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Reinventing Westminster Abbey, 1642–1660: A House of Kings from Revolution to Restoration

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While historians are familiar with the destruction wrought on the nation's cathedrals during the Civil War, the rather different fate experienced by Westminster Abbey – an important symbolic building that tied together royal and religious authority – has been strangely neglected. This article argues that the Abbey played an important and distinctive role in the religious and cultural politics of the nation during the 1640s and 1650s. It uncovers the Abbey's role in helping to legitimise successive non-monarchical regimes and ultimately explains how efforts to 'reclaim' the Abbey at the Restoration formed part of broader efforts to renegotiate and reinterpret the nation's past.

The history of Westminster Abbey has been intertwined with that of the monarchy for over 900 years, as the institution itself has traditionally emphasised. Its website proudly declares that it 'has been the coronation church since 1066 and is the final resting place of seventeen monarchs'. Yet this special association with the crown was dramatically severed with the outbreak of the English Civil War, the execution of Charles I and the abolition of the monarchy. As a royal foundation and the home of coronations and royal burials, it might be assumed that the Abbey would simply have become an object of distrust and derision in these years of upheaval, a building subject to abuse and neglect – at best an irrelevance. In histories of the Abbey, this is a time to be passed over in haste and embarrassment – 'the abomination of desolation' is the telling title of the relevant chapter (one of the shortest in the book)

BL = British Library; *CJ* = *Journals of the House of Commons, 1547–1714* (1742); *CSPD* = *Calendar of state papers domestic*; *CSPVen.* = *Calendar of state papers Venetian*; *LJ* = *Journals of the House of Lords*; TNA = The National Archives; WAC = Westminster Archives Centre; WAM = Westminster Abbey Muniments in the official 1966 history of the Abbey which itself bears the equally telling title *A house of kings*.[1] But, as this article will argue, the Abbey in fact played an important and distinctive role in the religious and cultural politics of the nation during the 1640s and 1650s – a role that has gone unacknowledged and largely unstudied. This article uncovers how the Abbey took on the mantle of a national Church and played a significant role in legitimising successive non-monarchical regimes. Moreover, it is this context that explains why it was so important for Church and State to 'reclaim' the Abbey at the Restoration – an important task connected with broader efforts to renegotiate and reinterpret the nation's past and the experience of the Civil War and Interregnum.

I

To appreciate how unusual the history of the Abbey was during the 1640s and 1650s, it is important to grasp the significance and meanings attached to it in the period after the Reformation but before the Civil War. In the wake of the dissolution of the monasteries and subsequent Tudor reformations, Westminster Abbey was ultimately re-founded as a collegiate church under Elizabeth and it remained an important symbol tying together royal and religious authority. An association with the monarch was maintained through the coronation ceremony held within the church, through the Abbey's role in safeguarding the regalia, and in its continued use as a place of royal burial. The Abbey's function as a royal mausoleum was intensified in the early years of James I's reign. The tomb that James erected to his predecessor Elizabeth was the first royal tomb to be completed in the Abbey since Henry VII, and was followed by the reburial of his mother, Mary Queen of Scots, followed by his children and wife, and ultimately James himself. Increasingly, the Abbey was a centre for royal funeral ritual and a political space in which the assembled royal effigies gave public expression to the royal succession.[2] The royal monuments and effigies on public display in the Abbey were a magnet for visitors: John Weever in his 1631 *Ancient funerall monuments* commented on 'what concourse of people come daily, to view the lively Statues and stately Monuments in Westminster Abbey wherein the sacred ashes of so many of the Lords anointed … are entombed. A sight which brings delight and admiration, and strikes a religious apprehension into the minds of the beholders'. Such was the popularity of visits to view 'the monuments at Westminster' that the dean and chapter appointed an official keeper of the monuments from at least the 1580s, and a patent for this lucrative post, which included the profits from 'showing' the monuments, sold for £250 in 1615.[3]

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[1] E. Carpenter (ed.), *A house of kings: the official history of Westminster Abbey*, London 1966, 168–75.

[2] J. Woodward, *The theatre of death: the ritual management of royal funerals in Renaissance England, 1570–1625*, Woodbridge 1997, 87, 115, 129, 130–40, 163, 190, 202, 205; A. Harvey and R. Mortimer, *The funeral effigies of Westminster Abbey*, Woodbridge 1994.

The Abbey also operated as a royal peculiar, while the crown effectively controlled entry into the Abbey almshouses. Monarchs also traditionally processed to the Abbey at the start of a new parliament. The prosecution of the dean, John Williams, by the authorities in the 1630s served to bind the Abbey more closely than ever to the crown, as a royal commission undertook the management of the institution in the later 1630s, with the king claiming the power to appoint all Abbey officers and to dispose of all the Abbey's fines and leases 'according to our royal will and pleasure'.[4] More broadly, under deans such as Gabriel Goodman, Lancelot Andrewes and Richard Neile, the Abbey became distinctive as a bastion of conservative practice within the English Church, preserving elaborate music and liturgical practices that later became associated with the Laudian movement and which were promoted by Charles I in particular.[5]

II

With the collapse of the Personal Rule of Charles I, the Abbey was in the public eye again, and in the escalating crisis it came under attack as a band of apprentices reportedly attempted to enter the building 'to pull downe the organs and altar', but were thrown back by the dean and his servants 'with some other gentlemen that came to them'.[6] The major change came, however, with the departure of Charles I from London in 1642, and the disappearance of the dean and most members of the chapter soon afterwards. Some members of the Abbey staff remained – one of the singing-men was convicted of setting up a royal proclamation in April 1643 in St Peter's Street (near the Abbey) that prohibited the collection of parliament's weekly assessments, and the following year all Abbey employees were required by parliament to take the National Covenant in the Abbey.[7] By this point the Abbey was firmly under the control of parliament. Unlike St Paul's (which ultimately found its way into the hands of the City of London), parliament exercised direct control over the Abbey, its management and its revenues. It had already taken effective control of the Abbey from the absent dean and chapter by January 1644, when it entrusted its management to a parliamentary committee.[8] Parliament expected to exercise very direct control over events in the Abbey: both Commons and Lords regularly gave detailed instructions about the running of the Abbey in the 1640s, authorising burials, arranging pews, directing the ringing of bells and requiring Abbey officials to act promptly to prevent people walking and talking there, and children playing, during divine service.[9] The Committee for Westminster College was a very active body. It was established by ordinance in November 1645 with eleven members of the Lords and twenty-two of the Commons. Its powers and membership were regularly enhanced thereafter, until this power was devolved and more formally established in September 1649 in a new body with the misleadingly anodyne title of the 'Governors of the School and Almshouses'. Despite its mundane name, this was actually a very powerful body – with control of the Abbey and its lands and revenues, preachers and lecturers, and with a very substantial annual income (its annual commitments were listed in the ordinance setting it up as a little over £1,900 *per annum*, but the deputy receiver's accounts in the mid-1650s suggest an annual income of over £2,900).[10]

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[3] John Weever, *Ancient funerall monuments*, London 1631, 41 (cf. pp. 450–98); *Acts of the dean and chapter of Westminster, 1543–1609*, ed. C. S. Knighton (Westminster Abbey record series i–ii, 1997–9), no. 541; Durham Cathedral Archives, MS Hunder 44, p. 217v.

[4] WAM, chapter act bk II, fo. 64v. WAM 25109 is the memorandum of the appointment of a royal commission to hold a visitation of Westminster College. See also TNA, PC 2/50, p. 232 (3 Apr. 1639), where the council's commission for the visitation of the Abbey took it upon itself to allocate a prebendal house.

[5] J. F. Merritt, 'The cradle of Laudianism? Westminster Abbey, 1558–1630', this JOURNAL lii (2001), 623–46.

[6] See the accounts in *CSPD, 1641–3*, 217; D. Cressy, *England on edge*, Oxford 2006, 390; and *Diurnall Occurrences* (27 Dec.–2 Jan. 1641/2), 3–4. This assault seems to have been prompted by reports that apprentices arrested after an affray in Westminster Hall the previous day (27 Dec. 1641) were being interrogated by Dean Williams in the Abbey.

The strong bonds that linked the Abbey and its Governors to the new republican regime were made still more explicit in the new seal that was created for the Governors, designed by Thomas Simon, maker of the new great seal of the commonwealth in 1649. The seal features the Great Porch of the Abbey on one side, and an image of parliament in session on the other.[11] There could hardly be a more explicit statement of the sense of the co-identity of the two institutions – this was an Abbey that was now self-consciously 'a house of parliament' rather than a 'house of kings'. It must have seemed only appropriate when in 1656 the Council of State proposed that parliament's records should be kept in the chapter house of the Abbey. In the past, the Abbey had preserved the royal regalia; now it was envisaged as the custodian of the goods of parliament.[12]

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[7] *CJ*, 29 Apr. 1643; 22 Apr. 1644. See the subsequent report in WAM 43160.

[8] *CJ*, 13 Jan. 1644.

[9] For example, WAM 42488A, 42488B; *CJ*, 28 Feb. 1644; 25 Mar. 1648; *LJ*, 15 Mar, 26 Dec. 1644; 25 Apr. 1645; 7 Dec. 1646; 7 Feb. 1648.

[10] WAM 33422. These accounts for 1654–6 indicate an income of over £5,800 (including £642 arrears), i.e *c.* £2,900 *per annum*).

[11] WAM 3922 (and see WAM 43166); H. Farquhar, 'New light on Thomas Simon', *Numismatic Chronicle* 5th ser xvi (1936), 229–30; cf. S. Kelsey, *Inventing a republic: the political culture of the English commonwealth, 1649–1653*, Manchester 1997, 96. Kelsey partly misses the point in suggesting that this was to foster 'the closeness of the ties between the Rump and *the school*' (my italics). For the link with parliament, note also

The importance of the Governors as a body is reflected in the list of names appointed to serve in the initial ordinance.[13] Most strikingly for the erstwhile 'house of kings', the list of Governors includes no fewer than fifteen regicides.[14] Perhaps most symbolic of all among these regicidal Governors was the name of John Bradshaw, lord president of the High Court of Justice set up to try Charles I. Bradshaw occupied the increasingly well-appointed dean's house throughout the 1650s and enjoyed surroundings of some luxury.[15] He also regularly attended services in the Abbey: his name, along with those of other members of the Governors such as Colonel Fielder, Edmund Ludlow and Sir John Trevor, appears in a partial seating plan that survives from the Abbey in the 1650s.[16] Bradshaw's dominant presence, and his active role as a member of the Governors, were a very public reflection of how the most prominent and publicly recognisable regicides had taken over the house of kings.

The control of the Abbey by the parliamentarian, republican and later protectoral regimes is unmistakable. But this was not a simple matter of seizure of royal assets – these regimes made very active use of the Abbey, turning it for the first time in its history into a state Church, and indeed perhaps the first example of a 'national' Church that was linked to the state rather than to the monarch. It should be stressed that there had been

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how one of the houses in the Abbey complex was now directed to be preserved for the Serjeant at Arms: *CJ*, 30 Apr. 1649.

[12] After a parliamentary order of 31 Oct. 1656 (*CJ*) to remove parliament's records from the room over the parliament house and to place them in 'the late King's Fish House', the clerks of council were instead instructed to view rooms in the chapter house adjoining Westminster Abbey with a view to receiving the records: *CSPD, 1656–7*, 147.

[13] See *Acts and ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642–1660*, ed. C. H. Firth and R. S. Rait, London 1911, ii. 256–77. For the members of the earlier Westminster College see the ordinance of November 1645 (ibid. i. 803–5). Ten of the governors had featured among the original thirty-three members of the Westminster College committee, viz the earl of Pembroke, Sir William Masham, Sir John Trevor, Francis Rous, John Gourdon, Humphrey Salaway, Bulstrode Whitelocke, Lord Commissioner Lisle, Sir William Strickland and Sir Henry Vane the younger.

[14] Sir John Danvers, Edmund Ludlow, Augustine Garland, John Carew, Henry Smith, William Cawley, John Downs, John Venn, John Bradshaw, Daniel Blagrave, Humphrey Edwards, Henry Marten, Gilbert Millington, John Moor and Thomas Challoner.

[15] WAM 42750–64. See also WAM 43014 for work being done for Bradshaw as late as 1654.

[16] WAM 24851.

nothing quite like this state Church, under the control of parliament, before. Moreover, in the past, it was St Paul's and Paul's Cross that had partly served as national religio-political venues. Paul's Cross, however, had been removed in the 1630s and its former pulpit was not rebuilt, while the cathedral suffered serious neglect and was repeatedly occupied by quartered soldiers and horses, with the collapse of the south transept vault in 1654 leaving part of the cathedral open to the elements, and prompting John Evelyn's famous exclamation: 'how lothsome a Golgotha is this Pauls!'[17] The sermons themselves did continue in a chapel in the cathedral, and indeed gained an increasing profile in print in the 1650s, although they were now more tightly under the control of the City, and were no longer attended by members of the government as in the past.[18] With the partial eclipse and reorienting of the Paul's Cross sermons, it was now the Abbey which served as the religious heart of the regime, aided by its daughter church of St Margaret's situated only yards away, which hosted the famous series of Commons fast sermons and was decorated with the State's Arms in the 1650s at the state's own expense.[19]

III

The most famous images of parliament's control of the Abbey are those of sacrilegious destruction. There are the reported desecrations by soldiers in the summer of 1643, the breaking open of doors to seize and remove the royal regalia, and Sir Robert Harley's notorious 'cleansing' of the Abbey of superstitious objects in 1644. Much damage was undoubtedly done in these attacks, but these vivid snapshots can easily give us a distorted view of the Abbey's fate in the 1640s and 1650s. Images and painted glass were removed in profusion in the 1640s, it is true, especially in the chapel of Henry VII, where the high altar was destroyed and some two thousand feet of stained glass removed. But this was not an iconoclastic fury: the activity took place over the course of two years, and was a cool and clinical dismantling of decoration. Moreover, this work was carried out by craftsmen and Abbey officials, many of whom had served during the Laudian period, and they included Adam Browne, who had been appointed surveyor at the Abbey in 1639, and remained in post until his death in 1655.[20] The valuable bronze of funeral effigies and the grille of Henry VII's tomb were not melted down in the way that the crown jewels were.[21] The amount spent on restoring the fabric immediately after the Restoration was significantly less than Dean Williams had spent on it in the 1620s.[22]

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[17] D. J. Crankshaw, 'Community, city and nation, 1540–1714', in D. Keene, A. Burns and A. Saint (eds), *St Paul's: the cathedral church of London, 604–2004*, London 2004, 63–4; John Evelyn, *A character of England*, 3rd edn, London 1659, 11–12.

[18] M. Morrissey, *Politics and the Paul's Cross sermons, 1558–1642*, Oxford 2011, 223–7. The church of Christ Church, Newgate, was the venue for some significant public celebrations of the alliance between parliament and the City in the 1640s, but these were only rare events – notably on 18 Jan. 1644, 19 June 1645 and 2 Apr. 1646. See also A. Hughes, 'Religious diversity in revolutionary England', in N. Tyacke (ed.), *The English Revolution,* c. *1590–1720*, Manchester 2007, 111–28 at pp. 117, 119.

[19] On the relationship between St Margaret's and the Abbey see J. F. Merritt, *The social world of early modern Westminster: abbey, court and community, 1525–1640*, Manchester 2005, 11–13, 324–7. On the painting of the state's arms see WAC, E30.

While it would subsequently have a national remit, Harley's Committee for the Demolition of Monuments of Superstition and Idolatry, created in April 1643, was clearly principally intended to reform the interior of the Abbey. But this was surely prompted by the fact that the Abbey was now intended to be in regular use by the political elite. Windows were re-glazed, and new galleries built.[23] John Vicars noted with approval 'the most rare and strange alteration of the face of things in the Cathedral Church of Westminster'.[24] The Abbey needed to be cleansed, because it had work to do, for the parliamentarian and later regimes.

Parliament gradually oversaw the conversion of the Abbey from a centre of elaborate ceremonial religion into the nation's most famous preaching place. Dedicating one of the morning sermons in 1648 to the Committee established to administer the Abbey, the preacher Thomas Hill exclaimed 'O how many people doe blesse God for the sweet change they finde in their Morning Exercises; now they have rather the meanes of a heart and life Religion amongst them [!].' He expressed his satisfaction that the Abbey offered 'Not Pompous Altars only to humour the Eyes, and ta[l]king Musick to please their Eares. All such tedious Chauntings with Musick and multiplied repetitions did little Edifie the mind of Hearers, had little saving influence upon their Hearts.' By contrast, 'many will tell you to the Praise of God in these Morning Exercises' that they had found such saving edification.[25]

Particularly important in this regard was the rota of daily sermons that was set up in the Abbey in the 1640s, to which Hill's sermon referred. While historians have for many years emphasised the importance of the monthly fast sermons delivered to the House of Commons in the neighbouring church of St Margaret's, they have tended to neglect the more constant and immediate opportunities for political direction that these daily Abbey lectures afforded.[26] The team of lecturers appointed by parliament contained some of the most politically important clergymen of the period, and they delivered lectures at the Abbey every single morning at 7·30 a.m. (or sometimes earlier).[27] Here, as one of the preachers noted, they 'preach to Builders of Church and State'. Indeed, the Commons gave direct instructions regarding the beginning time and length of these half-hourly services – clearly because they ran the risk of making attending MPs late for the House. Here was a means by which preachers could respond to daily events, and MPs could be advised or exhorted with an eye to the day's forthcoming business, just minutes before they crossed the short distance from the Abbey and entered the chamber, where prayers would usually be led by the same minister who had just preached to them. In the 1640s the preaching roster had a predominance of Presbyterian ministers, in the shape of Charles Herle, Thomas Hill, Herbert Palmer, Edmund Staunton, Jeremiah Whitaker and Stephen Marshall. It is perhaps emblematic of the failure of historians to grasp the significance of the Abbey lectures that they have continued to miss Marshall's own lectureship because they confuse it with a position at the neighbouring St Margaret's which Marshall never in fact took up.[28] Throughout the 1650s, the list of Abbey preachers continued to be a barometer of the regime's religious complexion, with Independents such as John Rowe, Philip Nye and Joseph Caryl dominant, but supplemented by the irenical Presbyterian Thomas Manton.[29]

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[20] BL, MS Add. 70005 (unfoliated); J. Spraggon, *Puritan iconoclasm during the English Civil War*, Woodbridge 2003, 88–93.

[21] T. Cocke, *900 years: the restorations of Westminster Abbey*, London 1995, 33–4.

[22] But note the calculation in 1646 that 'A thousand pound is not sufficient for the repair of the Church at this present time': WAM 6355.

[23] For details of work on new pews and glass and the construction of a new gallery in 1645–6 see WAM 24850, 24852, 24855, 42268, 42506–7, and BL, MS Add. 70005.

[24] Carpenter, *House*, 172.

[25] Thomas Hill, *The strength of the saints*, London 1648 (Wing H2030), sig. A2v.

It is true that the Abbey lectures probably did not include the providentialist diatribes that featured in so many fast sermons. One of the lecturers reported in 1644 how he and his fellow preachers at the Abbey morning exercise agreed to focus on godly doctrine, working through a programme focusing on the articles of the faith, the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments and the doctrine of the sacraments. Nevertheless, this was no anodyne catechetical exercise. When Stephen Marshall, lecturing on the doctrine of the sacraments, turned to baptism, he delivered a controversial defence of infant baptism aimed at the threat posed by the emergent Baptists, and in trying to cover all the germane issues in a single sermon, he admitted that he was 'compelled to borrow a little more time then is usually allotted to that Exercise'.[30]

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[26] J. F. Wilson, *Pulpit in parliament: Puritanism during the English civil wars, 1640–1648*, Princeton 1969; T. Webster, 'Preaching and parliament, 1640–1659', in P. McCullough, H. Adlington and E. Rhatigan (eds), *The Oxford handbook of the early modern sermon*, Oxford 2011, 404–20 at pp. 405–9.

[27] Thomas Case may have been referring to an additional development when, in a formal sermon on 9 Apr. 1644, he alluded to the lecture at Westminster 'every morning at six of the Clock': *The root of apostacy*, London 1644 (Wing C839), 3, cited in Wilson, *Pulpit*, 16. However, this may simply reflect when the lecturers were choosing to begin their services in order to finish by the specified time of 8 a.m.

[28] *CJ*, 28 Feb. 1644; *The private journals of the Long Parliament*, ed. W. H. Coates, A. S. Young and V. F. Snow, New Haven 1982–92, ii. 86–7. Marshall continues to be wrongly identified as lecturer at St Margaret's in all the relevant scholarship: see, most recently, Tom Webster's account in *ODNB*.

[29] W. A. Shaw, *History of the English Church during the civil wars and under the Commonwealth, 1640–1660*, London 1900, ii. 590–1.

It is also significant that Parliament gathered in the Abbey where its military victories were formally celebrated. This was where the House of Lords kept every one of the monthly fast days (and other thanksgiving days) until April 1648; at least forty-one of these Abbey fast sermons were printed. Not only did peers and judges have separate pews kept for them, but the wives of peers clearly attended these events in the Abbey as well, having seats reserved for them in what was referred to as 'the Honourable Pew'.[31] After the abolition of the Lords, the Abbey still continued to serve as a venue for other great national occasions. The chief among these took place on 3 September 1652, with the formal commemoration of and thanksgiving for the victories at Dunbar and Worcester, a public celebration of the new regime at the Abbey that in some ways echoes festivities held nearly a hundred years earlier in the Abbey commemorating the restoration of Catholicism under Queen Mary.[32] The Abbey also hosted the processions and sermons prior to the openings of the various 1650s parliaments.[33]

Given its importance to the state, it was only appropriate that the Abbey should also have played host to the Westminster Assembly for the nine years in which that body met to oversee the reformation of the English Church (and its prolocutor William Twisse was given a burial in the Abbey).

This was not just a matter of a handily-available local church being used for national purposes, though. The continued use of the Abbey was also bound up with issues of legitimisation. In recent years, scholars have noted the ways in which the early republic and Cromwell's protectorate still used

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[30] Stephen Marshall, *A sermon of the baptizing of infants*, London 1644 (Wing M774), sig. A2r. For the £10 quarterly payments for the 'catechizing lectures' see, for example, WAM 9371, 9384 (and for Nye's resignation from the post see WAM 9397).

[31] *LJ*, 25 Apr. 1645. We can trace this continuing usage for these days in the amounts listed as collected at the Abbey and sent to St Margaret's in the poor rate returns: WAC, E157–66. For details of payments for sermons given in the Abbey in 1643 see WAM 42417–21.

[32] Merritt, *Social world*, 55. Under the protectorate, however, while these were days of public thanksgiving, Cromwell generally observed them with his council and senior army officers at Hampton Court or Whitehall, with sermons and a feast, rather than attending a public event. See, for example, *Mercurius Politicus*, no. 380, 3–10 Sept. 1657, 1606.

[33] *Mercurius Politicus*, no. 221, 31 Aug.–7 Sept. 1654, 3743. For the 1656 parliament see the account in *Mercurius Politicus*, no. 327, 11–16 Sept. 1656, 7254, and John Owen, *God's work in founding Zion*, London 1656 (Wing O758).

Whitehall and other royal spaces and forms to project their power and legitimise their government.[34] These studies make little or no allusion to Westminster Abbey.[35] In fact, however, Westminster Abbey was one of the most important buildings of the non-monarchical governments of the civil war and Interregnum period, and had a key role to play in establishing the sense of physical continuity with past royal government. Decades earlier, the dean and chapter had claimed that the Abbey church was 'more in the eye of all comers to this great place of the land, then any else', given its proximity to the court and parliament, but it was arguably not until the 1640s and 1650s that the state truly seized upon the opportunities that this afforded for propaganda and display.[36]

IV

From early on in the civil war, Westminster Abbey was used by the state as the venue for elaborate state funerals, with that of the leading parliamentary leader John Pym taking place in 1643. The parliamentarian regime seems to have deliberately treated its most faithful servant as a hero whom it had a right to bury and memorialise where kings lay. The Venetian ambassador cannot have been alone in suggesting that parliament's decision to erect 'a sumptuous monument' to Pym 'in the chapel of the kings at Westminster' showed 'what their ends are to the reflecting eye'.[37] Other burials associated with the parliamentary regime followed, and, by the 1650s, the Abbey was notable for the lavish state funerals and burials provided there for major military figures, especially those dying in battle for the commonwealth. Particularly notable in this regard was the funeral of the regicide General Richard Deane (who died in the Anglo-Dutch War). He was brought in state from Greenwich, 'in a very rich and stately manner', the State's Arms were carried before the hearse, and the general was buried, a contemporary pamphlet noted, in 'the burial place of all the kings and queens of England', while 'guns were fired throughout the ceremony and the streets were lined by all the cavalry and infantry' then quartered in the city.[38] Similarly, Admiral Blake's magnificent state funeral ended with his burial in the chapel of Henry VII.[39] In recent times, the funeral for Baroness Thatcher prompted much discussion in the press of precedents for state funerals of commoners, with Nelson often suggested as the first, yet these forgotten state funerals took place 150 years earlier than his.

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[34] See especially Kelsey, *Inventing*, and R. Sherwood, *The court of Oliver Cromwell*, London 1977.

[35] The Abbey does not even have an index entry in either Sean Kelsey's *Inventing a republic* or Kevin Sharpe's *Image wars: promoting kings and commonwealths in England, 1603–1660*, New Haven 2010.

[36] HMC, *Salisbury*, xii. 142–3.

[37] *CSPVen., 1643–47*, 58. See also Robert Baillie, *Letters and journals, 1637–62*, ed. D. Laing, Edinburgh 1841–2, ii. 118.

[38] *CSPVen., 1653–54*, 96; *Mercurius Pragmaticus*, no. 6, 22–30 June 1653, 48; *The Moderate Intelligencer*, no. 8, 20–27 June 1653, 64; *The Moderate Publisher*, no. 139, 24 June–1 July 1653; *A Perfect Account*, no.129, 22–29 June 1653, 1027.

After the regicide, the Abbey was the burial place of choice for the republic's servants. Especially significant in starting this trend was the treatment of the republic's first martyr – its ambassador to the Netherlands, Isaac Dorislaus, assassinated by royalist refugees in May 1649. Significantly, Dorislaus had recently played a key role in the trial of Charles I. Dorislaus' body lay in state at Worcester House (a royalist property confiscated by the state), 'hung with black baize and escutcheons'. The body was conducted to its interment in the Henry VII chapel in the Abbey 'in stately pomp' by the lord chief justices, the general officers of the army, the Commons and the Council of State, 'in regard that he had beene a publick Agent for the State' (as one newsletter observed), where he was interred at the state's expense.[40] The spectacle clearly inspired Thomas May's friends to arrange a similar state funeral and Abbey burial for the republic's first historian, making it a major republican event, albeit also prompting the derisive poem by Andrew Marvell.[41] Other state servants buried in the Abbey with a fair degree of pomp and circumstance included the councillor Colonel Humphrey Mackworth (1654), Major-General Worsley (1656) and the regicide Sir William Constable (in 1655, despite his request in his will that he be buried 'without ostentation'). Similarly, the burial in 1659 of John Bradshaw, the judge who presided over the trials of Charles I and of Hamilton, Capel and Holland (royalist leaders of the Second Civil War) was reported by an observer to have been marked with 'very noble and great atendence with much of haroldy'.[42]

Grand state funerals were not merely magnificent theatrical events, however. They also generated memorials and monuments that enshrined the parliamentarian and republican presence in the Abbey. The Abbey became a virtual mausoleum of the parliamentarian and republican cause. Parliament ordered that the funeral hearse of the parliamentary war hero the earl of Essex should remain in the chancel indefinitely for those paying their last respects. The catafalque (based on a design by Inigo Jones) was, however, mutilated soon afterwards and the effigy was ordered to be reclothed and placed in a glass case near to the Stuart earl of Lennox in the Henry VII chapel where it remained for the next fifteen years. With notable symbolism, Essex's effigy wore the buff coat that he had worn at the battle of Edge Hill.[43] In effect, the revolutionary government turned Westminster Abbey into a Puritan shrine. The new monuments were now added to the familiar tourist route through the Abbey. The satirical royalist newsletter *The Man in the Moone* had imagined in 1649 how the current 'shower of the Monuments' would now guide tourists around, identifying the tombs and monuments of the traitors Dorislaus, Pym, William Strode and Essex. This was intended as scoffing satire, of course, but in fact an Abbey visitor two and a half years later describes how Dorislaus and Essex were indeed picked out for his attention by the man who displayed the monuments.[44] And the parade of commonwealth heroes in the Henry VII chapel would be augmented in the 1650s by Henry Ireton, Deane, Blake, and also Colonel Mackworth, who had famously refused to surrender Shrewsbury to Charles II in 1651. In a sense, then, every stage of the struggle against the Stuart monarchs and the triumph of the commonwealth was represented among the exhibits in the Abbey.

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[39] *CSPVen., 1657–59*, 106–13; *CSPD, 1657–8*, 60, 87, 179.

[40] *The Kingdoms Weekly Intelligencer*, 1397; *CSPD, 1649–50*, 135, 164, 165, 183; *CJ*, 11 June 1649.

[41] D. Norbrook, *Writing the English republic: poetry, rhetoric and politics, 1627–1660*, Cambridge 1999, 235. Norbrook describes Henry Marten and Thomas Chaloner as being behind this initiative – both were Abbey governors.

[42] Mackworth, a member of the Council of State, was interred in the Henry VII chapel, attended by the council, the Speaker, most MPs 'and many other persons of honor, with a great train of coaches and attendants': *Mercurius Politicus*, no. 237, 21–28 Dec. 1654, 5018. For Worsley's burial in the same chapel see *Mercurius Politicus*, no. 314, 12–19 June 1656, 7038. For Constable's funeral see *Mercurius Politicus*, no. 262, 14–21 June 1655, 5418, 5420; no. 263, 21–28 June 1655, 5435. For Bradshaw see *The diurnal of Thomas Rugg, 1659–1661*, ed. W. L. Sachse (Camden 3rd ser. xci, 1961), 17.

Making the Abbey the state's mausoleum, and placing these fallen leaders in such locations as Henry VII's chapel was particularly crucial as a legitimising symbol and as a form of state propaganda for regimes that struggled to maintain order and their own authority. Its significance has partly been missed by historians because they have tended to focus exclusively on Cromwell's dynastic use of the Abbey, and the question of whether his funeral and interment displayed monarchical pretensions.[45] Yet his funeral needs to be set in the wider context of the 1640s and 1650s, which had witnessed a series of grand state funerals occurring roughly at the rate of one a year from 1643 onwards. If the monarchical features of the funeral and its sheer scale were indeed unique, it is nevertheless also possible to see it as the culmination and apogee of established Commonwealth display. Moreover, while the dynastic use of the Abbey by the Cromwells, notably in the burials of Cromwell's mother and favourite daughter in Henry VII's chapel, was of course significant, it must be noted that these were still private funerals, and they should not distract us from the larger Commonwealth appropriation of the building.[46] The prominence of the state's arms, and the strong military features of the Abbey's funerals, also demonstrate that these were not simply feeble echoes of royal ritual, but also enshrined specific features of the interregnum regimes.

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[43] John Phillips, *Sportive wit*, London 1656 (Wing P2113), 96; *A perfect relation of the memorable funerall of the … earl of Essex*, London 1646 (Wing P1512), sig. A2v; *LJ*, 8 Jan. 1647.

[44] *The Man in the Moone*, no. 16, 13–20 June 1649, 83–5; *Lodewijk Huygens: The English Journal, 1651–1652*, ed. A. G. H. Bachrach and R. G. Collmer, Leiden 1982, 45–6; cf. *The last will and testament of Richard Brandon*, London 1649 (Wing B4254), 3.

[45] L. L. Knoppers, *Constructing Cromwell*, Cambridge 2000, 139–46; Sharpe, *Image wars*, 522; Sherwood, *Court*, 126–32, 164–5.

The sustained use of the Abbey as the mausoleum of the state's military heroes was a novel one, but, intriguingly, there was a similar contemporaneous development in the Netherlands, in the shape of the New Church in Amsterdam, rebuilt after the fire of 1645. Although rebuilt by the city rather than the state, this was the work of a new Dutch republican establishment (Holland and Amsterdam were very much the heartlands of Dutch republicanism), and within it were erected monuments to military heroes such as the vice-admiral Jan van Galen at exactly the same time as these appeared in Westminster Abbey (and to commemorate their heroism in the very same Anglo-Dutch conflict).[47] Ironically, just like the Abbey, the Nieuwe Kerk would subsequently become tied to the monarchy, as the venue for Dutch royal investitures.

The Abbey's role as effectively the national Church in these years was in itself part of a broader process whereby the area of central Westminster came to have a more exclusively 'national' meaning in this period. The fact that the executive was a more constant presence in the area – with parliament in continuous session until 1653, and the later protectorate not following the royal custom of going on progress – was a decisive element here. While more recent tradition has dubbed St Margaret's Westminster as 'the church of the House of Commons', supposedly reflecting its long-standing and natural link to the lower house of parliament,[48] this was not a significant feature of the Church in the pre-civil war period. Parliaments were too brief and infrequent in their sittings to have had any major impact. By contrast, it was in the 1640s and 1650s – during the unparalleled continuous sitting of the Long Parliament – that St Margaret's can for the first time be said to have served as the church of the House of Commons.[49] It was also the case, though, that in these years the state intervened more decisively in the locality than ever before. Not only did the state take it upon itself systematically to house its officials in the immediate proximity of parliament, but it also seized upon many of the most important noble townhouses in the Westminster area and converted them to the state's use. It also intervened in local parliamentary elections and the choice of preachers by local parishes, while security concerns placed the whole area of central Westminster literally under the eyes of the state in the shape of the troops garrisoned at Whitehall and St James throughout the 1650s.[50] Just as Westminster now acted as the host of national government in a more intensive and continuous fashion, so Westminster Abbey played a more continuous national role, in contrast to its episodic deployment under the early Stuart monarchs.

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[46] *Mercurius Politicus*' account (no. 428, 5–12 Aug. 1658, 752) of the night burial of Cromwell's daughter Lady Elizabeth on 10 August 1658 stresses the many barges filled with persons of honour and quality which accompanied the corpse from Hampton Court, but notes that 'the whole Ceremony … [was] managed without Funeral pomp'.

[47] E. Kurpershoek and J. Vrieze, *The Nieuwe Kerk, Amsterdam*, Amsterdam 1999; H. Scholvinck, *Graven in de Nieuwe Kerk Amsterdam*, Amsterdam 1999.

[48] For example, H. F. Westlake, *St Margaret's Westminster: the church of the House of Commons*, London 1914. See also the home-page of the St Margaret's website.

[49] It is true that St Margaret's had served as the Commons venue for parliamentary fasts and communions in the early Stuart period, most notably in the 1620s, but it was

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If any confirmation were needed of the Abbey's remarkably high public profile during the 1640s and 1650s, we need only study the prominent role that it played in some of the most significant events of the subsequent restoration of the monarchy and the state Church. Given its earlier associations with the monarchy, it is hardly surprising that the Abbey had an important role to play in the formal restoration of the crown, as the site of Charles II's coronation in 1661.[51] A succession of deaths among returning members of the royal family also meant that the Henry VII chapel was functioning again as the venue for royal funerals and interments within months of Charles's return.[52] Nevertheless, a good deal more was at stake here than the mere restoration to royal use of an earlier royal venue. It was precisely the very public role that the Abbey had performed in 1640s and 1650s regimes that made it so important that it should play a national role at the Restoration. This national role also featured in the restoration of

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its close links of interdependence with the Abbey (which exercised sole right of visitation over the parish) that were of overwhelming significance in shaping the character of St Margaret's in the pre-war period, not least in encouraging a notably conservative approach to religious worship. The only arm of government that enjoyed significant links with the parish would appear to have been the Exchequer: Merritt, *Social world*, 125, 340–1.

[50] I will document these points in more detail elsewhere.

[51] For descriptions of this event see, for example, *The diary of Samuel Pepys*, ed. R. Latham and W. Matthews, London 1970–83, ii. 83–4.

[52] Burials included Henry duke of Gloucester (21 Sept. 1660), the Princess Royal (29 Dec. 1660), Charles duke of Cambridge, the eldest son of the duke of York (4 May 1661) and Elizabeth of Bohemia (17 Feb. 1662): J. L. Chester, *The marriage, baptismal and burial registers of the Collegiate Church and Abbey of St Peter, Westminster* (Harleian Society x, 1878), 152–6.

the Church of England too – and the high churchmanship of which the Abbey had been a famous exemplar. Not only was the Abbey one of the first venues to restore organs, to much public interest,[53] but it was also the site chosen for a remarkable series of episcopal consecrations. Historians who have noted the consecrations in the past have failed to observe the significance of the choice of Westminster Abbey. This was most emphatically not the traditional venue for episcopal consecrations, which had typically taken place in the chapels of episcopal palaces.[54] Yet beginning with a notable ceremony on 28 October 1660 when five bishops were consecrated, no fewer than sixteen bishops were consecrated, all at the Abbey, within the space of ten weeks. All these consecrations took place in the Henry VII chapel, until recently a mausoleum of republican heroes. The Abbey was also the venue for the consecration of four Scottish bishops in December 1661 (it is notable that a comparable institution of three Scottish bishops in 1610 had taken place at the residence of the bishop of London).[55] The potential of the Abbey as a prominent stage for the restored Episcopalian Church may in fact have been seized upon even earlier than October 1660. Robert Skinner, the pre-war bishop of Oxford, reportedly ordained no fewer than 103 ministers at a ceremony at the Abbey immediately after Charles II returned from exile.[56]

If these events reflected a strong desire to link in the public eye and mind the revival of episcopal government with the restoration of the monarchy, then the choice of Westminster Abbey also surely reflected the more prominent national role that the building had assumed over the previous twenty years. But the use of the Henry VII chapel for the series of episcopal consecrations and royal funerals may also have focused attention on the continuing presence there of emblematic heroes of the 1640s and 1650s. What followed was one of the most notorious actions of the Restoration: the removal from the Abbey of the bodies of those associated with the interregnum regimes. While Cromwell and Ireton's bodies were hanged and the bodies publicly displayed, the rest – including Dorislaus, Deane, Blake, Bradshaw, Pym, Twisse and others – were later buried in a pit in St Margaret's churchyard.[57] Transfixed by these grisly events and the very tangible reversal of fortunes, historians have tended to ignore what this event also demonstrated – that many of the iconic figures of the 1640s and 1650s had taken up posthumous residence in the Abbey. The ejections were not merely an act of revenge; they were also a very public purging of a building that had been systematically taken over by the republican regimes. The Abbey was not then some neglected relic gathering dust, which was revived by the return of its natural role as an adjunct of the monarchy. It was the nation's Church that was being seized and reshaped. The monarchy was re-appropriating the building, and rebranding it as the house of kings.[58]

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[53] Pepys, *Diary*, i. 283, 324.

[54] See W. Stubbs, *Registrum sacrum Anglicanum*, Oxford 1858, 100–21. Discounting two consecrations in the 1540s (one of whom was Thomas Thirlby, the first and only bishop of Westminster), and that of Francis Godwin in 1601, the only three episcopal consecrations in the post-Reformation Abbey prior to 1660 all reflect John Williams's position as dean of Westminster, being Williams's own consecration in 1621, and the role that he played as senior prelate (archbishop of York, in the absence of Laud who was in the Tower) at the consecrations of John Prideaux (1641) and Ralph Brownrigg (1642).

[55] Stubbs, *Registrum*, 114, 121–3.

[56] S. Taylor and K. Fincham, 'The restoration of the Church of England, 1660–62: ordination, re-ordination and conformity', in S. Taylor and G. Tapsell (eds), *The nature of the English revolution revisited*, Woodbridge 2013, 197–232.

So tight remains the association of Westminster Abbey with the monarchy, that St Paul's cathedral continues to lay claim to being 'the nation's church', highlighting its role in the burial of military heroes and the state funerals of commoners. But, as we have seen, commoners had received state funerals nearly 150 years earlier, in a different building, which surely deserves to be remembered as the first church to have been truly that of the nation.

Continuity has always been an important theme in the history of Westminster Abbey: King James I had been anxious to use the Abbey's links with the past in order to emphasise the legitimacy of his succession, while the Restoration regime was all the more anxious to secure its links to the venerable and continuous history of the monarchy's ritual centre. But any appeal to the past, and to continuities, is inevitably a selective and present-centred process. The regimes of the 1640s and 1650s had been no less eager to appropriate the Abbey and its historical associations to assert their own legitimacy, but this was a selective appropriation which purged as well as revived, combining the old and the new. And the practices of cleansing and re-appropriation were observed by monarchical as well as parliamentarian, republican and protectoral regimes.

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[57] Chester, *Registers*, 521–3; J. Dart, *Westmonasterium*, London 1723, ii, 143–6. The royal warrant for the later disinterment (dated 9 September 1661) requires the ejection of all those 'unwarrantably interred' since 1641 (i.e. from Charles I's departure from London), and lists twenty-one names. Essex's effigy was removed at a later point in 1661 to make space for another monument, but the body remained unmolested: HMC, *Fourth report*, appendix, 180. Major-General Worsley's body also remained in the Abbey, presumably only by oversight.

[58] The purging also encapsulated the tensions between continuity and change that are readily observable as the Abbey struggled to rebuild its position in the locality. The restoration of the Abbey's role in the area was far from straightforward. For example, while the restored dean and chapter soon issued an order seeking to track down locally 'any money goods or utensills … which have beene any way deteyned or imbeazeled' from the Abbey (WAM, chapter act bk III, 11 Oct. 1660), they notably failed to renew the traditional payment of the college alms (despite the fact that the alms, which dated back to the pre–Reformation period, had remarkably been sustained throughout the Interregnum by the Abbey Governors, and specifically described as the benevolence of the late dean and chapter): WAC, E159–E176.

What historians have missed, however, is not simply one of a series of appropriations of the Abbey which might lead us to question the building's simple association with monarchy. It is perhaps understandable, if the present Abbey is itself selective about how it chooses to remember its briefly parliamentarian and regicidal past. But what is also missed is the manner in which the town of Westminster in general, and the Abbey in particular, played a much more central role in national affairs in these years. Not only did the Restoration restore the Abbey's links with the crown, but the restoration of the dean and chapter meant that the Abbey would never again be quite as abjectly under the thumb of the civil authorities as it was in the interregnum years, while the revival of St Paul's helped to muddy the waters of any discussion of which institution was truly 'the nation's church'. To pass over Westminster Abbey's role in the 1640s and 1650s means, therefore, that we thereby risk missing an important and distinctive period not just in the history of this institution, but of its role in the life of the nation.