstition.¹²⁰ The curate of Roxwell, Essex, finding some of his parishioners disposed not to observe the new Christmas, preached to them on the duty of obedience to the civil powers, taking as his text Gen. 1:14: "And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years". The curate's point was that the earthly calendar should reflect the findings of astronomy, as determined by lawful authority. Another published sermon on this theme was preached on Old Christmas Day 1753 to "a large congregation in the country" on Gal. 4:10-11: "Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain". The preacher turned the complaint of popery against his recalcitrant parishioners, warning that if the church's festivals were not kept decently, there was a risk that they would be abolished. The archdeacon of Blackburn also delivered an

¹¹⁹ Felix Farley's *Bristol Jnl*, 6 Jan. 1753; *Western Flying-Post*, 15 Jan. 1753.

¹²⁰ Felix Farley's *Bristol Jnl*, 30 Dec. 1752; J. Latimer, *The Annals of Bristol in the Eighteenth Century* ([Frome], 1893), pp. 298-9; *General Evening Post*, 9 Jan. 1753; *Norwich Mercury*, 6 Jan. 1753; *World*, no. 10 (8 Mar. 1753), pp. 57-8.

admonitory sermon to a congregation stubbornly gathered on Old Christmas Day.¹²¹

The effects of the calendar reform made an appearance in the debate over the celebrated case of the alleged kidnapping of Elizabeth Canning by gypsies in 1754. The vicar of Portesham, Dorset wrote to the *Western Flying-Post* in 1754 to make the ingenious suggestion that the baffling conflicts between witnesses over dates could be resolved if it were assumed that the people whom Canning had overheard wishing each other a happy New Year at Combe were reckoning by the old calendar, "as it is well known, the People, out of an illiterate and ill mannered Opposition to Science and their Superiors, were everywhere much disposed to do, in keeping Christmas, and all the immediate dependent festivals".¹²² It was the west country, of course, where Walpole had located the seat of provincial opposition to the calendar reform. As late as the 1880s it was reported from Wellington, Somerset, that "Many of the labouring class keep old Christmas Day in strict observance. Many say that it would be wicked to work on that day, as it is the real old Christmas Day, and they would not on any account do so". Crowds gathered on Old Christmas Day to see the Glastonbury thorn at West Buckland flower, and to see cattle in a barn kneel at midnight.¹²³ How far, one wonders, was the decline into which Christmas Day had fallen by the time of Charles Dickens's youth due to its having been fatally divided between old and new dates, established and popular versions, three generations before?

V

Having surveyed the effects of the calendar reform, we are in a better position to address our final question: how much opposition

¹²¹ Revd Pierson Lloyd, *The New Style the True Style . . . a Sermon* (London, 1753); [Francis Blackburne], *A Sermon Preached to a Large Congregation in the Country, on . . . [Old] Christmas Day* (London, 1753); Green, *Sermon Preached to a Country Congregation*; C. J. Abbey and J. H. Overton, *The English Church in the Eighteenth Century*, 2 vols. (London, 1878), ii, pp. 391-2.

¹²² *Western Flying-Post*, 20 May 1754. Elizabeth Canning claimed to have been kidnapped by gypsies, and in two sensational trials her evidence was overturned principally on the grounds that her dating of the alleged events was impossible. The vicar's suggestion shows a way in which Canning's evidence might in fact have been consistent. Goadby, publisher of the *Western Flying-Post*, was Owen's partner in his *Book of Fairs*, but though Owen also published a number of tracts on the popular, pro-Canning, side, this particular piece of evidence does not appear to have weighed in the affair: see J. Treherne, *The Canning Enigma* (London, 1989), pp. 49, 90, 116-24.

¹²³ A. L. Humphries, *The History of Wellington* (London, 1889), p. 231.

did it generate? We have seen that the persistence of old calendar festivals did not necessarily involve an articulated opposition to the reform. There was, however, an ideological dimension.

There is some corroboration for claims about popular clamour against the Act. The biographer of James Bradley, the Astronomer Royal who had advised on the calendar reform, picked up a story that in 1762, "when Bradley, worn down by his labours in the cause of science, was sinking under the disease which closed his mortal career, many of the common people attributed his sufferings to a judgement from heaven for having been instrumental in what they considered to be so impious an undertaking".¹²⁴ In a Commons debate on the notorious "Jew bill" in November 1753, Robert Nugent offered a similar story:

Even at this present time, there is among the country people a very general clamour against the New Stile Act; and as I have been, ever since my appearing for a general naturalization of foreign Protestants, represented as the author of every thing they think bad, I was said to be the author of that act, and am now said to be the author of this Jews act; on the hearing of which an old woman made this judicious remark, "Ay", says she, "it would be no wonder should he be for naturalizing the devil, for he was one of those that banished old Christmas".¹²⁵

These are isolated anecdotes, suggestive but lacking context; for that, we need to look to Jacobitism. There was certainly no wholesale Jacobite rejection of the new calendar. Among the managers of the amending Act to the calendar reform Act were both the Whig Lord Parker and the Jacobite-inclined Tory Charles Gray.¹²⁶ The Jacobite *True Briton* was unusual in criticizing the way the reform was implemented, but only in a sterile quibble about the system of abatements; it was broadly supportive of the reform.¹²⁷ In Bristol, the annual celebrations of the birthday of the Jacobite Tory Edward Colston moved straight to the New Style date in 1752,¹²⁸ while the Young Pretender himself (long resident in Gregorian lands) used New Style dating on a

¹²⁴ *Miscellaneous Works and Correspondence of James Bradley*, ed. J. P. Rigaud (Oxford, 1832), pp. lxxx-lxxxii. Rigaud's papers in the Bodleian Library (MSS. 26,203-67) do not, on selective inspection, appear to throw any light on the origin of this tale.

¹²⁵ Cobbett, *Parliamentary History*, xv, col. 136. Both these stories are picked up in Lecky, *History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, i, p. 268.

¹²⁶ *Commons Jls*, 17 Feb. 1752; E[veline] C[ruickshanks], "Gray, Charles", in R. Sedgwick (ed.), *History of Parliament: House of Commons, 1715-1754*, 2 vols. (London, 1970), ii, pp. 81-2.

¹²⁷ *True Briton*, 20 Sept. 1752.

¹²⁸ *Felix Farley's Bristol Jl*, 11 Aug., 28 Oct. 1752.

commemorative medal issued to his supporters shortly after the calendar reform came into effect.¹²⁹ There was some heavy-handed humour in the press focusing on the alleged pretensions of the Whig government to control the heavens, and on the supposed perplexities of ordinary people at the eleven-day leap, but the calendar reform itself was not a political issue of any importance. The main ideological objection, that the new calendar was popish, was not one which the Catholic Pretender could have embraced.¹³⁰ The link with the popular culture of Jacobitism, however, became clear at the Oxfordshire election of 1754, the backdrop to Hogarth's famous print.

When Hogarth chose Oxfordshire to make his observations of the general election of 1754, he chose one of the last strongholds of Jacobite Toryism, where a determined challenge by the court Whigs caused a prolonged and celebrated election battle.¹³¹ The Tory or "old interest" candidates were Lord Wenman and the sitting M.P. Sir James Dashwood, the "jolly brewer" and leading opponent of the "Jew bill" in 1753. Standing for the Whig or "new interest" side was Lord Parker, the son of the astronomer and calendar reformer Lord Macclesfield who (when M.P. for Newcastle) had himself chaired the committee stage of the calendar reform Act in the Commons.¹³² His running-mate was one Sir Edward Turner, whose most memorable feature in this context was his punnable name.

The calendar reform certainly had the makings of an election issue for the Tories. The Gregorian calendar could be portrayed as a popish import, imposed by a Whig government currently reviled for favouring foreign Jews; it was rumoured that the measure had been pushed through while the king was out of the country.¹³³ In 1752, and again in 1753, Old and New Christmases

¹²⁹ I am grateful to Paul Monod for this information. The medal in question was dated 23 September 1752 N.S., and marked the second anniversary of Charles Stuart's departure from England after his secret visit of 14-23 September 1750 O.S.

¹³⁰ *Felix Farley's Bristol JI*, 22 Aug., 30 Dec. 1752; "Properantia", letter, *Rambler* (ed. Samuel Johnson), no. 107 (26 Mar. 1751), repr. *Gentleman's Mag.*, original ser., xxi (1751), pp. 127-8 (see n. 67 above); *Norwich Mercury*, 7 Oct. 1752.

¹³¹ On the election, see B. Kemp, *Sir Francis Dashwood: An Eighteenth-Century Independent* (London, 1967), pp. 37-9, and the contemporary pamphlets cited at p. 133 below.

¹³² *Commons JIs*, 8 May 1751. Parker later took care to second Dashwood's motion against the "Jew bill": see E[veline] C[ruickshanks], "Parker, Thomas", in Sedgwick (ed.), *History of Parliament: House of Commons, 1715-1754*, ii, p. 325.

¹³³ [Blackburne], *Sermon Preached to a Large Congregation in the Country*.

would have caused the same friction in Oxford that they did in other places, exacerbated in the case of Oxford by the way the Act had (as noticed above) turned the St Thomas's Day fair (21 December) into a New Year's Day fair. The calendar issue was paraded in a number of Tory squibs. A song entitled "Old England. Old Interest. Old Style. Old Time" lampooned the Whig astronomer's son thus:

The next recommended was *P-r-k-r* the SMALL,
Whose Character — Faith, is just nothing at all:
Nay, 'twas whispered in *Oxford* by some simple Loon,
That *He* was put up by the *Man* in the *Moon*.¹³⁴

"A New Ballad" continued both theme and metre:

And as for his long-look'd-for Friend, on my Troth,
His fine moving Speeches are nothing but Froth;
Our Time he has alter'd and turn'd it about,
So he like *Old Christmas* shall too be turned out.
Tho' Lords and great Placemen do with him combine,
'Twill signify nothing when honest Men join;
Drink *Wenman* and *Dashwood*, and stand to the Tack,
We want no *old Turner* nor new *Almanack*.¹³⁵

Another song, "The Rump Revived", used the most worn-out of political metaphors to point out that "My Lord [Parker], at the bottom, was for the New Style".¹³⁶ "The Jew's Triumph" laboured to link the calendar reform to two other well-worn Tory themes, popery and Jewry:

In seventeen hundred and fifty-three,
The style was changed to P-p-ry,
But that it is lik'd, we don't all agree;
Which nobody can deny.
When the country folk first heard of this act,
That old father style was condemned to be rack'd,
And robb'd of his time, which appears to be fact,
Which nobody can deny;
It puzzl'd their brains, their senses perplex'd,
And all the old ladies were very much vex'd,
Not dreaming that Levites would alter our text;
Which nobody can deny.¹³⁷

¹³⁴ *The Old and New Interest, or a Sequel to the Oxfordshire Contest* (London, 1753), pp. 50-1.

¹³⁵ *The Oxfordshire Contest, or the Whole Controversy between the Old and the New Interest* (London, 1753), pp. 55-6.

¹³⁶ *Old and New Interest*, pp. 45-7.

¹³⁷ Quoted in J. Grego, *A History of Parliamentary Elections and Electioneering in the Old Days* (London, 1886), pp. 139-41. Grego's account of the election is muddled.

This development of a subpolitical Jacobite cultural agenda can be followed in the pages of *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, a Tory newspaper founded in the heat of the election contest. Its first issue carried a keynote piece entitled "The Oxfordshire Fool", by "Thomas Motley Esquire": "Every Body that knows what a Whitsun-Ale is, knows that the Fool, or more properly the Squire, claims the Priviledge of cracking Jokes upon the Women, and exercising the Calves Tail, the immemorial and tremendous Ensign of his Office, upon the Men".¹³⁸ The message was that the journal regarded itself as a kind of licensed fool, come to keep order at the election — an outlook which offered the appearance of impartiality but in fact aligned it firmly with the emergent mockery of established institutions which was coming to represent the limit of old-style Jacobite Tory political pretension. The second issue carried a burlesque account of "Proceedings of the Old Interest Society held at the *Crown and Anchor Tavern* in the Strand, May 1, O.S., 1753", at which it was "*Resolved*, That the *New Stile* and the *New Interest* are highly prejudicial to the Interest of *England*, and calculated only for the benefit of *H-n-v-r*". The account of the alleged meeting referred to "Turn-Stiles, Turners and Turnips".¹³⁹ In a later issue there was news of a nobleman's servant whose wife had produced a child after only three months of marriage: "The gentlemen of the *New Interest* say it is a happy Effect of the Alteration of the *Stile*; those of the *Old Interest* bluntly say 'tis *Bastardy*".¹⁴⁰ Another spoof notice in September announced:

On the 14th of this month will be held the anniversary Jubilee of the *New-Style*, when an excellent Discourse will be preached on the Occasion by Professor B——ss on the following Text — *Sun stand thou still*; after which the Society of *Conjurors*, with their President Lord M——d, will proceed to the sign of the Constellation called the *Bear*, and the evening will conclude with *Star-gazing*.¹⁴¹

The journal also advertised a game of back-sword sponsored by two gentleman to take place on Old Michaelmas Day, whilst a Whig correspondent complained that "one Gentleman out of the

¹³⁸ *Jackson's Oxford JI*, 5 May 1753.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 12 May 1753. The references were to the two candidates and to the king.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 25 June 1753.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 8 Sept. 1753. The reference to the sun standing still is to the miracle performed by Joshua (Josh. 10:12-14) — a stock jibe against the pretensions of calendar reformers. B——ss is Nathaniel Bliss (1700-64), Savilian professor of geometry and an associate of Macclesfield's.

Depth of his Wisdom, erected May Poles on Old May Day, ridiculing the Parliament, to gratify his own, and the Prejudice of the weakest of the People”¹⁴²

The Tory campaign in Oxfordshire mined a vein of popular sentiment in favour of the old festive calendar and against alien interference in it, harking back to the prohibition of Christmas and maypoles under the Commonwealth and to the favour shown to popular sports and customs by Stuart monarchs, from the *Book of Sports* under James I and Charles I to the use of maypoles and the instigation of Oak-apple Day (29 May) to celebrate the Restoration. David Underdown has demonstrated how in this earlier period “popular politics . . . drew heavily on the rituals and traditions — often regionally contrasting ones — of popular culture”¹⁴³ Similarly, to hold games on Old May Day and Old Michaelmas Day was, in the context of 1750s Oxfordshire, a political gesture, particularly now that it fell close to the Old Style birthday of “James III”¹⁴⁴ There is evidence of similar games from Kent, Yorkshire and Berkshire.¹⁴⁵ This burlesque element was also present in such Jacobite manifestations as mock corporations, lords of misrule and effigy-burning. Legitimism and mockery were two aspects of the same political discourse. Jacobite themes and symbols, as Paul Monod has shown, remained an important strand in popular culture throughout the eighteenth century.¹⁴⁶

There is a link here with a wider popular culture. Bob Bushaway has stressed how far many calendar customs were both festivals of subversion and rituals of legitimation. Bounds-beating customs asserted rights to common land, forest customs asserted the right to gather wood, harvest customs the right to glean, and so on.¹⁴⁷ Similarly, local wakes and feasts asserted the right of the people to take over public space, have a holiday, and behave

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 23 Feb. 1754.

¹⁴³ D. Underdown, *Revel, Riot and Rebellion: Popular Politics and Culture in England, 1603-1660* (Oxford, 1985), p. 291.

¹⁴⁴ Oxfordshire was an old centre for Midsummer games: Hutton, *Rise and Fall of Merry England*, p. 220. The birthday of “James III” was on 10 June. The old 10 June was now Midsummer, 21 June; the new 10 June fell the day after the old 29 May, the most celebrated of all Stuart anniversaries.

¹⁴⁵ J. Goulstone, *Summer Solstice Games* ([Bexleyheath], 1985), citing the following: *Kentish Post*, 4 July 1753; J. Cole, *Historical Sketches of Scalby, Burniston and Cloughton* (Scarborough, 1829), p. 44; *Reading Mercury*, 4 July 1757.

¹⁴⁶ P. Monod, *Jacobitism and the English People, 1688-1788* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 54-62, 292-300 and ch. 7.

¹⁴⁷ Bushaway, *By Rite*, ch. 3.

extravagantly at particular times. This emphasis on popular rights, alternative sources of legitimate authority, and irreverence towards the existing order, was shared by Jacobite discourse. The link became explicit in the appeal of the “merry England” of the Stuarts, and (in more limited contexts) of the old festive calendar, disrupted by the reform of 1752. This did not really amount to a Jacobite culture in any serious political sense, but it was, perhaps, a sort of cultural Jacobitism, hospitable to, but not dependent upon, the political form.¹⁴⁸ The effective demise of Jacobitism in the early 1750s left the people in possession of the language of legitimation and mockery. At the same time, the calendar reform left them in possession of a more distinctly plebeian Old Style festive calendar. After the calendar reform, perhaps, England’s “rebellious traditional culture” acquired a more pointedly festive air and a Jacobite tinge.

A generation or so later, with Jacobitism safely gone, the gentry rediscovered popular customs, through works such as John Brand’s *Popular Antiquities* (1777) and Joseph Strutt’s *Sports and Pastimes of the People of England* (1801).¹⁴⁹ This discovery, or rediscovery, was a consequence of that very alienation of most of the gentry from the festive calendar which the calendar reform had reinforced. There is evidence in the almanacs of a concomitant rise in interest in the Old Style festivals. As shown in the Graph, there was a sharp drop in the level of citation of old calendar festivals in the almanacs of the early 1780s, from over 80 per cent to below 40 per cent, as if they were thought to have outlived their usefulness. In the mid-1780s, however, the trend rapidly reversed itself. By 1787 the frequency of citation of the ten main old calendar festivals was well over 90 per cent, higher than it had ever been, and it remained so for the rest of the century. This was nothing to do with practical considerations, for around the same time the printing of dual columns of Old Style dates virtually ceased, only the satirical *Old Poor Robin’s Almanack* continuing with them. The useful four old quarter-days were, on average, now less rather than more likely to be cited than the other festivals, such as May Day and Candlemas,

¹⁴⁸ Cf. J. C. D. Clark, *English Society, 1688-1832* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 161-73. Perhaps the Queen Caroline affair of 1819-20 was a late flowering of cultural Jacobitism.

¹⁴⁹ J. Brand, *Observations on Popular Antiquities* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1777); J. Strutt, *Sports and Pastimes of the People of England* (London, 1801).

whose significance was largely symbolic.¹⁵⁰ There is no obvious explanation for this, but it is perhaps not stretching speculation too far to suggest that, with political Jacobitism moribund, the 1780s saw a sentimental reaction in favour of Old Style festivals in parallel with rising interest in popular antiquities.¹⁵¹ With the advent of war with revolutionary France and its decimal “calendar of reason” in the 1790s, the appeal of the old English festive calendar must have increased.¹⁵²

VI

What wider conclusions can be drawn from this complex episode? The calendar reform of 1752 was clearly not, as the Whig model would have it, an efficient scientific measure resisted by a superstitious mob. Its rationale was convenience, not science; the scientific endeavour lay mainly in the presentation, and in devising a way of harmonizing the Anglican and Roman Catholic Easters without importing popish tables into the Prayer Book. Whilst older religious debates were put on one side in a rational spirit, however, a concern with property rights muddied the waters in a different way. The year was not simply recalibrated, as was claimed at the time and as has usually been supposed. The calendar was divided down the middle and the two halves differently treated, on the basis of a somewhat arbitrary definition of what aspects of life were economic and/or seasonal. The effects of this were not fully appreciated, and those on the popular festive calendar were not considered at all. The calendar reform was in important respects a two-dimensional solution to a three-dimensional problem.

It follows from this that the opposition to the reform needs to be reassessed beyond simply rejecting the myth of the “Give us our eleven days!” riots. “Opposition” is not really the right word

¹⁵⁰ But see n. 96 above.

¹⁵¹ The Stationers’ Company archives in London appear to contain no material relating to the publishing of almanacs (upon which it had a licensing monopoly) that might throw light on any policy behind this phenomenon.

¹⁵² For radical pamphlets advocating adoption of the French “calendar of reason”, see John Lawrence (comp.), *The Patriot’s Calendar* (London, 1794) and *The Almanack for the Year 1797, according to the True Time* (Dublin, 1797); copies of both are in the British Library. For an example of the use of such a calendar by Sheffield radicals in 1820, see F. K. Donnelly and J. L. Baxter, “Sheffield and the English Revolutionary Tradition, 1791-1820”, *Int. Rev. Social Hist.*, xx (1975), p. 420. For an earlier attempt at a rationally reformed calendar, complete with seasonally named months such as “Floremon” and “Frumen”, see “Philichronos”, *Reformed Kalender*.

to use when considering the persistence of old calendar festivals. In keeping up the Old Style wakes, Christmas, May Day and so on, people were applying the same logic that the authors of the Act had applied to fairs: namely, that they should maintain their place in the natural year and their relationship with the seasons rather than hop forwards with the New Style. The persistence of the Old Style calendar was inherent in the calendar reform itself, not a result of opposition to it. Like the Church of England two centuries before, the calendar was “but halfly reformed”, and the people clung most strongly to that half which was not. It was the calendar reformers, not their plebeian opponents, who brought ideology to the debate, with their assumption that the calendar was a purely scientific issue, and their labelling of popular objections as “superstitious” or “disloyal”. For the mass of the people the reform provoked not so much principled opposition as confusion and recalcitrance. It also gave to their celebration of calendar customs at the traditional times a sharper sense of both legitimacy and opposition, reinforcing a diffuse tradition of cultural Jacobitism.

What we are seeing, then, is a separation not only of two calendars but of two cultures, with the élite culture (as usual) taking the initiative. The withdrawal of the upper classes from direct involvement in many popular festivities over the eighteenth century is well attested.¹⁵³ By mid-century, polite urban society had developed its own calendar, its own winter season, separate from the festive calendar.¹⁵⁴ The number of pamphlets which sought to explain the scientific rationale for the reform helped to generate a wave of interest in astronomy, which further separated educated perceptions of the calendar from plebeian ones.¹⁵⁵ The

¹⁵³ P. Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (London, 1978; rev. repr., Aldershot, 1994); Bushaway, *By Rite*; Thompson, *Customs in Common*.

¹⁵⁴ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, p. 289.

¹⁵⁵ For example, *A Plain Account of the Old and New Stiles* (London, 1751); *The Present State of England. To which is Added, An Account of the New Style* (London, n.d.); *A Dissertation on the Magnitude of the Year* (London, 1752); C. Brown, *A Supplement to the Several Almanacks* (London, 1752); A. Hawkins, *The Gregorian and Julian Calendars* (London, 1752); W. Parker, *A Short Explanation of the Difference between the Old and New Stiles* (London, 1756; a retitled version of his *Letter to a Person of Scrupulous Conscience*, see n. 68 above); J. Echlin, *An Essay upon the Amendment of the Calendar* (Dublin, 1756); R. Wetherald, *Philomath: The Perpetual Calculator, or Time's Universal Standard* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1760). On the rise of public interest in science in the 1750s, see R. Porter, “Science, Provincial Culture and Public Opinion in Enlightenment England”, in P. Borsay (ed.), *The Eighteenth-*

(cont. on p. 139)

riot myth had its roots in this perceptual gulf, but it also conveniently concealed the very real muddles and ambiguities which stemmed from the attempt to apply an over-simplified conception of the calendar to a more complicated reality. In 1752 many of the remaining links between the official calendar of church and state and the cycle of popular festivities were cut. The plebeian festive calendar was left more than ever wedded to the agricultural year and to local circumstances, and more than ever separated from that of church, state and polite urban society. The breach which opened in 1752 between the official and popular calendars was, for all its untidiness, a significant episode in the long-drawn-out separation of élite and popular cultures in early modern England.

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(n. 155 cont.)

Century Town (London, 1990), pp. 243-67; D. Spadafora, *The Idea of Progress in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (New Haven, 1990), ch. 2; Alkon, "Changing the Calendar".