

RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Counsellor Knockolds and Captain Swing: Negotiating urban-rural boundaries in early nineteenth-century East Anglia

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## Abstract

Through an in-depth exploration into the Norwich weavers' riots in 1829 and Swing Riot protests in Swanton Abbott, Norfolk, in January 1831, this article shows urban and rural protests were linked together in multifaceted ways. When these two protests are situated in the context of urban-rural relations, it becomes clear that the participants were part of an active renegotiation of the relationship between city and country brought on because the pressures of industrialization were pushing the two together in ways that many found threatening. Each of those involved had a different vision for what this relationship should look like, as well as a vested interest in ensuring this vision prevailed. By foregrounding how these participants approached the boundaries between urban and rural worlds, this research emphasizes the ways this boundary could be a crucial point of contention in early industrial Britain.

In January 1831, a weaver named Richard Knockolds, aided by three brothers named Robert, Josiah, and David Davison, burned stacks of grain on the property of several farmers from Swanton Abbott, a village in north Norfolk. Within two weeks, authorities apprehended Knockolds, the Davison brothers, and another labourer named Robert Hunt. A few months later, Richard Knockolds and Josiah Davison were both found guilty and condemned to death. Though Josiah Davison's sentence was later commuted to transportation, Knockolds was executed outside the gates of Norwich Castle on 9 April 1831.

The incendiary fires were just one episode in a wave of protests by agricultural labourers in late 1830 and early 1831 collectively called the Swing Riots. What makes the Swanton Abbott fires unique was not only the severity of the punishment – out of thousands of rioters, Knockolds was one of only nineteen people to be executed – but also the unusually clear relationship the fires had to a series of weavers' riots that had troubled the city of Norwich one year earlier.<sup>1</sup> The shared participants and intertwined motives in the two protest episodes highlight the need to account for the many ways that urban and rural strains of protest could intersect, a point highlighted in Carl Griffin's recent study of food riots.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, it underscores how the problematic relationship between city and country was sometimes at issue as much as more obvious problems like wages and mechanization in the era's protests.

The Swing Riots have been studied extensively by historians, especially following the publication of Eric Hobsbawm and George Rudé's *Captain Swing* (1968), which strongly shaped later interpretations of rural protest.<sup>3</sup> In Hobsbawm and Rudé's Marxist interpretation, Swing's 'great tragedy was that it never succeeded in linking up with the rebellion of mine, mill, and city' and remained in their view an archaic, agrarian protest devoid of political self-consciousness.<sup>4</sup>

Subsequent studies attempted to place Swing in a larger context of protest and social crime in rural areas and have examined the nature and meaning of different kinds of protests, though many maintained Hobsbawm and Rudé's broader assumptions about the protests' customary nature.<sup>5</sup>

Drawing on this earlier work, more recent historians have called for a more microhistorical approach to Swing 'from within', as opposed to Hobsbawm and Rudé's approach 'from below'.<sup>6</sup> This new wave of scholarship, sometimes called the 'new protest history', emphasizes themes like memory, place, and gender in pursuit of what Andy Wood has ambitiously called 'a social history that strategically integrates all aspects of human behaviour and mentalities in pursuit of worlds that we have lost'.<sup>7</sup> The result has been a new picture of Swing as 'a complex, multi-faceted series of outbreaks of rural agitation' located 'within longer term patterns of tension and unrest, and . . . regionally specific social and economic contexts'.<sup>8</sup> This has culminated in one of the most recent large-scale studies of Swing, Carl Griffin's *The Rural War* (2012), which situates Swing firmly within long-term social and economic tensions and the local 'politics of the parish' in its attempts to explain the events of 1830 in Kent.<sup>9</sup>

Nevertheless, blind spots persist, notably in the relationship the Swing riots had with urban protests occurring parallel to it. Historians have been conscious of this problem at least since Hobsbawm, who mentions the concern contemporary officials had that protests could spread to urban industrial areas and even noted how one incident seemed to indicate 'some deeper animosity between town and countryside', though he leaves these threads mostly unexplored.<sup>10</sup> Griffin likewise alludes to this problem when he notes how social and economic links between cities and villages blurred the line between urban and rural.<sup>11</sup> He and others emphasize the deep links between country and city to give a more expansive view of rural protest. This approach to this problem minimizing the distinction between urban and rural worlds has yielded important insights, not least of which are insights into the spread of radical political ideas from urban to rural areas.<sup>12</sup>

However, given the importance contemporaries attached to this distinction – discussing the eighteenth century, Carl Estabrook has called the urban-rural divide 'the most comprehensive and compelling distinction maintained by members of [English] society' – it is reasonable to ask if this approach is the best one.<sup>13</sup> As Griffin himself points out, despite the fluid boundaries between urban and rural spaces, 'the rural was experienced and lived in as something truly distinctive' from the urban.<sup>14</sup> Instead of minimizing this divide, there is a real need to accept its importance as a social boundary without dismissing the boundary's fluidity. When historians treat the urban-rural divide as a real and vital feature of early industrial society, the connections across this divide take on new meaning, as the work of Katrina Navickas and Rose Wallis shows.<sup>15</sup>

Besides the invaluable light that this incident sheds on the relationship between urban and rural worlds in early nineteenth-century Britain, there is a second reason to examine these events: the need for a detailed exploration of its central protagonist.<sup>16</sup> Few participants in the Swing Riots have captured the imagination of historians like Richard Knockolds, the radical Norwich weaver, whose career has become a kind of Rorschach test for historians interested in exploring the relationship between urban radicals and rural protest. To Hobsbawm and Rudé, who depicted Swing as 'improvised, archaic, [and] spontaneous', Knockolds appears as one of many shadowy, unsophisticated figures, the leader of a decidedly premodern 'village group' who 'appears to have emerged by a natural process of selection, based on his personal initiative or by his standing in the community'.<sup>17</sup> To John Archer, he is a very different figure – a working-class radical organizer who 'deserves to enter the British radicals' hall of fame' and who potentially saw himself as 'a vanguard of a working-class rebellion'.<sup>18</sup> Despite their contrasting depictions, both interpretations were shaped by a search for a 'rural proletariat'.<sup>19</sup> Hobsbawm, failing to find this, wrote off the entire movement as archaic and Knockolds along with it. Archer, while emphasizing the vitality and diversity of rural protest, kept this basic framework, leading him to see the supposedly class-conscious Knockolds as a compelling but untypical exception to Hobsbawm's rule.

The reality is more complicated. Knockolds here emerges as a figure no less radical than Archer describes but also something else – a complex figure whose life and legend could only have come about in the transitional world of early nineteenth-century Norwich. This is not the first study of Knockolds and the fires at Swanton to look at Knockolds in this way; the most extensive study to date was published in 2005 by Stella Evans, who wrote an excellent account of the fires as part of the Family and Community Historical Research Society's project *Swing Unmasked*.<sup>20</sup> While Evans' article provides a very good overview of the fires and their context, it only lightly addresses the broader implications of Knockolds' career, meaning that while Evans avoids the interpretive traps of earlier researchers, her analysis of Knockolds fails to meaningfully move beyond them. The FACHRS project was by its very nature preliminary and was never intended to be comprehensive, so Evans cannot be faulted here. Nevertheless, the time has come for a new study of Knockolds to better understand what his career reveals about the relationship between urban radicalism and rural protest. When viewed in light of concerns about poor relief, employment, and wages both in Norwich and Swanton Abbott, the actions of Knockolds and company offer a window into the contested, unstable relationship between city and country.

### Urban worlds: Knockolds' Norwich and the Weavers' protests of 1829

Like most cities in the early nineteenth century, kinship, work, and social ties intimately connected Norwich with the surrounding rural area. Nevertheless, the city had also long maintained a distinctive urban identity that removed it from the surrounding county. This perception is well illustrated by a sixteenth-century map, probably produced with the support of the city's corporation, which depicts the city as 'an island in a sea of green' to portray 'a unique cultural space, distinct from the barren emptiness of the countryside'.<sup>21</sup> Over the following centuries, this mental image of Norwich as a separate world from the surrounding countryside persisted, most notably, and most relevant for the events of 1829-31, in the urban-rural division of labour detailed below.

The economic pressures of the early nineteenth century complicated this relationship considerably, however, as the boundary separating urban and rural life became much blurrier. This altered relationship manifested itself in diverse ways and stemmed from many different causes. Estabrook, for example, has demonstrated how changing perceptions of urban life led some wealthy members of society to buy up land and build suburbs outside city boundaries, sometimes making use of enclosure to do so. A prime example of this 'urban-rural convergence on the landscape' was Old Catton outside Norwich, home to 'many opulent manufacturers, who have retired from Norwich, and built elegant houses' by the 1780s.<sup>22</sup> Industrialization was an even more serious factor. Though there appear to have been no major changes in large-scale migration patterns or volume of migration from rural to urban areas due to industrialization,<sup>23</sup> the Industrial Revolution could still have serious implications for this relationship, even in mostly rural areas like Norfolk.

In Norwich, the relationship between city and country was most clearly strained due to pressure from the industrializing North, which threatened the city's weaving industry. Long a centre for England's textile industry, the city of Norwich and its surrounding rural villages each had distinct roles to play in this industry, with the country villages spinning the yarn used by the city weavers.<sup>24</sup> Weavers in the villages also produced lower quality, plainer materials that complemented the higher quality stuff produced in the city.<sup>25</sup> Beginning in the mid-eighteenth century, though, industrialization shifted the industry's centre to Northern mill towns, beginning the industry's long decline that the Napoleonic Wars dramatically intensified. In the space of around thirty years, the value of the industry's output shrank from approximately £1,200,000 in 1771 to less than £800,000 in 1798.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, peace with France in 1815 brought a short period of increased productivity and expanded markets for Norwich's handloom weavers, providing a short-lived salve for an otherwise crumbling industry.<sup>27</sup>

This boom's timing was fortunate for many rural labourers, many of whom already had some experience with weaving and were increasingly struggling to make ends meet in the face of agricultural depression, high unemployment, and the increasing use of threshing machines.<sup>28</sup> This deepening poverty was exacerbated by the accelerating rate of enclosure, which in Norfolk peaked between 1800 and 1815.<sup>29</sup> As a result, the city became 'inundated with Country Weavers', in the words of one observer.<sup>30</sup> The strong temptation for rural labourers to move to the city was reflected in Norwich's booming population; after remaining constant for half a century, the city's population surged from 38,795 to 51,645 between 1811 and 1821, mostly due to the influx of 'strangers' from nearby villages.<sup>31</sup> Additional weaving work was sent to the villages to help meet the high demand for labour, creating a precedent that would later prove disastrous.<sup>32</sup>

Among those from Norwich's rural hinterland who flocked to the city during the postwar boom were the Davison siblings of Swanton Abbott, a village about 13 miles away. Like many of the new incomers, the siblings came from severe poverty, consistently receiving outdoor relief through the 1810s.<sup>33</sup> When their father died in 1820, parish poor relief paid for his burial, and their mother was left to take care of the large family with poor relief assistance.<sup>34</sup> Though many of the children had already grown and married, some remained at home, including the youngest, twelve-year-old Josiah. In the years following their father's death when the family of agricultural labourers must have felt their poverty most acutely, half of the ten surviving siblings migrated from Swanton to Norwich to marry or work as weavers.

The textile industry's long-term decline soon made itself known, however. In under a decade, the city went from having up to 10,000 active looms at the postwar boom's peak to only about 1500 operating, and unemployment became rampant.<sup>35</sup> For the Davisons, who had likely come to Norwich to escape rural poverty, the apparent promise of the early 1820s had been turned on its head. Problems compounded as the manufacturers who employed the weavers turned to the villages for additional labour to cut costs. Only by lowering costs, they argued, could Norfolk's weaving industry remain competitive, and without reducing wages for the city's weavers, their only option was to send more work out into the country.

Such a move would redefine the relationship Norwich had with its surrounding hinterland by replacing the earlier division of labour and merging the urban and rural workforces into a single pool of unskilled labour. Some overseers of the poor in country parishes, keen to find productive work for the parish poor, actively lobbied for manufacturers to send out work to their parishes, even attempting to negotiate lower prices to facilitate this.<sup>36</sup> Swanton Abbott, where some members of the Davison family remained dependent on poor relief, was one of many parishes whose vestries saw the potential benefits of greater involvement in the weaving industry: there, Reverend Henry Evans was later reported to have 'set on foot and begun an extensive cotton-weaving business' to help alleviate poverty.<sup>37</sup>

Weavers' complaints about these practices bubbled up continuously during the 1820s before more serious disorder broke out in 1829.<sup>38</sup> The 1829 riots, however, stand out for their intensity, in part due to the violent attacks Knockolds and his gang carried out to defend the weavers' interests. Beginning that July, handloom weavers gathered in mass numbers and punished manufacturers and local notables involved with sending the work to the country in protests that became increasingly vicious and targeted over the following nine months.<sup>39</sup>

From the start, the protests were explicitly tied to the changing relationship between the city and the country. In late July, the Weavers' Committee, which had been established seven years earlier to oppose any reduction of wages, called a mass meeting to petition Mayor Thomas Springfield to intervene on their behalf.<sup>40</sup> The Committee, chaired by Richard Browne, urged the mayor to 'use all your municipal influence with Manufacturers and other to keep up the present standard of wages, and endeavour to put a stop to their work being taken away from them and given to the country people (Wymondham excepted)'.<sup>41</sup> They protested that because of this practice, the city's weavers had been 'reduced to seek a pitiful pittance from the parish, whilst the country parishes are erased of their burdens'.<sup>42</sup>

The portrait this petition paints is somewhat misleading. After all, many of Norwich's weavers had only recently come into the city and therefore remained chargeable to their home parishes in the countryside for poor relief. As the *Norwich Mercury* pointed out, the number of weavers applying for relief in the city was surprisingly low, leading the paper to estimate (with some exaggeration) that three-quarters of the weavers were chargeable to country parishes.<sup>43</sup> Robert and Thomas Davison, for example, both received poor relief from Swanton Abbott repeatedly during 1829.<sup>44</sup> The burdens of country parishes, then, were hardly 'erased' as Browne's committee claimed. Even so, the petition may be more interesting as a script for how the Norwich weavers *thought* urban-rural relations should work than as a description of actual conditions. By framing the country and the city as competitors, the committee drew a bright line between rural and urban interests to establish the Norwich weavers as a community with shared interests, grievances, and enemies. The 'country people', despite their social, economic, and familial ties to the city, needed to remain apart if the Norwich weavers were to protect their distinctive community identity.

Despite a warm reception by the mayor, it soon became clear that little was going to change in response to the petition, and the weavers took matters into their own hands. Small bands guarded the roads out of the city to inspect carriers' carts and ensure that no work could leave, and mobs broke into the homes of weavers who had accepted underpriced work to cut the fabric off their looms. One police constable, after seizing underpriced work from a weaver, was accosted by a large group of weavers who took the silk from him and destroyed it.<sup>45</sup> The protests escalated in December after a few members of Norwich's court of guardians openly expressed support for lowering weavers' wages.<sup>46</sup> Around this time, a small gang of highly organized weavers began carrying out more violent and targeted attacks to 'produce such a terror in the minds of the Weavers' Carriers that should deter them from carrying the work out of the City to the Country'.<sup>47</sup> The group was led by Richard Knockolds of Pockthorpe. It also included Robert Davison, the eldest of the Davison siblings who had moved to Norwich and who employed Knockolds' fourteen-year-old son, probably as an apprentice.<sup>48</sup>

Knockolds was by all accounts the central figure of this group. He was given the title 'Counsellor' because '[his] opinion was taken before the execution of any depredation', according to his jailor.<sup>49</sup> Unlike Davison, Knockolds was a lifelong resident of Norwich – all his children were baptized in the same church he had been, St James Pockthorpe.<sup>50</sup> Knockolds also led a Sunday radical reading room in one of his associates' houses. According to a newspaper account, the group met on Sundays during church services ('with a studious contempt of all the decencies of the Sabbath'), adding to the paper's general characterization of Knockolds as 'a notorious scoffer' and religious sceptic.<sup>51</sup>

Besides Davison, Knockolds, and the Shepherd brothers, Robert Davison later named six other members of the group, while two additional members reportedly emigrated shortly before the fires.<sup>52</sup> Among these six was yet another pair of brothers who were both born in Pockthorpe like Knockolds.<sup>53</sup> Another possible group member, John Brittain, also lived in Pockthorpe, though he appears to have been born in Ipswich.<sup>54</sup> The weavers thus came from a diverse range of backgrounds, including both lifetime Norwich residents and recent incomers from places like Swanton Abbott, though there is no evidence tying any of the other Davison brothers besides Robert to the group until shortly before the fires.

The group appears to have been tightly organized, with individual members holding specified titles and roles. Knockolds was 'Counsellor', while Ralph Hardy Shepherd was 'Attorney'. Other members likewise held titles, including a few deemed 'executioners' tasked with leading the group's violent activities.<sup>55</sup> The use of legal titles evokes popular 'mock trials' – a form of folk justice adjacent to 'skimmingtons' and the like – in which participants 'aped official proceedings, seemingly in the sincere belief that they were repositories of genuine authority and legal authenticity'.<sup>56</sup> The implication – that manufacturers had actively subverted justice in sending work to the country – is one repeatedly affirmed in the Weavers' Committee meetings that claimed the manufacturers' actions were 'enemies of their rights and privileges' who behaved

'without any shadow of justice'.<sup>57</sup> The gang thus cast themselves as the defenders of justice, protecting rights being threatened by the manufacturers.

Secrecy seems to have been another defining aspect of the group's organization. Knockolds' jailor certainly implies this in his account of the group, which mentions Knockolds being referred to only by his title to protect his identity, shifting meeting locations to avoid suspicion, and a 'reign of terror' that stopped friends and neighbours from providing evidence against the group members.<sup>58</sup> As a secret or semi-secret society of tradesmen, the Norwich group was not unique. In fact, many such groups existed throughout England. Some such groups included large numbers of weavers and functioned as unions.<sup>59</sup> The function of a trade union, however, was filled more by the Weavers' Committee led by Richard Browne than Knockolds' secret band. After all, it was Browne's committee that called mass meetings, negotiated with employers, and sought to unify the weavers as a body. Nevertheless, Knockolds' gang could have been an informal, radical extension of Browne's more respectable committee. After all, Ralph Hardy Shepherd was a central figure in both organizations, both as a leader in Browne's committee and as 'Attorney' to Knockolds', and was arrested for his involvement with both groups.<sup>60</sup> In addition, after Shepherd's later arrest for his involvement with Knockolds' activities, Browne gave testimony corroborating the man's alibi.<sup>61</sup>

Any relationship between the two groups, however, remains conjecture without more concrete evidence. Significantly, Browne's committee repeatedly denied charges it had any relationship with those carrying out violent acts and publicly denounced the kinds of intimidation tactics used by Knockolds.<sup>62</sup> Despite this, John Johnson, the jailor of Norwich Castle who had spoken with both Knockolds and the Shepherds, seemed to imply some kind of relationship existed between the two groups. He gave the following account of the gang's development:

At first [the weavers] met to discuss matters . . . in large numbers, but circumstances soon rendered that unrequisite, and they scheduled about forty to act in the destruction of the work on the looms; and after having destroyed some in one or two places, they were alarmed at the enquiries, and Hardy Shepherd told me they met in a smaller number, but that he did not go out with them, as it was known they met at his house; on that account soon after they had met at a person's house at Catton, and were reduced in number from this time.<sup>63</sup>

Whether the meetings in 'large numbers' refer to Browne's mass meetings is unclear, though it seems likely. Whatever the case may be, it appears that the gang developed over time, coalescing out of the more diffuse loom-cutting events in September into a more tightly organized band by December. With increased organization came more ambitious attacks, as members of the group travelled to villages in the north Norfolk countryside to cut the work off looms during the night.<sup>64</sup>

Three days before Christmas, members of the group broke into the home of William Springall, a Norwich manufacturer who had tried to send work out of the city, to attempt the same thing. Though it is difficult to know which actions Robert Davison participated in, it is highly likely he was one of the ten or twelve men present, given that his house was only about 500 feet from Springall's.<sup>65</sup> The group disguised themselves by wearing black crape (a fabric Norwich weavers specialized in producing) over their faces, and one man carried a gun. When Springall tried to stop the gang from cutting his work, a scuffle broke out, and he was shot in the chest.<sup>66</sup> The manufacturer survived, but the city was thrown into a panic as news of what Davison and his fellow weavers had done. The next day, the mayor called in the army to keep order and ordered that the market close at dusk, creating an unsettling silence in the normally bustling city centre.<sup>67</sup>

In January, one of the gang members carried out an acid attack on the manufacturer John Wright, risking an even harsher crackdown. As a notoriously egregious offender who had begun to pay three pence per dozen pieces below the set wage rate, Wright had long been recognized as a potential target for the weavers and had police protection for his home and manufactory.<sup>68</sup> Wright fended off his vitriol-throwing attacker with a pistol but was seriously injured, and for the rest of

his life, he wore a green shade to hide his blinded right eye.<sup>69</sup> The attack represented a significant escalation. While the gang seemingly did not set out to shoot Springall, Wright's attackers clearly intended to cause bodily harm. After this attack, to which Knockolds eventually confessed, the gang became more discreet, and no other attacks on manufacturers or their carriers occurred during the following year.<sup>70</sup>

At the same time, a general sense that the standoff between the weavers and manufacturers was untenable seemed to overtake the city, and the general sense of exhaustion manifested itself in false rumours that the Weavers' Committee was going to accept the manufacturers' reduced rates.<sup>71</sup> In exchange for police protection, some weavers decided to accept the reduced wages proposed by the manufacturers, while one of the manufacturers moved twenty looms to the workhouse to help fill the need for cheap labour in mid-January.<sup>72</sup> These moves still attracted fierce opposition – as the looms were moved to the workhouse, a group of several thousand weavers assembled in the street and threw two of them into the river, leading the mayor to call out the military once again to disperse the rioters – but this would be the last mass protest until November.<sup>73</sup>

Once winter came, however, violent protests resumed. On November 29, a few hundred weavers assembled in a meeting only a fraction the size of the Committee's mass meetings the previous autumn. The attendees proceeded to destroy machinery in a Catton sawmill.<sup>74</sup> The next day, another mob vandalized a silk mill and destroyed looms in another factory.<sup>75</sup> In January 1831, Knockolds' gang reemerged to carry out one final vitriol attack, this time on a carrier named Charles Green. This last attack was even more brutal than the one on Wright and was tied even more directly to urban boundaries. Green was transporting yarn and silk from Norwich to his home village, presumably to carry out underpriced work. His role in this was apparently notorious, as a month before the attack the Shepherd brothers were overheard complaining that he deserved to be murdered for 'taking away [their] bread'.<sup>76</sup> After passing through the toll bar outside the city, several gang members beat him with stakes, poured oil of vitriol down his ear, and took the yarn and silk for themselves.<sup>77</sup> Severely injured, Green spent several weeks recuperating in the hospital.<sup>78</sup>

Rather than making the boundary between the urban and rural worlds obsolete, the changing relationship between the city and countryside made this boundary even more visible, contested, and consciously expressed. Everything about the group's activities, from their meeting place in New Catton (an expanding suburb on the city's fringes) to the wide geographical sweep of their activities spanning from the heart of the city to villages more than 20 miles away, evinces a preoccupation that spans across the urban-rural boundary. More importantly, the very nature of the dispute was over the proper economic relationship rural parishes should have with the city. Above all, Knockolds and his fellow weavers were defending what they saw as 'urban work', together with the unique status and traditional wages of urban weavers not shared by those in the country. The irony, of course, is that some of those weavers (like Robert Davison) came from the country labour background they sought to differentiate themselves from, yet they had now clearly adopted an urban identity. To protect this new identity, these incomers had no choice but to defend the economic boundaries they were themselves helping to blur.

### Rural worlds: Swing comes to Swanton

As unrest in the city quieted down, the country was becoming increasingly agitated. In the summer of 1830, agricultural labourers facing declining wages, insecure employment, and growing mechanization broke threshing machines and started fires in a series of protests that began in Kent and spread across southern England.<sup>79</sup> By late November, villages surrounding Swanton Abbott saw mobs assemble to break machines, even interrupting a meeting of magistrates in nearby North Walsham to demand no threshing machines be used in the area.<sup>80</sup> In

Norwich, there were fears that unrest might return to the city, since ‘the Mob are trying to force in to Norwich and to unite in great force’.<sup>81</sup>

Unlike neighbouring parishes, Swanton Abbott did not experience any recorded unrest during the first round of Swing rioting in north Norfolk. Although Swanton Abbott remained free from unrest until the January fires, many of the same tensions were present in the community. The parish had been enclosed less than a decade earlier and faced similar problems with poor relief as its neighbours.<sup>82</sup> In early December, an agricultural labourer named Robert Hunt repeatedly threatened that three of Swanton Abbott’s farmers’ crops would be ‘fired yet’.<sup>83</sup> Around the same time, the local rector recognized the potential for Swing violence to spread to the parish and reduced tithes in December 1830, promising to reduce them further in 1831.<sup>84</sup>

In early January 1831, just as Knockolds’ gang was resurfacing, the youngest Davison brother, Josiah, visited Norwich to sell a recently butchered pig at market and share part of the meat with his brothers who lived in the city (William, Robert, and Thomas).<sup>85</sup> There, the young man met his brother Robert and Richard Knockolds for lunch in Robert’s home, where the trio arranged for Knockolds to come ‘fire the stacks’ at Swanton Abbott. At their meeting, Knockolds asked Josiah how many stacks of corn Richard Ducker, Sam Wilson, and William Blake (whom he called ‘old Billy Blakes’) had.<sup>86</sup> The three men were among Swanton Abbott’s wealthiest farmers. In December 1830, Ducker and Wilson’s land holdings were valued at about 60 and 180 pounds, respectively. Blake, a justice of the peace, held even more land, including several tracts of land valued between 6 and 118 pounds, and even more tracts rented out to others, including the Davisons’ mother.<sup>87</sup> Josiah offered Knockolds some money to start the fires and said he could get a little more from his brother David (also an agricultural labourer in Swanton Abbott), but Robert interrupted him and told him not to ask David for any money, since he was too badly off. Knockolds responded that if that was the case, not to take anything from him, since he was not doing it for money.<sup>88</sup> After the three had planned the details, Josiah returned home to Swanton Abbott.<sup>89</sup>

The following Sunday night, Robert Davison guided Richard Knockolds to Swanton Abbott from Norwich on foot, a 4-hour journey.<sup>90</sup> At several houses in the village, Knockolds dropped threatening letters. One letter, labelled ‘The Truth’, read: ‘A reward of five hundred pound will be of no use for I have don it alone and can I keep my own counsel. I will surprize you more than this be foure you are one year older. Keep that in mind [sic]’.<sup>91</sup> At the three farms, Knockolds set fire starters with long fuses so that all three fires would light at the same time once the pair were a safe distance away.<sup>92</sup> Ducker’s fire burned one of his haystacks before it was extinguished, and Wilson’s fire failed to start entirely. Blake’s fire, on the other hand, burned for much longer, incinerating two barns, three stacks of wheat and barley, and a haystack before it was eventually put out.<sup>93</sup>

The motivation for targeting these three farmers seems to be related to poor relief. At least two of the three were associated with the parish vestry, in charge of relief administration – Richard Ducker was soon to become the guardian of the poor, responsible for the day-to-day administration of welfare, and Sam Wilson had served as overseer of the poor a few months earlier.<sup>94</sup> The third, William Blake (later William Jex-Blake), may have occupied a place in the vestry as well, possibly as a churchwarden (a post he later occupied multiple times). Interestingly, the beginning of Sam Wilson’s tenure as overseer in April 1830 aligns with the end of regular poor relief being given to Thomas and Robert Davison, who both had been receiving casual assistance from Swanton Abbott’s poor relief for the previous six months while living in Norwich.<sup>95</sup> After this point, Thomas appears infrequently, such as when sick, while Robert does not appear at all.<sup>96</sup> This timing creates the tantalizing possibility that Wilson could have been targeted as punishment for refusing the brothers’ poor relief or to threaten his successor with a similar fate. The fact that assistance to the brothers’ families resumed immediately after the fires lends some credence to this theory.<sup>97</sup>

There are some reasons to be sceptical that the fires were a simple matter of revenge, however. For one thing, the break in poor relief assistance also corresponds to the temporary pause in the conflict between weavers and manufacturers, meaning that Robert and Thomas Davison may have been less dependent on poor relief during Wilson’s tenure as overseer. Even if revenge was a



motivating factor, the fact that the incendiarism was carried out with so much emphasis on secrecy and anonymity would seem to indicate that the message they were trying to send went beyond simple retaliation. Robert Hunt's participation also shows there was more to these attacks than revenge for refusing relief to Robert Davison. In other words, while personal factors likely played an important role, the Davisons and Hunts seem to have considered their actions to have a larger resonance for the parish community beyond their own personal circumstances.

In any case, labourers could have many reasons to target vestrymen. Most importantly, as Griffin notes, the parish vestry was seen as the regulator not only of poor relief but also of wages in the parish, especially in rural parishes like Swanton Abbott where the vestry was made up entirely of farmers. Threatening individual farmers was less likely to be effective, as farmers were more likely to raise wages collectively.<sup>98</sup> As a result, the vestry – where farmers were already assembled in an official capacity to discuss the welfare of the parish – was a natural focus for rioting labourers.

If the precise motivations of the Davison siblings are difficult to determine beyond some connection to wages or poor relief, the motivations of Richard Knockolds seem even harder to ascertain, yet even more vital to understanding the ways urban workers saw their rural surroundings. Why would a lifelong urbanite like Richard Knockolds get involved with a rural protest like Swing? Though the Davisons and Robert Hunt paid him for his help, he claimed that he did not do it for money when Robert Davison told him that David could not pay. Social and professional bonds must have played a role – Knockolds' son was Robert Davison's apprentice, and he and Robert were evidently close – but the assumption that this was all there was to Knockolds' decision is unsatisfactory given that he later confessed to starting other fires besides the ones in Swanton Abbott.

Knockolds never left a manifesto outlining why he would adopt the cause of agrarian rebels when many of his fellow weavers seemed to view them as competitors. Nevertheless, Knockolds' political radicalism combined with the picture painted by his jailor of a man 'with a bitter hatred against every order of society raised above his own level' makes it easy to assume that Knockolds saw the fires as part of a broader revolutionary ambition, as some contemporaries seem to have done.<sup>99</sup> Similar agendas were not unheard of among Swing rioters, as Griffin points out, and Knockolds could well have been one of many who linked Swing to calls for revolution.<sup>100</sup>

There may have been more grounded reasons for this involvement, however. Another player in the Norwich weavers' riots put forward some reasons why a weaver might find a common cause with the agricultural labourers beyond simple social connection or a revolutionary desire to overturn. The nonconformist clergyman George Beaumont was a close ally of the weavers during the crisis of 1829 and attempted to negotiate on their behalf alongside the Weavers' Committee. At their December mass meeting, Beaumont addressed the weavers to argue that 'the *monopoly of landed property* is the chief cause of all our sufferings', creating a situation in which many of Britain's inhabitants 'can now starve in the midst of plenty and die for want of bread with a loaf at their elbow'.<sup>101</sup> Another pamphlet published in Norwich the same year as the fires made a similar, if more modest, argument. As part of a broader case against mechanization, the anonymous author argued that the unemployment of the city weavers stemmed from the deeper problems with unemployment and underemployment in the country, which created a ready body of workers to compete with the weavers for work.<sup>102</sup>

Did similar reasoning motivate Knockolds to join the cause of the agricultural labourers? It seems likely. The simplest explanation for why someone who had previously shown so much hostility to the 'country people' would adopt a 'country' cause so readily is that he must have seen the cause as complementary to his own, as Beaumont and the anonymous pamphleteer both did. Higher wages in the villages would ease the pressure pushing labourers to become weavers, helping to eliminate the competition that urban weavers would face for work and wages and maintain the traditional boundaries between rural and urban work. In other words, breaking down social and political boundaries by blending the country and city protests would preserve

economic ones. While evidence for how other Norwich weavers viewed Swing is scarce, Knockolds' strategy was clearly formulated within the context of dynamic urban-rural boundaries that were being vigorously negotiated not only by Knockolds but also by Browne's committee, the manufacturers, rural parish vestries, and others who all hoped to preserve some aspects of the urban-rural divide at the expense of others.

If the events in Norwich two years earlier show that the boundary between urban and rural was real and contested, the Swanton Abbott fires show no less forcefully that urban and rural radicalism could still be deeply linked across these boundaries. Even if urban and rural radicals held differing interests, their aims could align in surprising ways, as was the case for Knockolds and Robert Hunt, who never met and faced different challenges, yet both of whom saw the burning of the stacks as an important step to achieving their goals. Family and social networks crossed this boundary as shown most vividly by the Davisons, and concerns about parish poor relief could have both direct (like for Robert Davison) and indirect (like for the Norwich weavers more generally) effects on urban workers.

### Punishment and memorialization

Swanton Abbott's parish priest, Henry Evans, quickly took the lead in investigating the fires.<sup>103</sup> As a rector and JP, Reverend Evans took seriously his role as the defender of order and tranquillity in his parish. After the fires, Evans launched discreet inquiries to discover who was responsible, and within two weeks, two brothers from Swanton Abbott named Robert and Jeremiah Hunt were arrested through Evans' investigations.<sup>104</sup>

Josiah had warned Robert Hunt, who, having previously threatened the farmers and 'bearing a bad character in our parish', was 'liable to be taken up' for the crime, a few days before so he would know to stay inside and avoid suspicion the night of the fires.<sup>105</sup> Unable to keep the secret, Hunt had let slip that he knew about the fires beforehand, leading Evans to arrest him and his younger brother. When questioned following his arrest, Hunt did not know Knockolds' name, instead referring to him only as 'the Counsellor'.<sup>106</sup> Nevertheless, he still indicated to authorities that the Davison brothers were involved, leading Josiah, Robert, and David Davison to all be arrested and imprisoned in Norwich Castle a few days later.<sup>107</sup> Josiah quickly confessed when Reverend Evans visited him in prison. Evans told Josiah that he already had enough information to tie him concretely to the fires, which made Josiah extremely anxious. He then asked Evans, 'If I discover the name, shall I get the reward?' to which Evans responded, 'certainly not'. Despite this disappointment, Josiah still confessed shortly after at Evans' urging.<sup>108</sup>

After Robert Davison was arrested, the curate of St Augustine parish in Norwich visited him and told him that Josiah had confessed. Robert responded, 'Well sir, I see my brother will hang me or I them', and confessed himself. Keen to preserve his life, Robert gave a full and detailed confession. His prison chaplain noted with satisfaction that he 'brings the crime home to the Arch-Felon, Nockolds' and shared 'much other interesting and valuable information respecting other atrocities committed in this neighbourhood'.<sup>109</sup> Six other men were quickly arrested based on Robert Davison's confession, though all were released shortly afterward.<sup>110</sup> Because of his deeper involvement with Knockolds' gang, the government decided to use Robert's testimony to try the other four men, and as a witness for the state, Robert was not tried.<sup>111</sup>

Though Lent Assizes were always held at Thetford, 30 miles away from Norwich, considering Knockolds' gang of violent, dedicated supporters and 'the state of the public mind both in Norwich and the county', there was a risk that transporting the prisoners could provide the opportunity for a jailbreak or else spark some other kind of riot. Because of this, the jailor told Lord Suffield, 'the removal of prisoners was never before attended with so much danger'.<sup>112</sup> After a lengthy debate, these concerns won out and the location of the trial was moved to Norwich.

As the five prisoners (Robert Hunt, Knockolds, and the Davison brothers) were brought to trial, Justice Alderson made it clear in his charges to the jury that accessories to arson were just as punishable as the arsonists themselves. If anything, being an accessory was an even more serious offence, 'for there was hardly any crime more worthy of punishment than that of one person instigating another to commit such an offence, whilst he has not the manliness . . . to participate in its danger'.<sup>113</sup>

It is worth pausing to consider Alderson's reference to manliness. Interestingly, Canon Wodehouse (the parish priest of Norwich St Augustine) associated Josiah's involvement with a lack of responsible male role models, since the 'young man . . . has lived with a mother who, it is thought, has not been a good adviser to him'.<sup>114</sup> Both Alderson and Wodehouse saw the crime as a failure of masculinity, though for different reasons. While Alderson saw Josiah and David Davison's and Robert Hunt's role in the incendiarism as cowardliness, Wodehouse framed Josiah's involvement as not a lack, but the wrong kind of masculinity. His father's early death, he said, had left him reliant on Robert for an example, a man 'who instead of advising him well, managed the commission of the crime for which he is to suffer'.<sup>115</sup> Instead of the emerging 'bourgeois masculinity' described by John Tosh, in which violent confrontation was discouraged for the sake of 'character' and 'respectability', Robert Davison had initiated Josiah into what Tosh calls a 'working class . . . culture of physical confrontation'.<sup>116</sup> The irony, of course, is that the ideal of men as breadwinners that underpinned this 'bourgeois masculinity' was exactly the ideal many Swing rioters were attempting to protect.<sup>117</sup>

The five men were tried first for the fires on William Blake's property, with Robert's testimony standing as the key evidence against Knockolds and Josiah. As Robert took the stand, Knockolds heckled him from the prisoners' dock, yelling 'Look this way, *prisoner*'.<sup>118</sup> Other witnesses were also called, probably including the Davisons' sister Elizabeth (then living in the nearby village of Westwick with her husband and several children) who was summoned to Norwich as a witness but whose testimony is unmentioned in any accounts of the trial.<sup>119</sup> Knockolds loudly protested when cross-examined that the evidence was contradictory and inconclusive and then called several witnesses attesting to his character. After the evidence was presented, Justice Alderson told the jury that there was no evidence to convict David Davison and summarized the evidence against Josiah, Hunt, and Knockolds. After around 20 minutes, the jury returned a not guilty verdict, unconvinced that the eyewitness who placed Knockolds at the scene of the crime could positively identify the man after meeting him only once in the dark. Outraged, the prosecuting attorney promised to try the men again, this time for the fire on Ducker's property, and had a new jury called.<sup>120</sup>

The next morning, the five were tried again, and most of the same evidence was presented a second time. Based on Robert's testimony, the new jury found both Josiah and Knockolds guilty of arson, though they recommended mercy for Josiah. Notwithstanding, Justice Alderson sentenced both men to death. Soon after the conviction, Knockolds told the jailor that he was worried that other members of his gang of weavers would kill Robert Davison as revenge for confessing and begged the jailor to 'send him out of the way' for his protection.<sup>121</sup> At noon on Saturday, April 9 ('the usual hour', as the Gaol Keeper's daily journal notes with unnerving indifference), Knockolds was hung outside the gates of Norwich Castle as a huge crowd watched in silence.<sup>122</sup> After Knockolds' execution, his widow, Elizabeth, displayed his body at her house for a one-penny admittance fee.<sup>123</sup> After five days on display, his body was taken to St James' churchyard as the streets crowded with people to watch the procession.<sup>124</sup>

As Stella Evans noted in her article on Knockolds, the silent crowd at his execution and the large funeral crowd may indicate that his fellow weavers saw him as a popular hero or a martyr.<sup>125</sup> His wife's decision to display his corpse likewise points in this direction. Even stronger evidence for Knockolds' legacy comes from a threatening Swing letter delivered a few weeks after Knockolds' execution just 5 miles from Swanton Abbott. In this letter, the anonymous writer threatened, 'as you hang one of our gain [or gang], you shall have fires enough to your hearts'

content'.<sup>126</sup> The writer claimed to be a member of a gang of fifty that had started a fire in a neighbouring village two days earlier and dared the reader to 'catch any of us if you can' – an odd challenge if the gang referred to was the same as Knockolds' original group, most of whom had already been caught and released. More likely, the letter referred to an entirely new 'gang' of agricultural labourers taking inspiration from Knockolds' death. Notably, the woman accused of delivering the letter, Sarah Grix, appears to have had no direct connection with the Norwich weaving industry.

Most observers in polite society found Knockolds' behaviour baffling. When passing sentence on the weaver, Justice Alderson expressed his confusion at why an urban labourer would choose to involve himself in a rural dispute. His crime was especially egregious considering how he had '[gone] from his wife and children to a distant place without any particular malice towards the persons who have been sufferers'<sup>127</sup> A broadside published after Knockolds' execution likewise proclaimed that while an agricultural labourer's motives in carrying out the attacks would be understandable, 'how a Norwich weaver can suppose himself called upon to leave his loom for such a purpose is most astonishing instance of the folly and inconsistency the spirit of anarchy will lead a man into!' Only madness, the author wrote, could have motivated such a man to 'leave his home his wife his five children, and travel miles into the Country, merely for the pleasure of setting fire to Barns'.<sup>128</sup>

That contemporaries would find Knockolds' choice so strange emphasizes how deeply engrained contemporaries saw the boundary between urban and 'distant' rural interests. To elite observers, the blurring of urban and rural protest was an unnatural subversion, not the expected consequence of a porous urban-rural divide. It is significant that both Alderson and the broadside author discuss Knockolds as 'leaving' his wife, children, and loom – in short, his established position in urban society – and venturing into a separate world in which he had no place.

Of course, these observers also had a vested interest in framing Knockolds' involvement this way. Outrage at Knockolds helped reinforce traditional social and ideological boundaries between urban and rural workers. A comparison to Browne's Weavers' Committee is useful here. Both these groups hoped to place a bright dividing line between the urban and the rural worlds in order to preserve the interests that the blurred boundaries threatened. For the weavers, this blurred boundary threatened economic interests – the Norwich weavers' monopoly on the local textile trade that any disruption, especially intrusion by the 'country people', placed in danger. To the urban elite, on the other hand, the blurred boundary threatened political and social interests, since an urban radical like Knockolds embedding himself in agrarian protest could threaten nothing less than revolution. It was not for nothing that Knockolds' jailor compared his gang to the revolutionary Cato Street Conspiracy of a decade earlier.<sup>129</sup>

At the same time, however, Knockolds' involvement in Swing would only have confirmed what some observers already thought they knew about the true nature of the rural protest, as incendiarism was often blamed on shadowy groups of outsiders. In the words of Peter Jones, the British public was 'hard-wired . . . to find Frenchmen, Free Irishmen, and radical agitators hiding behind every haystack'.<sup>130</sup> There may even have been an element of truth to this – as Jones notes, the content and composition of many letters signed 'Captain Swing' strongly suggest they were not written by agricultural labourers, though many of them could have been written by local artisans.<sup>131</sup> Moreover, the example of Knockolds is clear evidence that fears about radical interlopers helping disrupt rural life were, if massively exaggerated, not always baseless.

This context helps explain the threat some saw in Knockolds' involvement and the intensity of the legal response. Wallis has noted that the publicity that authorities drew to Knockolds' trial and execution 'reinforced the line that authorities had drawn between the agricultural and urban labourers, separating communities with shared grievances', sharply dividing rural from urban interests.<sup>132</sup> Indeed, the language of Alderson and the broadside condemning Knockolds strongly

recalls a letter to Home Secretary Lord Melbourne claiming that the rioting labourers were '[in the] purses & influence of radical scoundrels who think they can produce revolution by the anarchy and confusion which they expect to arise from [the] destruction of the common means of subsistence'.<sup>133</sup> This lens pinned the blame for the fires squarely on Knockolds, conveniently allowing Reverend Evans and Swanton Abbott's farmers to grant Josiah Davison limited forgiveness for being a young man led astray by the scheming outsider, as mentioned below. It was a useful fiction that allowed social relations in the parish to emerge from the crisis relatively unharmed.

Josiah was to have been executed the same day as Knockolds but received word only a few days before that his sentence had been commuted to transportation.<sup>134</sup> A variety of concerns prompted this calculated decision. The choice to frame the twenty-one-year-old as a misled youth instead of an active participant in the riot played an important role. Fear of the mob was likewise a major consideration. Canon Wodehouse, for example, petitioned the home office to inform them he was 'strongly inclined to think that the benefit to be derived from Knockolds's execution may be materially diminished if Davison suffers along with him', as public sentiment blamed Josiah's conviction on his brother's shocking betrayal such that 'the prevailing feeling on the day of execution will be that of commiseration for Josiah Davison's fate'.<sup>135</sup> This anxiety, combined with the fears around moving the trial, indicates the extent to which the trial struck a chord in both the city and the country. The punishments meant to divide urban and rural discontent ironically threatened to unite them further.

If Knockolds was martyred in both city and village as an abstract symbol of protest, Josiah Davison was memorialized in far more personal ways. In the five years following his transportation, three of Josiah's five brothers named sons after him.<sup>136</sup> The only exceptions were the eldest, John, and Robert, neither of whom had any children during that period. Josiah's nephew, John (son of his eldest brother), also named a son for Josiah a few years after the fires, as did Josiah's friend William Hunt, the older brother of the two Hunts arrested with the Davisons.<sup>137</sup> In total, Josiah had a total of eight namesakes spread across Norwich, Swanton Abbott, and North Walsham, all but three of whom died in childhood. This intimate form of memorialization attests to a continuing sense of family solidarity that transcended community boundaries.

Josiah's mother, Mary Ann Davison, repeatedly urged Reverend Evans to petition the government on his behalf, which he did. At the same time, Evans added his name to a similar petition by the parish's farmers (including the three arson victims) likewise begging for a pardon, with the caveat that Josiah should not be allowed to return to England. In response to these petitions, Josiah was granted a conditional pardon in 1847.<sup>138</sup> Eventually, he died in 1856, aged just forty-seven, still living in Bathurst, Australia.<sup>139</sup>

The memory of the fires seems to have haunted Reverend Evans (later Evans-Lombe) for the rest of his life. In a subsequent assignment to Lyng, he established a local constabulary to keep order in the parish. At the end of his long life, nearly fifty years after the fires, those closest to him thought it worth including in his obituary how 'in the days of incendiarism he was the main instrument in hunting down into their hiding-places the leaders of that infamous movement, and the means of bringing the notorious Nockolds to justice'.<sup>140</sup>

In a very different but no less meaningful way to Knockolds or the Davison family, Evans represents the complex relationship between the city and the rural parish. Evans' role as a defender of public order cast him into a sort of double life – on the one hand, he was, and always would be, a rural clergyman (and later a country gentleman), deeply bound to his parish and separated from the urban worlds of Norwich and London. He also held a central role in defending public order in his parish as a justice of the peace whose role and authority can only be fully understood within the bounds of the rural parish community. Yet the clergy were strongly associated in the popular imagination with the forces of change threatening the traditional parish world, including enclosure and changes in poor relief, an association which many clergymen's role as justices of the

peace only intensified.<sup>141</sup> Swanton Abbott's benefice was among the largest beneficiaries of the enclosure, which had taken place just one year before Evans' appointment to the parish.<sup>142</sup> As already noted, these same forces altering parish life and social relations also helped change the relationship between the urban and rural worlds, as did Evans' efforts to promote Swanton Abbott's cotton-weaving industry.

Given his complex relationship with the issues underpinning the protests, it makes sense that Evans was the person to erect the most lasting, if perhaps inadvertent, memorial to the fires. Today, nearly two centuries after the fires, the walls of Swanton Abbott's parish church proudly display the arms of King William IV. In each corner of the painted board, the date '1831' appears, sombrely displaying the year of the parish's brief, dramatic crisis. Even if Evans did not have it placed as a direct response to the fires, the symbolism of the newly painted coat of arms would have been clear to parishioners for whom the fires and the transportation of Josiah Davison were fresh issues: there was no place for the vigilante justice of Counsellor Knockolds and his executioners in the village community. The King's justice had prevailed.

### Conclusions: the many visions of urban-rural relations

What emerges from this snapshot of protest in Norwich and Swanton Abbott is a portrait of a relationship between urban and rural communities that was being actively renegotiated. Each of the key protagonists – the Davisons, Knockolds, Browne, the manufacturers, Reverend Evans, and Justice Alderson – seems to have had a different view of what this relationship should look like, and each had a very real stake in the matter. All parties seem to have recognized that the relationship between city and country could not remain stagnant and so hoped to preserve those aspects of the urban-rural divide that most benefited them. Yet this preservationist instinct was much more than an attempt to protect what Raymond Williams called 'those successive and endlessly recessive "happy Englands of my boyhood"'.<sup>143</sup> Rather, the increasingly blurry line between the urban and rural worlds of north Norfolk meant all the difference for their livelihoods, power, and place in the world.

For the Davisons, the increasingly close relationship between Norwich and its surrounding villages provided some of the family members a way to escape the worst horrors of agrarian poverty while still retaining close connections to their home in Swanton Abbott. The manufacturers likewise fostered the economic integration of the city and village as a potential lifeline for Norwich's dying textile industry. On the other hand, for longtime Norwich residents like Browne, rural incomers represented new competitors for increasingly scarce work. Knockolds, Alderson, and Evans seem to have all seen the potential for social and political disruption that the colliding worlds could bring.

Where does this leave Knockolds? Some writers have framed him as a sort of class warrior, building solidarity and connection between the rural and urban workers. Yet to describe him exclusively in these terms is misleading. When viewed in context, the radical operative's actions were as much about preserving boundaries as they were building connections. Indeed, only by ensuring fair pay for agricultural labour could the pressure to accept underpriced urban work be eliminated. Historians have already noted how Swing served to preserve other boundaries, including gender boundaries.<sup>144</sup> The events in Norwich and Swanton Abbott thus demonstrate the need to take urban-rural boundaries seriously as a flashpoint for early nineteenth-century protest. Place was always more than just a backdrop but rarely more than during the unstable social and economic milieu of the early nineteenth century when concepts of community and locality were subject to enormous pressure.

More than anything else, however, the Swanton Abbott fires emphasize how these dramatic conflagrations were, in Griffin's words, 'exceptional crises in individual lives'.<sup>145</sup> Swing was, as Griffin observes, 'more than the sum of its local parts', yet those local parts mattered immensely to

the people who participated in them.<sup>146</sup> The close-knit Davison family was forever separated, while Wright and Green were both left with physical scars, to say nothing of the effects Knockolds' execution had on his family and friends. These were legacies far removed from the more large-scale social and political consequences of Swing and persisted long after the fires stopped blazing.

## Notes

- 1 E.J. Hobsbawm and George Rudé, *Captain Swing* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1968), p. 262.
- 2 Carl Griffin, 'Rural workers and the role of the rural in eighteenth-century English food rioting', *The Historical Journal* 64, no. 5 (2021).
- 3 For a discussion of *Captain Swing's* legacy, see Iain Robertson, "'Two steps forward; six steps back': the dissipated legacy of Captain Swing", *Southern History* 32 (2010).
- 4 Hobsbawm and Rudé, p. 19.
- 5 Roger A.E. Wells, 'The development of the English rural proletariat and social protest, 1700–1850', *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 6, no. 2 (1979); 'The development of the English rural proletariat and social protest, 1700–1850: A comment', *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 8, no. 1 (1980); and especially John E. Archer, *By a Flash and a Scare: Incendiarism, Animal Maiming, and Poaching in East Anglia, 1815–1870* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).
- 6 Peter Jones, 'Finding Captain Swing: protest, parish relations, and the state of the public mind in 1830', *International Review of Social History* 54, no. 3 (2009), 429, 431–4.
- 7 Andy Wood, 'Afterword: landscapes, memories, texts', in *Remembering Protest in Britain since 1500: Memory, Materiality and the Landscape*, ed. Carl J. Griffin and Briony McDonough (Springer, 2018), p. 243.
- 8 Katrina Navickas, 'What happened to class? New histories of labour and collective action in Britain', *Social History* 36, no. 2 (2011), 199.
- 9 Carl J. Griffin, *The Rural War: Captain Swing and the Politics of Protest* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012).
- 10 Hobsbawm and Rudé, pp. 127, 143.
- 11 Carl Griffin, *Protest, Politics and Work in Rural England, 1700–1850* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 16.
- 12 Andrew Charlesworth, 'An agenda for historical studies of rural protest in Britain', *Rural History* 2, no. 2 (1991), 231–2; Griffin, *Protest, Politics and Work*, chapter 7.
- 13 Carl B. Estabrook, *Urbane and Rustic England: Cultural Ties and Social Spheres in the Provinces, 1660–1780* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), p. 9.
- 14 Griffin, *Protest, Politics and Work*, p. 174.
- 15 Katrina Navickas, 'Luddism, incendiarism and the defence of rural 'task-scapes' in 1812', *Northern History* XLVIII, no. 1 (2011), 60, 71–2; Rose Wallis, 'Prosecution, precedence, and official memory: judicial responses and perceptions of Swing in Norfolk', in *Remembering Protest in Britain since 1500*, p. 168.
- 16 I would be remiss if I did not mention a second, more personal motivation: David Davison, one of the three siblings arrested and tried for his involvement with the Swanton fires, is a direct ancestor of mine. In fact, this entire project began as a much smaller effort to understand the lives of him and his family members. Though this project has ballooned into something far beyond this, at its core, it remains an attempt to understand the Davison siblings, their world, and their decisions.
- 17 Hobsbawm and Rudé, pp. 19, 207.
- 18 Archer, pp. 172, 174.
- 19 Navickas, 'What happened to class?' p. 198.
- 20 Stella Evans, 'The life and death of Richard Nockolds, hand-loom weaver of Norwich', in *Swing Unmasked: The Agricultural Riots of 1830 to 1832 and Their Wider Implications*, ed. Michael Holland (Milton Keynes: FACHRS Publications, 2005), pp. 170–183.
- 21 Fiona Williamson, *Social Relations and Urban Space: Norwich, 1600–1700* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2014), p. 47.
- 22 Estabrook, 253–270; I.M. Manning, *A History of Old Catton* (Old Catton: The Old Catton Society, 2007), pp. 4, 11–14; *History and County of Norfolk*, vol. IX (Norwich: J. Crouse, 1781), 15.
- 23 'Migration and settlement', in *A Companion to Nineteenth-Century Britain*, ed. Chris Williams (Melden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), p. 274.
- 24 Daniel Defoe, *A Tour Thro' the whole Island of Great Britain* (London: G. Strahan, 1724), p. 91.
- 25 Penelope J. Corfield, 'From second city to regional capital', in *Norwich Since 1550*, ed. Carole Rawcliffe and Richard Wilson (London: Hambledon and London, 2004), p. 147.
- 26 Richard Wilson, 'The textile industry', in *Norwich Since 1550*, p. 234–5.
- 27 Wilson, p. 236.
- 28 See Griffin, *The Rural War*, chapter 2 for a more detailed description of conditions for agricultural labourers from 1790 to 1828.
- 29 Michael Edward Turner, *English Parliamentary Enclosure: Its Historical Geography and Economic History* (Folkestone, Kent: Dawson, 1980), pp. 47–8, 78. The debate over enclosure's consequences is long and complex, though most historians

- agree that enclosure was not the root of all eighteenth- and nineteenth-century rural poverty and unrest (as some earlier studies imply). Nevertheless, it still transformed rural life in important ways. Most notable for the purposes of this study was the way enclosure eliminated any hope labourers might have had of land or use rights (G.E. Mingay, *Parliamentary enclosure in England: An introduction to its causes, incidence, and impact, 1750–1850* [New York: Longman, 1998], p. 2–5); J.M. Neeson, 'English enclosures and British peasants: current debates and rural social structure in Britain c. 1750–1870', *Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 2000/2 [2000], p. 27).
- 30 *Minutes of Evidence Taken Before the Select Committee of the House of Lords Appointed to Consider of the Poor Laws, 1830–31*, p. 167.
- 31 Alan Armstrong, 'Population, 1700–1950', in *Norwich Since 1550*, 245; 'Relief of the Poor', *Norfolk Chronicle*, 4 January 1817, p. 2, *British Library Newspapers*, gale.com.
- 32 *Minutes*, 167.
- 33 Swanton Abbot Overseer's Accounts, 1815–1834, PD 146/55, Parish Records of Swanton Abbot, NRO, pp. 55, 58, 62, 77.
- 34 Church of England, Swanton Abbot, Norfolk Parish Registers, 2 April 1820 burial of John Davison, Norfolk Record Office [NRO], PD 146/10, digital image in *Norfolk Burials*, findmypast.com; Swanton Abbot Overseer's Accounts, pp. 85–6.
- 35 Wilson, p. 236.
- 36 *The Sessional Papers Printed by Order of the House of Lords, Reports from Commissioners: Hand-Loom Weavers*, Vol. XXXVII (1840), 337.
- 37 Charles Mackie, *Norfolk Annals: A Chronological Record of Remarkable Events in the Nineteenth Century*, Vol. 2 (Norwich: Office of the *Norfolk Chronicle*, 1901), p. 289. The evidence for this comes secondhand from Evans' obituary, which conflates the village with another one similarly named and likely overstates Evans' role. Nevertheless, the detail that this was a cotton-weaving business (unusual for Norfolk, where wool textiles were the norm) rings true for Swanton Abbott: a search of wills proved in Norwich Consistory Court shows that out of only five wills for cotton weavers (as opposed to 523 for worsted weavers), two were from Swanton Abbott (NRO, Norwich, England, Norwich Consistory Court will register Borrett fos. 9, 197, index at [nrocatalogue.norfolk.gov.uk](http://nrocatalogue.norfolk.gov.uk)).
- 38 'Meetings of Manufacturers', *Norfolk Chronicle*, 13 July 1822, p. 2; 'Norwich Crape Manufacturers', *Norfolk Chronicle*, 10 February 1827, p. 2.
- 39 'Meetings of Operatives', *Norfolk Chronicle*, 27 July 1829, p. 2, *British Library Newspapers*, gale.com.
- 40 'The Humble Address of the Committee of Journeymen Weavers', *Norfolk Chronicle*, 27 July 1822, p. 3.
- 41 'Meetings of Operatives', *Norfolk Chronicle*, 8 August 1829, p. 2. The exception for Wymondham had been hammered out during a similar controversy in 1826 after Wymondham weavers protested to the Norwich Weavers' Committee that the weaving trade was just as deeply rooted there as it had been in Norwich. ('The Weavers' Committee', *Norfolk Chronicle*, 11 February 1826, p. 3).
- 42 'Meetings of Operatives', *Norfolk Chronicle*, 8 August 1829, p. 2.
- 43 'Norwich Weavers', *Norfolk Mercury*, 15 January 1830, p. 2.
- 44 Swanton Abbot Overseer's Accounts, p. 167.
- 45 'On Tuesday last', *Norfolk Chronicle*, 5 September 1829, p. 2; 'News', *Norfolk Chronicle*, 12 September 1829, p. 2.
- 46 'Court of Guardians', *Norfolk Chronicle*, 5 December 1829, p. 2.
- 47 'Statement of Mr. Johnson the Gaoler of Norwich', 3 May 1831, in Home Office Criminal Petitions: Series I, National Archives HO17, Piece 110. Item WP10, digital image at findmypast.com.
- 48 'Adjourned Norfolk Assizes', *Norfolk Chronicle*, 2 April 1831, p. 2; Church of England, Norwich, St James with Pockthorpe, Norfolk Parish Registers, 21 July 1816 baptism of Richard Nockolds, NRO, PD 11/7, digital image in *Norfolk Baptisms*, findmypast.com.
- 49 'Statement of Mr. Johnson the Gaoler of Norwich'.
- 50 Church of England, Norwich, St James with Pockthorpe, Norfolk Parish Registers, 1 May 1796 baptism of Richard Nockolds, NRO, PD 11/7, digital image in *Norfolk Baptisms*, findmypast.com; Church of England, Norwich, St James with Pockthorpe, Norfolk Parish Registers, 21 July 1816 baptism of Richard Nockolds, NRO, PD 11/7, digital image in *Norfolk Baptisms*, findmypast.com; Church of England, Norwich, St James with Pockthorpe, Norfolk Parish Registers, 23 August 1818 baptism of Elizabeth Nockolds, NRO, PD 11/8, digital image in *Norfolk Baptisms*, findmypast.com; Church of England, Norwich, St James with Pockthorpe, Norfolk Parish Registers, 15 December 1822 baptism of Mary Ann Nockolls, NRO, PD 11/9, digital image in *Norfolk Baptisms*, findmypast.com; Church of England, Norwich, St James with Pockthorpe, Norfolk Parish Registers, 24 April 1825 baptism of John Nockalls, NRO, PD 11/8, digital image in *Norfolk Baptisms*, findmypast.com; Church of England, Norwich, St James with Pockthorpe, Norfolk Parish Registers, 19 August 1827 baptism of John Nockles, NRO, PD 11/8, digital image in *Norfolk Baptisms*, findmypast.com; Church of England, Norwich, St James with Pockthorpe, Norfolk Parish Registers, 24 January 1830 baptism of William Nockolds, NRO, PD 11/9, digital image in *Norfolk Baptisms*, findmypast.com.
- 51 'Execution of Richard Nockolds for Arson', *Norfolk Chronicle*, 16 April 1831, p. 3.
- 52 'Statement of Mr. Johnson the Gaoler of Norwich'; 'A Respite', *Norfolk Chronicle*, 9 April 1831, p. 2; Chapel Book, 1 April 1831, MF 882, Microfilm Records of Norwich County Gaol (Norwich Castle), NRO; Visiting Justices of the County Gaol minute book, 9 April and 16 April 1831, MF 879, Microfilm Records of Norwich County Gaol (Norwich Castle), NRO;



'Execution of Richard Nockolds for Arson', *Norfolk Chronicle*, 16 April 1831, p. 3. According to the jailor of Norwich Castle, these six were John Fitt, William Goward, Robert and Samuel Dary, John Brittain, and William Chillock. Brittain and Chillock's credentials as members of the gang are unclear – the two were arrested mostly based on public threats they had made about a manufacturer targeted by the group.

53 Church of England, Norwich, St James with Pockthorpe, Norfolk Parish Registers, 12 February 1804 baptism of Thomas Samuel Deary, NRO, PD 11/7, digital image in *Norfolk Baptisms*, findmypast.com; Church of England, Norwich, St James with Pockthorpe, Norfolk Parish Registers, 8 February 1805 baptism of Robert Deary, NRO, PD 11/7, digital image in *Norfolk Baptisms*, findmypast.com.

54 1841 England Census, John Britton in the household of Mary Creed, St James Pockthorpe, Norwich, Norfolk, England, UK National Archives, HO107, Piece 789, Book 2, Folio 40, p. 32, digital image at findmypast.com; 1861 England Census, John Brittain household, St Martins At Oak, Norwich, Norfolk, England, UK National Archives, RG09, Piece 1210, Folio 38, p. 4, digital image at findmypast.com.

55 'Statement of Mr. Johnson the Gaoler of Norwich'.

56 Stephen Banks, *Informal Justice in England and Wales, 1760–1914: The Courts of Popular Opinion* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2014), 43.

57 'Meeting of the Operatives', *Norfolk Chronicle*, 12 December 1829; 'Meetings of Operatives', *Norfolk Chronicle*, 8 August 1829, p. 2.

58 *Ibid.*

59 Carl J. Griffin, 'The culture of combination: solidarities and collective action before Tolpuddle', *The Historical Journal* 58, no. 2 (2015), 458–61.

60 'Statement of Mr. Johnson the Gaoler of Norwich'; 'Meeting of the Operatives', *Norfolk Chronicle*, 12 December 1829; 'At the City Sessions', *Bury and Norwich Post*, 20 January 1830; 'Adjourned Norfolk Assizes', *Norfolk Chronicle*, 2 April 1831, p. 2.

61 Notes on The King v. John Shepherd and Hardy Shepherd, 26 March 1831, in Home Office Criminal Petitions: Series I, National Archives HO17, Piece 110. Item WP10, digital image at findmypast.com.

62 'Meeting of the Operatives', *Norfolk Chronicle*, 12 December 1829.

63 'Statement of Mr. Johnson the Gaoler of Norwich'.

64 'State of the City'. *Norfolk Chronicle*, 26 December 1829, p. 2; 'Execution of Richard Nockolds for Arson', *Norfolk Chronicle*, 16 April 1831, p. 3.

65 According to his brother's confession, Robert lived between Magdalen and St Augustine Gates. This is consistent with the family's residence in 1841, when that year's census shows the family residing in a yard on St Augustine's Street, and 1851, which shows the family residing in Barnes Yard (on St Augustine's Street) with most of the same neighbors as a decade earlier. The entrance to Barnes Yard is only about 500 feet from Boatswain's Call yard, where Springall lived. Interestingly, following Robert's death, his widow would take up residence in Boatswain Call yard herself (Examination of Josiah Davidson; 1841 England Census, Robert and Amy Davison household, Norwich St Augustine, Norfolk, England, UK National Archives HO107, Piece 788, Folio 14, P. 23, digital image at findmypast.com; 1851 England Census, Robert and Amy Davison household, Norwich St Augustine, Norfolk, England, UK National Archives HO107, Piece 1812, Folio 396, P. 20, digital image at findmypast.com; 1861 England Census, Amy Davison household, Norwich St Augustine, Norfolk, England, UK National Archives RG09, Piece 1211, Folio 63, p. 4, digital image at findmypast.com).

66 'State of the City'.

67 *Ibid.*

68 'During the Last Seven Days', *Norfolk Chronicle*, 12 December 1829; Letter from T.O. Springfield to Robert Peel, 16 January 1830, HO 52/11/135, fo. 319, The National Archives, Kew. According to Springfield, Springall was offered additional protection but declined it.

69 *First Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire as to the Best Means of Establishing an Efficient Constabulary Force in the Counties of England and Wales* (London: W. Clowes and Sons, Stamford Street, 1839), 136.

70 'Statement of Mr. Johnson the Gaoler of Norwich'; 'Adjourned Norfolk Assizes', *Norfolk Chronicle*, 2 April 1831, p. 2.

71 'The State of the City', *Norwich Mercury*, 16 January 1830, p. 2.

72 'The Norwich Weavers', *Weekly Times*, 24 January 1830, p. 8.

73 'The State of the City', *Norwich Mercury*, 16 January 1830, p. 2. In May, tensions threatened to flare again when worries about the king's health increased demand for Norwich bombazine (a fabric used in mourning clothes). Some weavers tried to seize their newfound leverage to demand higher wages, but the manufacturers refused to budge. ('Norfolk', *Bury and Suffolk Herald*, 5 May 1830, p. 3).

74 'Attack on a Sawing Mill', *Norfolk Chronicle*, 4 December 1830, p. 2.

75 'On Monday', *Norfolk Chronicle*, 4 December 1830, p. 2.

76 Notes on The King v. John Shepherd and Hardy Shepherd. Hardy and John Shepherd were later arrested for the attack on Green, and this conversation was a key piece of evidence against them. A couple of days after the attack, John attempted to sell a similar yarn to the same manufacturer who had originally sold Green the yarn. When the manufacturer questioned where he got the yarn from, John was evasive and, when pressed, gave answers that did not make sense. As a result, the two brothers were arrested and tried for the crime, though several witnesses confirmed their alibis at the time of the assault and others

- argued that it was impossible to positively identify the yarn as the same stolen from Green. After deliberating, the jury returned and told the judge the evidence was unconvincing but found the Shepherds guilty notwithstanding. The judge then sent the jury back to reconsider their contradictory verdict, and after only a few minutes, they returned once again with a guilty verdict. The two Shepherds were both sentenced to death but were recommended to mercy and sent to Australia instead. ('Adjourned Norfolk Assizes', *Norfolk Chronicle*, 2 April 1831, p. 2; Notes on The King v. John Shepherd and Hardy Shepherd; Petition from John and Hardy Shepherd, 17 May 1831, in Home Office Criminal Petitions: Series I, National Archives HO17, Piece 110. Item WP10, digital image at findmypast.com).
- 77 Notes on The King v. John Shepherd and Hardy Shepherd.
- 78 Letter from Richard Griffin, Apothecary to the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital, 5 February 1831, HO 64/2/12/68, The National Archives, Kew.
- 79 Hobsbawm and Rudé, p. 44.
- 80 Hobsbawm and Rudé, pp. 153–4. See also Wallis, 'The Relationship Between Magistrates and their Communities in the Age of Crisis: social protest c. 1790–1834' (PhD diss., University of the West of England, Bristol, 2016), 175–181 for an overview of Swing in Norfolk.
- 81 Wallis, 'Relationship', 180.
- 82 'Swanton Abbott, Lamas, and Buxton Inclosure', *Norfolk Chronicle*, 17 July 1824, p. 1.
- 83 'Adjourned Norfolk Assizes', *Bury and Norwich Post*, 30 March 1831, p. 3.
- 84 'Agriculture and Commerce', *Leamington Spa Courier*, 24 December 1830, p. 4.
- 85 Examination of Josiah Davidson, 31 January 1831, in Home Office Criminal Petitions: Series I, National Archives HO17, Piece 89. Item QP3, digital image at findmypast.com.
- 86 Examination of Josiah Davidson.
- 87 Swanton Abbot Overseer's Accounts, p. 175.
- 88 'Arson', *Norfolk Chronicle*, 26 March 1831, p. 3.
- 89 Examination of Josiah Davidson.
- 90 'Arson', *Norfolk Chronicle*, 26 March 1831, p. 3.
- 91 'Adjourned Norfolk Assizes', *Norfolk Chronicle*, 2 April 1831, p. 2.
- 92 Examination of Josiah Davidson.
- 93 'Fires by Incendiaries', *Norfolk Chronicle*, 15 January 1831, p. 2.
- 94 Swanton Abbot Overseer's Accounts, pp. 179, 53.
- 95 Swanton Abbot Overseer's Accounts, p. 53, 167.
- 96 Swanton Abbot Overseer's Accounts, p. 173.
- 97 Swanton Abbot Overseer's Accounts, p. 179.
- 98 Griffin, *The Rural War*, pp. 181–4, 271–2.
- 99 'Execution of Richard Nockolds for Arson', *Norfolk Chronicle*, 16 April 1831, p. 3.
- 100 Griffin, *The Rural War*, pp. 190–206.
- 101 George Beaumont, *The Griper* (Norwich: George Wright, 1830), p. 7. Emphasis in original.
- 102 *Plain Sense and Reason: Letters to the Present Generation on the Unconstrained Use of Modern Machinery* (Norwich: Wilkin and Fletcher, [1831]), p. 12.
- 103 Petition of Henry Evans for Josiah Davison, 21 July 1835, in Home Office Criminal Petitions: Series I, National Archives HO17, Piece 89. Item QP3, digital image at findmypast.com.
- 104 Petition of Henry Evans for Josiah Davison, 21 July 1835, in Home Office Criminal Petitions: Series I, National Archives HO17, Piece 89. Item QP3, digital image at findmypast.com; 'Two persons', *Norfolk Chronicle*, 29 January 1831, p. 2; 'Statement of Mr. Johnson the Gaoler'.
- 105 Examination of Josiah Davidson.
- 106 'Statement of Mr Johnson the Gaoler'.
- 107 'Statement of Mr. Johnson the Gaoler'; 'In addition', *Norfolk Chronicle*, 5 February 1831, p. 2; Examination of Josiah Davidson.
- 108 Petition of Henry Evans, 24 March 1831.
- 109 Letter from James Brown to Lord Suffield, 9 February 1831, GTN 5/9/70, Suffield Papers, NRO.
- 110 'Statement of Mr. Johnson the Gaoler of Norwich'; 'A Respite', *Norfolk Chronicle*, 9 April 1831, p. 2; Chapel Book, 1 April 1831, MF 882, Microfilm Records of Norwich County Gaol (Norwich Castle), NRO; Visiting Justices of the County Gaol minute book, 9 April and 16 April 1831, MF 879, Microfilm Records of Norwich County Gaol (Norwich Castle), NRO; 'Execution of Richard Nockolds for Arson', *Norfolk Chronicle*, 16 April 1831, p. 3. The *Norfolk Chronicle* says seven, not six people were arrested, though this seems to be an error.
- 111 Letter from Charles N. Wodehouse regarding Josiah Davison, 6 April 1831, in Home Office Criminal Petitions: Series I, National Archives HO17, Piece 89. Item QP3, digital image at findmypast.com.
- 112 Letter from James Brown to Lord Suffield, 9 February 1831. See also Wallis, 'Relationship', 61, 239–40 on the significance of the trial location.
- 113 'Adjourned Norfolk Assizes', *Norfolk Chronicle*, 26 March 1831, p. 3.

- 114 Letter from Charles N. Wodehouse regarding Josiah Davison.
- 115 *Ibid.*
- 116 John Tosh, 'Masculinities in an industrializing society: Britain, 1800–1914', *Journal of British Studies* 44, issue 2 (2005), 334. See Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Harlow: Pearson, 2005) for further discussion of these ideas, especially the chapter on 'Gentlemanly politeness and manly simplicity in Victorian England'.
- 117 Griffin, *The Rural War*, pp. 214–220. This ideal of men as breadwinner was deeply related to ideas about 'independence' that were bound up with ideas about manliness and increasingly applied to the working classes, with important political implications as shown by Matthew McCormack in *The Independent Man: Citizenship and Gender Politics in Georgian England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005). Indeed, Canon Wodehouse's complaints in particular could be read as criticism of Josiah's lack of 'self-command', an essential aspect of eighteenth and nineteenth-century manliness (McCormack 24).
- 118 'Norfolk Circuit', *Morning Herald (London)*, 28 March 1831, p. 4. Emphasis in original.
- 119 True Bill and Recognizances, Lent Assizes, Norfolk held at Norwich on 24 March, ASSI 94/2117, National Archives, Kew.
- 120 'Norfolk Circuit', *Morning Herald (London)*, 28 March 1831, p. 4.
- 121 'Statement of Mr. Johnson the Gaoler'
- 122 'Execution of Richard Nockolds for Arson', *Norfolk Chronicle*, 16 April 1831, p. 3; Keeper's Daily Journal, 9 April 1831, MF/RO 576/1, Microfilm Records of Norwich County Gaol (Norwich Castle), NRO.
- 123 'Execution of Richard Nockolds for Arson', *Norfolk Chronicle*, 16 April 1831, p. 3.
- 124 *Ibid.*
- 125 Evans, 181.
- 126 'Norfolk Assizes', *Bury and Norwich Post*, 3 August 1831, p. 4.
- 127 'Adjourned Norfolk Assizes', *Norfolk Chronicle*, 2 April 1831, p. 2.
- 128 'A Correct Account of the Trial, Execution, Life, Character, and Behavior of the unfortunate Man who suffered on Castle Hill, at Norwich, on Saturday the 9th of April, 1831', broadside, [1831], BroadSides.B.83.6, Exhibition Items, Cambridge University Library, Cambridge. <https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/PR-BROADSIDES-B-00083-00006/1>.
- 129 'Statement of Mr. Johnson the Gaoler'.
- 130 Jones, 'Finding Captain Swing', p. 442.
- 131 Jones, 'Finding Captain Swing', pp. 437–8.
- 132 Wallis, 'Prosecution, precedence, and official memory', p. 175. See Wallis, 'Relationship', 194–251 for a more detailed discussion of judicial responses to Swing in Norfolk, including the argument that Knockolds was executed as a way to provide a 'terrifying example' while at the same time 'papering over long-term structural problems in Norfolk society' (p. 241).
- 133 Carl Griffin, "'The mystery of the fires": "Captain Swing" as incendiary', *Southern History* 32 (2010), 37.
- 134 'On Sunday', *Norfolk Chronicle*, 23 April 1831, p. 2.
- 135 Letter from Charles N. Wodehouse regarding Josiah Davison.
- 136 Church of England, Norwich St Augustine, Norfolk Parish Registers, 1 July 1832 baptism of Josiah Davison, NRO, PD 185/9, digital image in *Norfolk Baptisms*, findmypast.com; Church of England, Norwich St James with Pockthorpe, Norfolk Parish Registers, 4 January 1833 baptism of Josiah Davison, NRO, PD 11/9, digital image in *Norfolk Baptisms*, findmypast.com; Church of England, Norwich St Augustine, Norfolk Parish Registers, 21 September 1834 baptism of Josiah Davison, NRO, PD 185/9, digital image in *Norfolk Baptisms*, findmypast.com; Church of England, Norwich St Augustine, Norfolk Parish Registers, 1 July 1832 baptism of Josiah Davison, NRO, PD 185/9, digital image in *Norfolk Baptisms*, findmypast.com; Church of England, Norwich St Augustine, Norfolk Parish Registers, 13 November 1836 baptism of Josiah Davison, NRO, PD 185/9, digital image in *Norfolk Baptisms*, findmypast.com.
- 137 Church of England, North Walsham, Norfolk Parish Registers, 11 April 1838 baptism of Josiah Davison, NRO, PD 711/6, digital image in *Norfolk Baptisms*, findmypast.com; 1841 England Census, William Hunt household, Swanton Abbott, Aylsham, Norfolk, England, UK National Archives, HO107, Piece 762, Book 17, Folio 7A, p. 11, digital image at findmypast.com. Josiah Davison mentions seeing Hunt and wandering around the city with him in his examination while he was in Norwich immediately before visiting his brother's house to plan the fires (Examination of Josiah Davison).
- 138 Petition of Henry Evans for Josiah Davison, 21 July 1835, and 'Humble Memorial of Josiah Davison', 6 January 1835, in Home Office Criminal Petitions: Series I, National Archives HO17, Piece 89, Item QP3, digital image at findmypast.com; New South Wales, Australia, Convict Registers of Conditional and Absolute Pardons, 1788–1870, Pardon of Josiah Davison, 31 December 1847, pardon no. 48/139, digital image at Ancestry.com.
- 139 New South Wales Deaths, death of Josiah Davison, 1856, volume reference V18562257 43A, index at findmypast.com.
- 140 Charles Mackie, *Norfolk Annals: A Chronological Record of Remarkable Events in the Nineteenth Century*, Vol. 2 (Norwich: Office of the *Norfolk Chronicle*, 1901), p. 289.
- 141 Robert Lee, 'Customs in conflict: some causes of anti-clericalism in rural Norfolk, 1815–1914', *Rural History* 14, no. 2 (2003), 215; Eric J. Evans, 'Some Reasons for the Growth of English Rural Anti-Clericalism c. 1750–c. 1830', *Past and Present* 66 (1975), 94–104.

142 Swanton Abbot, Manorial Court Rolls, 1817–1843, MC 1803/95, 830X6, Swanton Abbott Manor Court Books, NRO, pp. 80–1, 83–5, digital image at [familysearch.org](https://familysearch.org), DGS 4393123.

143 Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 297.

144 Griffin, *The Rural War*, pp. 214–220.

145 Griffin, *The Rural War*, p. 20.

146 Griffin, *The Rural War*, p. 24.