The response to plague and the poor in the suburban parishes of early modern London c. 1600-1650

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The response to plague and the poor in the suburban parishes of early modern London c. 1600-1650

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I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Except where stated otherwise by reference or acknowledgment, the work presented is entirely my own.

Aaron Columbus

28 January 2021

Abstract:

The response to plague and the poor in the suburban parishes of early modern London, c. 1600-1650

Plague and poverty were synonymous with London's expansion in the seventeenth century and were particularly identified with the large and socially diverse parish communities beyond the city walls. Contemporary views of the suburban parishes were couched in the pejorative rhetoric of sin, pollution, poverty and pestilence. This thesis rejects that pessimistic narrative and analyses the response of the suburban parishes to the intersecting problems of plague and the poor in the context of the significant demographic and social burden they managed.

Since Paul Slack's seminal studies of plague and poverty in early modern England, historians have tended to separate the management of the plague from that of the poor, whilst London's plague narrative tends to focus on the epidemic events and to overlook the long periods when the disease was endemic. This thesis redresses these significant oversights.

Parish records, although prosaic and representative of the parish elite, provide a different perspective from literary sources and the records of the Crown and City authorities, and are the main sources used in this thesis. Crown, City and ecclesiastical records are employed to frame the context in which the suburban parishes responded to plague and the poor

This thesis presents a nuanced and sympathetic account of the response to plague and the poor in the suburban parishes between 1600 and 1650. It describes the search for efficiency amidst increasing need and limited resources and the power and responsibility devolved to the parishes by the Poor Laws and Plague Orders. These laws and orders led suburban parishes toward a double-faceted response that was marked by hardening perceptions of the right to belong, on the one hand, but also pragmatism, flexibility and independent action in meeting myriad social challenges that were exacerbated by the long-term problems of plague.

For Jacqui and Tennessee

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The unconditional support of my wife Jacqui has been integral to this project in myriad ways from its inception to completion. Words will not do justice to the debt of gratitude I owe. My daughter Tennessee has been both a source of inspiration and distraction from the world of early modern London. I wish to thank my mother Carol for her support in my wider academic journey, and also my late father, Gary, who would have enjoyed seeing this project come to fruition. I wish to also thank my in-laws, Kerrie and Lyn, for their support and interest in this journey.

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Abbreviations used in the text:

BL: British Library

GL: Guildhall Library

LMA: London Metropolitan Archives

LPL: Lambeth Palace Library

TNA: The National Archives

WAC: Westminster Archives Centre

Note on conventions used in the text:

All dates are given in the New Style, with the year beginning 1 January, unless otherwise stated in the text.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1. Research questions

'How happy therefore were Cities if they had no Suburbes, sithence they serue but as caues, where monsters are bred vp to deuowre the Citties them-selues?'.[1] So states Thomas Dekker in *Lanthorne and candle-light,* published in 1608, amidst a run of years in which plague was endemic in London, or rather, in the ever-growing and diverse suburbs. Margaret Healy drew attention to the 'rhetoric of social division' in plague tracts and civic initiative, and stressed caution in being 'carried away' by the 'dominant elite rhetoric' about the 'pollution' of the suburbs.[2] This preoccupation was based on the shifting topography of plague from the parishes within the walls to those without. This was linked to the capital's enormous growth from some 60-70,000 people in 1550 to 200,000 by 1600 and 400,000 in 1650.[3] The spatial and human focus was increasingly in the suburbs where many parishes contained populations greater than England's leading provincial cities by the 1630s. Figure 1.1 (p.15) shows the city and wider metropolitan London and marks the three divisions in which the Bills of Mortality were organised in 1636.[4] The 'suburbs' in the thesis comprises the extramural and outer parishes, the latter including Westminster (figure 1.2, p.16).

The thesis explores the response to plague and the poor in the suburban parishes of London between c. 1600 and 1650. It focuses less on the pessimistic rhetoric of the tracts and national and civic authorities about the intersecting problems of plague and the poor, and instead, pays greater focus to the practical response of suburban parishes. The thesis addresses five

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[1] Thomas Dekker, *Lanthorne and Candle-Light* (1608)*,* https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A20046.0001.001/1:8.9?rgn=div2;view=fulltext, [accessed 22/01/19].

[2] Margaret Healy, *Fictions of Disease in Early Modern England: Bodies, Plagues and Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), 88-97.

[3] Vanessa Harding, 'The Population of London, 1550-1700: A Review of the Published Evidence', *The London Journal,* 15:2 (1990), 111-128.

[4] Vanessa Harding, 'London and Middlesex in the 1660's', in Matthew Davies, Catherine Ferguson, Vanessa Harding, Elizabeth Parkinson & Andrew Wareham (eds.), *London and Middlesex Hearth Tax* (London: BA & BRS Hearth Tax Series IX, 2014), 2-4 - for a description of London's boundaries and jurisdictions c. 1660.

important issues. The first relates to the tendency for historians of plague since Paul Slack's seminal studies to neglect the socio-economic dimension of the disease, and to the comparative neglect of the impact of plague by historians of poverty. Richelle Munkhoff highlighted the oversight in not giving more attention to how they functioned together, given the 'structural overlap' of their management.[5] This is an important consideration that frames the other issues.

The second issue is that historians tend to view plague events in isolation and focus on the epidemic events, particularly that in 1665. Paul Slack suggested that the works of Samuel Pepys and Daniel Defoe made the epidemic of 1665 the 'Great Plague' of London, which 'obscured' earlier epidemics.[6] There were plague epidemics in 1603, 1625 and 1636, but also years in which the disease was endemic in London, primarily in the eight and thirteen years following the 1603 and 1636 epidemics respectively. Vanessa Harding surmised the endemic periods would repay detailed study, an issue the thesis will address.[7] Plague was a long-term problem in London's suburbs and this feature is essential to understand the response of the parishes to the disease, and how it intersected with the problems of the poor.

The third issue the thesis addresses is the pessimistic narrative concerning vestries, the local secular and ecclesiastical governing body in the parish. Select vestries - a narrowed, co-opting and socially exclusive group - were ubiquitous in the suburbs by the early seventeenth century. Steve Hindle referred to a 'tendency towards oligarchy' in rural parish vestries but did argue that they were 'relatively circumscribed'.[8] London's suburban vestries were largely autonomous and managed local secular affairs firmly. The important question here is what part practical considerations in managing the burden of plague and the poor played in the takeover of vestries by select groups, and in their actions and interventions.

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[5] Richelle Munkhoff, 'Poor Women and Parish Public Health in Sixteenth Century London', *Renaissance* Studies, Vol. 28, No. 4 (2014), 580.

[6] Paul Slack, *The Impact of Plague in Tudor and Stuart England* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), 144.

[7] Vanessa Harding, 'Plague in Early Modern London', in L. Englemann and C. Lynteris, (eds.), *Plague and the City* (London: Routledge, 2018), 48-50.

[8] Steve Hindle, *The State and Social Change in Early Modern England, c. 1550-1640,* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), 212.

The fourth issue the thesis addresses is the implication of the Poor Laws and Plague Orders for the suburbs. It is taken for granted that responsibility for plague and the poor was devolved to the parishes by these statutes. This imposed great responsibility and an increasing social burden on parish vestries, and their outlook and interventions require setting in that context. It is also useful though to think about the benefits that were derived from the statutes, particularly when the interventions of national and civic authorities were limited after 1600.

The final issue the thesis addresses is the performance of suburban parishes in managing plague and the poor. The narrative tends to focus on the reactive response to the major epidemics and the possible breakdown in the implementation of plague regulations. This focus requires redress, particularly when thinking about plague as a long-term problem and how the management of the disease functioned alongside that of the poor. The key consideration in addressing this issue is how parishes in the suburbs balanced the needs of the poor living, the visited and the dead, amidst increasing need and limited resources.

A comment is required for the application of 'the poor' in the thesis. Jeremy Boulton was right in his urging to separate the overlapping social groups of 'the poor' and 'labouring poor' and his emphasis on the influence of life-cycle poverty.[9] Whilst sources reflect anxiety about the destitute and itinerant poor, arguably, the greater proportion of those that might be considered poor by the parish were the ordinary poor, a largely self-sufficient and mobile group with the potential to seek, receive or to be excluded from parish relief. The ordinary poor were particularly vulnerable to the socio-economic dislocation that plague might cause, and unless otherwise stated, are 'the poor' for which the thesis will focus on. This includes those defined by the vestry as having the right to belong and those on the residential margin, who tended to be referred to as inmates and lodgers.

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[9] Jeremy Boulton, 'The 'Meaner Sort': Labouring, People and the Poor', in Keith Wrightson (ed.), *A Social History of England, 1500–1750,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2017), 310.

Figure 1.1. Map of the metropolitan London parishes, c. 1660. The map shows the intramural or inner-city parishes within the walls, the extramural parishes without (wholly or partially within the jurisdiction of the City) and some of the outer parishes in Middlesex.
Source: Matthew Davies, Catherine Ferguson, Vanessa Harding, Elizabeth Parkinson & Andrew Wareham (eds.), *London and Middlesex Hearth Tax Returns* (London: BA & BRS Hearth Tax Series IX, 2014) - thank you to Andrew Wareham at the Centre for Hearth Tax Research (University of Roehampton) for permission to use this map.

Figure 1.2. Map of the metropolitan London parishes in Middlesex and Surrey, c. 1660. The map shows the parishes of Middlesex and Surrey in relation to the intramural and the extramural parishes. **Source:** Davies et al, *London and Middlesex Hearth Tax Returns* - thank you to Andrew Wareham at the Centre for Hearth Tax Research (University of Roehampton) for permission to use this map also.

1.2 Historiography

The discussion that follows weaves together an array of connected themes relevant to the issues that the thesis will address. The discussion is structured around each of the intersecting challenges of demography, building, poverty and associated social problems, and plague, that suburban parishes faced.

The enormous growth of London was the underlying factor in the social and health challenges suburban parishes faced after 1600. Norman Brett-James maintained it was not possible to state with anything like 'complete accuracy' the exact population of London during the seventeenth century, a task made difficult in light of the fast-developing suburbs.[10] Vanessa Harding examined different population estimates and concluded that a definitive number remained a 'field for debate'.[11] The growth of London's population was not geographically or chronologically uniform, which limits the relevance of focusing so intently on an overall metropolitan figure. Jeremy Boulton commented that London grew at different rates in different areas and that socio-economic composition dictated the intensity of problems like an epidemic disease.[12] When looking at suburban parish data, divergences in temporal patterns are indeed evident (see figure 2.1, p.42). Moreover, suburban parishes contained very large populations, which leaned toward the ordinary poor, and given that social problems were confronted at the local level of the parish, it is more useful to focus on and compare local studies. As Harding emphasised, it is here that insight into the nature and implications of demographic change and impact on local communities and social structures can be constructed.[13] These factors have relevance when considering the anxiety that the spatial expansion of London caused, particularly the attempts by the early Stuarts to prohibit building beyond the city walls.

Brett-James described the scale of extramural development as ruthless in its 'absorption and destruction' and the Crown's attempts to control building by proclamations as 'ineffective'.[14] Thomas Barnes stressed anxiety about plague and overcrowded urban conditions as the motivation behind proclamations.[15] Malcolm Smuts shifted the discussion to the poor more

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[10] Norman Brett-James, *The Growth of Stuart London* (London: London and Middlesex Archaeological Society, 1935), 495.

[11] Harding, 'The Population of London', 111, 121.

[12] Jeremy Boulton, *Neighbourhood and Society: A London Suburb in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 13, 20, 37.

[13] Harding, 'The Population of London', 111, 121.

[14] Brett-James, *Growth of Stuart London*, 21-26.

[15] Thomas Barnes, 'The Prerogative and Environmental Control of London Building in the Early Seventeenth Century: The Lost Opportunity', *Calif. L. Rev* (1970)*, 1340, 1341.

generally and argued that building proclamations were the most 'conspicuous aspect' of a broader urban policy that was driven by the demands of a 'new kind' of social geography.[16] Whilst in agreement that London's growth was initially seen as a moral problem of plague and health, William Baer downplayed the early Stuart attempts at prohibition as a 'natural reaction' to the rapid change underway in the parishes beyond the walls.[17] It is important to look beyond the Crown's anxiety and connect the patterns in building with the location of plague incidence.

Michael Power argued that two 'very different' societies inhabited the west and east ends of the suburbs.[18] Moreover, in appraising Gideon Sjoberg's thesis of social and occupational segregation from the wealthy centre to the poorer periphery, Power claimed Sjoberg's theory shaken on some level with the growing residential elite in London's west end.[19] Using the 1666 hearth tax, Andrew Wareham agreed with the general patterns of wealth in the central zone contrasting with the poorer suburbs that stretched east.[20] It is important though to approach the suburbs as not one undifferentiated mass, and equally, to avoid the preoccupation with any clean socio-economic divide between the east and west. The environs beyond the walls were a patchwork of parishes with both shared and individual experiences. This can be extended to the individual parish, which might not necessarily conform to established presumptions of locational social character and plague incidence therein.

Jeremy Boulton showed that a degree of homogeneity existed in the riverside suburbs of Southwark. Although he did not dispute the unequal distribution of wealth there, Boulton showed that housing stock allowed for a 'residential intermingling' of mixed social and

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[16] Malcolm Smuts, 'The Court and Its Neighborhood: Royal Policy and Urban Growth in the Early Stuart West End', *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (1991), 129.

[17] William Baer, 'Planning for Growth Controls in Early Modern Northern Europe: Part 2: The Evolution of London's Practice 1580 to 1680', *The Town Planning Review*, Vol. 78 (3) (2007), 273.

[18] Michael Power, 'The East and West in Early Modern London,' in E. W. Ives, R. J. Knecht, and J. J. Scarisbrick (eds.), *Wealth and Power in Tudor England* (London: The Athlone Press, 1978), 167, 183.

[19] Michael Power, 'The Social Topography of Restoration London, in A. L. Beier and R. Finlay (eds.), *Making of the Metropolis: London 1500-1700*, (London: Longman, 1986), 204.

[20] Andrew Wareham 'The Unpopularity of the Hearth Tax and the Social Geography of London in 1666', *Economic History Review*, Vol. 70, No. 2 (2017), 475.

economic groups.[21] This was certainly the case in some suburban parishes north of the river, whilst others might present a more homogeneous pattern. Julia Merritt described 'local characteristics' and factors driving poverty in Westminster as 'distinctive', as were the structures of society and government 'framing experiences of poverty'.[22] This is a valid observation when looking to other parishes beyond the walls. This study will demonstrate the value of taking the analysis of the parish down to the street-level where a more finely-grained understanding of the social reality can be established, and the context of the manifold social burdens that individual vestries managed, and managed mostly on their own, understood.

This study will demonstrate how suburban vestries largely managed their social problems with very little support from external authorities. This was the result of the imposed or delegated responsibility of the Poor Laws and Plague Orders to the parish but equally, the City's reluctance about some form of incorporation of the suburbs and a growing detachment from the scale of the problems parishes there faced. Historians have tended to focus on the stability or otherwise of City government in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth-century London. Ian Archer questioned the positive arguments presented by Valerie Pearl and Steve Rappaport for stability, which they based on perceptions of 'fundamental orderliness' and concentrated central authority. Archer, though, argued for dispersed power and this leading to a 'fruitful symbiotic relationship', although he did admit his view of metropolitan government 'optimistic' and Londoners conscious of 'boundaries'.[23] That consciousness is valid on the part of parish government and to a degree, ratepayers, who shared a vested interest in the parishes' hardening view of the right to belong. The perception of community beyond the vestry though was far more elastic.

Vanessa Harding talked of a changed relationship between centre and suburbs and considered perceptions of health and order one of the most significant ways in which the relationship shifted, and the unplanned and 'chaotic suburbs' transforming perceptions of London as a

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[21] Boulton, *Neighbourhood and Society*, 290

[22] Julia Merritt, *The Social World of Early Modern Westminster: Abbey, Court and Community 1525-1640* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 258

[23] Ian Archer, 'Government in Early Modern London: The Challenge of the Suburbs', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 107 (2001), 133.

'space inhabited and experienced'.[24] The impact of that shifting relationship and the City's increasing reluctance to get involved with the suburbs was the independence of parish vestries. This provided the flexibility to respond to local problems but also placed the absolute demographic and social burden on the parish vestries who increasingly and pragmatically sought to define the parish community. This has bearing on any judgement as to the response of vestries, or rather the narrowed, co-opting and socially exclusive groups, which after 1600, governed each suburban parish.

Ian Archer described the 'real power' in London's parishes concentrated in a select vestry of elite parishioners by the late sixteenth century, although he did suggest that vestries remained pluralistic.[25] Whilst the former was the case in the suburbs, the latter was not, as select vestries consolidated their hold on power with increasing enthusiasm after 1600. Michael Berlin argued that the implementation of the Poor Laws was the vehicle by which enhanced control was gained over parish communities, amidst a more formal 'exercise of power' and requisite limitation on 'parish pump democracy'. Berlin asserted that the priority of vestries became 'policing the margins' around deserving and undeserving poor and disciplining of the 'recalcitrant', although the trend did not go unchallenged.[26] Julia Merritt termed this a process of 'contested legitimacy'.[27] Whilst the rise of select vestries was ubiquitous in the suburbs, with or without episcopal sanction, it is important to situate any perceived take-over of parish government within the context of growing populations and worsening social problems, which included plague. The power and responsibility that was bestowed on parish government by the Poor Laws and Plague Orders was an important factor in that take-over, which is best viewed as a search for greater efficiency in managing the myriad demographic and social challenges.

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[24] Vanessa Harding, 'City, Capital and Metropolis: The Changing Shape of Seventeenth Century London', in Julia Merritt, *Imagining Early Modern London: Perceptions and Portrayals of the City from Stow to Strype, 1598-1720* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 133.

[25] Archer, 'Government in Early Modern London', 144-45.

[26] Michael Berlin, 'Reordering Rituals: Ceremony and the Parish, 1520-1640', in Paul Griffith and Mark Jenner (eds.), *Londinopolis: Essays in the Cultural and Social History of Early Modern London* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 48, 50, 53.

[27] Julia Merritt, 'Contested Legitimacy and the Ambiguous Rise of Vestries in Early Modern London', *The Historical Journal,* Vol. 54, No.1 (2011), 25-45.

Merritt suggested that the rise of select vestries was halted by concerted campaigns against their power in the 1620s and 1630s. She pointed to the restructuring of vestries in some parishes during the Presbyterian era of the 1640s as evidence of this.[28] In an earlier study, Tai Liu had argued that this 'social revolution' was insignificant, as the parish continued to be dominated by a reasonably closed group of substantial parishioners.[29] Keith Lindley likewise suggested that the move of some parishes away from a select faculty was not so 'momentous', and that restructured vestries were still composed of the most substantial.[30] This was most certainly the case in the suburbs where significant levels of hardship were experienced in the 1630s and 1640s, which was stoked by the disruption of the civil wars. The power of select vestries was far from halted. Conflict did emerge with elements of the parish as vestries increasingly enforced the right to belong, sought to impose some accountability on those who accommodated the migrant ordinary poor, and pressed those in arrears of their rates.

These issues raise questions about the persistence of neighbourliness in suburban parish communities, which Keith Wrightson considered a 'critically important' social ideal in early modern society. This was based on 'residential propinquity' and the recognition of 'reciprocal obligations'.[31] Andrew Wear maintained that a concept of neighbourliness between the parish and the poor prevailed after 1600, drawing as it did on perceptions of belonging.[32] Wear's argument was based on the study of a single city parish. The Poor Law made a very clear distinction between the parish's own poor and outsiders. Vanessa Harding argued that a 'territorial aspect' to the poor emerged and each parish had its own 'level of charge' and powers of judgment about liability and eligibility.[33] Claire Schen outlined a dichotomy of

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[28] Merritt, 'Contested Legitimacy', 43-45.

[29] Tai Liu, *Puritan London: A Study of Religion and Society in the City parishes* (Newark: University of Delaware, 1986), 174.

[30] Keith Lindley, *Popular Politics and Religion in Civil War London* (London: Scholar Press, 1997), 56.

[31] Keith Wrightson, 'The Politics of the Parish in Early Modern England', in P. Griffiths, A. Fox and S. Hindle (eds.), *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England,* (Basingstoke: New York: Macmillan, 1996), 18, 22.

[32] Andrew Wear, 'Caring for the Sick Poor in St Bartholomew's Exchange'1580-1676', *Medical History Supplement* (11) (1991), 47-49.

[33] Harding, 'City, Capital, and Metropolis', 127.

deserving and undeserving poor as parishes worked out poor relief and charity on the local level and talked of a 'narrative of legitimacy'.[34] This determinant of distinction is important in the suburban parishes where populations were large and mobile, and whilst need was increasing, the resources that the parish could draw on were both limited and problematic in collecting. Wrightson took a less positive view of continuity and argued that the 'politics of poverty' changed the nature of the neighbourhood throughout the period.[35] Tim Stretton took this further and argued that neighbourly relations were 'under attack' from all sides from the late sixteenth century. Stretton questioned the 'optimistic' interpretations in the continuity of social relations, given the transformation of economic relations that occurred with the Poor Laws after 1600.[36] Whilst neighbourliness no doubt existed within micro-communities in the suburban parishes, arguably, any concept of parish-wide neighbourliness was impossible to achieve, given the size and social character of parishes.

Vanessa Harding suggested that the character of the building aimed at accommodating the growing population obscured the 'human community' and displaced the sense of neighbourliness.[37] This study will show that it is important to also focus on the right to belong. Our understanding of the parish community in early modern London tends to follow the same spatial lines as that defined and actively promulgated by vestries. This is influenced by the surviving sources and the increasing role of parish government in managing local affairs. Steve Hindle maintained the parish was the 'arena' for which 'structure, ritual and agency' were combined, in which a 'highly localised sense of belonging' was inculcated.[38] Whilst vestries acted in the interest of the parish community, this inevitably clashed with other individuals and groups for whom the interpretation was far more elastic and improvised.

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[34] Claire Schen, 'Constructing the Poor in Early Modern London', *Albion,* 32.3 (2000), 351.

[35] Wrightson, 'Politics of the Parish', 18, 22.

[36] Tim Stretton, 'Written Obligations, Litigation and Neighbourliness', in S. Hindle, A. Shepard and J. Walter (eds.), *Remaking English Society: Social Relations and Social Change in Early Modern England* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2013), 189, 190, 209.

[37] Harding, 'City, Capital, and Metropolis', 127-128.

[38] Steve Hindle, 'A Sense of Place? Becoming and Belonging in the Rural Parish, 1550-1650', in A. Shepard and P. Withington (eds.), *Communities in Early Modern England: Networks, Place and Rhetoric* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 96-7.

Vagrants were a group for whom that interpretation was fluid and as the sources reflect, were a major source of anxiety for Crown and City authorities. A. L. Beier labelled the authorities' response to the itinerant poor as 'judicial and penal', aimed at removing a potential source of disorder from society, behind an uncompromising attitude and policy.[39] Paul Slack argued that harsh policies against vagrants were part of the wider 'defensive rampart' of the social elite in maintaining order over 'anarchy'.[40] Paul Griffiths points to court records giving a sense of continuous concern and London's leaders always on edge with 'pessimistic perceptions'.[41] Parish records reflect externally directed action against the itinerant poor, but suburban parishes were equally, if not more concerned with inmates and lodgers: those without settled status taking accommodation in the parish. The poorer sort had the potential to become chargeable to the parish, whilst those of middling or substantial status could be called on to pay the poor and plague rate. Plague amplified this outlook, particularly in the run of endemic years that followed the 1636 epidemic. Whilst parishes became increasingly preoccupied with expelling or taking security for the floating population, they were also pragmatic in working with the reality that inmates and lodgers were an established, if ill-defined, element of the parish community.

Another dimension in understanding perceptions of the right to belong can be taken from the willingness to pay rates and the extent of the free charitable impulse. Historians have tended to focus on the importance of one source of revenue over the other and the influence that religious change did or did not have on attitudes about charity and community obligation. Ronald Herlan criticised the earlier work of W. K. Jordan and what he saw as his exaggeration of the importance of private charity in supporting the poor, and an underestimation of the scale and continuity of a tax-supported system.[42] Ian Archer observed Protestants seeking to 'forge an association' with charity but suggested more continuities

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[39] A. L. Beier, 'Social Problems in Elizabethan London', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History,* Vol. 9, No. 2 (1978), 218, 221.

[40] Paul Slack, *Poverty and Policy* (London: Longman, 1988)*,* 93, 100.

[41] Paul Griffiths, *Lost Londons: Change, Crime, and Control in the Capital City, 1550-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 35.

[42] Ronald Herlan, 'Poor Relief in London During the English Revolution', *Journal of British* Studies, 18 (2) (1979), 37.

than differences with Catholicism in that sphere. Archer concluded that the 'transformation' of charitable practice was not as significant as previously argued.[43] Claire Schen also presented more similarities than differences in her argument that 'fear of disorder' and attempts to 'regulate' the poor were a common aim of both faiths.[44] This raises questions as the extent to which anxiety or practicalities informed the parishes' attitude to the poor. Ben Coates suggested that Margaret James' argument that a Puritan emphasis on self-help and punishment resulted in a harsher attitude to the poor was overstated. Instead, Coates warned of the need to consider the impact of the civil wars on both poverty and available monies for parishes to support the poor.[45] This is an important argument when considering both the hardship in suburban parishes in the 1640s and the difficulties vestries experienced in seeing all due revenue accounted for. This impacted the support that could be extended to meet need in the parish community, and here, historians have focused on social control.

Ian Archer suggested that the discretionary management of resources presented opportunities to 'mould the poor'.[46] Paul Slack took a similar view and proposed that changes in attitudes to the poor and mechanisms for dealing with poverty were not about punishment or charity for the poor, rather the poor were a 'fundamental segment of society' to be 'manipulated'.[47] Marjorie McIntosh showed that communities had to decide upon the 'scope of their beneficence'. The ongoing challenge, she argued, was the balance of 'genuine religious and social concern' for the poor with the need to 'maintain order and discipline', and as cheaply as possible.[48] Julia Merritt described the broad 'charitable impulse' that existed in Westminster, alongside the 'ruthless' and 'coercive instincts' of 'social control' in the management of the poor.[49] These arguments raise questions as to the process of negotiation

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[43] Ian Archer, 'The Charity of Early Modern Londoners', *Transactions of the RHS,* 12 (2002), 234.

[44] Claire Schen, *Charity and Lay Piety in Reformation London*, 1500-1620 (Farnham: Ashgate, 2002), 249.

[45] Ben Coates, 'Poor Relief in London During the English Revolution Revisited', *The London Journal*, 25:2 (2000), 40.

[46] Ian Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 59.

[47] Paul Slack, *Poverty and Policy*, 32.

[48] Marjorie McIntosh, 'Poverty, Charity, and Coercion in Elizabethan England', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 35 (2005), 447.

[49] Julia Merritt, *Early Modern Westminster*, 286.

undermining agency, but equally, the benefits that those judged to belong might derive from a reciprocal relationship with the parish. These threads of historiography, whilst largely ignoring plague, are relevant to the experience of plague in the suburban parishes.

Writing in the early twentieth century, Walter Bell described the suburban parishes as the 'most ominous things' in the plague story and their 'neglect and poverty and squalor' central to the story of plague in 1665.[50] F. P. Wilson likewise described the suburbs as synonymous with poverty and disease and the 'haunt of vice and the breeding-place of the plague'.[51] These works are important, particularly Wilson's attempt to give voice to the earlier epidemics preceding 1665, but are essentially narrative accounts. And whilst J. F. D. Shrewsbury made a cursory reference to the dispersal of plague across the metropolitan area in his expansive history of British plagues, he failed to explore in any detail the movement of plague to the suburbs after 1563.[52] Ian Sutherland attempted a reappraisal of sorts by comparing mortality in London in different years, which recast the accepted narrative of 1665 as the Great Plague.[53] With a few exceptions, which are referenced below, this has not yet resulted in historians exploring in detail other epidemics, or more importantly, the lengthy periods of endemic plague that followed the epidemics in 1603 and 1636.

Later studies, including the work of Paul Slack in the 1980s, maintained the 'sins of the suburbs' narrative and framed the response to plague as driven by fears of disorder. Slack described measures against the disease most clearly formulated when the 'socially discriminating incidence' of the disease became 'conspicuous'.[54] Margaret Healy argued that when the response to plague was 'yoked to coercive sanctions and punishments' it became a 'powerful and unpleasant engine for social control'. This influenced perceptions of suburban

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[50] Walter Bell, *The Great Plague in London*, (London: The Bodley Head, 1924), v, 5, 33, 34.

[51] F. P. Wilson, *The Plague in Shakespeare's London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1927), 23.

[52] J. F. D. Shrewsbury, *Bubonic Plague in the British Isles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 269.

[53] Ian Sutherland, 'When was the Great Plague?', in D. V. Glass and R. Revelle (eds.), *Population and Social Change* (New York: Crane, Russak, 1972), 288.

[54] Paul Slack, 'The Response to Plague in Early Modern England: Public Policies and their Consequences', in J. Walter and R. Schofield (eds.), *Famine, Disease and the Social Order in Early Modern Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 448.

plague and prejudice about the poor.[55] Andrew Wear argued that blaming the poor created a

sense of control of the social order at a time of 'potential chaos' amidst a sense that measures

were available to control plague.[56] Kira Newman addressed the question of whether plague

measures were derived more from public health or punishment. Newman argued that the

government was involved in 'double-speak', claiming the purpose of quarantine was

isolating the sick but using the policy to punish transgressors of plague regulations.[57] Whilst

keeping these arguments in mind, and as with the response of the parish to demographic and

other social pressures, it is important to place the response to plague in the context of the

scale and complexities of the problems vestries managed and their search for greater

efficiency in deploying limited resources. Moving beyond the outlook of external authorities

and focusing on the motives and actions of parish authorities is more relevant.

As stated above, literary works and national and civic governmental sources bias the

narrative about the fear of the suburbs and search for social control and order. Parish sources

though reflect the priorities and interventions on the ground. They are prosaic and reflect the

outlook of the parish elite but tend not to be clouded by the pejorative rhetoric of the

aforementioned sources. Moreover, the priorities of the parish can be established, which

takes on added significance when approaching plague as both a social and long-term

problem, much the same as vestries did at the time. In her work with Westminster, Julia

Merritt outlined the 'intimate connection' between plague, poverty, vagrancy, and 'broader

forms of disorder' by contemporaries and that poverty and plague exacerbated existing social

divisions.[58] This connection is important to understand the response to plague in London's

suburbs, specifically the need to approach plague as a social problem that intersected with

poverty. Moreover, plague was not necessarily viewed as the most pressing problem by

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[55] Margaret Healy, 'Discourses of the Plague in Early Modern London', in J. A. I. Champion (ed.), *Epidemic Disease in London*, (Centre for Metropolitan History Working Papers Series, No. 1, 1993), 19, 34.

[56] Andrew Wear, *Knowledge and Practice in English Medicine, 1550-1680* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 288

[57] Kira Newman, 'Shutt Up: Bubonic Plague and Quarantine in Early Modern England', *Journal of Social History,* 45:3 (Spring, 2012), 42.

[58] Merritt, *Early Modern Westminster*, 306-307.

suburban vestries, which highlights the scale of the demographic and social burden they managed.

These threads of historiography have been the focus of historians looking to the early modern Italian plague experience. Brian Pullan identified the connection between poverty and plague in Venice in the mid to late sixteenth century, where 'discriminating and systematic' methods of poor relief were introduced between 1540 and 1570. This was aimed at the preservation of health and public order as the city's population surged, whilst plague exacerbated the problems of poverty and fears of order breaking down.[59] Sam Cohn described a 'change in consciousness' by Italian health boards and governments after 1576, when writers began discriminating socially.[60] John Henderson showed that prejudices about the behaviour and living conditions of the Florentine poor were used to justify 'draconian' measures to 'keep the poor in their places' in epidemics during the seventeenth-century.[61] It is important to see London's experience as part of the wider European plague narrative. At the same time, the scale and pace of demographic change underway in London's suburbs in the first half of the seventeenth century presented a unique dimension to the plague experience. Moreover, and despite the aspirations of the early Stuarts, the response to plague was not centralised as it was in the Italian city-states.

In looking to the problems of burial in the period, Vanessa Harding described the foundation of the New Churchyard in 1569 as a reaction by Guildhall to the 1563 epidemic. In drawing attention to the lack of any new civic initiative toward the problems of burial space until 1665, Harding asked whether the City was less sensitive to a problem decreasingly associated with the 'city-heartland'.[62] This can be extended to the more general impact of plague beyond

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[59] Brian Pullan, *The Rich and Poor in Renaissance Venice: The Social Institutions of a Catholic State to 1620* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1971), chapter 4.

[60] Samuel K. Cohn, *Cultures of Plague: Medical Thinking at the End of the Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 213-216.

[61] John Henderson, "Filth is the Mother of Corruption': Plague, the Poor and the Environment in Early Modern Florence', in L. Engleman, J. Henderson and C. Lynteris (eds.), *Plague and the City,* (London and New York: Routledge, 2018)), 85; John Henderson, *Florence Under Siege* (Newhaven and London: Yale University Press, 2019), 60-75.

[62] Vanessa Harding, 'Burial of the Plague Dead in Early Modern London', in J. A. I. Champion (ed.), *Epidemic Disease in London* (Centre for Metropolitan History Working Papers Series, No. 1, 1993), 64.

the walls and underscores the independent response of vestries to plague. As with the Poor Laws, the Plague Orders provided the necessary flexibility in negating aspects of the City's relative inertia.

In the years outside the major plague epidemics, the City failed to appreciate the cumulative impact of plague as a long-term problem. This has also been downplayed by some scholars. Roger Finlay argued that that the background mortality of other diseases in 'non-epidemic' years was 'probably more important' to demographic development than plague. These conclusions were primarily derived from analysis of several intramural parishes, and by Finlay's admission, suburban demographic 'features' deserve 'full analysis'.[63] Graham Twigg also promoted a diminished role for bubonic plague and suggested plague possibly a 'generic term' applied to a 'complex' epidemic pool of disease vectors.[64] Only two of the thirty-one parishes selected by Twigg were located in the suburbs. The presence of yersinia pestis or bubonic plague has now been confirmed in plague burial grounds in London and elsewhere and new hypotheses about its transmission presented.[65] Even so, and taking into account the complex pool of diseases and complaints afflicting early modern Londoners, this study will follow the urging of Vanessa Harding, which is to consider the evidence of London's plagues largely free from any 'epidemiological preconception'.[66]

Neil Cummins, Morgan Kelly and Cormac Ó Gráda analysed the lethality, temporal and spatial movement, and the seasonal patterns of mortality of plague in the major epidemics. They concluded relative plague mortality was 'fairly constant' but the spatial distribution of epidemics was shifting to the suburbs. They also asserted that the lethality and frequency of 'smaller' plague outbreaks decreased after 1590.[67] Whilst that might be true of sporadic

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[63] Finlay, *Population and Metropolis: The Demography of London 1580-1650* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 4, 132.

[64] Graham Twigg, 'Plague in London: Spatial and Temporal Aspects of Mortality', in J. A. I. Champion (ed.), *Epidemic Disease in London* (Centre for Metropolitan History Working Papers Series, No. 1, 1993), 17.

[65] Robert Hartle with Niamh Carty, Michael Henderson, Elizabeth Knox and Don Walker, *The New Churchyard: from Moorfields Marsh to Bethlem Burial Ground, Brokers Row and Liverpool Street*, (London: Museum of London Archaeology, 2018), 149.

[66] Harding, 'Plague in London', 57.

[67] Neil Cummins, Morgan Kelly and Cormac Ó Gráda, 'Living Standards and Plague in London, 1560–1665', *Economic History Review*, 69 (1) 2016, 2-4.

outbreaks, the lengthy periods of endemic plague that followed the 1603 and 1636 epidemics were largely a suburban problem. These periods presented significant cumulative mortality and were situated against escalating demographic and social problems.

Justin Champion's study of epidemics and the built environment in the 1665 epidemic provides a pathway to understanding the social topography of plague and the connected nature of 'mortality and the human environment'. Champion directed attention toward exploring the connections between the location of plague deaths and the 'quality of the urban environment' and understanding variations in patterns of mortality between different localities. Likewise, how plague moved within a locality and the 'type of households' that suffered at particular points in time were highlighted as important to understanding the experience of plague.[68] So far, Champion's approach has not been applied to the study of plague in the suburban parishes. Moreover, it is important to not assume the character of a location based only on the type of space and to consider the link between plague and the stage of development in particular locations.

Other studies of plague and the poor have focused on gender and marginality. Laura Gowing argued that gender determined how space was used and that Londoners had their 'mental maps' of the urban environment. Gowing suggested that women like street sellers did not conform to gendered perceptions of the use of space and were the objects of attack due to their mobility and marginality.[69] These arguments are relevant to women plague auxiliaries, particularly searchers, who were also mobile and marginal, and for whom contemporary sources, and until recently, historians, presented a pessimistic narrative. Richelle Munkhoff reimagined the power of searchers, on one hand, marginalised from the community they served, and the other, deriving status and influence from their role.[70] Munkhoff explored the 'reciprocal relationship' between women receiving parish relief in exchange for, or

[68] Justin Champion, 'Epidemics and the Built Environment in 1665', in J. A. I. Champion (ed.), *Epidemic Disease in London*, (Centre for Metropolitan History Working Papers Series, No. 1, 1993), 36.

[69] Laura Gowing, 'The Freedom of the Streets': Women and Social Space, 1560-1640', Paul Griffiths and Mark Jenner (eds.), *Londinopolis: Essays in the Cultural and Social History of Early Modern London* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 138, 141-142.

[70] Richelle Munkhoff, 'Searchers of the Dead: Authority, Marginality, and the Interpretation of Plague in England, 1574–1665', *Gender and History,* Vol. 11, No. 1 (1999), 20-22.

'obligated', to give plague-time labour in return.[71] Deborah Harkness highlighted the

unhelpful distinctions between types of female medical and health-care work. Harkness

argued that women medical practitioners held a significant place in the medical world and

were not 'marginal' or expendable'.[72] Suburban parishes necessarily deployed an extended

cohort of plague auxiliaries: searchers, nurses, warders, bearers, doorkeepers and other

supporting roles taken up by the dependent poor. Women played an important role beyond

the male-dominated governing and administrative ranks of the parish. Lara Thorpe's work

with nurses in St Margaret Westminster and St Bride Fleet Street in 1665 showed that the

parish system of nursing was 'successful' there. Thorpe based this conclusion on women on

the margins being paid for their 'competent and skilled' care of neighbours and friends.[73]

This is evident earlier in the century but fits with the parishes balancing the logistical and

financial demands of plague and the poor.

This discussion of the historiography has taken in aspects of demography, the changing built

environment and an expansive view of poverty, against which the response to plague is

situated and best understood. A wide range of sources has been deployed to assess the

response to plague and the poor in London's suburbs.

1.3 Sources and methodology

This section sets out the sources that will be used and how they are used to address the issues

and gaps in the literature identified above. This includes setting out the sample parishes and

why they have been chosen.

Responsibility for implementing the poor and plague statutes was devolved to parishes,

which necessitated increasingly sophisticated and meticulous record keeping. Gary Gibbs

commented that the evolution of parish record-keeping in the Tudor period showed the local

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[71] Munkhoff, 'Poor Women and Parish Public Health', 586.

[72] Deborah Harkness, 'A View From the Streets: Women and Medical Work in Elizabethan London', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, Volume 82 (1), (2008), 68, 84.

[73] Lara Thorpe, ''At the Mercy of a Strange Woman': Plague Nurses, Marginality, and Fear during the Great Plague of 1665', in L. Hopkins and A. Norrie (eds.), *Women on the Edge in Early Modern Europe* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019), 36-42.

response to 'larger influences', which was defined by the experience of the parish.[74] This is relevant to record-keeping in suburban parishes in the early Stuart period, the result of which is a voluminous corpus of primary materials. When used cautiously, and set against the records of national and civic authorities, parish records are the most effective means by which to understand the response to plague and the poor in the suburbs.

The records of all extramural and outer parishes held in the London Metropolitan Archives and the Westminster Archive Centre were sampled and three parishes selected for focused study. The inclusion of an eastern (St Botolph Aldgate) and western (St Bride Fleet Street) extramural parish and a rapidly growing westerly outer parish (St Martin in the Fields) present a geographically and socially diverse sample. These parishes have also been included for the quality of their records.[75] A wider range of suburban parishes has been included to complement and compare with the three focus parishes: St Botolph Bishopsgate, which neighboured Aldgate, extends the view of the north-easterly extramural parishes, and St Dunstan in the West, St Sepulchre Newgate and St Andrew Holborn the westerly. The northeastern outer parish of St John Hackney and the westerly outer parish of St Giles in the Fields, neighbour to St Martin in the Fields, are also used for targeted insights on London's metropolitan periphery.[76]

The parish sources used include registers, churchwardens' accounts, vestry minutes and assorted special documents relating to the management of the poor and plague. The former tend to survive in uninterrupted runs and are common to each of the selected parishes, whilst the latter might be a one-off record created for a particular need. Following their selection, the records of the three core sample parishes were examined for any reference to the management of plague and the poor and the administration of parish government. Relevant references, usually incidental, were likewise extracted from the wider parish sample. This

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[74] Gary Gibbs, 'London Parish Records and Parish Studies: Texts, Contexts, and the Debates over Appropriate Methods', Valerie Hitchman and Andrew Foster (eds.), *View from the Parish: Churchwardens' Accounts c. 1500-c.1800* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), 66-67, 70-71, 73-74.

[75] For example, P69/SEP/B/123/MS09080/001B; P69/DUN2/B/011/MS02968/003 - individual items are fully listed in the footnotes to the research chapters and in the Bibliography.

[76] For example, P79/JN1/137 - as above, individual items are fully listed in the footnotes to the research chapters and in the Bibliography.

approach is necessitated by the dispersal of the material across many parishes. Whilst aspects of these sources have been used by historians, none have yet compared so many suburban parishes.

The limitations of a methodology that draws primarily on parish records are inherent in the limits of the records themselves. The evidence is patchy and no suburban parish maintains a perfect set of records, and as indicated above, synthesis is the necessary approach. Parish records also reflect the outlook of the vestry elite and the need to record the minutia of poor and plague administration. It is difficult to access a view of history from below, although this can be inferred from the interventions of the parish in the community. This can be extended to gender and the important contribution women made to the implementation of plague regulations and wider responsibilities for care in the parish. The records detailing the response to plague and the poor tend to be more detailed and expansive in the second quarter of the seventeenth century, which does sway aspects of the discussion toward the 1630s and 1640s. This reflects though the increasing challenges parishes faced at that time, and the necessary search for efficiency and monitoring of income and expenditure it entailed.

Suburban registers survive well in uninterrupted runs in this period. The accuracy of baptismal registers during the rise of Puritanism in the civil wars has been raised by historians. Roger Finlay suggested that the 'quality' of registration was not impacted until after 1645.[77] Neil Cummins, Morgan Kelly and Cormac Ó Gráda though questioned the accuracy of baptismal registers from 1639.[78] The discussion in chapters 2 and 4 show Finlay's argument closer to the situation in the suburbs, where the quality of registers is generally maintained up to at least 1647. Suburban registers present the added challenge of large numbers baptised and buried, the latter being a particular problem during epidemic plague events. The registers used in the thesis stand up to the scrutiny of these considerations and comment is made in the course of the discussion on their accuracy and relationship with the Bills of Mortality.

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[77] Finlay, *Population and* Metropolis, 20-51.

[78] Cummins et al, 'Living Standards', 34-35.

Vanessa Harding drew attention to the 'spatial specificity' of plague that the Bills of Mortality presented to Londoners.[79] The bills are used sparingly in Chapter 4 to present the broad topographical patterns of plague burials. Registers give a much finer grain view of burial patterns in a plague year and the long view of those patterns across time.[80] The number of annual baptisms from 1559 to 1650 was counted for St Bride Fleet, St Martin in the Fields, St Botolph Aldgate and St Botolph Bishopsgate. These serve to frame broad demographic trends. Monthly and annual burials were counted for the same parishes, with the addition of St Andrew Holborn.[81] The Holborn register both marks plague and the locational origin of persons buried, which is useful in tracking the spatial patterns of the disease in the parish.

Churchwardens' accounts are useful for tracking change over time in the patterns of income sources, parish priorities in spending and the relationship between the parish and individuals and groups. They may not capture the full gamut of parish activities and can vary in quality and detail as each parish decided how and what to record in the accounts and responded to local problems and needs. The accounts are best understood in the local context in which they were formed and used in tandem with other parish administrative sources. Keeping these limits in mind, churchwardens' accounts are indispensable and are used to address the issues related to the implication of the poor and plague statutes and how parishes balanced the needs of the poor living, the visited and the dead. The churchwardens' accounts for St Martin in the Fields and St Botolph Aldgate exist in a continuous run through the period. Those for St Bride Fleet Street are only extant from 1639 but are nonetheless rich in plague references through the endemic period in the 1640s. The accounts for St Dunstan in the West are also useful in their coverage of plague management, particularly in the 1603 and 1625 epidemics.

Vestry minutes can touch on all aspects of the day-to-day management of secular and ecclesiastical affairs of the parish. These records show the business and activities of the suburban vestries becoming more complex and increasing in scope after 1600. This was the

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[79] Harding, 'Plague in early modern London', 42.

[80] For example, GL Worshipful Company of Parish Clerks, *A Generall Bill for this Present Yeare, ending the 16. of December 1641 (*Worshipful Company of Parish Clerks, 1641).

[81] For example, LMA P69/AND2/A/010/MS06673/002 - individual registers and printed registers are fully listed in the footnotes to the research chapters and in the Bibliography.

result of responsibility for the poor and for implementation of plague statutes being devolved to the parish, the increasing power of vestries and the worsening demographic and social challenges they faced. Vestry minutes were not audited like the churchwardens' accounts or subject to diocesan review like the burial, baptismal and marriage registers. The vestry and clerk chose what to record and the items tend to reflect final decisions rather than any process of discussion and debate. This gives the impression of harmony and accord, both within the vestry and in their relationship with individuals and groups in the parish. It is important to acknowledge that silence in the sources: recorded activities mostly relate to those judged deserving of parish support, rather than all those that might interact with the vestry. Even so, this source is essential in understanding the rise of select vestries and the operational dimension and priorities of parish government. As above, the vestry minutes for St Martin's, a particularly rich source, and Aldgate, survive in a continuous run but are only extant from 1645 for St Bride Fleet Street.

Whilst registers, churchwardens' accounts and vestry minutes survive across parishes, other sources might be unique to a parish, not always in creation, but rather whether they have survived. Rate lists and overseers' for the poor accounts are very patchy in survival. A continuous run does exist for St Martin in the Fields and is used here to support the material in the churchwardens' accounts, vestry minutes and assorted records. The latter include a complete list of all quarantined households in the parish in 1636 and 1637, some plague examiners' accounts, and rate and rate arrears lists. These sources demonstrate the practical edge of the decisions related to the management of plague and the poor evident in the churchwardens' accounts and vestry minutes. St Sepulchre Newgate has significant gaps in its wider records for this period, but an extant booklet that details the accounts for the poor and poor visited in 1647 survives. This usefully illustrates the intersection of plague and poverty in an endemic plague year.

Although the thesis draws primarily on parish sources to address the issues and gaps in the literature, national, civic and higher ecclesiastical sources do have an important function in showing the context in which parishes responded to their local problems. A significant corpus of records exists for these authorities in the seventeenth century. The challenge is choosing

which records best serve the focus on the parish and understanding the different directions from which different authorities approached plague and the poor in the suburbs.

Several documents held in the Landsdowne Collection in the British Library frame the Crown and City's view in the late sixteenth century that parishes were best placed to manage plague and associated social problems.[82] These sources can be connected to the Remembrancia, a collection of communications between Whitehall and Guildhall, which shows the different priorities of the Crown and City about the suburbs and the tensions that emerged between the two.[83] The Repertories, which are the records of the meetings of the Court of Aldermen in the City of London, survive in a continuous run through the period and cover the decisions and interventions of that group, taken as representative of the City.[84] Much like vestry minutes, they are an expression of authority but are useful in further assessing the outlook and intervention of the City in the suburbs. The City's Cash books are the record of income and spending by the City Chamberlain and expand that view and shows the context in which the City's directives and interventions in the suburbs functioned.[85]

A series of surveys are used to establish demographic change and social character at different points throughout the period. These include the chantry inquiry in 1548, the survey of parish government in 1636/7 and the tithes survey in 1638. The chantry inquiry was the result of a survey of colleges, chantries and endowments by the government of Edward VI. This included the return of the total number of communicants in parishes, from which the data can be used to estimate parish population.[86] This can be compared to estimates calculated from the number of households listed in each parish in the tithes survey in 1638. The ecclesiastical survey was the result of clergy complaints about the insufficiencies of gathered tithes, from which local clergy surveyed and compiled a list of 'invaluable' moderated rents of

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[82] BL Lansdowne Collection, MS 7/21; MS 74/33; MS 74/36; MS 74/38; MS 81/34.

[83] W. H. Overall and H. C Overall, *Analytical Index to the Series of Records Known as the Remembrancia 1579-1664* (London: E.G Francis, 1878).

[84] For example, LMA COL/CA/01/01/054/01.

[85] For example, LMA COL/CHD/CT/01/002.

[86] C. J. Kitching, (ed.), *London and Middlesex Chantry Certificate,1548* (London: London Record Society, 1980); Harding, 'The Population of London', 114-117.

householders in their parish.[87] The purpose and process of compiling the two benchmark surveys require consideration, but even so, both are useful in gauging population, and from the tithes survey, social character in parishes where a sufficient return was compiled. The survey of parish government in 1636/7 is believed to be the result of a series of inquiries into select vestries, in which the Bishop of London sought to understand the extent of select vestries in metropolitan London. The source has been used by historians to assess the power and position of select vestries before the civil wars.[88]

Although outside the timeframe of this study, the 1666 hearth tax returns for London and Middlesex are used to extend the view of demography and social character up to the eve of the Great Fire. This national tax was introduced by parliamentary statute in 1662 and imposed 2d on the householder for each hearth a house contained. It is a complex source but when taken down to street-level, is useful in establishing social character.[89]

A series of contemporary maps are used alongside the various benchmark surveys to show the changing built environment.[90] These are representations rather than an accurate rendering but are useful nonetheless, particularly when set alongside the returns for illegal building in defiance of royal proclamations that were compiled in the 1630s. These are contained within the Domestic State Papers of Charles I and the main return used in this study is an undated return for 1638. This lists developers and the parish in which they erected buildings. These

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[87] T. C. Dale (ed.), *The Inhabitants of London in 1638* (London: Society of Genealogists, 1931); Emrys Jones, 'London in the Early Seventeenth Century: An Ecological Approach', *The London Journal*, Vol. 6, No. 2, (1980), 123-126; Finlay, *Population and Metropolis*, 71-77; William Baer, 'Stuart London's Standard of Living: Re-examining the Settlement of Tithes of 1638 for Rents, Income, and Poverty', *The Economic History Review,* New Series, Vol. 63, No. 3 (2010), 613-616.

[88] LPL CM/1-60; CM/VII/61-115; Merritt, 'Contested Legitimacy', 26.

[89] Andrew Wareham, 'The Hearth Tax and Empty Properties in London on the Eve of the Great Fire', *The Local Historian*, Vol. 41, No. 4 (2011), 278-281; Davies et al, *London Hearth Tax*.

[90] For example, 'Plan of London (circa 1560 to 1570)', in *Agas Map of London 1561* ([s.l.], 1633), *British History Online* http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/london-map-agas/1561/map [accessed 11 January 2021]; R. Cline and L. Saunders (eds.), *London: a History in Maps* (London: London Topographical Society in association with the British Library, publication 173, 2012).

give a sense of both the location and type of building and can be cautiously linked to the location of plague in the parish.[91]

The methodology followed is ambitious in the scope of sources used and novel in leading the analysis with the records of so many suburban parishes. The selection of the national and civic sources outlined above serve to provide the context in which to understand the local parish studies. The thesis is subsequently structured in such a way to best address the issues and gaps in the literature identified.

1.4 Thesis structure

The thesis examines the response of the suburban parishes to plague and the poor, and as stated above, places that in the context of how parishes balanced the needs of the poor, the visited and the dead. The underlying structure of the thesis is to build toward that focus in Chapters 5 and 6. This is so that exploration of the changing suburbs, the response to the poor, implications of the Plague Orders and patterns of burials and spatial occurrence of plague provide the context in which to fairly appraise the response of parishes to the disease.

Beyond this introduction, Chapter 2 focuses on the changing demographic, built environment and government in the suburban parishes. Baptismal data is used to chart population growth in the suburbs and frame the focused description of the three focus parishes. The chapter then moves to a chronological survey of the evolution of select vestries in suburban parishes and considers the extent to which their power was hindered by controversy in the 1630s and the Presbyterian era of the civil wars in the 1640s.

Chapter 3 focuses on the implications of the Poor Laws and Plague Orders for the suburban parishes. The discussion begins with an examination of certain sources of revenue that were important to the parish after 1600. This informs the discussion of how the parish responded

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[91] William Douglas Hamilton and Sophie Crawford Lomas (eds.), *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Charles I, 1625-49* (London, 1897); TNA SP16/408/139, ff.139-144; William Baer, 'Housing for the Lesser Sort in Stuart London: Findings from Certificates, and Returns of Divided Houses', *The London Journal*, 33:1 (2008), 63.

to the poor and needy, and establishes the context in which parish vestries hardened in their view of the right to belong and discretionary support. The chapter concludes by tracing the development of the Plague Orders and the leading role they gave the parish, and the implications of this for the suburbs.

The focus of Chapter 4 is to establish the context in which the sample parishes and more general suburban parishes responded to plague after 1600. This is achieved by tracking the patterns in burials in both epidemic and endemic plague events, in which plague emerges as both a long-term and increasingly suburban problem in the seventeenth century. The second half of Chapter 4 shifts to the environment of the parish and considers change and continuity in the social character of particular spaces, and connects locational plague incidence with the stage and type of building. This recasts to a degree the prevailing view of plague primarily ravaging the destitute poor in the squalid and crowded alleys and yards of the parish.

Chapters 5 and 6 both focus on the response of the suburban parish to plague. The implementation of quarantine, as the cornerstone of the plague regulations, is explored in Chapter 5. This considers change and continuity in its implementation in the westerly extramural parishes. The discussion then shifts to the more general experience of quarantine in St Martin in the Fields in 1636 and 1637. As with the discussion of the location of plague incidence in Chapter 4, several new insights will be presented. This chapter lays the groundwork for the discussion of the different responses to plague that are explored in Chapter 6. These include the different ways that parishes used the pesthouse, the acquisition of additional burial ground and the significant problem of meeting the financial burden of plague. The main theme explored in Chapter 6 is how parishes approached the challenge of balancing the needs of the poor living, the visited and the dead.

Michael Power commented that the growth of London's suburbs and the nature of their communities had been neglected by historians, which to ignore, he argued, gives a one-sided view of the development of London.[92] The conclusion (Chapter 7) will synthesise the

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[92] Michael Power, 'Shadwell: The Development of a London Suburban Community in the Seventeenth Century', *The London Journal*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (1978), 29.

primary themes explored in the course of this study and aim to resolve aspects of the 'inconsistencies and puzzling elements' of the 'widely accepted' plague narrative.[93] The thesis will also more generally address aspects of the significant oversight of the suburbs that Power identified.

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[93] Harding, 'Plague in London', 39.

Chapter 2 - London's changing suburban parishes

Jeremy Boulton emphasised the important 'backdrop' that the demographic record formed in his study of Southwark in the seventeenth century, throwing 'valuable light' on the annual tempo of life, environmental measures and the effect of population movements.[1] This is true for the suburban parishes north of the river and forms the context against which plague and the poor can be best understood. The baptismal data presented below (figure 2.1), and the three parish case studies that follow, give context to the situation in which vestries responded to their local social problems after 1600. The key theme explored in the discussion of the three parishes is the need to consider the shared features of change but equally, to acknowledge the unique aspects of those processes as were experienced in each parish. This is important to understanding the response of each parish community to their local demographic and social problems, which included the long-term problem of plague.

Understanding the rise and power of select vestries in suburban London is also integral, given that vestries implemented the Plague Orders and the Poor Laws, and in doing so, sought to define the right to belong and those deserving of support. Julia Merritt suggested the need to re-examine the rise of select vestries and argued their powers were more extensive and contested than assumed by historians.[2] This chapter argues that the establishment of select vestries in the suburban parishes was born of pragmatism and a drive to greater efficiency, amidst accelerated population growth and worsening social problems. These were exacerbated by the long-term problem of plague. Merritt also argued that the 'rise' of select vestries was halted from the mid-1630s.[3] This was not the case in the suburban parishes where populations continued to grow and a more inclusive structure open to all householders was not practical.

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[1] Jeremy Boulton, *Neighbourhood and Society: A London Suburb in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1987), 13, 59.

[2] Julia Merritt, 'Contested Legitimacy and the Ambiguous Rise of Vestries in Early Modern London', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 54, No. 1 (2011), 26.

[3] Merritt, 'Contested Legitimacy', 45.

2.1 Demography

As explained in Chapter 1, parish registers are useful in tracking demographic trends over time. The general decline in registered baptisms in the 1640s is evident in each of the sample parishes represented in figure 2.1. In September 1647, the vestry of St Bride Fleet Street expressed concern with the numbers of children baptised at home, and therefore not registered, 'w[hi]ch may prove very p[re]iudiciall to those Children hereafter'. The vestry took a conciliatory line. If parents repaired to the parish clerk the children would be registered according to the 'form[er] Ancient Custom'. A cross-check of the baptismal register for 1646 and 1647 shows possible under-registration with 121 and 157 baptisms in each year. This is well below the mean number of 274 annual baptisms between 1640 and 1645.[4]

The interval between birth and baptism is the primary question raised in the accuracy of the baptismal registers outside the disruption of the civil wars. Given the high infant mortality rates children might die before baptism. Roger Finlay downplayed underregistration and argued most children were baptised the Sunday after their birth and special baptisms were organised for sickly newborns.[5] The St Bride's register shows blocks of baptisms on Sundays and single baptisms on days here and there through each month. The other factor giving credibility to many baptismal registers is the general quality in organisation and detail through the period. 'A Stilborne Childe of William Adams' was entered in the St Bride's burial register in March 1631 and a 'Chrisom Childe of Henry Manninge' in the burial and baptism register that same month, suggesting that the parish did endeavour to baptise all live births.[6] Finlay was right in his assertion that if parish clerks were careful to record stillbirths, they were most likely particular in recording other 'vital' statistics.[7]

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[4] LMA P69/BRI/B/001/MS06554/001, ff.51v; P69/BRI/A/001/MS06536 - not foliated.

[5] Roger Finlay, *Population and Metropolis: The Demography of London 1580-1650* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 31.

[6] LMA P69/BRI/A/001/MS06536.

[7] Finlay, *Population and Metropolis*, 104.
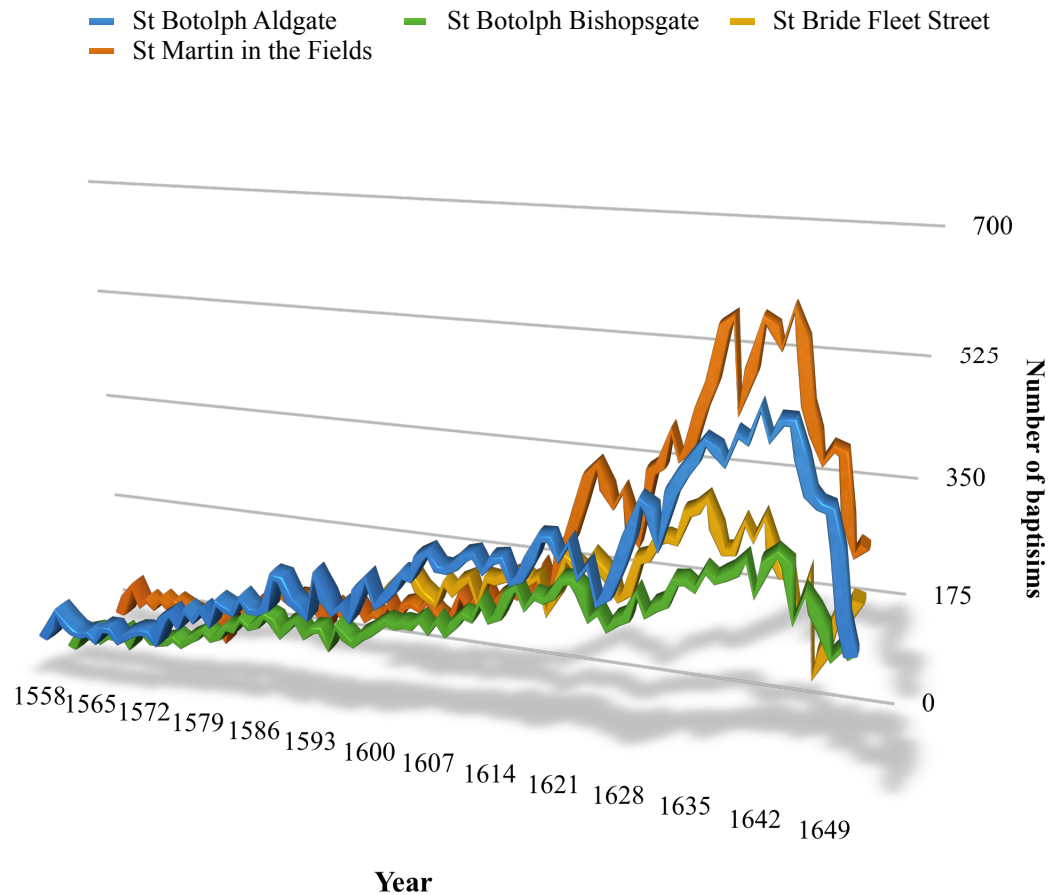
Figure 2.1. Baptisms by year in suburban London parishes, c. 1559-1650.
Sources: A. W. Cornelius Hallen, A.W (ed.), *The Registers of St Botolph Bishopsgate, London* (Edinburgh: printed by T. and A. Constable, 1889-1895); T. R. Forbes, *Chronicle from Aldgate: Life and Death in Shakespeare's London* (Newhaven and London: Yale University Press, 1971); LMA P69/BRI/A/001/MS06536 ; Kitto, J. V (ed.), *A Register of Baptisms, Marriages, and Burials in the Parish of St. Martin-in-the-Fields: in the County of Middlesex* (London: Harleian Society, 1898-1936); WAC STG/PR/5/7.

The most obvious trend in each of the parishes in figure 2.1 is the increase in annual baptisms across the 90 or so years from 1559. This is marked by divergences in temporal patterns and periods of accelerated population growth, such as that in St Botolph Bishopsgate and St Botolph Aldgate in the ten years following the 1603 plague epidemic, the mid to late 1620s in St Bride Fleet Street, and from 1615 to 1620 and the late 1620s in St Martin in the Fields. Most population growth over all in London was the result of migration, but a local increase in baptisms suggests an increased population settling in the parish. The baptismal data gives context to the discussion of change and social character in the three parishes below and the takeover of parish government in the suburbs by select vestries from the late sixteenth century.

2.2 St Bride Fleet Street

St Bride Fleet Street was part of the ward of Farringdon Without, the farthest western ward of London, and wholly within the jurisdiction of the City. John Stow described the city at the close of the sixteenth century stretching south into Fleet Street and of 'latter years on both sides built through with many fair houses'. Stow describes elements of development along Shoe Lane, an 'old house called Oldborne Hall' now 'letten out into divers tenements'.[8]

The Agas Map (figure 2.2), based on an original from some time before 1561, shows the cluster of building behind the main frontages on the south side of the street and open space of sorts running down to the Thames. In contrast, the space behind the facade of building on the north side of Fleet Street shows ribbon development running north along Shoe Lane. Beyond the end of Shoe Lane is High Holborn and open countryside engendering the general feel of the parish as border country, neither the wound tight impression of the area within the walls nor the open expanse of the fields running north.

Figure 2.2 Map of the environs of St Bride Fleet Street, c. 1560-70. The parish church of St Bride's is marked 'C'. The River Fleet borders the parish to the east and St Dunstan's in the West to the west. **Source:** 'Plan of London (circa 1560 to 1570)', in *Agas Map of London 1561* ([s.l.], 1633), *British History Online* http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/london-map-agas/1561/map [accessed 11 January 2021].

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[8] John Stow, *A Survey of London: Written in the Year, 1598,* (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1994), 315, 328, 329.

Step forward eighty or so years from the Agas map to the Faithorne and Newcourt map
(figure 2.3**),** which was surveyed in the 1640s and published in 1658, and the changes are
stark. Fleet Street is now defined by a tightly pressed run of three to four-story buildings. The
most marked change is the crowded frontage of houses along Shoe Lane, the rear gardens
infilled with a maze of courts and alleys, eroding any sense of space. Beyond Holborn is the
beginning of new ribbon development, akin to that of Shoe and Fetter Lanes 80-90 years
earlier. The general westwards representation is a continuous band of development running to
Westminster from the walled city, the open space of the countryside now beyond
Clerkenwell. Houses are very pressed, which reflects both the reality and contemporary view
of the significant changes that had been wrought on the environment.

Figure 2.3. Map of the western extramural parishes, c. 1643-47. Taken from the Faithorne and
Newcourt map (1658). Parish churches are marked: St Bride Fleet Street (103), St Dunstan in the West
(107), St Andrew Holborn (100) and St Sepulchre Newgate (112).
Source: http://tudigit.ulb.tu-darmstadt.de/show/Sp_London1658/0003/image [accessed 11 January
2021].

The return for building in defiance of royal proclamations in 1638 lists twelve offenders for building within the bounds of the parish. This is a small number but hints to the location and type of development at play through the second quarter of the seventeenth century as the parish was built over. Elizabeth Waggett was identified for building '3 Tenem[en]ts and John Bratt for 'Enlargement of 6 houses on the Ditchside'. All but one of the offending structures were confined to the development behind the main thoroughfares, including John Wainright for '5 Tenem[en]ts in Bridewell precinct'.[9] The subdivision of existing dwellings and the infilling of the last vestiges of space reflect the building tendencies in a parish largely built over by the 1630s.

As explained in Chapter 1, the tithes return of 1638 has been used by historians to estimate London's mid-century population and social topography.[10] Emrys Jones used the source to show what he argued was a 'fairly complete' view of 'residential differences'. In the areas immediately west of the city wall, Jones described the 'nature' of the Fleet river and its environs as that of 'extreme squalor', and the area between Holborn Bridge and Fleet Street as 'largely squatted'.[11] St Bride's returned no list of moderated rents, although did report spending £800 each year towards the maintenance of 'our miserable poor' comprising some 'seven and eight hundred families'. A cautious population estimate of somewhere between 3,000-3,500 individuals seems plausible.[12] Roger Finlay estimated 1,413 householders in 1638, which presents a total parochial population of some 6,700. Around half the parish were considered 'poor' by the vestry, not necessarily destitute but with the potential to call on relief, and essentially the ordinary poor described in the introduction.[13]

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[9] TNA SP16/408/139, ff.140-145.

[10] William Baer, 'Stuart London's Standard of Living: Re-examining the Settlement of Tithes of 1638 for Rents, Income, and Poverty', *The Economic History Review*, New Series, Vol. 63, No. 3 (2010).

[11] Emrys Jones, 'London in the Early Seventeenth Century: An Ecological Approach', *The London Journal* Vol. 6, No. 2 (1980), 123, 131.

[12] T. C. Dale, *The Inhabitants of London in 1638* (London: Society of Genealogists, 1931), 201.

[13] Finlay, *Population and Metropolis*, 171.

As also stated in Chapter 1, the 1666 hearth tax return for London and Middlesex provides insight as to change and continuity in the social character of parishes at the beginning of the Restoration period. A population estimate of just under 8,000 souls can be ventured from the 1,613 rated householders, a four-fold increase in population from the chantry inquiry in 1548.[14] The parish buried 2,000 individuals during the 1665 plague epidemic, the population most likely around 10,000 at the onset of the Restoration period.[15]

The average hearths per dwelling (3.7) in 1666 show the parish certainly not the richest of parishes, but also not the poorest. The fact 97% of householders did not pay reflects the impact of the Great Fire making it impossible to collect and pay the tax, due to the fact the Lady Day collection was still in progress when the Fire struck, rather than large numbers unable or unwilling to pay. The reasonably high number of empty houses is probably due to the plague epidemic of the previous year. Quarantined houses stood vacant and others empty due to the inhabitants being out of town, not returned or recently departed in anticipation of a second epidemic wave.[16]`Racket Court and Popinjay Alley were impacted during the endemic plague run in the 1640s, and at the rating of the hearth tax in 1666, seven and eight houses sat empty in each location. Of those in Racket Court, two dwellings contained four hearths, three just one or two hearths, and one dwelling contained ten hearths and another nine. A total of twenty-one houses were recorded as empty on Fleet Street, the preserve of the middling sort.[17]

Taking the hearth tax down to street level gives a more finely grained view of the character of the parish.[18] In this light, the fact a third of the parish lived in one to two hearth dwellings,

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[14] C. J. Kitching (ed.)., London and Middlesex Chantry Certificate,1548 (London, 1980), 107.

[15] T. Birch, *A Collection of the Yearly Bills of Mortality, from 1657 to 1758 Inclusive* (London: A. Miller, 1759) - 1665.

[16] Mathew Davies, Catherine Ferguson, Vanessa Harding, Elizabethan Parkinson and Andrew Wareham (eds.), *London and Middlesex Hearth Tax Returns* (London: BA & BRS Hearth Tax Series IX, 2014), 166-70, 172-6, 178-184, 186-97, 198 (2), 199-202, 204-11, 608 (indexing for the transcript is by Index Reference Numbers - hereafter IRN); Andrew Wareham, 'The Unpopularity of the Hearth Tax and the Social Geography of London in 1666', *Economic History Review*, Vol. 70, No. 2 (2017), 481 - I am grateful to Andrew Wareham at the Centre for Hearth Tax Research (University of Roehampton, London) for the clarification of the numbers not paying and the empty houses.

[17] Davies et al, *London Hearth Tax*, 170, 173-174.

[18] Davies et al, *London Hearth Tax*, 166-70, 172-6, 178-184, 186-97, 198 (2), 199-202, 204-11, 608.

which reflects the ordinary poor, is significant regarding the work of the vestry and numbers likely to call on relief at some stage of the life-cycle, or under particular circumstances. No householder with more than two hearths could claim exemption on grounds of poverty in the hearth tax. This shows some continuity with the vestry's comment on the number of poor families in 1638.

To look in more detail at two specific locations, Popinjay Alley and Harp Alley both had lower average hearths per household than the wider parish mean. Both are notable in their concentration of 70 plus households. Just over 40% of dwellings in Popinjay Alley contained one hearth and those households tended to be clustered together through the return. We might speculate this the result of subdivision. There were also four five hearth dwellings in the alley, whilst William Whitlach and Adam Chards lived in seven and nine hearth houses. Harp Alley's seventeen one hearth households tended to be dispersed along the alley, rather than concentrated. The alley was relatively evenly split between one to two and three to four hearth households with just six houses containing five to six hearths. The alley was likely home to the ordinary poor and middling sort, rather than overrun with the destitute poor, which is a common perception of these smaller spaces in the suburbs. Girder Alley and its nine households, in which each contained just one hearth, does show the clustering of the very poor in this location.[19]

As mentioned above, it would be a mistake to assume that all alleys were dominated by the poorer sort. Rose Alley and Swan Alley maintained an average of 4.5 hearths per dwelling, although each contained just six households, whilst Three Leg Alley averaged six hearths per dwelling across 75 households. A closer look at Three Leg Alley shows close to 50% of the dwellings containing three to four hearths and 28% more than six. So whilst the location may have been home to a significant number of middling parishioners, the alley was also home to many of the ordinary poor.[20] This group would be particularly vulnerable during a plague

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[19] Davies et al, *London Hearth Tax*, 170, 181-183, 208.

[20] Davies et al, *London Hearth Tax,* 192-193, 197, 204, 207.

event in that they would lack the reserves to support themselves through a period of enforced quarantine, hence the direction of plague-time relief there in the 1640s.[21]

Those living in houses containing six or more hearths comprised less than a fifth of the parish population. Whilst the parish was not wholly devoid of the titled and moneyed elites, they comprised only a fraction of the community and clustered together in Salisbury Court, where houses averaged eight hearths.[22] The records of the Fire Court show the richer sort maintaining property interests within the parish, whilst possibly not resident themselves. Some suburban parishes may have declined in desirability for those of wealth and rank.[23]

Fleet Street was the preserve of the middling sort where the mean number of hearths per dwelling was five and a greater homogeneity is evident. At an average of 4.4 hearths per dwelling, the north-south artery of Shoe Lane represented a socio-economic cross-section and perhaps skews existing impressions as to who might live in main streets beyond the walls, a point that will be expanded on in Chapter 3. The fact just under a quarter of the lane's dwellings contained one to two hearths is notable, alongside the 40% of houses with three to four hearths, 20% with five to six and 17% with seven or more.[24]

The broad socio-economic hierarchy of locations in the parish is evident with decreasing average hearths per household from streets though courts to alleys and yards. Even so, the discussion has demonstrated the mixed character that might exist in many spaces and sets down caution in presuming the character of locations based on type or status. Moreover, and as the discussion of St Martin in the Fields below will show, some caution is needed in assuming that all rated multi-hearth households in the western suburbs were necessarily home to a middling or substantial family only. Rather, there might be instances where a rated building was sub-divided and home to several household units.

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[21] LMA P69/BRI/B/016/MS06552/001, ff.165v-166, 172v-174.

[22] Davies et al, *London Hearth Tax,* 200-201.

[23] P. E. Jones (ed.), *The Fire Court: Calendar to the Judgements and Decrees of the Court of Judicature Appointed to Determine Differences between Landlords and Tenants as Rebuilding after the Great Fire,* Vol 1 (London: Clowes & Son, 1966), G. A-63, G. A-147, G. B-590.

[24] Davies et al, *London Hearth Tax*, 168, 174-175, 181, 183-184, 187-188, 194-196, 201.

2.3 St Botolph Aldgate

St Botolph Aldgate was located to the immediate east of the city walls, and comprised the ward of Portsoken, within the jurisdiction of the City, and the liberty of East Smithfield, which was jurisdictionally part of Middlesex. Matthew Davis estimated that the population grew from some 3,500 inhabitants in 1540 to over 11,000 by 1650. Davies termed the changes to the built environment 'ad hoc' and 'piecemeal', and although median rental values were one of the lowest, pointed to occupations as evidence that the parish was not necessarily dominated by the poor.[25]

At the beginning of the seventeenth-century John Stow reports the parish being of 'late yeares mightily increased' and describes a smattering of 'faire and comely buildings' on the north side of the 'Lane running east from the church' and 'certaine faire Innes'.[26] Stow laments the disappearance of 'fayre hedgerowes of Elme trees' and 'pleasant fieldes', which is 'nowe within few yeares made a continuall building' and the fields on either side turned into 'Garden plottes, teynter yardes, Bowling Allyes', from Houndsditch to Whitechapel. Stow's disquiet was driven by anxiety as to further change, disturbed as he is by the 'thinly scattered' tenements and 'voyd spaces' now 'fully replenished with buildings outward' and 'pestered with diuerse Allyes' either side of the Barrs and beyond.[27]

The Agas map (figure 2.4) shows a thin line of ribbon development north and south of the high street and mostly two-storey dwellings. Open fields stretch north to Spitalfields and market gardens run down to St Katherine's on the Thames. The Faithorne and Newcourt map shows (figure 2.5) the dense street frontage but space still in behind the main streets in the north of the parish and increased development in the East Smithfield area of the parish by the civil wars. The discussion of the tithes return below will show that this representation of the

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[25] Matthew Davies, 'City and Suburbs: London 1400-1700', in M. Do Carmo Ribiero and A. Sousa Melo (eds.), *Evolução da Paisagem Urbana: Cidade e Periferia* (Portugal: University of Minho 2014), 216-222.

[26] Stow, *Survey of London*, 123.

[27] Stow, *Survey of London*, 124.

parish probably did not reflect the scale of development that had occurred in the time since the creation of the Agas map.
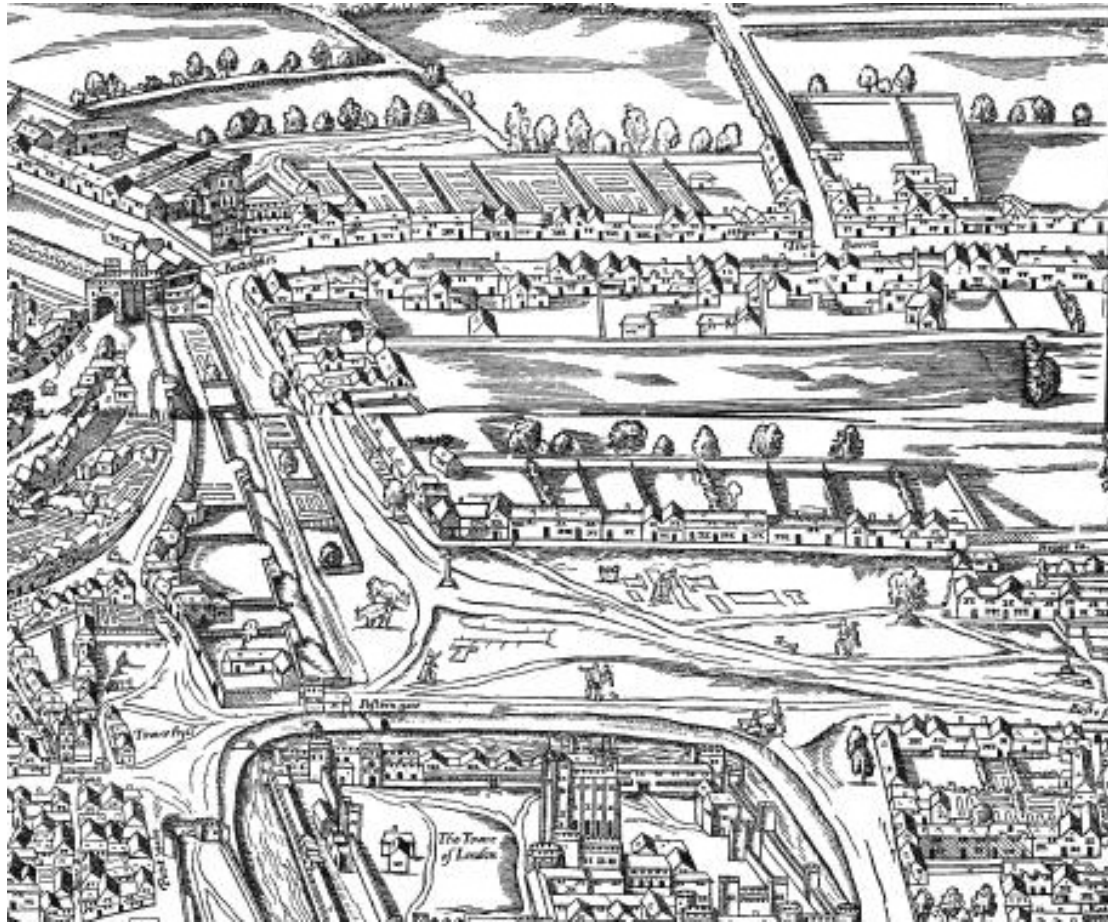

Figure 2.4. Map of the environs of St Botolph Aldgate, c. 1560-70. The parish church is located adjacent to Aldgate and the walls of the city. The parish stretches east along the Barrs/high street and south past the Minories to East Smithfield, which is adjacent to the Tower.
Source: 'Plan of London (circa 1560 to 1570)', in *Agas Map of London 1561* ([s.l.], 1633), *British History Online* http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/london-map-agas/1561/map [accessed 11 January 2021].

The Ogilby and Morgan map though shows the stark changes by the 1670s, the infilling of spaces behind the emergent ribbon development evident just a century earlier, the most tangible.[28] This extended along either side of the lanes that previously wound through the open countryside to Spitalfields and beyond to Shoreditch. Space has been similarly infilled to the south of the high street and East Smithfield has been densely built up. These building tendencies were permitted by the space to expand outwards and eastwards from initial

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[28] 'Ogilby and Morgan's Large Scale Map of the City As Rebuilt By 1676 ', in *Ogilby and Morgan's Large Scale Map of the City As Rebuilt By 1676* ([s.l.], 1676), *British History Online* http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/london-map-ogilby-morgan/1676/map [accessed 17 January 2020].

development adjacent to the city walls. Building to the east tended to be on new foundations, permitted in royal proclamations, but a source of anxiety for authorities. This was driven by perceptions of the eastern suburbs being overrun with the migrant poor.

Figure 2.5. Map of the environs of St Botolph Aldgate, c. 1643-47. Taken from the Faithorne and Newcourt map (1658). As commented above, the cartographical surveys were carried out in the 1640s. **Source:** http://tudigit.ulb.tu-darmstadt.de/show/Sp_London1658/0003/scroll [accessesed 11 January 2021].

Gill Newton and Richard Smith described Aldgate as a 'poor parish', particularly in the back alleys of the Minories and East Smithfield that was furthest from the wall and closer to the Thames. They also suggested that the parish was largely 'urbanised' by 1600.[29] The return for illegal building in 1638 identifies just eight individuals for building a total of seventeen houses within the bounds of the parish. There was a slight bias to the south of the parish

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[29] Gill Newton and Richard Smith, 'Convergence or Divergence? Mortality in London, its Suburbs and its Hinterland Between 1550-1700', *Annales De Demographie Historique,* No. 2 (2013), 20.

where ten of the houses were built; East Smithfield (4), Covent Garden (2) and the Minories (4). This chimes with the comment of Newton and Smith that some open space remained around Brewhouse Fields in East Smithfield. Three houses were built in Gravel Lane, which ran west off the high street and just one each in Houndsditch and Petticoat Lane.[30] This is a small number and does not capture the full scale of building in the parish. William Baer calculated that the certificates for illegal building covered just 40-45% (1,846) of dwelling units built between 1635 and 1638, the 'peak of enforcement'.[31]

The division of the 1638 tithes survey on precinct lines in the parish permits a reasonably nuanced view of the spatial patterns of wealth and housing quality. Officials tended to lump tenements together under the landlord in Tower Hill and East Smithfield: for example, Mouse Alley in East Smithfield, 'consisting of 24 tenements' and was collectively valued at £50. Swan Alley, 'consisting of 100 tenements', was valued at £150. Parish officials failed to venture into some spaces and simply estimated the number of tenements. Pond Alley consisted of 'betwixt 60 or 70 tenements' and was valued at £100.[32] It may have been tricky for the valuer to disentangle the rents in such densely built spaces, or to venture into certain locations. Vanessa Harding linked this to the 'spatial obscurity' of these areas shrouding inhabitants' identity and fostering perceptions about the residents having 'less individuality'.[33]

The total value of rents for the parish was just over £7,000, which was drawn from 1,071 valuations. Once the tenement units in alleys are added in, this can be expanded to 1,860 units, and a tentative population estimate of 9,207, which provides context to the changing built environment. Establishing the parish-wide mean rental value requires adjustment for the number of tenement units, which gives a revised value of £4. The adjusted mean for the High Street and the Barrs is £5 each, Houndsditch £4, the Tower precinct £4 and East Smithfield

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[30] TNA SP16/408/139, ff.142v, 143, 144.

[31] William Baer, 'Housing for the Lesser Sort in Stuart London: Findings from Certificates, and Returns of Divided Houses', *The London Journal*, 33:1 (2008), 66.

[32] Dale, *Inhabitants of London*, 210-224.

[33] Harding, 'City, Capital and Metropolis: the Changing Shape of Seventeenth Century London', in Julia Merritt, *Imagining Early Modern London: Perceptions and Portrayals of the City from Stow to Strype, 1598-1720* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 127.

just £3. By way of comparison, two intramural parishes that supported Aldgate through the statutory rates-in-aid scheme, St Helen Bishopsgate and All Hallows Lombard Street, had mean rents of £17 and £42. This was derived from just 103 and 67 householders.[34]

St Botolph Aldgate's population had expanded to around 14,000 at the assessing of the hearth tax in 1666. The parish-wide average of three hearths per dwelling shows the lower socio-economic level of the community. The fact that half of those householders are recorded as not having paid should not be read as mass doorstep defiance, although there were many instances of this in the parish. Andrew Wareham explained that this tendency was a mixture of the lingering impact of the plague epidemic in 1665 and the Great Fire disrupting collection, and collectors listing both liable and non-liable. This was required by the 1664 statute, which inflates the numbers of unpaid.[35]

Over half the dwelling units contained just one to two hearths, the greater proportion of those living there not necessarily destitute, but certainly of the ordinary poor. Another third were houses of three to five hearths, giving further credibility to Davies' cautioning against assuming the parish was overrun with the poorer sort. Just 7% of houses had six or more hearths, suggesting that the parish did not attract those of substantial means.[36] This negatively impacted the available pool of rate-payers and charitable benefactors, which had a bearing on the income the parish derived for supporting its management of the poor and plague.

The hearth tax return for the Portsoken area of St Botolph Aldgate for 1666 is not organised by street, rather by precinct. This allows comparison to the 1638 tithes survey and a sense of continuity and change in conditions and the social character in a selection of broad spatial zones of the parish. The 'Barrs' precinct reported 101 householders in 1638.[37] The hearth tax rated 234 householders in 1666, the population roughly doubling. The average number of

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[34] Dale, *Inhabitants of London,* 16, 69-70, 210-224.

[35] Wareham, 'The Unpopularity of the Hearth Tax', 481; for examples of refusal to pay the tax in the parish, Davies et al, *London Hearth Tax*, 526.

[36] Davies et al, *London Hearth Tax,* 431, 460, 506, 513-5, 516 (2), 519-21, 524, 562 (as above, indexing for the transcript is by IRN).

[37] Dale, *Inhabitants of London*, 215-216.

hearths per dwelling (2) was slightly lower than the parish average, with just thirteen houses containing five or more hearths and eight the ceiling for the precinct. These larger properties tended to be listed towards the beginning of the return, as they were in 1638, which indicates some clustering of larger dwellings, possibly along the main street.[38] These were most likely the same rated houses in 1666, which reflects some continuity in the spatial distribution of the more substantial residents. Population density had increased and conditions presumably worsened for many in the precinct since 1638.

The High Street precinct had little room to expand and this is reflected in the slight rise of rated dwellings from 199 in 1638 to 206 in 1666, with twenty-six empty houses recorded. These may have been newly built, but equally, they could have been vacant due to the lingering impact of the plague, either due to flight or the extinction of a household. The average number of hearths mirrors that of the wider parish, while the three most substantial houses were of fifteen, sixteen and ten hearths, very much the exception to the general housing pattern.[39] Aldgate High Street was noted for its inns, which these buildings could have been. It would appear the precinct had changed very little in character since the 1630s.

Tower Hill precinct was at the lower end of the moderated rent value in 1638, and by 1665, the number of rated households had risen from 273 to 327. The average number of hearths (1.8) was slightly lower than the parish average, and 86% of the precinct population lived in one to three hearth houses.[40] The population of the precinct was weighted to the ordinary poor. The wider parish lacked the stratum of substantial parishioners found in populations in the westerly suburban parishes, such as in the Westminster parish of St Martin in the Fields.

2.4 St Martin in the Fields

Although the development of St Martin in the Fields was viewed as an extension of London's 'push' westwards, Julia Merritt suggested that the parish's growth was as much related to the

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[38] Davies et al, *London Hearth Tax*, 438-442, 477-483.

[39] Dale, *Inhabitants of London*, 213-215; Davies et al, *London Hearth Tax,* 436-438, 471-476.

[40] Dale, *Inhabitants of London*, 217-223; Davies et al, *London Hearth Tax,* 442-447, 483-493.

'nature' of Westminster's development and increasing importance as a 'distinct' urban centre. The fact it was outside the political and economic orbit of the City gave 'impetus' to certain trades and activities. There could also be tension between the 'social reality' and 'aristocratic intentions' in the parish.[41] Its proximity to Whitehall drew the eye of the Crown, whilst the Court was a magnet for the nobility and lesser gentry. The presence of the national elite created an economic draw for poorer migrants, and as such the social mix of the parish was diverse.
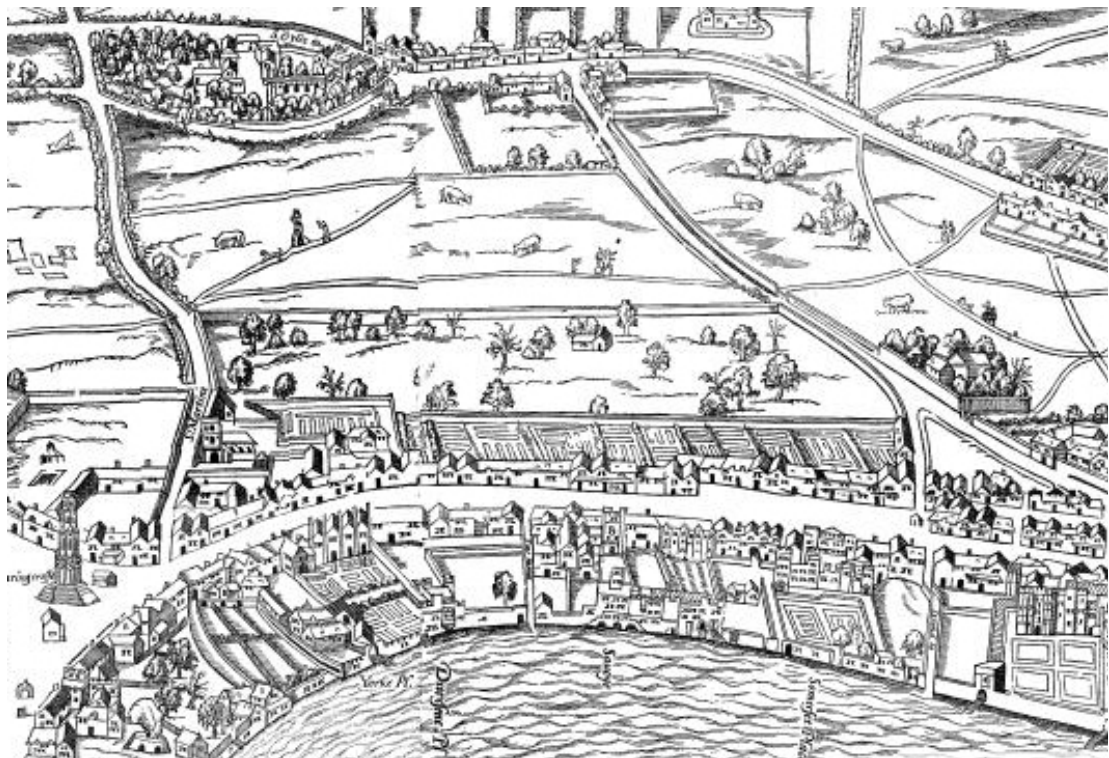
Figure 2.6. Map of the environs of St Martin in the Fields, c. 1560-70. The parish church is located at the bottom of St Martin's Lane in the east of the parish. The 'waterside' area is south of the Strand. St Giles in the Fields is located to the north of the parish and the lanes visible in the open areas between would become Long Acre (in the north of the parish) and Drury Lane (running north-west from the bottom right).
Source: 'Plan of London (circa 1560 to 1570)', in *Agas Map of London 1561* ([s.l.], 1633), *British History Online* http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/london-map-agas/1561/map [accessed 11 January 2021].

John Stow reserves sparse comment for the parish, and simply describes the 'continuall new building of diuers fayre houses' that were lately 'builded nigh to Iuy Bridge', and 'on the north side to a lane that turneth' to the parish church 'in the liberty of Westminster'. At the eastern end of the parish, Drury Lane at the end of the sixteenth century contained 'diuerse faire buildings, Hosteries, and houses for Gentlemen, and men of honor', including that of

[41] Julia Merritt, *The Social World of Early Modern Westminster: Abbey, Court and Community 1525-1640* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 259.

William Cecil.[42] Stow's sparse comments reflect the parish's limited expansion to that point, and perceptions of it sitting beyond the City's orbit.

The Agas map shows development limited to a small enclave of housing immediate to the parish church in the early 1560s (figure 2.6). A thin band of wider ribbon development runs from Westminster to the walled city, whilst gardens roll down to the Thames and open fields extend northwards. The Faithorne and Newcourt map shows the intensive development that had occurred in the parish by the 1640s (figure 2.7). An interwoven web of courts and alleys fall away from the main streets, the built footprint extending to Covent Garden and beyond to St Giles in the Fields, with formerly open fields to the west under development.

Figure 2.7. Map of the environs of St Martin in the Fields, c. 1643-47. Taken from the Faithorne and Newcourt map (1658). As commented above, the map was surveyed in the 1640s.
Source: http://tudigit.ulb.tu-darmstadt.de/show/Sp_London1658/0003/scroll [accessed 11 January 2021].

The parish comprised just 980 parishioners in 1548, which had risen to around 3,000 in the early years of the seventeenth century. The population increased threefold between 1603 and 1625. Julia Merritt showed that the population doubled again in the next fifteen years and

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[42] Stow, *Survey of London*, 97-124, 375.

was somewhere close to 18,000 by the outbreak of the civil wars. Merritt also showed that the parish was impacted acutely by poverty during the late Jacobean period.[43]

The parish lay outside the City's jurisdiction and was not covered by the 1638 tithe and rent survey, but the fines for illegal building in 1638 give a sense of the type of development in particular locations.[44] Norman Brett-James comments that the buildings comprising the return had 'probably' been erected in the last 34 years.[45] Of the 1,361 fines recorded in the return in 1638, 297 were levied in St Martin's or the neighbouring and parish of St Giles in the Field. This illustrates the intensity of the development underway on the western periphery of metropolitan London.[46] The building return shows the ongoing development of lane locations in the 1630s and the building within secondary streets such as Bedford Berry (modern Bedfordbury). The discussion below focuses on the three main streets - St Martin's Lane, Drury Lane and Long Acre - in the parish and a selection of other locations that together, present a representative picture of the parish's character. References to the building in the lanes might also link to the alleys and courts running immediately off them, challenging environments for officials to survey and often linked to the main streets in the sources. For example, Christopher Parsons was fined for building seven tenements in Vinegar Yard in Long Acre.[47]

A smaller return, dated May 1637, lists the same fines in St Martin's, from which we might assume the list in 1638 the result of collated returns.[48] We might need to be mindful of bias in the record so far as the surveyors focusing their attention on particular areas and or the type of building that aroused their anxiety. This is a pertinent consideration in a parish pushing up against Whitehall at a time of concerted effort to control London's expansion.

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[43] Merritt, *Early Modern Westminster*, 261-262.

[44] TNA SP16/408-139, ff.139-146.

[45] Norman Brett-James, *The Growth of Stuart London,* (London: London and Middlesex Archaeological Society, 1935), 116.

[46] Brett-James, *Growth of Stuart London*, 116, 164.

[47] TNA SP16/408-139, ff.139v.

[48] TNA SP16/355/348, ff.783-785.

The hearth tax returns demonstrate the wealth distribution and social character of the parish by the early Restoration period. The total households rated in 1666 (3,025) was a little over two hundred more than St Botolph Aldgate. The average number of hearths per dwelling (5) was quite high, although just under a fifth of householders lived in one to two hearth dwellings and somewhere between a third to half in those with three to five. In contrast to the other sample parishes, a third lived in dwellings with six or more hearths.[49] This shows the unique social composition of the parish and in particular the impact of the resident nobility and gentry on the housing stock.

The high number of 'empty' houses (493) require comment, resultant of plague and many nobility and gentry either still out of town.[50] Malcolm Smuts estimated that around 40% of residents were able to contribute to parish rates and the absence of ratepayers and potential charitable benefactors was no doubt difficult for the vestry. The parish experienced increasing difficulties in collecting all due rates, a point that will be expanded on in Chapters 2 and 5.[51] 70% of households were recorded as having paid the tax, which diverges significantly from Aldgate. The fact around a third of those rated liable for the hearth tax and able to pay did not do so indicates the fluid economic reality for many, and the potential pressure this imposed on the parish vestry.[52]

The parish presented a mean of five hearths per dwelling, but what stands out when looking to street-level analysis is the heterogeneous nature of locations that might be considered fashionable or the preserve of the elite.[53] Malcolm Smuts described 'dense pockets' of 'relatively' poor dwellings emerging across the West End, yet a lack of 'marked polarisation' between the very rich and very poor.[54] One example is St Martin's Lane, the main north-west

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[49] Wareham, 'Unpopularity of the Hearth Tax', 481.

[50] Wareham, 'Unpopularity of the Hearth Tax', 481.

[51] Malcolm Smuts, 'The Court and its Neighborhood: Royal Policy and Urban Growth in the Early Stuart West End', *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (April, 1991), 128.

[52] Wareham, A, 'The Unpopularity of the Hearth Tax', 481; I am grateful to Andrew Wareham at the Centre for Hearth Tax Research (University of Roehampton, London) for clarification of this discrepancy.

[53] Davies et al, *London Hearth Tax*, 757-9, 771, 806, 817, 822, 835, 838 (indexing for transcript is by IRN).

[54] Smuts, 'Court and its Neighbourhood', 126.

artery of the parish, running to St Giles in the Fields. Brett-James highlighted the fashionable nature of the lane from the beginning of its development.[55] Nine fines were levied for building in St Martin's Lane in 1638. The areas around the parish church, which included the lane, were the site of initial development in the sixteenth century and it might be assumed that the lane was largely built over by the 1630s, which gives the small number of fines some context. Six developers were identified in the return for building a total of fourteen houses, including seven built by John Bale, alongside the single tenements built by each of John Lenitt and Christopher Stanley.[56] It might be taken as notable that tenements were being erected in spaces identified as main streets. As commented above, new development might reasonably be said to be 'in St Martin's Lane' before it acquired its own distinctive identity. This is an important consideration when reading the spatial incidence of plague in the parish records in Chapter 4.

Whilst St Martin's Lane maintained its broad character through to the Restoration period, the mean of six hearths per dwelling in the hearth tax return is misleading. Given the pervasive presence of the nobility and gentry in the parish, it is not surprising that 46% of houses contained seven or more hearths. By contrast, 40% of dwellings contained one to four hearths and half of these (19% of the whole) just one to two. A run of four one hearth dwellings was situated around the middle of the lane, with one resident, Francis Bullard, noted as poor by the collector. These houses face another block of one hearth dwellings on the west side of the lane, that of Mary Flood marked by the collector with the 'people very poore all one house'. The tendency though is a distinct lack of social stratification, the rich, the middling and the ordinary poor living cheek by jowl. As one example, Roger Pye and the Lady Seamore neighboured one another, one and 24 hearths respectively.[57]

Twelve building fines were recorded in Drury Lane in the east of the parish in 1638, which related to a total of 27 houses across eleven developers and the seven tenements built by

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[55] Brett-James, *The Growth of Stuart London*, 153-182; 176-179.

[56] TNA SP16/408/139, ff.139v-141v.

[57] Davies et al, *London Hearth Tax,* 814-815, 823-824.

Robert Barlo.[58] The average number of hearths per dwelling in 1666 was eight across the twelve listed households, which cannot reflect the true number of dwellings in the lane. An interesting extension to the lane is Cheny Yard. The term yard is often associated with the poorer and densely built pockets of a suburban parish, but here, three of the four houses that were rated averaged eight hearths. So despite accelerated population growth, the extension of Drury Lane was not simply a case of accommodating the ordinary poor.

A third of all fines in the parish in 1638 were focused in Long Acre.[59] Michael Power found 72.2% of the 255 'houses' identified there in the parliamentary surveys to be constructed of brick but also counted 24.3% of those houses being in multi-occupancy and 3.6% dwelling sheds.[60] The illegal building return shows the mixed building development in Long Acre up to 1638. Two-thirds of the 22 individual fines were for building houses, although several of the seven individuals identified for building tenements did erect several. For example, John Moncaster was fined for building four tenements, William Joyce for seven and Serieant Francis for thirteen. Francis was also fined for erecting sheds. A total of 27 tenements were identified in the return for Long Acre.

Whilst Long Acre was home to a reasonable proportion of substantial residents by 1666, represented by the mean of 6.5 hearths per household in the hearth tax return, it is notable that close to a fifth of all residents lived in dwellings with just one to two hearths. The collector noted 'pore & noe distress' beside the two hearth entry for one Richard Bodman in the return.[61] The building returns suggest that the heterogeneous nature of Long Acre emerged in a period of focused development in the 1630s.

Pump Court was located off the southern side of the Strand and shows a divergence from the locations discussed, an average of three hearths per dwelling across its twelve households.

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[58] TNA SP16/408/139, ff.139v-144v.

[59] TNA SP16/408/139, ff.139v-145v.

[60] Michael Power, 'The East and West in Early Modern London,' in E. W. Ives, R. J. Knecht, and J. J. Scarisbrick (eds.), *Wealth and Power in Tudor England* (London: The Athlone Press, University of London, 1978), 170.

[61] Davies et al, *London Hearth Tax*, 828-829, 831.

The two hearth dwelling of John Nelson's was noted as 'pore & fallen downe some houses'. These were the exception though, most dwellings contained three to six hearths.[62] On the surface this appears a location not uniformly destitute. We need to be cautious of assuming a house that is recorded with several hearths only housing the middling or more substantial. For example, nineteen householders and a mean of three hearths per dwelling are recorded in Vinegar Yard. One Mr Higgs is marked as the householder for a six hearth dwelling that the collector specified as '6 chambers Left to poore people Noe distress'.[63] Seventy-eight houses are recorded in Spur Alley, which ran off the southern side of the Strand and was hit hard in the epidemic in 1636. Whilst the mean number of hearths was 2.8 and 68% of dwellings contained three to five hearths, twenty were marked as 'poor' or 'no distress' by the collector. Eleven of the twenty denoted as too poor to pay the tax and having no goods to take as payment (no goods to take in 'distress') contained three or four hearths. The four hearth dwelling listed under one Mr Barton was 'lett to foure widdows' and marked as 'noe distress'.[64]

Soho was a developing space on the northern fringes of the parish. A parish pesthouse was built there in the 1630s, which indicates its peripheral nature. The average number of hearths in 1666 was slightly below the parish average. Seven householders were noted as poor, whilst Edward Higges and George Duckett were rated at eight and six hearths respectively, and Sir William Poultney', noted as building a new house.[65] Soho was not fully developed, so the availability of space was an attracting factor.

The three parishes shared the basic social pressures resulting from accelerated population growth and changes to the built environment. It is perhaps more striking that each developed in its own way and time, which influenced their experience of the many social problems they confronted. The burden of dealing with those problems fell on the parish vestry, and in the

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[62] Davies et al, *London Hearth Tax*, 812.

[63] Davies et al, *London Hearth Tax*, 809-810.

[64] Davies et al, *London Hearth Tax*, 803-805.

[65] Davies et al, *London Hearth Tax,* 774, 776-777.

sections that follow, the timing and process by which suburban vestries took over parish affairs will be presented in the context of the changes described above.

2.5 Emergence of select vestries

In October 1633, the vestry in St Martin in the Fields 'agreed' that Mr John Harris, lately churchwarden of the parish, should be 'brought in and Admitted to the Vestry'. The agreement was signed by the vicar William Bray and twelve vestrymen. The word 'ordered' was crossed out and 'agreed' entered in its place.[66] The extent of the vestry's power was laid bare, the group self-regulating their membership with little suggestion that decision making was open to any beyond the thirteen men present. Julia Merritt described the confidence parishes exuded in their 'right and ability' to run local affairs and readiness to 'imbue' their vestry with 'specific meaning', but the legal basis for their actions was vague.[67] The move to select vestries was a ubiquitous phenomenon in the suburban parishes and the reality was that take-over was all but assured by the last decade of the sixteenth century.

Sidney and Beatrice Webb influenced the general view of select vestries. They described the parishes within the walls as exhibiting 'petty jobbery, corrupt waste, and extreme partiality', and a minority without the walls as 'strengthened by influential membership' and excelling local authorities in 'independence, variety of functions and extent of powers'. Mostly though the extramural vestries were labelled as 'continuously corrupt and extravagantly wasteful'.[68] Ian Archer queried whether the drift to select vestries was the result of a 'feeling of greater social exclusiveness' and the 'alleged' reasons presented by vestries in seeking an instrument (the Bishop of London's formal authority) having little to do with 'any consciousness of the social divide'.[69] Mike Berlin argued that the phenomenon was driven by 'social differentiation' and by substantial Londoners wishing to distance themselves from the poor,

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[66] WAC F2002, ff.96.

[67] Merritt, 'Contested Legitimacy', 28, 31-32.

[68] Beatrice Webb and Sidney Webb, *The Parish and the County* (London: Longman, Green and Co, 1924), chapter 5.

[69] Ian Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991)*,* 41, 70.

although the process was not ubiquitous.[70] These conclusions were based on samples that largely comprised intramural parishes. It is important to detach the suburban parishes and set any desire to achieve social differentiation by parish elites there against the need to ensure efficiency in the structure and operational capacity of parish government. This was key to meeting the demands placed upon suburban parishes by population growth and the intersecting pressures of plague and the poor. This section considers the motivations and manner in which select vestries in the suburban parishes emerged through the last quarter of the sixteenth century and offers a more positive narrative.

In petitioning the Bishop of London in 1623 for authority to become a select vestry, the existing vestry of St Botolph Aldgate referenced the 'great confusion and disorder' in church meetings, the 'weakenes and Ignorance' and 'dissente' of the 'multitude', being 'greater in nomber' and 'more readie to Crosse the good proceeding[e]s'. The Aldgate vestrymen argued for their exclusive operation of the vestry on the basis that they were the 'Auncientest and better sort' and the 'most sufficientest' and 'grave & honest men'.[71] They asked that 48 men be appointed 'continuallie' for the ordering and directing of the parish. Julia Merritt described the request for the select faculty being the result of a bitter dispute between the minister and junior parish officers on one side, and two 'prominent' vestrymen the other. Merritt suggested that the number of vestrymen specified was actually an example where participation and accountability was increased.[72] The discussion of St Bride Fleet Street below will show that despite any expansion to the number of vestrymen, a core group of senior men still tended to dominate the day-to-day management of the parish.

While the smaller City parishes might appear prone to hyperbole in their description of the ignorance and disorder of the 'multitudes', these arguments contained more than a kernel of truth in the suburbs, and expressed genuine anxieties. Berlin was right in his suggestion that the formulaic requests did reflect the difficulties faced by parish elites as the 'formal

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[70] Michael Berlin, ''Reordering Rituals: Ceremony and the Parish, 1520-1640', in Paul Griffith and Mark Jenner (eds.), *Londinopolis: Essays in the Cultural and Social History of Early Modern London* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 51, 53.

[71] LMA P69/BOT2/B/001/MS09237, ff.18v-19v.

[72] Merritt, 'Contested Legitimacy', 31.

constitution of the community' was stretched.[73] Henry French highlighted how parish elites
played on the 'perpetual concerns' about disorder among church and governmental
authorities in their petitioning for select faculties.[74] The vestry of St Dunstan in the West
submitted a petition for a select vestry as early as 1601, in which they referred to the
'discente of the inferior and meaner sorte' and 'generall admittance of all sortes of
parishioners' leading to much 'disquietness and hinderance' in the good proceedings of the
Church.[75] In 1613, the vestry of the north-easterly outer-parish of St John Hackney likewise
drew attention to the 'great disquietnes' brought to proceedings by the dissent of the 'evill
dispused' and 'inferior and meaner sorte'. They requested sanction for thirty-two men to be
appointed vestrymen for the 'Orderinge & directinge of thinges'.[76] The petitions were
couched in the rhetoric of social differentiation but also express the practical view that a
narrow and socially exclusive group was the most efficient means by which to tackle
growing demographic and social problems.

The responsibilities of suburban vestries began to increase from the mid-sixteenth century,
amidst growing populations and the City's view that parishes were the obvious loci to
manage centralised poor relief and plague regulations. Some forty years before the petition
quoted above, the vestry of St Botolph Aldgate had organised themselves into a coherent and
stable body at an early stage of the parish's expansion. Confidence was probably derived
from the narrowed and constant structure of the vestry, as new demographic and social
challenges emerged. For example, a vestry was held in the communal space of the church on
15 December 1583, to receive the churchwardens' and renters' accounts for the 'poores
landes' and choose new officers for the coming year. In January of the new year, the
vestrymen met to take order for a £40 gift by one Mr Ripton. Twenty-four vestrymen were
present, presumably twelve for each end of the parish. In December 1588, the vestry
appointed eight of their number to assess the 'poores Lands' and sought detail of charges to

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[73] Berlin, 'Reordering Rituals', 53.

[74] Henry French**,** *The Middling Sort of People in Provincial England 1600-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 92.

[75] LMA P69/DUN2/B/001/MS03016/001, ff.43.

[76] LMA P79/JN1/137, ff.1-2.

repair or rebuild the houses.[77] The establishment of subcommittees was an increasingly common and practical measure as the management of parish affairs became more complex and centrally delegated responsibilities widened. It was those same responsibilities that presented vestries with the opportunity to impress their power on the community, and well before the codification of the Poor Laws.

The City's attitude was ambivalent, balancing their reluctance to take full responsibility for the growing suburbs, and any concern with the growing power of suburban vestries, against the need for organised and effective authority to manage the increasing numbers of migrant poor driving expansion, and their concern with order. Suburban vestries though took advantage of the opportunity to extend their reach into a wide range of local affairs. In June 1587, a note from the Lord Mayor was read in the church of St Botolph Aldgate which did 'admonishe the parishioneres and Inhabitantes Dwellinge within the warde to Choose newe Collectores for the poore'. Three days later the vestrymen and 'assistants' chose the bricklayer Thomas Watts a new collector and reappointed the armourer Christopher Carlton.[78] In a practical sense, the most efficient means by which to choose new parish officers was for the vestry to appoint, rather than put the issue to a more general gathering of parishioners.

The western extramural and outer parishes moved to select vestries over the same period. In 1575, the churchwardens and 'worshipfull masters' of St Martin in the Fields agreed on the 'pluckinge and supplieinge' of Robert Forest to the clerkship. The same 'Masters' settled 'strife and controu[er]ses' between two parishioners in August 1582.[79] Decisions were made by the vestrymen, and bolstered by a view of themselves as the rightful leaders of the parish. This confident outlook is evident in St Dunstan in the West, which was also home to a tier of substantial parishioners who were seemingly keen to take the initiative in the face of population growth. The vestry of St Dunstan's dispensed with general vestries in December 1587, with only those having served upwards of scavenger henceforth permitted to 'co[me]

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[77] LMA P69/BOT2/A/019/MS09234/001, ff.1v, 11v; P69/BOT2/A/019/MS09234/002, ff.13v.

[78] LMA P69/BOT2/A/019/MS09234/001, ff.91v.

[79] WAC F2001, ff.6, 11.

to the Vestry Contynuallie' and tend the 'Affayres of the p[ar]ishe'. A modicum of openness and custom was retained. At Christmas, householders were to 'geeve their voyces' for the election of parish officers, whilst officers for the 'service of the Cytty' would be chosen by freemen only. Any promised inclusion was laid aside, as collectors for the poor were chosen by the vestrymen for 1589.[80] Status and wealth no doubt engendered confidence in the face of change.

The vestry of St Andrew Holborn moved to a select structure around 1570, when the 'lawes and statutes of the realme when a vestrie is to be called' were detailed. If any 'Assistants', as the vestrymen referred to themselves, were to 'die, depart or discon[tinue] time out of the parish', or were ejected for 'ill behaviour', the remainder were permitted to call a vestry and with the parson and churchwardens, choose 'one or more, other most honeste' persons. The vestry comprised just twelve, six for the area of the parish within the City's jurisdiction and six for the area above the 'Barrs' in Middlesex, a small number for any growing suburban parish. The group was co-opting from that moment, the turnover of vestrymen recorded in rough tally charts showing three or four nominated individuals and allocated votes. Andrew Turner, 'one of the assistants above the Barrs' died in 1571 and his replacement was 'elected' by the parson and 'assistants'. Thomas Perry was elected in 1581, having received nine of eleven votes from the 'parson, Churchwardens and assistants'. Many vestrymen in Holborn in the 1570s and 1580s were gentry, which may have influenced the confidence of the parish elite to press their takeover over local affairs. John Campyon 'gent', was 'chosen' to replace Hugh Wadelow in 1573. Campyon himself died in 1576 and was replaced in turn by John Cowp[er] 'gent'.[81]

Plague sparked anxiety for suburban vestries and highlighted the need for tighter and more efficient management of parish affairs. The codification of the Plague Orders in 1578 handed responsibility to parishes and this was used as a platform from which to exercise greater control over wider parish affairs.[82] St Andrew Holborn recorded their framework of response

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[80] LMA P69/DUN2/B/001/MS03016/001, ff.5, 7.

[81] LMA P82/AND/B/008/MS04249, ff.5, 17-18v.

[82] Slack, *The Impact of Plague in Tudor and Stuart England* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), 205-209.

to the plague, drawing on Privy Council and Mayoral orders from 1580 and 1582, respectively. At the centre of regulations was vestry control and direction; in 'tyme of every great plague' a vestry should be called to 'elect & choose' plague officials, to ensure all 'such good and godly orders and p[ro]ceedings' for the 'safety' of the people.[83] The run of endemic plague years and codification of the Plague Orders in this period probably demonstrated that a narrowed and exclusive group could attend more efficiently to local problems.

The 1590s was a turbulent decade, which included minor and major plague epidemics in 1592 and 1593, and suburban parishes felt the sharp end of economic and social hardship. It was amidst this context that vestries pressed their take-over. One night after evening prayers in February 1590, 'serten of the Masters' of St Botolph Aldgate met to finalise the 10s annuity Robert Dow wished to establish for the widow Leake. The use of the term 'masters' suggests heightened confidence in Aldgate in a narrowed committee in control of a long-term source of revenue.[84] Ian Archer stated that changes in local government through this period allowed for some participation and contribution by the 'middling sort', the intention though not derived from a sense of openness, but rather to provide a modicum of inclusiveness to dispel disquiet.[85] This is evident in St Botolph Aldgate, when in December 1594, the curate gave the 'Masters and vestrimen' of the parish warning of a 'Jenerall vestrie or accompt day to be kept in the p[ar]ish churche'. The primary focus was the auditing of the churchwardens' and renter accounts and confirming Robert Tuttie, a junior member of the vestry, as the new junior churchwarden. The records indicate no other choice presented to the general assembly.[86] Audits appear to have required a general vestry and it may have been that the presentation of the new churchwarden was simply convenient in that open forum.

As one century closed and another dawned, suburban vestries had essentially assumed the full authority of local temporal affairs. Davie Ticknell was 'ellected' parish clerk of St Martin in the Fields by 'the Vicar, Masters and Churchwardens' in October 1596. This suggests total

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[83] LMA P82/AND/B/008/MS04249, ff.89.

[84] LMA P69/BOT2/A/019/MS09234/002, ff.30v.

[85] Archer, *Pursuit of Stability*, 74.

[86] LMA P69/BOT2/A/019/MS09234/005, ff.1v-2.

control and the need for efficiency in decision-making processes.[87] This is reflected in St Dunstan in the West in March 1598, when for 'good government', the vestrymen agreed that former orders 'sett down in the booke' about taking sureties from churchwardens and collectors for the poor, and 'all other orders' were to 'stande good and effectual'. Thirty 'parishioners' put their names to the order, which reflects the vestry's belief that decisions were made for the benefit of the parish and focused on efficiency in parochial government.[88] Ian Archer posited that open vestries endured provided parochial politics remained 'non-controversial'.[89]

Hints of controversy are evident in St Botolph Aldgate at the end of the sixteenth century, although it is prudent to not overstate this as indicative of general disaffection about the vestry or read silence in the records as oligarchic consensus. In early 1592, having consented to build a brick wall to enclose the churchyard, to avoid it 'being made a com'on Thorowghfare', the vestry of Aldgate ordered that Johann Soda, whose tenements bordered the churchyard, should not 'nether Build' nor pave more than three foote 'eache syde of the Chauncell or gutter'. The vestry requested a 'Reasonable quitrent' to acknowledge the ground 'be still belonginge' to the parish. The dispute with the Sodas led to the vestry considering a suit in the Star Chamber in November 1593: for 'certen abuses' Soda committed against the churchwardens and constables in the churchyard. The matter was finally resolved in April 1595 and involved the intercession of the Lord Mayor. Soda though did use the opportunity to complain that many agreements had been made by 'vestries & Meetinges togither' and they 'would stand to none'.[90] Whilst the dispute hints to disaffection, it might also simply be that Soda was acting in his own interest and upset at the loss of access to an amenity he had enjoyed. The incident itself does require setting against the vestry's motivation of maximising revenue. The fact most tenants and leaseholders accepted terms

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[87] WAC F2001, ff.27-28.

[88] LMA P69/DUN2/B/001/MS03016/001, ff.29, 33.

[89] Archer, *Pursuit of Stability,* 68.

[90] LMA P69/BOT2/A/019/MS09234/002, ff.66-67v, 87, 97v-98; P69/BOT2/A/019/MS09234/004, 70v-71, 74v-75; P69/BOT2/A/019/MS09234/005, 48v, 55v-57, 67-67v.

and the vestry carefully recorded the Soda incident, might also say something to the exceptional nature of the episode.

The vestry of St Botolph Aldgate did face other instances of defiance in its management of parish lands. The ward Alderman and churchwardens were ordered in early 1592 to accompany the 'Renterors' to warn parish tenants in arrears and any not paying to be 'turned owt'. John Balderstonn, appointed collector for the poor in 1588, answered 'plainly' that he would not take any 'lease of them nor pay any suche rent' and willed the vestry to 'sue hem for the said howses' he held of the parish. Others quietly acquiesced. Thomas Pilkington consented to take the lease of his house for twenty-five years. The vestry was focused on securing both maximum rental value and security in the length of leases, understandable in light of the demographic and social problems confronting the parish. Robert Tompkins was granted a lease of twenty-one years for a garden plot and two tenements on the condition he made them 'Tennauntable and to repayer them from tyme to tyme' and to leave the 'same well and suffitientlie repayred' at the end of the lease and to make 'severall howses At his owne Cost and Chardges'.[91] The terms were, arguably, not an unreasonable expectation of a leaseholder, and would serve to the best advantage of the parish and the poor, in both income raised and a valuable resource maintained.

The difficulties of the early 1590s compounded the social problems confronting suburban vestries. In the case of parish rents, as with other streams of income, these had to be collected if the parish was to meet the growing need of many in the parochial community. Some controversy was inevitable as suburban vestries necessarily redrew the contours of their power and authority. Julia Merritt highlighted questions about 'law, of custom, and especially of lay religious authority' compromising the role and acceptance of vestries.[92] The priority though was shaping policies that worked to the best interests of the parish. This attitude and outlook would be carried forward into the new century as the Poor Laws were codified and suburban parishes faced no let-up in demographic and social challenges, which included an extended period of endemic plague after the epidemic in 1603.

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[91] LMA P69/BOT2/A/019/MS09234/002, ff. 66-66v, 74v-75v.

[92] Merritt, 'Contested Legitimacy', 45.

2.6 Select vestries in action, c. 1600-1629

The vestry of St Botolph Bishopsgate called the outgoing churchwarden John Headly to an audience in May 1617, the parish auditors having raised concerns he had 'given away much more money than any other had done before him'. Twenty of the twenty-two vestrymen in attendance voted to disallow the account and that Headly was 'indebted' to the parish, his 'ill shaped accompt beinge favourably Confused and so Tollerated'. Headly was ordered to repay £10. 15s 3d from his pocket.[93] Expressions of power were an important means by which suburban vestries consolidated control beyond the initial 'take-over' through the last quarter of the sixteenth century. On a practical level, this was part of their process in interpreting and implementing the Poor Laws and ensuring greater efficiency. Malcolm Gaskill argued that select vestries cast a 'probably greater' influence over their communities than magistrates over counties in the seventeenth century. Gaskill attributed this to their closeness with neighbours and 'hovering' between working to the law and satisfying those in the community 'most like themselves'.[94] This section considers the motivations and manner in which suburban select vestries consolidated power after 1600.

The need to minimise controversy was increasingly important to select vestries in the suburbs, and the first step was in the vestry itself, where self-regulation and a united front were sought. Henry French was right in stating that any impression of 'factiousness' implied a 'weak grip on power', and that if the vestry could not govern themselves, then how could they be 'trusted' to govern the parish community?[95] The establishment of stringent regulations and punitive measures for contrary vestrymen increased in frequency after 1600 and was intended to ensure obedience from new men and avoid any dissension that might destabilise the vestry. This extended to a veil of silence as to the inner workings of the vestry. St Andrew Holborn ordered in March 1618, that any vestryman 'whatsoever' disclosing 'abroad any business that shall be propounded or agreed uppon' in the private confines of the

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[93] LMA P69/BOT4/B/001/MS04526/001, ff.2.

[94] Malcolm Gaskill, 'Little Commonwealth II: Communities', in Keith Wrightson (ed.), *A Social History of England, 1500–1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 92.

[95] French, *Middling Sort*, 92.

vestry house, would face a fine of 40s. and be 'put out from being a vestry-man'.[96] This was part of a general trend across the suburban parishes, driven in large part by population and social pressures at that time. These regulations were very similar to those of the guilds, which reflects the increasing sophistication of vestry structure and operation.[97] The vestry of St Andrew Holborn also decreed in 1618 that any churchwarden or vestryman at any time in the vestry 'or elsewhere' who willingly interrupted or used any 'contentious or appobreyous' words to the group and spoke privately or publicly of any matter where 'contenc[i]on or displeasure maie arise or grow', was to pay a fine. If the fine was refused or a second offence committed they were to be 'dismissed and dischardged'.[98]

Select vestries were not immune to internal squabbles and differences did arise behind closed doors. A divergence in opinion arrived 'att the Table' of the vestry of St Martin in the Fields in January 1629. The vestry proposed that any contrary vestryman opposing 'ag[ain]st and disagree any matter' which the 'major part' agreed would be discharged.[99] This was a period of accelerated population growth in the parish. Despite the reorganisation of the vestry of St Bride Fleet Street during the Presbyterian era of the civil wars, the vestrymen still thought it necessary in January 1645 to levy fines for 'not tymlie appearing' and interrupting or giving any 'ill or apprebious words'.[100] These sorts of references are common in the parish records after 1600 and makes clear the need for consensus.

The establishment of exclusive vestry space was an increasing tendency from the 1590s onwards. This created a physical divide and a veil of secrecy, linked as it was to the focus on self-regulation and unity. This was a significant moment in the privatisation of vestries, which can be linked to wider building initiatives that were focused on managing the poor. These included almshouses and houses of correction, which will be discussed in chapters 3 and 6. In February 1596, the vestrymen of St Botolph Aldgate met with Robert Dow, himself

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[96] LMA P82/AND/B/008/MS04249, ff.23-24.

[97] Joe Ward, *Trade, Guilds Identity, and Change in Early Modern London* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 83-98.

[98] LMA P82/AND/B/008/MS04249, ff.23v.

[99] WAC F2002, ff.72.

[100] LMA P69/BRI/B/001/MS06554/001, ff.2-3.

a vestryman, to negotiate the lease of a parcel of land so 'that a vestrie may be built'. In June 1596, the vestry ordered a new building erected for the 'better enlarging' of the upper room for a 'vestrie Howse'. The lower room was rented out to derive additional revenue.[101] Dialogue and decision from that point largely occurred behind closed doors. This provided means by which to make decisions in a controlled environment and, in a practical sense, permitted vestries the space to settle internal disputes quietly without public rancour. The vestry of St Dunstan in the West agreed in February 1597 that a vestry house was to be built and purchased to the use of the parish and 'at the charge of the Church stockes'.[102]

Vestry houses were the sphere in which most affairs were conducted after 1600 and controlling access might be interpreted as an expression of power and secrecy but was a further means by which to practically mitigate controversy. In February 1646, the vestry of St Bride Fleet Street ordered only vestrymen and the parish clerk to be present in the vestry at the time of 'debating of business'. Staffmen were to attend the vestry house door and keep people from 'hearkinge to any proceeding'. The measure itself was sparked by disorder at a previous meeting, in which one Mr White, not 'relishing' the fine set for deferring scavenger, 'craved further time to consider it'.[103] Order and efficiency were required for suburban vestries to attend to increasingly complex and busy schedules. In this sense, regulating access provided the necessary space and a controlled environment.

The church itself remained a space where the vestry could further express their power. Although fairly widespread, pewing was important to the parish elite as an expression of status. The vestry of St Dunstan in the West saw fit to reorganise their pews in 1587, ordering them viewed and rated 'reasonably by the Auncients six of them'.[104] Steve Hindle suggested that moments of stress spurred a reemphasises on 'social maps' of entitlement.[105] This could be applied to parishes in London's suburbs, impacted as they were by periods of endemic

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[101] LMA P69/BOT2/A/019/MS09234/005, ff.4, 193v.

[102] LMA P69/DUN2/B/001/MS03016/001, ff.23.

[103] LMA P69/BRI/B/001/MS06554/001, ff.19-19v.

[104] LMA P69/DUN2/B/001/MS03016/001, ff.5.

[105] Steve Hindle, 'The Political Culture of the Middling Sort, c.1550-1700', in Tim Harris (ed.), *The Politics of the Excluded, c.1500-1850* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), 140.

plague and ongoing demographic and social pressures. The tension between the vestry and resident nobility and gentry was not easily assuaged in St Martin in the Fields, where the tight-knit vestry jostled with the expectations of their social superiors.[106] A new gallery was built in 1630, which was generously sponsored by noble parishioners and inevitably sparked controversy. The vestry sat all day on 23 December settling 'direc[i]ons' about 'Complaynts and Excepc[i]ons' taken by the nobility 'touchng places' in the new gallery.[107] The tension was unsettling but the power to allocate pews was viewed as a vestry prerogative.

Christopher Marsh linked the rise in the number of pew disputes in the 1630s in Chester with the 'Laudian quest for uniformity'. Marsh argued that seating disputes occurred largely among the relatively powerful and were fuelled by local rivalry.[108] Jonathan Reeks highlighted the control over pew allocation as a means by which the parish elite could 'represent and perpetuate' their 'status and authority'. Reeks also pointed to the 1630s as a period of tension as the Laudian reorganisation of the church intruded into local pewing practices, alongside the parish elites' tendency to see the allocation of pews as their prerogative.[109] This was the case in St Martin in the Fields and can be extended to church burial, which presented a further opportunity for the vestry to underscore their control of parish affairs to the resident elite. A sliding scale of fees was established in April 1610, in which Knights paid £3. 6s 8d, gentleman or esquires having been a vestryman just 40s, and 'every Tradesman having likewise beene a Vestrie man', 10s. Any knight, gentlemen or esquires, 'being a stranger or lodger' and 'not inhabitant', was to pay £6 13s 4d and £4, respectively, and for 'every Noble personage', the churchwardens were to 'gett and obtain' such 'increase above the highest of the Rates aforesaid'.[110] The re-tabulation had the potential to be contentious, but may have been a means by which to extract higher charges from the substantial element of the community.[111]

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[106] Merritt, *Early Modern Westminster,* 215-221.

[107] WAC F3, ff.95v.

[108] Christopher Marsh, 'Order and Place in England, 1580–1640: The View from the Pew', *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 44. No. 1. (January, 2005), 20, 26.

[109] Jonathan Reeks, "The churchwardens have not used to meddle with anie seate': Seating Plans and Parochial Resistance to Laudianism in 1630s Somerset', *Seventeenth Century,* 33 (2) (2018), 14, 18, 24.

[110] WAC F2001, ff.61v.

[111] Merritt, *Early Modern Westminster,* 268-272.

The deepening sense of total governance and search for greater efficiency extended to the subordination of parish officers. Majorie McIntosh argued that there was a growing social and cultural distance between elite members of the community that comprised select vestries and the 'middling men' taking on parish office.[112] This is difficult to apply to a parish like St Botolph Aldgate, where vestries largely shared the social status of the 'middling' tier of parishioners. McIntosh's view has some validity in the western suburbs, where vestrymen were further removed in a socio-economic sense from the 'middling men' taking on parish office. These men faced increasingly burdensome jobs and this was reflected in the rise of those fining out rather than serve. Claire Schen commented that parishes may have seen this as 'easy' fundraising.[113] Thomas Baldwin Esquire was elected churchwarden by the vestry of St Martin in the Fields in 1607, 'accordinge to the Ancient Custome', but refused to serve and was fined £5.[114] William Wagstaffe asked to be 'spared' in respect of his 'other employments' when chosen churchwarden of St Andrew Holborn in 1629. The vestry levied a £6 fine.[115] Vestries sought to dissuade those fining out but also seized the opportunity to gather much-needed revenue, reflected in the increase of the sums levied in some parishes. John Waterer (also recorded as Waters) requested deferment in St Martin in the Fields in April 1633, due to 'severall occasions' of 'continuall & weekly imployment' below London Bridge. A fine of £10 was levied to the 'use of the poore'. Waterer though maintained interests in the parish, where he is identified as the landlord for several quarantined households in scattered locations through the epidemic and wider visitation in 1636 and 1637.[116]

The imposing of sureties on churchwardens became a standard policy as the complexities of office and the sums of money handled increased. The vestry of St Martin in the Fields

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[112] Majorie McIntosh, *Poor Relief in England 1350-1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012)*,* 232.

[113] Claire Shen, *Charity and Lay Piety in Reformation London, 1500-1620* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 224.

[114] WAC F2001, ff.47v.

[115] LMA P82/AND/B/001/MS04251/001, ff.18.

[116] WAC F2002, 94; F4514, ff.36, 52, 75, 76, 82, 110.

imposed £200 on each candidate in nomination from October 1634.[117] This served to filter undesirable candidates and maintained some control over expenditure, although these practices did open vestries up to criticism. The role of churchwarden remained important to those seeking a stake in vestry government and more notable was the rise of those fining out for lesser positions. Fourteen men fined out for constable and eleven for scavenger in St Botolph Bishopsgate in 1616.[118] This trend concerned the vestry in St Martin's, evident in March 1629 when they ordered that the names of all 'such officers usually Chosen by the vestry' which 'doe or ought to stand in elecc[i]on' were to be compiled and 'stand nomynac[i]on'. Outside authority was sought at times of stress: a warrant was raised by St Martin's in October 1630 to press one Mr Sharman to be a collector for the poor. There was no doubt a practical need for an officials to be in a post, in a year when endemic plague amplified hardship.[119]

The vestry's increasing management of parish officers after 1600 was an important facet in ensuring greater accountability and efficiency. Jeremy Boulton restated Valerie Pearl's argument that closer supervision of overseers mirrored the increasing concern for the poor during the 1640s.[120] This was considered at an earlier stage in St Martin in the Fields. In April 1618, the vestry ordered that no person be placed in the parish almshouses without express 'Choice and consent' of the vicar and vestry in 'assembly'. The churchwardens and overseers were directed in December 1622 to meet monthly 'at the least' to consider orders 'touching the poor and aquient' and acquaint the Justices or vestry with their proceedings for the 'better strengthening by the Offices'. Overseers were also told to refrain from increasing pensions or disbursing above twenty shillings without 'expresse consent' of the vestrymen'.[121] Whilst a negative view of micro-management might be taken, the vestry was necessarily focused on maintaining oversight of discretionary expenditure. This did bring

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[117] WAC F2002, ff.102.

[118] LMA P69/BOT4/B/001/MS04526/001, ff.3.

[119] WAC F2002, ff.75; F3, ff.95v.

[120] Jeremy Boulton, 'Going on the Parish: The Parish Pension and its Meaning in the London Suburbs, 1640-1724', in T. Hitchcock, T. King, P. Sharpe (eds.), *Chronicling Poverty: The Voices and Strategies of the English Poor, 1640-1840* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press 1997), 26.

[121] WAC F2001, ff.117, 163v.

about conflict between the vestry and the poor and plague officers though, which will be explored in the context of paying for plague in Chapter 6.

This was a period of population growth and social stress in which vestries restated aspects of policy towards the poor. Vestries were increasingly keen to maintain oversight of expenditure and ensure support was directed to the deserving. In January 1632, the vestry of St Martin in the Fields reiterated the order that no man or woman be admitted to the almshouse 'Untill he or she be Allowed of by the Vestry'. The vestry demanded in March 1643 that the churchwardens 'show cause' as to why the widow Gibbs was denied money 'due for keeping of two Orphans'. In September, the churchwarden Mr Duck was given 'speciall warning' to appear at the next vestry and show why money 'Due unto Ann Holt' was not paid.[122] Boulton suggested this was an opportunity for the poor to play off branches of poor relief administration.[123] The vestry was in a sense operating as an arbitrator and ensuring close management of parochial officials and financial resources, both collected and disbursed. Tighter management of parish officers who lacked the holistic view of the parish's financial position was pragmatic but did create problems, particularly amidst the disruption of endemic plague.

Select vestries were entrenched in suburban parishes by the third decade of the seventeenth century. Whilst they likely viewed their tightened grip on parish affairs as legitimised by the Elizabethan statutes, and equally, as a pragmatic response to the increasing burden of population, poor and plague, their activities did begin to attract suspicion from outside entities.

2.7 Select vestries in action, c. 1629-1650

A survey was dispatched to London's parishes by the Bishop of London in February 1636, and answers to four questions were sought. The first pertained to the 'business ordered' in the parish, and whether it was by a select or general meeting of parishioners. The second and third questions asked whether the bishop had granted any faculty or instrument for a select vestry. If the selection was rather by 'use and prescription', the survey asked what powers

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[122] WAC F2002. ff.88, 134, 137.

[123] Boulton, 'Going on the Parish', 30.

were claimed and exercised by the vestry. The fourth question sought details of fees levied by the parish, seemingly innocuous, but as 'politically charged' as the three preceding, driven as it was by concern about dubious financial practice.[124] Julia Merritt termed the questions 'potentially awkward' and 'politically driven' and queried the origin of the source, doubting it was the result of an ecclesiastical inquiry. Rather, it was likely sparked by anxiety about a series of Star Chamber cases against London vestries, which included one against the extramural parish of St Botolph Aldersgate in 1629.[125] This section will show that despite that inquiry, the survey of parochial government in 1636 and the attempt to open vestries up during the Presbyterian era of the civil wars, the total control of parish affairs by select vestries was unhindered in the suburban parishes.

A possible influence on vestry anxiety about the purpose of the survey in 1636 was the investigation of the vestry of St Botolph Aldersgate by the Royal Commission on Fees in late 1629.[126] Aldersgate was an extramural parish located to the immediate north-west of the city walls. The 'jurors' report presents a neat summary of alleged vestry 'abuses' and irregularities. Taxes, rates and fees were said to be 'unequally and unjustly' impressed, and a revised table of fees identified as a 'generall grievance and oppression' for parishioners and 'Lodgers and Soiourners'. Although taking to task the curate Thomas Booth, the jurors levelled total responsibility for all failings at the vestry, until twenty-three years earlier a 'publique and open vestry' where 'Acts or orders made by gen[er]all assent' was for the 'good governm[en]t' of the parish. This had allegedly been cast aside by those looking to their 'owne sinister and p[ar]ticular ends more than the com[m]on good'. The litany of perceived offences laid bare certain perceptions of select vestries. Particular ire was levelled at the 'unwarrantable power and authority to make Acts and Orders' and the compelling of pensioners to make a deed of gift of their estate, in which their 'Children & kindred have been defrauded'. The jury emphasised the 'damages losses disadvantages oppressions and abuses' committed to the great 'prediudice of the said p[ar]ishioners in gen[er]all and the poore'. They recommended the table of fees be revoked and the select vestry dismantled, 'for

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[124] LPL CM/VII/61-115, 28/72.

[125] Merritt, 'Contested Legitimacy', 34-45.

[126] Merritt, 'Contested Legitimacy', 34-45.

the general freedom and benefit' of all parishioners.[127] This was an unequivocal attack on select vestries and might suggest a general suspicion of those in the suburbs.

It might also speak to the potential for controversy in a parish which contained a reasonable tier of middling and more substantial parishioners. Roger Finlay counted 581 households and no tenements in Aldersgate in the 1638 tithes survey. Aldersgate was one of the parishes for which Finlay stated he was unable to distinguish substantial households.[128] This is because just 208 rents of the listed 581 householders are recorded in the parish return.[129] The hearth tax though nuances the broad social character of the 514 householders listed in the 1666 return, of which just 14% (74) lived in buildings with one to two hearths and 49% (253) in three to five hearths. Of significance to this discussion is the 36% (184) of householders that lived in houses with six or more hearths.[130] This might explain complaints made about the power and actions of the select vestry in Aldersgate, if they expressed the rancour of those excluded from active participation in the decision-making processes of parish government.

The survey of 1636 was directed to churchwardens, but given that suburban vestries tended to control churchwardens and appoint from within their circle, it would be difficult for a return to be composed without vestry interference. The returns have been used to chart the expansion of London's vestries and a preoccupation with oligarchy has tended to dominate the narrative. All fifteen suburban vestries, represented in the surviving returns (of 28 extramural and out-parishes listed in the Bills of Mortality in 1636), operated select structures. Of 55 intramural parishes sampled, 32 were operating select vestries and 23 were not. Merritt sees the returns as part of a concerted campaign against vestries, whose power and independence were causing consternation.[131]

Only five of the fifteen suburban parishes possessed an episcopal mandate to operate a select vestry. St Botolph Aldgate stated they had no Bishop's instrument or faculty, though their

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[127] LMA P69/BOT1/B/026/MS10910.

[128] Finlay, *Population and Metropolis*, 78-79, 171.

[129] Dale, *Inhabitants of London,* 203-209.

[130] Wareham, 'Unpopularity of the Hearth Tax', 481; Davies et al, *London Hearth Tax,* 277-80, 281 (2), 282-5, 287, 291-4, 295 (2), 296-300, 304, 311 (indexing for the transcript is by IRN).

[131] Merritt, 'Contested Legitimacy', 39, 40.

petition in 1623 for a select vestry is of course recorded in their administrative records. A further reference in the vestry minute book records their endeavour in 1638 to 'obtaine a selected vestrie againe' so as the 'inhabitants of Eastsmithfield will joyne with them'.[132] This may have been due to the vestry seeking to reaffirm its authority in light of population growth and plague in the southern part of the parish. A handful of other parishes acknowledged historical possession of an instrument. The eastern outer parish of St Mary Whitechapel confirmed a select vestry had been in operation since 'time out of minde', with an instrument granted in 1615.[133]

What can be discerned is an east-west divergence in those suburban vestries in possession of an instrument, with more eastern parishes having one. Whitechapel, Aldgate and St Botolph Bishopsgate did, and whilst the outer-parish of St Leonard Shoreditch did not, they had operated 'a Selected Companie' by prescription from around 1524.[134] The brevity and directness of their answer stand out, which as with Whitechapel, was possibly influenced by their peripheral location beyond the jurisdiction of the City. This view can be extended to St John Hackney, not included in the surviving returns, but where the vestry had submitted a petition in 1613. The vestry drew consent for their activities from the grant. In October 1627, the parish clerk recorded those chosen to be vestrymen to 'make up the numb[e]r according to the Instrum[en]t,' with some twenty-eight names following. Two knights, six esquires and eight gentlemen, just over half the named vestrymen, put their names to the petition for an instrument in 1613.[135] Hackney remained a desirable peripheral location for elements of the nobility and lesser gentry, and increasingly so for prominent merchants. A genuine push for social differentiation perhaps influenced the submission of the petition. Despite the existence of a select vestry though, and most likely due to the presence of the merchants, both retired and maintaining second homes in Hackney, a wider body of parishioners did participate in parish government.[136]

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[132] LPL CM/7/7; LMA P69/BOT2/B/031/MS09237, ff. 265v.

[133] LPL CM VII/125/115.

[134] LPL CM VII/79/93.

[135] LMA P79/JN1/137, ff.39.

[136] T. F. T. Baker (ed.), 'Hackney: Settlement and Building to c.1800', *A History of the County of Middlesex: Volume 10, Hackney* (London: Victoria County History, 1995), 10-14.

The extramural parishes may have been sensitive to the criticisms of the 1629 inquiry in St Botolph Aldersgate. This might explain Aldgate's confusing response, in which they stated they had 'no Vestrie but only generall meeting[e]s' and this 'hath byn used time out of mynde', in answer to the second question.[137] Henry Cordiwen was a named vestryman to the instrument in 1623 and senior vestryman by 1636, among others. This was no oversight, rather we might assume this reflects anxiety, particularly for suburban parishes partially or wholly within the City's jurisdiction.[138] St Botolph Bishopsgate laconically answered having 'our vestry by graunt', taking confidence in official approval and keen to avoid any doubt.[139]

Whilst the eastern block of suburban parishes had obtained facilities, those to the north-west and west had mostly not. St Dunstan in the West was the exception. As described above, the vestry was granted a faculty in 1601 but avoided directly answering the question. Rather they presented a lengthy diatribe around how they had historically arrived at a petition. The 'hinderance to the good proceedings' of the church and 'dissent of the inferior and meaner sort of the multitude' there 'greater in number', was trotted out, the standard refrain of petitions. This reflects the key driver in the move to select vestries in the suburbs: the growth of parish populations and the push for greater efficiency in managing associated social problems. What might explain this divergence from the east? Steve Hindle suggested vestries were driven by a consciousness of protest from the rate-paying community and derived security from an 'authoritative document'.[140]

The timing of St Dunstan's petition might support this, coinciding in time with the codification of the Poor Laws. The western band of suburban parishes contained greater numbers of substantial parishioners who likely felt emboldened to press the takeover of vestry government. Conversely, the relative dearth of substantial parishioners to the east with vestrymen status less removed from the rate-paying community might have made conflict

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[137] LPL CM/7/7.

[138] LMA P69/BOT2/B/001/MS09237, ff.18v-19v, 267v.

[139] LPL CM/4/3.

[140] Steve Hindle, *The State and Social Change in Early Modern England, c.1550-1640,* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), 210.

more likely, as opposed to 'rightful' social superiors assuming the power to the west. The parish-wide mean rental for St Botolph Aldgate was £4 in 1638, and that for St Dunstan in the West was £8-9. The average rental value for seventeen vestrymen regularly appearing at meetings in Aldgate in 1638 was £10. Many householders assessed with similar rents in the parish do not appear in vestry lists, indicative of the vestry elite sharing the same relative socio-economic standing as the upper tier of parishioners they governed. This diverges significantly from St Dunstan's, where the average rental value for seventeen vestrymen in 1638 was £20.[141]

Many City parishes presented 'oddities' in their answers, but for the most part, were less evasive where select faculties were in operation and without possession of an instrument.[142] The answers of the northwestern extramural parishes suggest a sensitivity about their select vestries. Although stating they had no instrument from any authority, St Giles Cripplegate emphasised the operation of a select faculty 'by p[re]scription' since 'time out of mynde', an effort to assuage outside anxiety in emphasising a historically established structure.[143] St Sepulchre Newgate returned a rambling answer along similar lines, admitting they possessed no instrument but simply operated the vestry 'as o[ur] Auncestors have done before us' and 'by usage and p[re]scription'.[144] St Andrew Holborn detailed the 'nysances and other smale trespasses' in the part of the parish under the City's jurisdiction, before going on to confirm that some affairs of the parish were ordered by the 'grave and ancient inhabitants, men of approved honestie'. The "s-word" was not deployed. In answer to the second question, the vestry professed they could 'not call to minde' if a faculty had been granted, before adding, nor had the 'saide Vestry' ever been 'disapproved' by any of the 'Reverend Predecessors'.[145] We might speculate that the vestry was anxious as to the outcome of any answer not well received by the ecclesiastical authorities.

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[141] Dale, *Inhabitants of London,* 210-224, 230-235.

[142] Merritt, 'Contested Legitimacy', 40; for examples, LPL CM/VII/61-115, 3/62; 68/88; 75/91; 93/99; 97/101.

[143] LPL CM VII/110/105/2.

[144] LPL CM VII/19/69.

[145] LPL CM/57/1.

Vestries in the suburbs began functioning as narrow and closed administrative units as their populations became too numerous for inclusive involvement, and the tasks laid upon them by statute became increasingly complex through the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century. This was influenced by social factors but equally a drive to ensure the most efficient means by which to cope with the social problems, plague included, that parishes faced and the leading role imposed on them by the Poor Laws. This reality meant that any attempt to restructure vestries during the Presbyterian era of the civil wars was unlikely to bring about any real change, given that those problems continued unabated, and were compounded by the hardship and disruption of the wars.

The reorganisation of the vestry of St Bride Fleet Street in early 1645 was an apparent endeavour to reopen the decision-making processes of parish affairs to a wider constituency.[146] This was set within the context of a 'sustained attack' on Laudianism, beginning in 1640 with the impeachment of Archbishop Laud by the House of Commons. Kenneth Fincham and Nicolas Tyacke stated that the religious developments of the early 1640s were characterised by 'waves of iconoclasm' against key elements of Laudianism. Whilst select vestries predated Laud's reforms, the apparent reopening of vestry government by ascendant Puritan minority elites is necessarily set against that backdrop.[147] The reimagining of vestry government was, in reality, limited, since some restriction in membership and access was inevitable in the large and socially diverse suburban parishes.

Eight propositions committed the 'power and care' of the parish to the 'new' vestry of St Bride's. A quorum of fifteen had the power to 'determyne the busynes in hand', whilst the 'generallite' retained election of churchwardens, common councilmen and the vestry. The latter was somewhat limited by restriction on the eligibility to hold office, though this was reasonable given the parish's size and social mix. The power for 'assessing of the parish' and choosing officers resided with the vestry.[148] Tai Liu was right in his argument that since men of substantial or moderate means continued to govern parish communities, the general vestry

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[146] LMA P69/BRI/B/001/MS06554/001, ff.1-3.

[147] Kenneth Fincham and Nicholas Tyacke, *Altars Restored* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 274-275.

[148] LMA P69/BRI/B/001/MS06554/001, ff.1-3.

was after all 'not really general'.[149] Forty-seven vestrymen were elected in 1645, although the number that attended meetings never exceeded twenty-eight through the rest of the decade and tended to comprise a smaller and consistent core of senior vestrymen from meeting to meeting.[150] Keith Lindley argued that despite greater numbers of parishioners being permitted to participate in parish government during the 1640s, this did not mean the 'social basis of local political power broadened'. In essence, the authority 'vested in persons of substance' with experience of office still applied.[151] Whilst the vestry of St Bride's was reimagined on some level, the reality was the persistence of a narrow core administering parish affairs, with the challenges they faced exacerbated by the war and a run of plague endemic years.

Mike Berlin argued that select vestries saw themselves as 'natural rulers' of the parish, both 'worshipful and discreet'. The hierarchy and power of vestries prevailed through the revolutionary period, as reflected in the appointing of 'Elders' in St Bride's in 1646.[152] The parish was part of the Fifth London Classis established under Presbyterian reform in the 1640s. In 1646, Parliament ordered vestries to elect ruling Elders, the vestry subsequently voting, 'and by the hands, it was agreed to be 6'; just twelve would stand in nomination. Tai Liu stated that the governance of parish affairs in St Bride's was 'unmistakably' in their hands throughout the period. Chosen by the 'whole parish' on 19 July, the Elders elected were essentially the core of the vestry's senior leadership, little changed from the pre-Civil War period.[153] The general pattern was relatively unchanged in other parishes in the suburbs beyond the survey of parochial government in 1636. Tai Liu described the vestry reorganisation of St Botolph Aldersgate in 1645, whereby each of the four precincts was to choose six men to compose the new vestry, and concluded that no 'radical social revolution' took place. The management of the parish remained in the hands of a vestry core, as it did in

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[149] Tai Liu, *Puritan London: A Study of Religion and Society in the City Parishes* (Newark and London: University of Delaware Press, 1986), 184.

[150] LMA P69/BRI/B/001/MS06554/001, ff.3v-15v - for the regular attendees following the reorganisation in 1645.

[151] Keith Lindley, *Popular Politics and Religion in Civil War London* (London: Scholar Press, 1997), 57.

[152] Berlin, 'Reordering Rituals', 47-66.

[153] LMA P69/BRI/B/001/MS06554/001, ff.35v.

other suburban parishes.[154]

London's suburban parishes did not hold a monopoly in the emergence of select vestries. Keith Wrightson and David Levine examined the rural Essex parish of Terling and the rapidly industrialising parish of Whickham in the north-east of England. They showed that the vestry emerged at Terling only after 1660 and that institutional control was concentrated 'high in the social scale' in rural society. The vestry was 'relatively open', at least until the early eighteenth century, the key qualification though for newcomers was wealth. Wrightson and Levine suggested that the social mobility evident at Terling was indicative of patterns in at least wider rural Essex and other rural contexts.[155]

A select vestry emerged in Whickham in 1633 and was composed of the leading gentlemen, coal owners, farmers and tradesmen in the parish. By the 1730s a sixteen man sub-committee, referenced to as the 'Gentleman of the Vestry', had replaced the Halmote Court as the 'principal agency'. Wrightson and Levine linked this to the imposed responsibilities of the Poor Law, amidst population growth and worsening social pressure.[156] The trends identified in the evolution of select vestries in London's suburbs sit with a broader national picture but show London at the forefront of developments. This is not surprising given the timing and rapid pace of change. What is apparent when comparing those developments, is the similar motivations to achieve efficiency in parish government and how to best manage demographic and social problems.

Tim Hitchcock and Robert Shoemaker argued that although the creation of select vestries in London could be traced back to the sixteenth century, what they termed the 'dominance' of these groups grew 'substantially' in the 1720s and 1730s.[157] The discussion has shown that 'dominance' to have been established in London's suburban parishes by the closing of the

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[154] Tai Luu, *Puritan London*, 174.

[155] David Levine and Keith Wrightson, *Poverty and Piety in and English Village: Terling, 1525-1700* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995 - first published 1979), 104-106, 183-184.

[156] David Levine and Keith Wrightson, *The Making of an Industrial Society: Whickham 1560-1765* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 172, 344, 346.

[157] Tim Hitchcock and Robert Shoemaker, *London Lives: Poverty, Crime and the Making of a Modern City, 1690-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 148.

sixteenth century, consolidated after 1600 and barely interrupted by the Presbyterian era of the civil wars.

2.8 Conclusions

The intersecting problems of growing populations, the changing built environment and increasing social pressure, which included plague, loomed large in London's suburbs in the first half of the seventeenth century. Whilst the three sample parishes described above shared the basic challenges that resulted from those processes, it is also striking that they developed in their individual ways. This then influenced their response to plague and the poor, as will be demonstrated in Chapters 3, 5 and 6. As the discussion in Chapter 3 will show, the responsibility that the Poor Laws and Plague Orders imposed on parishes was essential to any independent and individual response.

It is also important to acknowledge the intensity and relentlessness of change in suburban London when assessing the response of parish government to the plague and the poor, whether in light of the take-over of parish government by select groups, or the more general response to social problems. The fact that all suburban vestries were operating select structures by the end of the sixteenth century is not surprising in that context. Whilst the influence of vestries might have evoked lingering disquiet from external sources, and instances of internal controversy, the motivation for taking control was practical in shape and purpose. Little had changed for suburban vestries through the Presbyterian period of the 1640s, so far as complete control of parish affairs being maintained. Despite apparent criticisms of certain vestry practices expressed in the inquiry of Aldersgate in 1629 and the anxiety engendered by the Bishop's inquiry in 1636, the reality remained unchanged. That reality was that suburban parishes were too populous and diverse to revert to an earlier vestry structure appropriate to parishes far smaller and without the web of responsibilities thrust upon the seventeenth-century parish by the Poor Laws.

Chapter 3 - Implications of the Poor Laws and Plague Orders

This chapter will establish the normal parameters in which the suburban parish responded to the poor after 1600, and will consider the intersection of the interpretation of the Poor Laws with that of the Plague Orders. The first part of the chapter will explore the sources of income that parishes might draw on after 1600 which were impacted by a fading charitable impulse and problems with collecting rates. This leads on to discussion of the approach and outlook of the suburban parishes in meeting their statutory responsibilities to the poor. The overarching argument, which connects with that in the previous chapter, is that pragmatism and the need for efficiency were the main drivers in the response to the poor in the suburbs. The key argument as to the implication of the Plague Orders is that they gave suburban parishes the practical benefit of independence in responding to local problems as they emerged. This was imperative in light of the inertia of outside authorities, particularly that of the City. This sets the scene for the discussion of the response to plague in Chapters 5 and 6.

3.1 Sources of revenue

On 5 December 1622, the vestry of St Martin of the Fields met to discuss the 'multitude of poore people daylie' increasing the 'Charge of the p[ar]ishe'. Constables were directed to search every month 'at least' for all 'inmates, Undersitters and new comers' and inform the Burgesses and Assistants so that 'abuses may be reformed'.[1] Inmates and lodgers provided supplementary income for the host family and revenue for landlords but were an ongoing source of anxiety for parish authorities. This manifested in efforts to eject them in times of stress or in the taking of bonds to avoid their charge to the parish. Steve Hindle argued that the exclusion of outsiders in rural communities reflected the extent to which 'parochial responsibility for social welfare' had 'strengthened the common interests of all the settled residents'. The process of collecting and disbursing poor-relief involved 'protracted' and

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[1] WAC F2001, ff.163v.

often 'antagonistic' negotiations.[2] This was particularly marked in London's suburban parishes. This section outlines the income streams vestries might draw on in their management of the poor after 1600, as guided by the mechanisms of the Poor Laws and the charitable impulse of the parish community. The discussion will show that the problems parishes encountered in gathering certain revenue affected the increasingly rigid definition of belonging and the discretionary response to need in the parish.

Whilst the 'centre called the tune', Paul Slack explained that the Poor Laws were 'embellished' and 'adapted' to fit 'local circumstance' by parish vestries charged with interpreting and implementing the statutes. Slack described the laws as 'untidy' and 'inefficient', yet 'remarkably' effective and uniform, although met with some opposition, principally about liability for rates.[3] Keith Wrightson highlighted the 'profound' influence on social attitudes and relations in communities and the 'gradual' implementation of the parish-based relief system after 1600. Vestries were presented with responsibility for the poor, the impotent, able-bodied and young, the power to raise rates to meet the costs of poor relief, and extensive power to police the itinerant and non-resident poor.[4] This process was far from gradual in London's suburbs, where parish vestries quickly adopted the power to formally collect rates. Jeremy Boulton drew attention to this realisation in the parish that the statutes were a 'potentially powerful administrative tool' but also echoed Wrighton's comment that the statutes were used to socially reform the poor.[5]

As formal responsibility was bestowed on the parish, vestries were required to interpret the statutes and implement them accordingly. Suburban vestries considered the implications of the laws and the best path forward. In January 1599, the Alderman's deputy, the vestrymen and overseers of the poor of St Botolph Aldgate met to confer about a precept sent from the Lord Mayor. This concerned the poor of the ward which 'do take Reliefe according to the

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[2] Steve Hindle, *On the Parish?: The Micro-Politics of Poor Relief in Rural England c. 1550-1750* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2004), 354, 361.

[3] Paul Slack, *Poverty & Policy in Tudor & Stuart England* (London: Longman, 1988), 114, 126-127.

[4] Keith Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities: Economic Lives in Early Modern Britain, 1470-1750* (London: Penguin, 2002), 214-215.

[5] Jeremy Boulton, 'The 'Meaner Sort': Labouring, People and the Poor', Keith Wrightson (ed.), *A Social History of England, 1500–1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 123.

Statute' and the order taken 'for the same' from the Privy Council.[6] An important and ongoing priority for suburban vestries was to establish the financial machinery required to meet the obligations of the Poor Laws, in their individual context. Ronald Herlan argued that W. K. Jordan underestimated the role which the poor-rate and other assistance forms played in the 'amelioration of English poverty' up to the Restoration.[7] Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos presented the argument that most reflects the situation in the suburban parishes after 1600. This involved a 'mixed economy' that had emerged as voluntary contributions continued to be valued and sought. Rates were quickly integrated into the response, although limits or issues with both sources of income were increasingly problematic.[8]

The financial situation was precarious for suburban parishes, which necessitated careful management of resources, given the large sums of money incoming and outgoing and the scale of need. As was described in Chapter 1, account keeping became necessarily meticulous after 1600. In December 1628, the vestry of St John Hackney directed the churchwardens to buy 'one Booke in folio wherein the taxac[i]ons and assessmente of the parishioners towards the reliefe of the poore shale sett down, and kept from yeare to yeare', and other books to account for the Church and poor stock.'[9] At times of high need, vestries sought to ensure all available and owed monies were collected. In April 1618, the vestry of St Botolph Aldgate agreed to find out the legacies given to the poor and what 'belong to either end' of the parish.[10] The churchwardens and overseers of St Martin in the Fields were directed in July 1644 to search the parish records for rents, legacies and other gifts 'due belonging to the poore' and to display them in vestry'.[11]

Suburban parishes were usually able to balance the payments and receipts in 'ordinary' years. The churchwarden Issac Foster oversaw total receipts of £527 and disbursed the same in

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[6] LMA, P69/BOT2/A/019/MS09234/005, ff.31v.

[7] Ronald Herlan, 'Poor Relief in the London Parish of St Dunstan West During the English Revolution', *Guildhall Studies in London History*, 3 (1) (1977), 13.

[8] Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, *The Culture of Giving: Informal Support and Gift-Exchange in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 85.

[9] LMA P79/JN1/137, ff.45.

[10] LMA P69/BOT2/B/001/MS09236, ff.61.

[11] WAC F2002, ff.135.

Aldgate in 1631, in the tail of a localised endemic plague year in 1630. Despite plague and the hardship of the civil wars, the churchwarden Kellam White balanced his accounts in 1647, having received £703 and expended £669.[12] This did not mean they were able to provide for all in need: far from it, rather discretion was used by the parish to choose those they would support. This was framed by the Poor Laws and influenced by the willingness of the community to pay rates and give voluntarily.

Voluntary giving to the poor reflected a particular free charitable impulse. Ian Archer argued that the transformation of charitable practices of Londoners was not as 'pervasive or extensive' as suggested by W. K. Jordan.[13] Ben-Amos argued that some practices of private charity had diminished by 1700, yet others that related to voluntary giving within 'close-knit group settings' had become 'vibrant' and 'diversified'.[14] Ben-Amos' argument is limited when applied to the suburban parishes where populations were so large and fluid and the idea of 'close-knit group settings', at least from the administrative perspective of the parish, was eroded. Philip Baker and Mark Merry showed that one-off donations were important to St Botolph Aldgate, especially in crisis years, pointing to the epidemics of 1625 and 1636, when £34 and £100 was gifted to the parish respectively.[15] Any rise in gifts evident during epidemic plague events might relate to guilt gifting from those fleeing.[16]

The churchwardens' accounts of St Botolph Aldgate in the twenty years spanning 1622-42 reveal a paucity of one-off gifts outside epidemic years. The accounts are tricky to disentangle and in this instance, any sum explicitly stated as a one-off and 'for the parish poor' where empathy to circumstance might be discerned was counted. Just twenty-five casual gifts for the parish poor were made to the churchwardens through the 20 years, outside the plague epidemic in 1636. These tended to be sums of £1, the largest £10 from an

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[12] LMA P69/BOT2/B/031/MS09237, 58-59, 110-112v.

[13] Ian Archer, 'The Charity of Early Modern Londoners', *Transactions of the RHS* 12 (2002), 244.

[14] Ben-Amos, *Culture of Giving*, 111-12, 140.

[15] Philip Baker and Mark Merry, "The poore lost a good Frend and the parish a good Neighbour': The Lives of the Poor and their Supports in London's Eastern Suburb, *c*. 1583-*c*. 1679', in M. Davies and J. A. Galloway (eds.), *London and Beyond: Essays in Honour of Derek Keene* (London, 2012), 160.

[16] Paul Slack, *Impact of Plague in Tudor and Stuart England* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), 19, 20, 41, 149, 223, 241, 242, 269, 294 - for flight from London.

Alderman in 1641, and the odd smaller sum of a few shillings. More gifts were noted in the endemic plague years of 1637 (4) and 1641 (5).[17] Many individuals did not necessarily direct their giving through the parish. The Poor Laws however looked to the parish as the administrator of poor relief. Doorstep giving, albeit important in the parochial community, yet difficult to quantify, may not have been directed to where the parish believed it was most needed.

Jeremy Boulton suggested that private charity and neighbourly support were perhaps falling away as people increasingly saw the support of the poor as 'parish business'.[18] This has some validity when applied to the suburban parishes, but requires setting in the context of large populations and the changed built environments having eroded the parish-wide sense of community. The rateable element of the Poor Laws influenced the view that the parish was best placed to deal to the poor. One sphere of changed giving was that of licensed collections in church. A license was granted to an impoverished individual by an external authority, such as the Bishop of London. The licensee was then permitted to seek alms directly from a benefactor for a specified period of time. Thomas Forbes described this 'efficient' and 'interesting mechanism' for sanctioned relief having developed under the Poor Laws.[19] Instances of alms raised in church for licensed outsiders numbered 29 in St Botolph Aldgate in the year from March 1588 to March 1589. These were directed to an array of recipients and circumstance. On 1 April, 20d was collected for a shoemaker William Stone of Holborn 'Whose howse fell downe Upon him and bruysed him'. In May, 6s 7d was gathered and delivered to Ralph Shepard at St Martin Vintry and 'dyvers others hindred by fyer'. This particular charitable obligation faded away in the early seventeenth century. In 1624, just one collection was organised in the church; £3 4s 11d gathered for 1500 Englishmen 'helde Captiue at Argier by the Turkes'. This collection was instigated by a King's 'Letters Pattent'.[20]

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[17] LMA P69/BOT2/B/031/MS09237, ff.26v-96.

[18] Boulton, 'The Meaner Sort', 325.

[19] T. R. Forbes, *Chronicle from Aldgate: Life and Death in Shakespeare's London* (Newhaven and London: Yale University Press, 1971), 201-211.

[20] LMA P69/BOT2/A/019/MS09234/002, ff.39v-132, 1-38; P69/BOT2/A/019/MS09234/008, ff.239v.

Voluntary giving to the parish reveals something about individual priorities, particularly important in light of the relative paucity of giving towards relief of the poor through the parish system. Amidst anxiety about endemic plague, 'free and voluntary' gifts were incoming for repairs to the church steeple and the building of a new gallery in the church in St Martin in the Fields in November 1630. Thirteen gifts were received for the steeple, a number around £5, and ten were received for the new gallery; Robert Watson gifted £20 and a number, including the Earl of Salisbury, gave sums of £15.[21] The motives of those contributing to the gallery were self-serving, as indicated by the reference in Chapter 2 to the 'Complaynts & Excepc[i]ons' taken by some nobility about the new gallery in December 1630. St Martin's could draw on a tier of very substantial parishioners, and the example serves to show what could be taken when parishioners were motivated to give. This clashes though with the more general dearth of giving to the poor and poor visited which worsened through the half-century.

Giving at the church door was another occasion by which the parish might seek voluntary contributions. Ben Amos argued that collections following fast days and other church services were the most important form of post-Reformation voluntary collection, although she did state that London parishes were 'not exceptional' in their practices.[22] The monthly collections of 'well disposed' parishioners 'to the poore' of St Martin in the Fields totalled £28 18s 7d in 1637.[23] As an example of one year, St Bride Fleet Street collected £33 11s 7d in 1647.[24] Given the tier of substantial and middling parishioners in these parishes, particularly in St Martin's, these sums are not very impressive and can be taken as an indication to the charitable outlook of givers.

The vestry certainly viewed the church door and services as a location and opportunity to encourage charitable giving. Vestries were increasingly insistent in ensuring all due money was accounted for at the church door. In April 1642, the vestry of St Martin's demanded the

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[21] WAC F3, ff.88v-89v.

[22] Ben-Amos, *Culture of Giving,* 87.

[23] WAC F3, ff.243v.

[24] LMA P69/BRI/B/016/MS06552/001, ff.171-171v.

accounts from any having collected at the 'Chappells of Covent garden and Knights bridge'. In September 1643, churchwardens and sidemen were ordered to attend the church door 'att and ev[er]y the Collect[i]ons' to urge 'charitable contribuc[i]on'.[25] The poor were a physical presence at this occasion and aroused concern about order. In April 1632, the vestry of St Andrew Holborn sought to avoid the gathering of poor at the church 'att all times' and 'especially' communion days. Collected money would be placed in the poor chest in the vestry, 'according to the statute' and be distributed quarterly for the 'poore & a particular noate of their names of such poore as shall have the same as to be kept orderly'.[26] In December 1644, the constables and beadles of St Martin's were likewise ordered to keep away the poor, 'both of this p[ar]ish and others incumbring' officials on collection days.[27]

Whilst voluntary giving continued to be sought by vestries in the suburbs, statutory rates were viewed as the vital component in meeting the myriad responsibilities thrust upon them by the Poor Laws. Steve Hindle suggested that the statutory power to raise rates fell between 'two stools', antagonising ratepayers, whilst failing to provide for those 'in distress'. Hindle calculated that the 'quadrupling' of assessments was needed to alleviate the dislocation of the impotent, 'respectable and marginal' poor in moments of stress.[28] London's suburban parishes might have faced moments of acute stress but equally, and particularly in the 1630s and 1640s, hardship was an ongoing feature of life beyond the walls. Philip Baker and Mark Merry showed that the rise in expenditure on the poor was outstripped by population growth in St Botolph Aldgate. They estimated that the poor rate brought in between £12 and £22 in the late sixteenth century and £81 and £116 between 1616 and 1622, but that the totals raised were insufficient to deal with the scale of need in the parish.[29]

The social composition of many parishes in suburban London presented a narrow base of ratepayers. In 1630, the vestry of the westerly outer parish of St Giles in the Fields bemoaned

[25] WAC F2002, ff.127, 129, 133.

[26] LMA P82/AND/B/001/MS04251/001, ff.34.

[27] WAC F2002, ff.139.

[28] Hindle, *The State and Social Change in Early Modern England, c. 1550-1640* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000)*,* 157.

[29] Baker and Merry 'The poore lost a good Frend', 159.

the relief of the poor being 'muche lesse' than it would be, if so many 'new-comers' into the parish were not 'dwellers, or inmates or lodgers'. Constables were directed to report monthly the names of newcomers and the name of the landlords in 'order that they might be dealt with according to law'.[30] Even those parishes with a reasonable base of ratepayers experienced difficulties in gathering all rated monies, whether poor or plague rates. St Bride Fleet Street raised two warrants 'against them that would not paie to the visited howses' in 1641. This shows both the reluctance of some rated parishioners to pay and the acute need for funds. At a meeting in December 1645, the vestry discussed the 'great necessities of the poore' against the 'backwardness' of payments, the collectors complaining they could not pay the poor as it was 'formly, thought fit and ordered'.[31] Steve Hindle highlighted the vulnerability of rates to 'resistance and default', and this was most certainly an increasing problem in the suburban parishes, which significantly undermined the scope and depth of parish support.[32] This was particularly an increasing problem in the western suburbs, which will be expanded on Chapter 6, in the context of the long-term problem of plague. These difficulties reduced the funds available to provide for the poor and poor visited and increased the discretionary application of the Poor Laws. This extended to outside sources of support.

Statutory rates-in-aid was an extension of the rates system, established for those parishes with less need to support overburdened parishes, not exclusively but primarily in the suburbs. Ronald Herlan considered this 'pattern of shared responsibility' was a 'vital dimension' of the official system of poor relief in London.[33] Ian Archer though stated that the rate was 'unevenly' distributed and detailed the reluctance of the intramural parishes to increase their contribution to cover what might be presented as 'maladministration' in the suburbs.[34] Archer's argument is true of the suburban parishes and supported by Baker and Merry in their reporting of this to be a 'fluctuating' source of income for St Botolph Aldgate.[35] St

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[30] John Parton, *Some Account of the Hospital and Parish of St Giles in the Fields* (London: Luke Hansard & Sons, 1822), 301.

[31] LMA P69/BRI/B/016/MS06552/001 ff.74, 81; P69/BRI/B/001/MS06554/001, ff.16-6v.

[32] Hindle, *On the Parish*, 158.

[33] Ronald Herlan, Poor Relief in London During the English Revolution, *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (Spring, 1979), 30-51; 37.

[34] Ian Archer, *Pursuit of Stability* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 185.

[35] Baker and Merry, 'The poore lost a good Frend', 159-160.

Bride Fleet Street shows a similar situation in the western suburbs. St Bride's received around £40 from two intramural parishes in 1642, rising to just over £50 by 1645, as three other parishes contributed intermittently. This was presumably at the direction of outside authorities and perhaps related to the changed Presbyterian landscape, which would show some flexibility to the system in moments of marked stress. The amounts expected from the individual City parishes were relatively unchanged, and were not always paid. St Bride's sought support from Guildhall when due monies were not forthcoming. The parish spent 3s 'warninge the Churchwardens of St Leonard Fosters and Michael in the Querne before the Lord Maior' in September 1646.[36] St Botolph Aldgate did the same in 1648, giving 3s to the Lord Mayor's officer for 'warninge in some of the Ancients of St Helena about the pores money'.[37]

A weariness with long-term support by inner-city vestries is apparent by the middle of the century. In 1654, the vestry of All Hallows Lombard Street declared that despite a warrant arriving from the Lord Mayor that compelled payment to St Botolph Aldgate, 'Upon serious consideration of the great charge upon' the parish, the churchwardens were ordered not to pay any longer. From this point, the parish ceased to disburse aid to Aldgate.[38] The rate systems were only as effective as the goodwill and keenness of the rate-payers to meet their 'obligation' and the ability of gathered rates to match population growth. Resistance to sustained long-term support of the poorer parishes, along with difficulties in collecting inter-parochial rates, impacted the numbers of needy that could be supported. This influenced the hardening perceptions of belonging and the direction of relief, which the impact of heavy taxation in the civil wars exacerbated.[39]

The support of City government towards parishes in the suburbs was relatively absent outside major epidemic plague events. Existing systems of public support and private charity were expected to suffice, and only in pressing circumstances would the City Chamberlain disburse

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[36] LMA P69/BRI/B/016/MS06552/001, ff.49, 159, 162v.

[37] LMA P69/BOT2/B/031/MS09237, ff.116.

[38] LMA P69/ALH4/B/001/MS04049/001, ff.32.

[39] Ben Coates, 'Poor Relief in London During the English Revolution Revisited', *The London Journal*, 25:2 (2000), 40-58.

money to parishes under strain. In February 1623, the vestrymen of St Botolph Aldgate discussed a petition put to 'Parliament House' concerning the 'good of the poore'. It was proposed the parish 'joyne with other out wardes, As Bishopsgate, Aldgate, Cripplegate and Sepulchres' and pay 'Charges' with them and if 'they out of the poores Stocke; then wee [do so;] if by Collection; then [we pay] by Collection'.[40] The example indicates that the northeastern and northern extramural parishes could not rely on external support and sought to forge a collective of sorts and maintain provision via mutual aid. Intermittent sums might be disbursed from Guildhall. Receipts were recorded 'of the Lord Maior for our visited howses' and 'of the Recorder for oure poore' in St Bride Fleet Street in 1641, and £5 arrived from the City Chamberlain in 1646. A gift of £2 for the visited poor is recorded in 1647.[41] This suggests that the suburban parishes were only a distant concern for the City authorities. They were, of course, working within a tense and fragmented political landscape. This discussion will also be expanded in Chapter 6, again, in the context of paying for plague.

Andrew Wear painted a rosy picture of neighbourly traditions prevailing beyond the Reformation.[42] Keith Wrightson stated that instances of 'simple economic aid' were the most significant visible form of neighbourliness.[43] This discussion has shown that both arguments are limited when applied to the large suburban parishes. Whether or not neighbourly notions were in decline, the key consideration for this discussion is that the impact of difficulties in collecting rates and the relative paucity of voluntary giving undermined the ability of suburban parishes to attend to social problems. These problems intersected with plague, or rather plague served to exacerbate these problems. These factors forced suburban vestries to demarcate the right to belong and to decide the extent and direction of their distribution of relief.

3.3 Response to the poor

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[40] LMA P69/BOT2/B/001/MS09237, ff.29.

[41] LMA P69/BRI/B/016/MS06552/001, ff.47v, 159, 170.

[42] Andrew Wear, 'Caring for the Sick Poor in St Bartholomew's Exchange: 1580–1676', *Medical History*, 35 (1991).

[43] Keith Wrightson, *English Society 1580-1680* (London: Hutchinson, 1983)*,* 51.

Several new orders were agreed by the vestry of St John Hackney in 1618, for the 'better relie of the poore', which were based on the 'authorye and tenor' of the Poor Laws. Ensuring that the chargeable migrant poor were kept out of the parish was the priority. The churchwardens and overseers were directed to take security for 'discharge of the p[ar]ishe', otherwise to force 'such Children ore poore' out. Any poor able to work, and 'neglecting the same' through idleness, drunkenness or other 'unthriftynes' were to be reported to the Justices. Likewise, any dividing of cottages or tenements, or new building, was to be reported.[44] Keith Wrightson explained the relief system established by the Poor Laws was premised on the concept of eligibility, which was 'discretionary, discriminatory and conditional'. Wrightson argued that the system could be 'remarkably' generous, yet 'harshly' exclude and be used as a tool of discipline.[45] Steve Hindle argued for a 'profound challenge' to traditions of 'neighbourliness, solidarity, and belonging' by the Poor Laws. Statutory obligation was placed on rate-payers and those same rate-payers possessed a 'vested interest' in the distribution of community 'assets'. Hindle highlighted that there was 'inconsistency and ambiguity' of interpretations of the settlement provisions of the statute, and tension between the benevolent aims of the system and the powers of exclusion operated by parishes.[46] There was indeed a marked discrimination in those supported by suburban parishes through the first half of the seventeenth century. Even so, a less pessimistic interpretation is required, when the response to the poor is set against the greater need in the suburbs, and the inefficiencies in income streams, described above.

Comparison of the recipients of relief from church door collections in St Martin in the Fields in 1610 and 1640 reflect this change. Disbursements were mainly directed to anonymous and desperate poor in 1610, such as the 'poore man that lays sicks at the Churchdore'. A number were stated to be of the parish, including Richard Jezard, 'a poore soldiour' who was 'borne in this parishe'. Outsiders are evident, for example, the burial of two 'poore men strangers' having 'dyed in the feilds', whilst a handful of payments are made to support the departure of

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[44] LMA P79/JN1/137, ff.16-17.

[45] Keith Wrightson, 'The Politics of the Parish in Early Modern England', in P. Griffiths, A. Fox and S. Hindle (eds.), *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: New York: Macmillan, 1996), 21.

[46] Hindle, *On the Parish,* 301, 303.

individuals from the parish, including a 'poor boy went to Bath'. Sympathy extended widely, a poor man out of Derbyshire, having a 'suite in lawe' and being 'very poore', being relieved. Support tended to be one-off, the sympathy of the churchwarden to individual circumstance driving the direction of disbursements. This had shifted by 1640: the volume of recipients had notably increased and most individuals were named, presumably being accepted members of the community. Women and dependent children comprised three-quarters of recipients, meshing with trends of the period. Widow Norris, Anne Rose, Elizabeth Bayley and her two children and Surehope Lee, 'a poore woman' and her two children, received relief in October.[47] Several individuals are supported over time. Money was disbursed as it became available, which reflects a reasonable level of flexibility and response to need for those judged to belong. This particular disbursement was informal and shows a change in the direction and scope of support, and a sense of obligation to elements of the community. A similar outlook was applied to the management of plague and this will be a key theme presented in Chapters 5 and 6.

Suburban vestries responded positively to the needs of settled and 'deserving' parishioners, but this line was permeable and left open to interpretation by the Poor Laws. There is little evidence of petitioners being turned away empty-handed in St Bride Fleet Street in the 1640s, despite increasing numbers seeking relief. Caution is of course advised in reading the recorded instances of successful petitions as the only cases put before the vestry. In early October 1648, Deborah Blackforce was allowed 18d each week for the maintenance of her children. Focused and ongoing support might be dispensed for parishioners to outside institutions, which reflects a heightened sense of responsibility to certain deserving individuals.[48] St Botolph Aldgate paid £4 17s 6d to maintain John Smart's wife at Bedlam for 'three quarters of a yeare' in 1646.[49] The fact discretionary giving to those for whom the parish felt no formal responsibility waned over time, as statutory obligations took hold and populations continued to grow, is perhaps not surprising. The tendency though is very marked in the suburban parishes.

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[47] WAC F2, ff.129-131; F3, ff.336v-339.

[48] LMA P69/BRI/B/001/MS06554/001, ff.66.

[49] LMA P69/BOT2/B/031/MS09237, ff.108v.

Parishes in London's suburbs were increasingly concerned with inmates and lodgers. St Bride Fleet Street declared the quest for 1645 was to 'look to the inmates'.[50] Hindle argued those taking inmates did so as part of a survival strategy within a 'makeshift economy of the poor', and parish officials were unsympathetic and showed their 'incomprehension' of the outlook of the poor.[51] Orders and activities that concerned the searching out of the floating population in the suburbs increased in energy through the first half of the seventeenth century. The beadles of St Giles in the Fields were instructed in 1629 to give a weekly account of inmates, and 'who take them in; and to take up all idle persons', on pains of losing their salary for the first failure to do so, and being 'turned out' and 'incapable of being rechosen' for the second.[52] The fluid nature of suburban communities and constant turn-over of the population made this a difficult task and led to pragmatic measures to ensure a measure of income to the parish. The overseers of St Martin's were ordered in July 1644 to 'repare to ev[er]y houses' in their 'devisions' and make enquiry of what lodgers had 'remained there for the space of one quarter of a yeare' and bring names to the burgesses so that they could be rated accordingly.[53]

The Poor Law did not call on parishes to make full provision for those in need, rather the focus was supplementary support. The scale of need faced by suburban parishes though was unrelenting and vestries took necessarily proactive steps to avoid chargeable situations. In May 1605, the vestry of St Botolph Aldgate agreed that the clerk needed to acquaint the churchwardens with any children before they were christened, presumably to check the status of the parents before formally marking the child as a member of the parish.[54] The widow Spence was 'absolutely denied' her suit for relief by the vestry of St Martin in the Fields in May 1619, due to her 'long absence out of the p[ar]ishe.[55] The vestry of Aldgate spent 2s in 'searching for a poore boyes age at Stepney & White cha[pel] in 1637. Outside authority was

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[50] LMA P69/BRI/B/001/MS06554/001, ff.2v-3.

[51] Hindle, *On the Parish*, 360.

[52] Parton, *Parish of St Giles in the Fields,* 300.

[53] WAC F2002, ff.135.

[54] LMA P69/BOT2/B/001/MS09236, ff.9.

[55] WAC F2001 ff.131v.

sought to sanction the ejection of chargeable individuals and families. Warrants were raised in 1648 in Aldgate for the woman 'that came out of White Chappell P[ar]ish with 4 Children' and a child coming out of 'Cripplgate p[ar]ish into our ward'.[56]

The permeable interpretation of the physical boundaries of the suburbs for many beyond the vestry clashed with the parish's interpretation of those same boundaries. This resulted in the ongoing review of those supported by the parish. The vestry of St Bride Fleet Street appointed a committee in March 1645 for 'taking a viewe of the poore'. The mandate of the committee was to examine parish pensioners, assess whether any of them could maintain themselves, command them to wear their badges and 'to reforme' or 'pull them by their pention'.[57] This reinforced status and dependence on the vestry, social control of sorts, but served the purpose of freeing funds up to support those deemed more deserving.

Parish pensioners were both supported and increasingly policed and their relationship with the parish was complex and conditional. In 1610, the vestry of St Martin in the Fields agreed that any pensioner 'found obstinate or unwillinge' to perform service for the parish would have their pension suspended, but if agreeing to take on any specified duties would receive a small allowance. Churchwardens and overseers were warned they would 'beare the charge' on their 'own purse' for any allowances granted contrary to the order.[58] This undermined the churchwardens' agency and placed the balance of power in the hands of the vestry, although it reflects the more general tendency for closer management of parish officials. Jeremy Boulton argued it is difficult to justify the imposition of social controls by parishes.[59] This was the dilemma for vestries. They were obligated to provide pensions for those deemed to belong and deserve, yet also needed to balance long-term outlay. From 1613, any admitted to the parish almshouses in St Martin's were to make 'due conveyance' of all goods to the churchwardens and overseers and when deceased the pensioner's goods would go to the use

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[56] LMA P69/BOT2/B/031/MS09237, ff.75v, 116.

[57] LMA P69/BRI/B/001/MS06554/001, ff.4-4v.

[58] WAC F2001, ff.63.

[59] Jeremy Boulton, 'Going on the Parish: The Parish Pension and its Meaning in the London Suburbs, 1640-1724', in T. Hitchcock, T. King, P. Sharpe (eds.), *Chronicling Poverty: The Voices and Strategies of the English Poor, 1640-1840* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press 1997), 21.

of the poor.[60] This was a key criticism levelled by the inquiry of the vestry of St Botolph

Aldersgate in 1629 but emerged as a standard policy in the parishes beyond the walls after

1600.

The vestry of St John Hackney applied similar conditions in their revised regulation of

pensioners in 1618. New pensioners would be accepted when another died, and none would

be admitted unless 'Contente' to make a 'deede of guifte' of all goods and estate'. The

following year it was agreed that no pensioner could be nominated without the consent of the

vestry, and candidates were to appear before the vestry 'for note to be taken of them'. In

1628, the number was restricted to fifteen and any pensioner refusing to keep sick persons, as

ordered by the churchwardens or overseers, would lose their pension.[61] St Giles in the Fields

established a similarly stringent policy in 1639, which coincided with a general pattern at that

time across the suburbs. The overseers were ordered to admit no new pensioners 'without the

approbation of the churchwardens and vestrymen'.[62] Steve Hindle identified several rural

parishes that had enacted this 'not unusual' policy, albeit with no apparent statutory authority.

The examples he draws are from the middle of the seventeenth century through to the early

eighteenth, which indicates that the policy developed later outside London.[63] Vestries

managed wider parish outgoings increasingly closely, and these policies sit within that

context. Pensioners were an on-going and significant cost to the parish. Numbers were

managed and some contribution was sought in return. Coerced deeds of gift opened vestries

to criticism, but in a system requiring pragmatism and detachment, the policy fits with the

general push to meet statutory responsibilities and growing parochial need.

Vestry control extended to policing the moral behaviour of existing pensioners. In 1622, the

beadles of St Martin in the Fields were instructed to warn pensioners to the vestry so that

'considerac[i]on may be had of them' and 'order taken as shalbe thought fitt'.[64] In March, the

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[60] WAC F2001, ff.83.

[61] LMA P79/JN1/137, ff.17v.

[62] Parton, *Parish of St Giles in the Fields*, 301.

[63] Hindle, *On the Parish*, 281.

[64] WAC F2001, ff.159.

vestry agreed to withhold the pension of Henry King until he 'Ridd the p[ar]ishe of his sonne & daughter and her Children' according to an agreement made at the preceding vestry which he had 'wilfully broken'.[65] The reality was that there were more candidates than available places, and as with all facets of their work, constant monitoring and exercising of discretion was needed to provide for those deemed more deserving. Andrew Wear suggested that the parochial welfare system was of mutual benefit to both parties.[66] In this sense, he referred to the dependent poor accessing a supplementary income stream and the parish possessing a flexible workforce to aid in activities like nursing parish children and plague-time obligations. The system was weighted in favour of the parish, as they controlled the distribution of resources. Even so, pensioners were a privileged group in parishes that were home to so many ordinary poor.

The focus on moral behaviour provided scope to exclude and to justify support to only those deemed truly deserving. In November 1646, the vestry of St Bride Fleet Street ordered any pensioners taking 'Inmates or great bellied women into their houses and of any other parishe' without the consent of churchwardens would lose their pensions and be 'lyable to the Lawe'.[67] The patchwork of measures was aimed at the compliance of parish dependents and control of numbers, a standard policy for suburban parishes by the 1620s. This also exhibited a moral dimension. Valentine Keeling petitioned the vestry of St Martin's for parish accommodation in May 1619. Officers were directed to 'place him' so 'long as he behaveth well and orderly to the good liking' of the vestry. In September 1621, the vestry of St Martin's ordered churchwardens to examine the 'behaviour of the Almesfolk, and suche disorders' and 'displacing' or punishing as they 'shall thinke fitting'.[68] The practical motivation of these policies was the limit on the number of pensioners parishes could viably support and to justify support to only those deemed truly deserving. The coercive and conditional aspect of controlling behaviour or securing service in return for support related to the parish practically attempting to minimise or recover long-term spending. In July 1614,

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[65] WAC 2001, ff.163-163v.

[66] Wear, 'Caring for the Sick Poor', 48

[67] LMA P69/BRI/B/001/MS06554/001, ff.38-38v.

[68] WAC F2001, ff.130v, 153.

the vestry consented to a husband and wife taking a room in the almshouse that had recently been vacated, on the condition that they behave themselves 'quietly' and 'honestly' and the woman would 'execute the place of a Searcher' if and when 'it shall please God' to visit the parish 'w[i]th sicknes'.[69]

The moral policing of parish dependents extended to the wider community and was part of a more general societal concern. Hindle argued that the Poor Laws 'institutionalised' the traditional 'moral distinction' between the deserving and undeserving poor. Those administering the system realised the distinctions 'applied in theory' by the statutes were less easy to apply in reality. This was certainly the case across the suburban parishes. The moral criteria set down by parishes came to function as 'structural constraints' on the agency of the poor.[70] The motivation of the suburban parish was driven by the hard practicalities of heading off any situation that might present a chargeable situation. In July 1605, Thomas Ansell, suspected of 'gettinge of' Jane Featherstons, 'som[m]etime tyme his servante' with child, was presented to the vestry of St Botolph Aldgate, along with several other men. Humphrye Harrison was presented in April 1607 for getting his maid with child and marriage to a widow, 'whose name' the vestry 'know nott'.[71] The need to ensure liability for any begotten child was the driver behind the presentments, which reflect wider anxiety about social pressures in that first decade of the new century. Higher authority was sought to enforce responsibility on alleged fathers and significant short-term outlay preferred to long-term relief. The churchwardens of St Bride Fleet Street paid £1 for a warrant in 1642, for 'one Goddard that gott a woman w[i]th child', 2s 6d to a midwife 'in going to the Sessions about a Bastard', and a warrant for avoiding the parish of a child 'brought out of Holbourne'.[72]

A seemingly callous policy was the ejection of poor non-resident pregnant or birthing women from the parish bounds. In 1633, Mr Ansloe was paid 10s for 'conveying awaie a woman

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[69] WAC F2001, ff.100 - for other examples, ff.63, 83.

[70] Steve Hindle, 'Civility, Honesty and the Identification of the Deserving Poor in Seventeenth-Century England', in H. French and J. Barry (eds.), *Identity and Agency in England, 1500-1800* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2004), 38-40.

[71] LMA P69/BOT2/B/001/MS09236, ff.10v, 13.

[72] LMA P69/BRI/B/016/MS06552/001, ff.92-94.

great w[i]th child' from St Botolph Aldgate.[73] The vestry of St Giles in the Fields gave 'special chardge' to constables and beadles in 1639 to 'search diligently for women great with child' and either eject them or take good security by the churchwardens for the discharge of the parish.[74] Ejection might simply require depositing the woman in the neighbouring parish. The overseers for the poor of St Martin in the Fields paid for the sending a woman in labour to 'St:Gyles', presumably the neighbouring parish of St Giles in the Fields that was imposing the same measure in the that year.[75] As with the settling of paternity, the ejection of heavily pregnant or birthing women of dubious residential status was focused on avoiding responsibility and charge. In 1648, two poor children that came 'sick into the warde' of St Botolph Aldgate were 'carried out in two Chaires'.[76] These interventions may reflect badly on parish authorities, but this distracts from their practical motivation of saving the parish from a situation where they would be responsible and chargeable for the child. This was accepted and pragmatic practice in the suburban parishes and was linked to the suburban vestries' preoccupation with inclusion and exclusion. This was increasingly marked through the period of endemic plague that followed the 1636 epidemic.

Paul Slack stated that social commentators of the period were 'unanimous' about the 'overwhelming' threat posed by vagrants in their 'reckless mobility' and that contemporary reactions were driven by perceptions of vagrants as 'representatives of disorder'.[77] Paul Griffiths described concern growing 'darker over time'.[78] Amidst endemic plague in July and August 1638, the beadle of St Martin in the Fields was given money 'for passes for Vagrants'.[79] Parish officials were directed from external authorities and were required to take in a bigger picture than individual circumstance, at least for those whose right to reside was

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[73] LMA P69/BOT2/B/031/MS09237, ff.62v.

[74] Parton, *Parish of St Giles in the Fields,* 301.

[75] WAC F366 - not foliated.

[76] LMA P69/BOT2/B/031/MS09237, ff.166v.

[77] Paul Slack, 'Vagrants and Vagrancy in England 1598-1664', in P. Clark, P and D. Soude (eds.), *Migration and Society in Early Modern England* (London: Hutchinson, 1987), 49-50, 69.

[78] Paul Griffiths, *Lost Londons: Change, Crime, and Control in the Capital City, 1550-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 5, 65.

[79] WAC F3, ff.272-274.

dubious. An appraisal of vestry responses to vagrants requires setting in this context. Anxiety about the itinerant poor was by no means unique to London, but the suburbs aroused the anxiety of central and City government. Whilst the Crown looked to Guildhall for action, City government, in turn, looked to the suburban parishes, as agents of the Poor Law, to implement policy. In 1624, a mayoral order alerted vestries about the 'suppressing of all Vagrant, Beggars, loose and idle people', at that time allegedly swarming in 'greate multitude' in the Cittie and Liberties'. Vestries were to repair to Bridewell and collect five pounds of hemp and set the poor to work.[80] Parishes were required to interpret and implement the vagrancy provisions of the Poor Laws alongside intermittent direction from central and City authorities. Claire Schen emphasised the reliance on parishes to 'identify, control and punish' the itinerant poor and argued this was a 'further indicator' of parishes' importance in 'devising and implementing' the national response to poverty.[81]

The floating population spiked the anxiety of vestry elites, but imposed measures were an opportunity to impress control and maintain order amongst the wider migrant poor. In October 1617, the vestry of St Martin in the Fields directed the churchwardens to take order to build a 'shedd fitt for a private house of Correction' and in February of 1618, ordered two pair of stocks to be made 'strong and sufficient' and one pair placed at the 'Ragges Row & the other Drury Lane'. In March 1634, the vestry considered converting the parish run pesthouse to a workhouse for the 'begging poor', able to work. The churchwarden disbursed 9s for 'Cullouring and oyling the stocks and whipping Post' in September 1640, endemic plague likely sharpening anxiety about wider social problems.[82] Schen argued that this measure was the 'final articulation' of the poor laws and showed the 'lingering ambivalence' in the link between charity and punishment.[83] Rather than ambivalence, the sheer scale of the problems suburban vestries faced requires acknowledgement.

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[80] LMA P69/BOT2/B/001/MS09237, ff.33.

[81] Claire Schen, *Charity and Lay Piety in Reformation London 1500-1620* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 178.

[82] WAC F2001, ff.114v, 127; F3, ff.317.

[83] Schen, *Charity and Lay Piety*, 179.

Suburban vestries were pragmatic and adaptive in their interpretation and implementation of the Poor Laws. They had to be, given the challenges before them and limits and difficulties with certain income streams. Within this framework there was an increasing element of control of those receiving relief. Whilst the evidence shows that the judgement of belonging and deserving was significantly marked in the suburban context, the motivations of suburban vestries require acknowledgement, driven as they were by the scale of poverty and responsibilities imposed by the poor laws. Steve Hindle recognised that the 'right to belong' rested with the parish who acted on behalf of both ratepayers and the 'ancient', and argued that vestries should be understood in terms of 'power and experience'.[84] It is too simplistic to judge negatively their actions to exclude: rather those actions should be considered a pragmatic response to the manifest social problems thrown up by rapid and ongoing population growth.

The distinctiveness or otherwise of London's suburban parishes interpretation and implementation of the Poor Laws requires comment. Ilana Ben Amos reported the consensus among historians that over a third of England's parishes were likely raising poor rates by 1660. This shows the leading role of London's suburban parishes in initiating the collection of rates and embedding the practice.[85] Hindle argued that the 'decisive' transformation of poor relief in England's rural parishes took place in the late seventeenth century when the scale of pension payments affected the 'demand for, and even the supply' of, the 'personal charity of householders'. Jonathan Healey pushed back on notions of 'northern tardiness' in the development of the Poor Law in England's remote north and argued that the implementation was gradual, and largely driven by townships, but was well developed in Lancashire by the middle of the seventeenth century. Healey attributed this 'success' to central direction and to the adaptability of the Poor Law to the local context.[86] These studies show the development of the Poor Laws in London's suburbs as fitting within a national picture, but, as with the evolution of select vestries, taking the leading edge in the timing and pace of change.

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[84] Hindle, *On the Parish*, 352.

[85] Ben-Amos, *Culture of Giving,* 83.

[86] Jonathan Healey, 'The Developments of Poor Relief in Lancashire', *The Historical Journal,* Vol. 53, No. 3 (2010), 556, 564, 571.

Comparison with other localities that experienced rapid change is pertinent, in assessing whether the parishes in London's suburbs were exceptional. Wrightson and Levine identified anxiety about the growing numbers of migrant poor in Whickham from the 1620s, and pointed to the poor-rate in operation and orders to take bonds from the early 1620s in the neighbouring parish of Chester-le-Street. They emphasised Whickham's 'assiduousness' in the performance of its duties and the influence the parish wielded in defining and redefining local society. They acknowledged though the 'mean' and 'grudging' manner in which relief might be released and the ongoing need to keep both the numbers being relieved and costs down.[87] This meshes with London's suburban parishes, the difference being again, the timing of change. David Rollinson described the doubling of the population of the Stroudwater Valley in Gloucestershire between 1551 and 1676, which was driven by the growth of the cloth industry. Rollinson calculated that 40% of the population of Randwick was exempted from the hearth tax in 1671-2 and that the poor rate was levied on neighbouring parishes to alleviate the burden of the poor there in 1677.[88] As with Whickham, a lag of sorts is evident compared with developments in London, but what does match is the implementation of the Poor Law when a certain level of distress and disruption was experienced. London's suburbs experienced those pressures before the codification of the Poor Laws and were quick to seize on the statutory powers afforded to them. London, or rather London's suburban parishes, were then at the forefront of the practical implementation of the statutes. The same can be said for the Plague Orders.

3.3 Plague Orders

Whilst Guildhall maintained oversight of the regulatory response to plague, and the policy itself was directed by the Crown, as with the Poor Laws, it was parish government that was expected to manage the burden of plague. The Plague Orders were their guide. A national set

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[87] David Levine and Keith Wrightson, *The Making of an Industrial Society: Whickham 1560-1765* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 348-352.

[88] David Rollinson, *The Local Origins of Modern Society: Gloucestershire 1500-1800* (London: Routledge, 1992), 29, 205-206.

of orders was codified in 1578 and London received specific orders in 1583.[89] This section will argue that although the plague regulations imposed great responsibility, an important outcome for London's suburban parishes was that they were empowered to independently and flexibly manage local problems. This was essential given the limited outside direction, and was positively seized on by vestries. This will be demonstrated in Chapters 5 and 6, in which the responses to plague are explored.

Efforts had been made since 1518 by central authorities to mark and quarantine infected houses and monitor the progress of plague in London.[90] The evolving regulations were influenced by regulatory developments in continental Europe, particularly those of the Italian city-states. What Charles Mullett referred to as a 'miscellany of cognate orders', coalesced into a coherent whole in 1578 and received statutory sanction in 1604. Mullett admitted that there were limits to the orders and that they were a basic reiteration of 'long-standing' regulations but argued for a 'dynamic outlook' in the 'new spirit' that accompanied the codification.[91] Paul Slack acknowledged the slow progress toward a 'coherent code of administrative practice' but argued that the orders were 'innovative, far-reaching' and permanent.[92] Ole Grell pushed back on these appraisals and interpreted the regulations as evidence of 'government intent' rather than expressions of 'practical policy'.[93] This discussion aims to move beyond debate as to the effectiveness of the regulations, and rather, focus on their implications for London's suburban parishes.

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[89] Paul Slack, 'Metropolitan Government in Crisis: the Response to Plague', in A. L. Beier and R. Finlay (eds.), *The Making of the Metropolis: London 1500-1700*, (London: Longman, 1986), 65-67.

[90] Euan Rogers, ''To Be Shut up': New Evidence for the Development of Quarantine Regulations in Early-Tudor England', *Social History of Medicine* (2019) - published online.

[91] Charles Mullett, *The Bubonic Plague and England: An Essay in the History of Preventive Medicine,* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1956), 45.

[92] Slack, *Impact of Plague,* 205, 209.

[93] Ole Grell, 'Plague in Elizabethan and Stuart London: The Dutch Response'*, Medical History* 34 (1990), 425.

John Henderson described the centralised and effective response of the ruling authorities in Florence during the 1630/31 plague epidemic.[94] At the core of the regulations in London was the view that parish authorities were best placed to respond to plague. Paul Slack highlighted the importance of the 'initiative' of those 'closest to the problem', the parishes.[95] Vanessa Harding, likewise, emphasised this point when describing the City's basic support of a regulatory framework with the parishes, the 'natural locus of care and support', taking on the essential burdens of plague.[96] Dorothy and Lloyd Moote presented the dispersal of responsibility for plague to the parish authorities as pragmatic, given the action of central and City authorities could only fill the cracks of 'neighbourhood functions'.[97] This was certainly the case in the growing parishes beyond the walls where the intervention of the City authorities was limited. The suburbs may have been viewed as by-words for 'disease, pollution and corruption', but Ian Archer argued that the negative rhetoric of the City about the suburbs was perhaps 'self-serving', in that it potentially diverted attention from their failings in administration there.[98] Of relevance to this discussion is the implication of limited intervention in the suburban parishes, which will be largely approached as a positive.

Julia Merritt pointed to differences in the application of plague regulations in Westminster and the City of London and suggested that this was the result of the Crown's particular anxiety about the proximity of the 'plague-ridden poor' to government and the elites.[99] This influenced the internal conflict of the Plague Orders in which control and care, and punishment and provision, were embedded. Ernest Gilman argued that 'repressive' plague policies were focused on control of the infected and were driven by the 'panic' of London's elites and the anxiety of James I about the increasing population and density of building in

[94] John Henderson, *Florence Under Siege: Surviving Plague in an Early Modern City* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2019), chapter 3.

[95] Slack, *Impact of Plague*, 205.

[96] Vanessa Harding, 'Plague in Early Modern London', in L. Englemann, J. Henderson and C. Lynteris, (eds.), *Plague and the City* (Routledge, 2018), 44.

[97] Alanson Lloyd Moote and Dorothy Moote, *The Great Plague: The Story of London's Deadly Year* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 221.

[98] Ian Archer, 'Government in Early Modern London: the Challenge of the Suburbs', *Proceedings of the British Academy* (107), 146.

[99] Julia Merritt, *Early Modern Westminster: Abbey, Court and Community 1525-1640* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 294-297.

London's poorer parishes.[100] As was stated in Chapter 1, the pessimistic and anxious rhetoric of the literary sources and civic elites will be put to one side, and the response of the parish placed front and centre.

William Cecil's orders for the 'ceassing of infection' issued to the bailiff, headboroughs and constables in Westminster in March 1564, show the views about plague prevention and the envisaged central role of the parish beginning to coalesce. Cecil directed any house or shop which might become infected or had been infected within twenty days of the publication of the orders, to be shut up for forty days. The primary concern was with compliance, so that the healthy did not interact with the sick. Cecil looked to local and parish authorities to commit to the 'open stockes' for 'seaven dayes or lese, or more' any infected persons going forth or taking into their house or shop any person 'b'einge cleans or whole'. Once a public example had been made, offenders were to be committed to the common gaol for forty days from the time of the 'first committing to the stockes without bayle'. This punitive undercurrent was to be enshrined in the Plague Orders and provided local authorities with the means to enforce compliance, at least in principle, and if required.

Derived from what Cecil stated as 'christian charyty', provision for the poor infected without the 'releife of other good people, abyde in ther houses, and sustayne them selves', was an equally important focus of the plague regulations. This would place a significant burden on suburban parishes, particularly those with a narrow base of ratepayers and large numbers drawing, or potentially drawing on parochial relief. The curate and churchwardens were ordered to collect money at the church door 'made every Sonday' and 'certayne honest charitable p[er]sons' were to distribute the sums raised. This aspect of the regulations would take on increasing importance in the suburbs where growing need necessitated a selective approach to support of the infected, much the same as poor relief.

And whilst provisions for care were embedded in the emerging plague regulations, Cecil's directives betrayed an equally anxious view about population growth and increasing density,

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[100] Ernest Gilman, *Plague Writing in Early Modern England* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 154-156.

principally, the 'greater numbers of people inhabytinge' and 'swarminge in every roome'. Many owners or tenants were believed to be taking in 'inhabytants & famylyes to dwell' in some 'p[ar]t of theyer chambers shoppes, Cellers or lanetooes' (lean to structure or otherwise referred to as a shed). Those dwelling in a house that had within twelve months been home to a single-family unit were to remove immediately. The need to assert some form of control is evident, as is the framing of the concept of belonging, which fits with the outlook of the Poor Laws and would be increasingly employed by suburban vestries after 1600.[101] This was an important demarcation of responsibility and fits with the efforts of parish authorities in the seventeenth century to impose responsibility on landlords who provided the migrant poor with accommodation.

Both sporadic and longer runs of endemic plague in the twenty years that followed the 1563 epidemic influenced the codification of the Plague Orders and London's specific orders in 1583. In early June 1580, the Mayor of London sent a letter to the Privy Council assuring them of the precautions that the City had taken against plague and the Crown's recent proclamation around new buildings.[102] Plague was a persistent presence in the suburbs at that time and less so within the walls.[103] On 17 June 1580, the Mayor acknowledged to the Council their express command to preserve the city from infection but asked for support in 'redressing things dangerous in spreading infection', including, they stated, the 'increase of people'. These are typical of the plague-related communications between the Privy Council and the Mayor and Aldermen in the period up to 1583.[104] The Council was anxious to see regulations implemented and expressed their displeasure with the City's perceived inertia. In September 1582, a particularly severe plague year for many suburban parishes, the Council suggested to the Lord Mayor that the notable rise in plague was partly due to 'negligence' in not keeping the streets clean and not shutting up houses where the infection was found, and

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[101] BL Lansdowne MS 7/21.

[102] W. H. Overall and H. C. Overall, *Analytical Index to the Series of Records Known as the Remembrancia 1579-1664* (London: E.G Francis, 1878), I.35.

[103] GL Worshipful Company of Parish Clerks, *The Number of All Those That Hath Dyed.. 28 of December 1581 unto the 27, of December 1582…*(London: J.Charlewood, after 1582).

[104] Overall, *Remembrancia,* I.39, 40, 41, 221, 267, 306, 331, 343, 394, 395, 410, 430, 431, 447, 454, 455, 456, 497, 538.

more generally, not observing the general orders set by the Council.[105] Despite codification of the Plague Orders in 1578, the communications show some difficulty or unwillingness on the City's part in seeing the orders rigorously imposed. In late December 1582, and rather belatedly, orders were made to 'prevent plague' in Westminster, the liberties and Duchy of Lancaster. A punitive tone for any form of non-compliance pervaded the orders. This was extended to the Headboroughs and Constables and 'anie officers (elected and chosen to see theise artickles and orders executed)' who were to be punished at the discretion of the Justices in the event they failed to execute their 'office and chardge'.[106] This suggests that problems had probably been experienced.

In April 1583, the Council again pressed the Mayor and Aldermen with specific direction as to shutting up houses and making provision to feed and maintain the sick, and expressed surprise that no house or hospital had been built 'without the city' and in some 'remote place' to send infected people. The Mayor retorted that the Court of Aldermen had published orders, but equally, expressed concern with the 'great conveniences [sic]' of assemblies of the 'worst sort' beyond the jurisdiction of the City, and asked the Council to redress the danger.[107] The vestry of St Botolph Aldgate did indeed note the reading of a precept from the 'Lorde Maior concerninge ye avoidinge of ye infection of ye plague' to parishioners in February 1583.[108] Given the accelerating growth of the extramural parishes at this time and persistent endemic plague there, the City authorities may genuinely have struggled to maintain oversight of the problem. They may have also considered that their responsibilities went no further than providing initial direction or a reminder as to priorities. This was likely an important factor in the move to provide London with its own set of orders and emphasised the central role which the parish would hold in seeing the regulations implemented.

The central role of the parish in the day-to-day operation of the plague regulations was enshrined in the 1583 orders. The Aldermen required daily certificates that detailed the

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[105] Overall, *Remembrancia,* I.394-I.395.

[106] BL Lansdowne MS 74/38.

[107] Overall, *Remembrancia*, I.497.

[108] Arthur Atkinson, *St Botolph Aldgate, the Story of a City Parish* (London: Grant Richards, 1898), 108.

infected houses in their ward from churchwardens, constables, parish clerks, sextons and beadles. The hierarchy of external overview and parochial execution is also made clear in the stipulation that 'two substantial and discreet citizens' were to be 'appointedd in every parish' as surveyors of the regulations. These were to be chosen monthly by the Alderman of the ward.[109] London's specific regulations were issued in May, at the tail end of the period of localised endemic plague in the suburban parishes. This demonstrates the influence that persistent plague infections, and arguably, the increasing suburban focus of plague, might have had on the introduction of London's special regulations.

What the orders did give parishes was a shared and standardised framework by which to manage the burden of plague in their communities, which they could apply as the local need arose. An entry in the vestry minutes of the westerly extramural parish of St Andrew Holborn for 22 February 1583 shows the efficient choosing of plague officers by the churchwardens and constables, as 'set down in plague orders published'. A tally chart lists the names of six candidates considered for overseers of the orders for the 'plague tyme well kept & observed diligently', with John Crowsen and John Standley chosen. The pensioners Agnes Falkner and July Lowe were selected to be keepers of the sick, and Alice Starbye and Alice Rogers 'viewers' of the 'Quick folkes' that 'have the plague or suspected to have it'. Two other women were chosen to be viewers (searchers) of the 'dead of the plague' and were asked to 'swear to make true' in their judgements.[110] The gender-defined auxiliary roles carried out by parish dependents were enshrined in the regulations, as was a proviso for the coercion of parish dependents to undertake tasks as ordered. The Council specified the appointing of women as keepers in 1593 but acknowledged that in 'suche distres', there might be 'noe women' that 'will take that service'. They directed keepers to always be ready and to attend 'without refusall', an allusion to the difficulties parishes might face in finding available auxiliaries but also to the powers conferred on them to impose such duties.[111] This is particularly relevant when considering the dependence on parish relief of those often appointed. This point will be unpacked in the discussion of plague auxiliaries in Chapter 5.

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[109] LMA COL/CC/01/01/022, ff.284v-286v.

[110] LMA P82/AND/B/008/MS04249, ff.89.

[111] BL Lansdowne MS 74/36.

With the focus on removing ambiguities in lines of communication and defining the parochial role, parishes beyond the walls henceforth possessed the tools to face the growing challenges of plague in their locality. They were also able to react independently and speedily when plague was present. This was particularly important in endemic plague years when external support was muted and parish vestries were very much on their own.

Quarantine was the cornerstone of the plague regulations, but doubts were expressed by the Crown early on with regard to the shutting up of the healthy with the sick in infected houses. The 'experience' of the preceding fifteen or so years led the Privy Council to conclude in 1593, that 'verie fewe' escaped infection and the 'most dye' when the 'sound and infected' and 'manie be pestered in a howse infected'. The Council proposed the choosing and or erecting of houses in places 'within the cittye or without'. An element of social bias was presented, in that some houses would be reserved for the 'better sorte' that could bear the charge and others for the poorer sort that could not. Parishes were to make provision for their own poor removed to the houses and the sick and sound to be 'kept a sunder' in those houses for the 'better avoydinge' of the infection. It was further proposed that the richer sort might keep their own sick and sound in their gardens or other convenient places. This was likely intended to reduce the charges of their isolation but also betrays social bias, in that a measure of control was to be given over to the elite class.[112] In later orders, the rich were allowed to remove from one of their houses to another if the first became infected.[113] The logistics and expense of establishing an extensive network of pesthouses, along the lines of the lazarettos in Italy, evidently proved prohibitive. This is an overlooked aspect of the response to plague that will be explored in Chapter 6. These references do show a momentary contrast to the relative inertia that would come to define the plague regulations. Moreover, at least in the early years of the codification, the regulations were viewed as a working document and might be amended. Whatever impetus for change sparked this discussion was lost, perhaps due to the relative absence of plague in the rest of the 1590s. The scale of the epidemic in

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[112] BL Lansdowne MS 74/36.

[113] Daniel Defoe, *A Journal of a Plague Year* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, revised edition 2010), 37 - for this policy in 1665.

1603 may also have made it obvious that the amendment was unworkable. The reference illustrates that that if a change was to be made in the regulations, then it would need to come from the top down.

The City's limited understanding of the changing plague landscape is evident in a communication to the Privy Council in 1596, in which they guaranteed several plague regulations if the Queen permitted the Michaelmas Term at Westminster. One of the nine points promised that the sick would be removed out of London to 'suche a convenient place' as 'shalbe thought meete'.[114] It would be difficult to see Guildhall achieving this if any significant plague mortality did occur. Even so, a group was appointed by the Court of Aldermen to decide the places and 'charges of building new houses for those whose houses are infected with plague'.[115] An interesting point is also made in regards to the collateral impact of London's regulations on its hinterland, specifically the focus on harrying away rogues and vagabonds that 'wander abroad'. The City's officers promised to make 'reasonable recompenence' to the town of St Albans in Hertfordshire, the implication being that people ejected from London became a problem for the local authorities in the hinterland.[116] The final point to make in regards to this particular source is the clear deference made from the City to the Crown as to the wider oversight of plague in the metropolis. The Crown, in turn, expected the City to see the plague policies purposefully and rigorously implemented.

In 1593, the Privy Council charged the Aldermen of London with seeing that constables and parish officers identified infected houses, and with visiting their ward themselves, and 'often', to see the orders observed. The Aldermen, in this instance, functioned as a communication hub and check for the officials on the ground in the parishes who were charged with executing the mechanics of the plague regulations. Surveyors, for example, were required to maintain a list of infected houses and appoint 'purveyo[r]s of necessaries' for the quarantined. Churchwardens were in turn required to have in 'readines wemen to be

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[114] BL Lansdowne MS 81/34.

[115] LMA COL/CA/01/01/025, ff.95.

[116] BL Lansdowne MS 81/34.

provyders & delivers of necessaries' and see wider support rendered in the community. Clerks and sextons were expected to know which houses were infected and ensure those houses were marked as such, whilst rakers and scavengers were to see the streets kept clean and warn inhabitants to 'kepe channells clear frome fylth'.[117] Compliance was expected at each level of a network drawing on the full range of the local ward and parish officers who were charged with preventing, or rather managing, plague.

Given the resistance of the City in responding to problems in the suburbs, the Justices of the Peace in Middlesex and Surrey were looked to by the Crown and City authorities for the oversight of general order in the areas beyond the liberties of the City. On 30 November 1594, the Lord Mayor, on the 'request' of the Privy Council, wrote to the Justices of Middlesex and Surrey with instruction to attend a 'conference' upon the measures taken for the suppression of vagrants 'within the City of London'. The difficulties in the relationship between the City and county authorities is evident in a letter from the Mayor to the Council in September 1595, touching the complaint made by the same Justices as to the proposed erection of houses of correction in their counties. This reflects the City's view that the Justices were best placed to deal with the 'great numbers' of begging and vagrant poor, who subsequently made 'demands' to the City as to the contributions required for erecting and maintaining the houses of correction.[118]

This outlook changed very little after 1600, except for the greater suburban dimension. In July 1625, the Mayor replied to a terse message from the Privy Council as to the need for 'speedy redress' concerning 'Government' in the extension of plague regulations. The Mayor pointed out that the plague had so far 'raged' more in the skirts of the City where parishes 'spread into other Counties' where the multitudes of inmates were 'without measure'. He asked that the Council take especial notice and reform the problem by Act of Parliament or Order in the Council. Ian Archer though argued that despite Middlesex being 'in some respects' intensely governed, the Middlesex and Surrey session commissions showed weakness in their 'inability' to form a common policy for the metropolis. Archer suggested

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[117] BL Lansdowne MS 74/33.

[118] Overall, *Remembrancia*, I.63; II.15, 75, 76, 85, 87, 229, 231.

that this was compensated to a degree by the 'vigour' of parish government.[119] As this study argues, that vigour was derived from both the pressing need to address local problems and the power handed to parish government by the Poor Laws and Plague Orders.

The maintenance of order and not the practical working of plague regulations were the primary concern of the Justices of the Peace. In mid-April 1630, the Council directed the Mayor and JPs in Middlesex and Surrey, on account of the spread of plague, to prohibit and suppress meetings and stage plays, alongside restricting the assemblies of people at the common halls of London and taverns or elsewhere. The JPs were also called upon to consider any non-compliance of plague relations at the Quarter Sessions. In early 1637, Stephen Smyth, a Fishmonger, was presented to the Justices at the Westminster sessions regarding his 'p(ro)ceedings' in concealing his servant's infection 'after his house was infected with the plague'. A 'watchman' was also to answer for entering a tavern whilst on duty and another individual was examined for 'escapinge out of an infected house of the plague and going to houses of people free from the plague'.[120] Whatever jurisdictional inertia existed, the Crown tended to communicate their direction to Guildhall and considered their responsibility for plague to extend widely beyond the walls. In March 1630, with reports of plague in St Giles in the Fields, Shoreditch and Whitechapel, the Council asked the Mayor and Aldermen to shut up houses and install watchmen, alongside reprinting and carefully observing plague regulations, 'for their better direction'. Whilst Guildhall might consider a parish like Shoreditch to lie beyond their jurisdiction, it is clear that the Council saw the City's responsibility as extending beyond the extramural parishes that lay within the formal bounds of the City's authority.

The regulations might be supported by some direction from the City, at least in an epidemic year. On 18 April 1603, the Mayor wrote to the Council informing them of the steps taken to prevent the spread of plague in Middlesex and Surrey.[121] More coordinated measures were organised by the Court of Aldermen, at least during an epidemic, and these might show an

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[119] Archer, 'Government in Early Modern London', 140, 143-144.

[120] LMA WJ/SR/NS/47, 25, 32, 33, 139; WJ/SR/NS/48, 24, 25.

[121] Overall and Overall, *Remembrancia*, II.234.

awareness of the social group that was most likely to be impacted. In May 1603, a collection was ordered by the Court for the poor of London. The Aldermen were directed to organise the local collectors in each ward to gather all money that was 'due and behinde by anie of the inhabitants', alongside order that the Chamberlain organise funds to prepare the pesthouse.[122] The latter reflects the priorities of the City, which were not necessarily the same as those in the suburban parishes, a point the discussion of the use of the pesthouse in Chapter 6 will return to. It was not until July that directives were issued by the Court of Aldermen. This likely indicates the point at which the City believed a more forceful and coordinated response was required and appears to coincide with the moment at which plague was more active in the parishes within the walls. It was widely diffused across London's suburbs at this time (see figure 4.2, p.129).[123]

It can be inferred, and is not surprising, that suburban vestries implemented plague measures prior to any formal instruction from Guildhall. The parishioners of St Botolph Bishopsgate sent a petition to the Court of Aldermen for relief in March 1625, requesting support due to their 'extraordinary expenditure with visited of plague'. The Chamberlain was instructed to give the 'guifte' of £10 to the parish, upon receipts from the deputy of the ward of Bishopsgate. It was not until May that the Court of Aldermen ordered the killing of dogs and preparing the pesthouse, their standard first response in epidemics from 1603.[124] This illustrates the lag between any formal regulatory action by the City and the reality in suburban parishes. Vestries were implementing plague regulations well before any formal intervention from above, which was a key outcome of the Plague Orders.

At that point in 1603, the Court of Aldermen charged several of their number with consideration of the best means for 'decreasing and suppressing the infecc[i]on' and stated as 'w[i]thin this Cittie'. Later in the month, the Court agreed to the publishing of plague regulations, as prescribed by the Provost Marshal, Roger Walrond, and the use of Bridewell

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[122] LMA COL/CA/01/01/028, ff.138v.

[123] Neil Cummins, Morgan Kelly and Cormac Ó Gráda, 'Living Standards and Plague in London, 1560–1665', *Economic History Review*, 69 (1) (2016), 23.

[124] LMA COL/CA/01/01/043, ff.158, 222.

to give punishment to rogues, vagabonds and unlicensed oyster sellers. The scavengers and rakers were to maintain clean and clear streets in every ward, under the 'paiyne of imprisonment'. Walrond was given authority by the Court to publish the orders and see 'execuc[i]on to be done', alongside the order to 'ride or goe abroade in the night' to see the watchers 'dulie kepte & p[er]formed as they ought'. It might be observed that the prescribed orders were a reiteration of particular expedients the City viewed as essential to the prevention of plague. Additional measures were ordered in 1625 and 1636 about the killing of dogs, appointing surgeons and physicians and the ability for parishes to petition the Chamber of London for financial support. And whilst the Mayor ordered the Aldermen to remain at their posts in 1665, he expressed his unwillingness in 1625 to have the Aldermen and officers of the City 'congregate' for the 'endangeringe of theire healthes'. This likely explains the gap in their records between August and October.

The role of the City, beyond regulatory oversight, was more generally a backstop for any particular problems that might arise. For example, a 'special' court was held in September 1636, for discussion of the better ordering of night watches. This had been requested by the Justices of Westminster and Southwark. A precept was ordered to be sent to every Alderman for remedy in his ward.[125] This also shows how central directives were communicated to local officials during an epidemic event. Epidemics then necessitated some form of direct action from the City, albeit not necessarily in sync with the timing of events beyond the walls.

The City's direction was inconsistent in endemic plague years and tended to occur when there was some impact felt within the walls. In October 1606, the Mayor reported to the Privy Council the steps taken to preserve the city from infection. They also ordered that two watchmen would ward every infected house and for a Marshall and two assistants to be appointed to keep beggars from the 'City'. In early April 1607, the Mayor directed the interdicting of stage plays in Whitechapel, Shoreditch, Clerkenwell and 'other remote parts'.[126] The only other plague-related item recorded in the Court of Aldermen in the period

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[125] LMA COL/CA/01/01/028, ff.138v-139v, 175v, 179v; COL/CA/01/01/043, ff.222, 268-268v, 279v-280; COL/CA/01/01/054/01, ff.199-199v, 228v, 283v.

[126] Overall, *Remembrancia*, II.275, 283.

of endemic plague between 1604 and 1611 was related to the appointing of a physician and 'other charges' at the pesthouse in August 1609.[127] The City's lack of action stands out in a period when plague was persistently active in the suburbs. The suburban parishes though responded to plague as the need arose. For example, in October 1607, St Dunstan in the West ordered the rate to be paid by any householder for 'wardinge of their houses beinge visited' and the junior churchwarden to disburse 'to the p[er]sons ensuinge being visited & poore'.[128] This was no different in the period of endemic plague that followed the 1636 epidemic. In late July 1639, the Privy Council expressed concern at the spreading of plague and requested that the Mayor and Aldermen 'revive execution of former orders' sent in the time of the 'late infection', presumably a reference to the epidemic in 1636.[129] The letter indicates that the City had taken little action in response to the increase in plague, which was confined to the parishes beyond the walls. The discussion in Chapter 4 will show that plague was primarily a suburban problem in this and the earlier period of endemic plague.

Plague was more diffused within the walls in 1641 and particularly severe in the westerly extramural parishes, as demonstrated by several petitions to the Court of Aldermen requesting relief for the poor visited. These came separately from the parishioners of St Sepulchre Newgate and St Bride Fleet Street in October, and to the east, the parish officers of Portsoken ward, the northerly half of St Botolph Aldgate. No other plague-related references are evident in the Repertories until October 1647, one of the more severe plague years of the decade, when a petition from the prisoners at the Wood Street Compter, concerning their 'great want' having 'lately byn visited with the Sicknesse', was read and considered.[130] Outside these references and the deferment of livery dinners in 1647, the silence of the Aldermen's records indicates either a failure to understand the scale of the problem beyond the walls or simply a view that it was a suburban problem and that the parishes there were to manage as best they could. The disruption of the civil wars may have exercised some

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[127] LMA COL/CA/01/01/032, ff.68v.

[128] LMA P69/DUN2/B/001/MS03016/001, ff.57.

[129] Overall, *Remembrancia*, VIII.218.

[130] LMA COL/CA/01/01/059, ff.198, 201v, 206; COL/CA/01/01/063, ff.17 - Nathaniel Upton was the surgeon appointed to the pesthouse and William Upton the 'Keeper' - see LMA COL/CHD/CT/01/002, ff.40, 134, 143v.

influence over the City's priorities, but their apparent inertia was part of a more general trend through the first half of the seventeenth century.

The Plague Orders were reissued in 1641, 1644 and 1646, which indicates the scale and persistent presence of plague and the Crown's anxiety.[131] The churchwardens' accounts of St Bride Fleet Street reflect the constant implementation of plague measures from 1639, the point at which records are extant, through to 1648. The clerk reserved separate sections for the poor visited in 1646, 1647 and 1648.[132] As the discussion in chapters 5 and 6 will show, plague regulations were implemented as the need arose, and in and around the formal issuing of the regulations by the Crown. The regulations provided a framework from which suburban parishes were able to react according to the timing of plague in their locality, and generally without recourse to external support, unless the financial burden proved too much. On the one hand, this gave flexibility and the mechanisms by which to manage plague, on the other hand, the growing burden was largely faced alone.

3.5 Conclusions

Parish vestries were required to interpret and implement the Poor Laws and find the most efficient path forward, and achieve provision for the 'deserving' poor within available income. The problem was increasing difficulties in gathering rates, alongside a declining impulse to voluntary charity, at least that directed through the parish. This undermined the scope and depth of support and forced parishes to constantly specify who they were responsible for. This discussion has shown that tendency to be very marked across the suburbs. The primary motivation for suburban vestries was the need to ensure efficiency and provision for those judged to belong and deserve support from ever-stretched parish stocks. The long-term problem of plague exacerbated these difficulties.

The pragmatic and discretionary framework that underpinned the management of parochial affairs, also shaped the way in which suburban vestries would approach plague. Paul Slack

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[131] Harding, 'Plague in Early Modern London', 50.

[132] See LMA P69/BRI/B/016/MS06552/001, ff.165v-166, 172v-174, 181.

presented plague as a 'window' onto the environmental, social and political 'problems' that accompanied the growth of metropolitan London.[133] The intersection of plague with those problems had particular relevance for the suburban parishes. To understand this, and the response of parishes to plague, it is essential to chart the long-term course of plague and to set out when and where it hit hardest. These two threads are the focus of Chapter 4, in which the patterns in burials will be tracked between 1600 and 1650, giving particular attention to the endemic plague years. The second half of the chapter will establish the spatial patterns of plague within the suburban parishes, and will encourage a cautious approach to making assumptions about the social character of particular locations.

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[133] Paul Slack, 'The Response to Plague', in A. L. Beier and R. Finlay (eds.), *The Making of the Metropolis: London 1500-1700* (London: Longman, 1986), 76.

Chapter 4: Scale, chronology and spatial patterns of plague

A general Bill of Mortality reported 97,306 total burials in 1665, of which, 68,596 were of plague. Of the total plague burials, 9,887, 28,888, 21,420 and 8,403 were drawn from each of the four spatial divisions that comprised the bills in 1665; the 97 intramural, the sixteen extramural, the twelve 'Out Parishes', and the five parishes in the 'City and Liberties of Westminster'.[1] Neil Cummins, Morgan Kelly and Cormac O Grada corroborated Paul Slack's view that the spatial distribution of plague changed 'markedly' through the period. The focus of plague shifted from the 'wealthier' parishes within the walls to the growing suburbs.[2] The relative geographical share of plague burials across the four divisions in 1665 reflects the culmination of patterns that had evolved in the one hundred or so years since the 1563 epidemic, the last to impact the parishes within the walls more severely than those without. The first part of this chapter will track the patterns of suburban burials after 1600 and will show that plague was a long-term and, outside of the major epidemics, a largely suburban problem. The second part of the chapter will analyse the spatial patterns of plague within the suburban parish and will argue that caution is needed in presuming the nature of a location based on whether it is a main street, alley, yard or court. Together, the two sections provide the context in which to best understand the response of suburban parishes to plague in Chapters 5 and 6.

4.1 Sources and methodology

Paul Slack stated that the 'hold' of plague on London was 'clearest' in the seventeenth century due to the continuous record provided by the Bills of Mortality from 1603.[3] Whilst that is certainly true, several suburban registers do provide a continuous record of burials

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[1] T. Birch, *A Collection of the Yearly Bills of Mortality, from 1657 to 1758* (London: A. Miller, 1759) - 1665.

[2] Neil Cummins, Morgan Kelly and Cormac Ó Gráda, 'Living Standards and Plague in London, 1560–1665', *Economic History Review*, 69 (1) (2016), 16-18.

[3] Paul Slack, *The Impact of Plague in Tudor and Stuart England* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), 145.

from around 1559. Parishes were first ordered to register burials in 1538, and in 1598 were required to transcribe and keep records of burials back to 1559.[4] Roger Finlay concluded that there were limited grounds to 'suspect' that burials were under-registered in the period before the civil wars. The number of unrecorded deaths in registers, he explained, were smaller than births, primarily due to the necessary brevity of the death to burial interval. The existence and use of extra-parochial grounds outside London was also limited before the civil wars.[5]
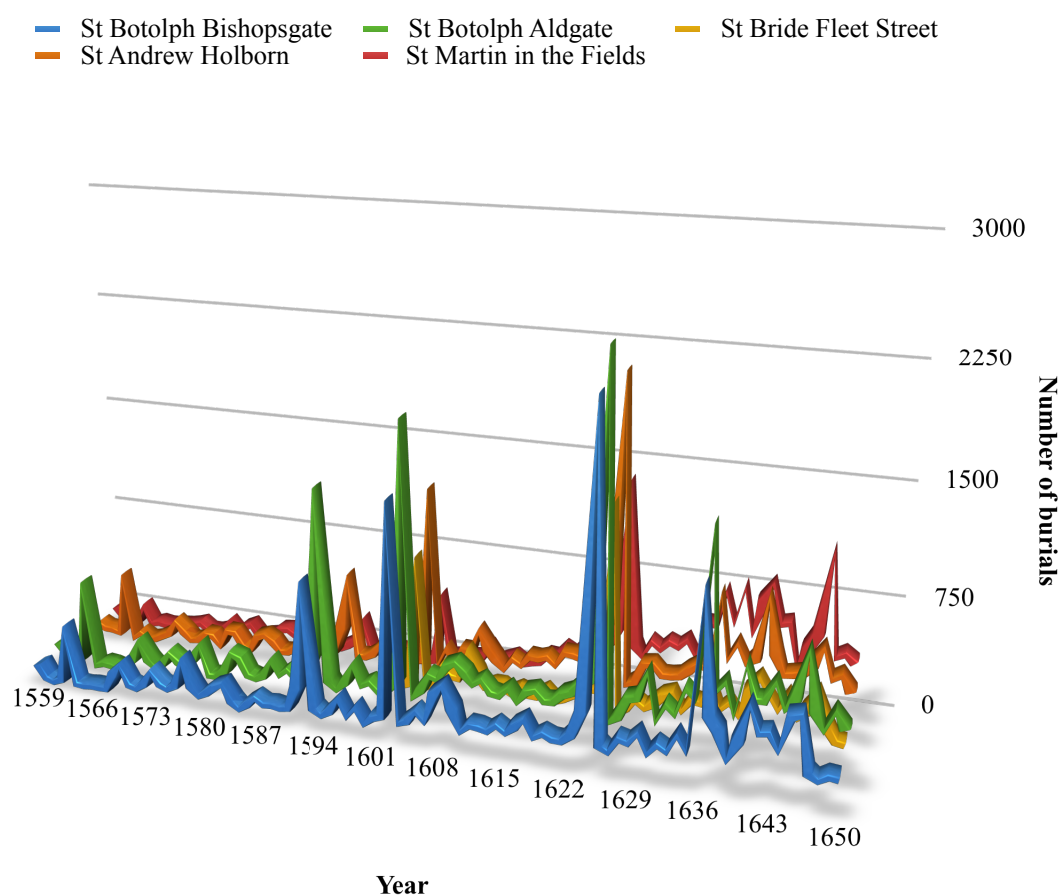

Figure 4.1 Burials by year in suburban London parishes, c. 1559-1650.
Sources: LMA P69/BOT4/A/001/MS04515/001; P69/BOT4/A/001/MS04515/002; P69/BOT2/A/015/ MS09222/001; P69/BOT2/A/015/MS09222/002; P69/BRI/A/004/MS06538; P82/AND/A/010/ MS06673/001; P82/AND/A/010/MS06673/002; P82/AND/A/010/MS06673/003; J. V. Kitto (ed.), *A Register of Baptisms, Marriages and Burials in the Parish of St. Martin-in-the-Fields: in the County of Middlesex* (London: Harleian Society, 1898-1936); WAC STG/PR/5/7.

Figure 4.1 shows the long-term burial trends for the sample suburban parishes between 1559 and 1650. The epidemics in 1563, 1593, 1603, 1625 and 1636 unsurprisingly stand out, as does the frequency of peaks in burials in several years outside the recognised epidemics.

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[4] Gary Gibbs, 'London Parish Records and Parish Studies: Texts, Contexts, and the Debates Over Appropriate Methods', Valerie Hitchman and Andrew Foster (eds.), *View from the Parish: Churchwardens' Accounts c. 1500-c. 1800* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), 66-70.

[5] Roger Finlay, *Population and Metropolis: The Demography of London 1580-1650* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 22.

These are the years, or series of years, in which plague was active at 'endemic' levels. Ian Sutherland defined a year as plague free if mortality attributed to the disease was below 1% normal levels. Higher proportions were termed 'plague-endemic', whilst the 'small number' of years where total mortality rose at least 50% above normal plague-free levels was termed a 'plague year'.[6] These definitions are broadly followed, although there could occur a large degree of local variation in the severity of an epidemic or endemic plague year.

The methodology used in this chapter to assess the relative severity of plague is indebted to the work of Neil Cummins, Morgan Kelly and Cormac O Grada. They used 870,000 digitised burial records and calculated the severity of plague epidemics on elevations in mortality above normal levels. A 'normal' level of running mortality was based on the average annual mortality in the five years preceding each epidemic.[7] The analysis here follows that methodology, although some manipulation is required for the endemic plague years, where the closest preceding five years that were relatively clear of plague is used to calculate normal levels of mortality. For example, the same mean for the epidemic in 1636 is used for the endemic plague years that followed. Cummins et al also presented a series of enhanced mortality maps that showed the weekly spread of crisis mortality in the epidemic years. The maps show the relative elevations in mortality in each parish but do not inquire beyond a basic comparison in spatial and chronological patterns and exclude the endemic plague years. Their weekly spread of crisis mortality maps shows the diffusion of plague. Cummins et al calculated values for each parish based on the Farrington threshold, a surveillance algorithm in which they were able to compare timing and patterns of 'crisis'.[8]

Cummins et al's methodology differed to that of Paul Slack's measure of 'normal' annual mortality, which was calculated on the decade preceding an epidemic. The relative elevation in the epidemic year was presented as a 'Crisis Mortality Ratio' (hereafter CMR). Slack admitted that this was a 'crude' measure of the relative severity of plague. His analysis was also largely focused on the epidemics. Slack looked to the yearly 'fluctuations' in burials as a

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[6] Ian Sutherland, 'When was the Great Plague?', D. V. Glass and R. Revelle (eds.) *Population and Social Change* (New York: Crane Russak, 1972), 292-293.

[7] Cummins et al, 'Living Standards', 15-17.

[8] Cummins et al, 'Living Standards', 17, 23.

means by which to compare the severity of plague and suggested that when burial numbers were twice the annual average, mortality rates likely doubled. If they trebled or quadrupled and matched evidence of plague in the area, then the impact of plague in different places could be compared. Slack also acknowledged that his method was not 'easily adapted' to years in which plague extended beyond the twelve months of the epidemic. He also advised correlation with other records where plague incidence was evident in years where fluctuations in burials occurred.[9] The studies of Slack and Cummins et al are important but focus primarily on the major epidemics and neglect detailed and comparative case studies of individual suburban parishes.

Although the seventeenth-century endemic plague years have long been recognised, their inclusion in scholarly discourse has been limited.[10] Vanessa Harding suggested that tracking the number and patterns of plague burials in 'non-epidemic' years might enhance our understanding of London's mortality and plague experience.[11] By tracking burials in several suburban parishes the experience and variation in the scale and timing of plague and seasonal distribution of burials will be teased out.

As to the epidemiology of plague in the period, Graham Twigg suggested that plague may not have died out between epidemics, rather 'aspects of the climate' may have influenced its incidence and scale. Twigg explained that the disease showed little variation in the nineteenth century. This was in contrast to seventeenth-century plague where he found a wide variation in patterns of seasonality and suggested a 'strong argument' against plague as the only cause of high mortality in epidemic years. Twigg suggested that if we were to accept a 'diminished role' for bubonic plague, this might help explain the diversity seen in plague epidemics.[12]

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[9] Slack, *Impact of Plague*, 80-82.

[10] Charles Creighton, *A History of Epidemics in Britain,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1891), 471, 533; J. F. D.Shrewsbury, *Bubonic Plague in the British Isles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 294, 372, 402-404; Slack, *Impact of Plague*, 145, 164, 169; Kira Newman, 'Shutt Up: Bubonic Plague and Quarantine in Early Modern England', *Journal of Social History* 45:3 (2012), 809-834 - for analysis of aspects of the 1636 epidemic.

[11] Vanessa Harding, 'Plague in Early Modern London', L. Englemann, J. Henderson and C. Lynteris (eds.), *Plague and the City* (London: Routledge, 2018), 39-40.

[12] Graeme Twigg, 'Plague in London: Spatial and Temporal Aspects of Mortality', in J. A. I. Champion (ed.), *Epidemic Disease in London* (Centre for Metropolitan History Working Papers Series, No. 1, 1993), 1-17.

Cummins et al found the spatial and temporal aspects of plague to be consistent in the major epidemics, in which plague tended to emerge in the northeastern extramural parish of St Giles Cripplegate and northeastern outer parish of St Leonard Shoreditch. Plague then spread across the wider suburbs in the six to eight weeks following and to the intramural parishes within three months. This was suggestive, they argued, of plague endemic rather than an 'exotic import' with each epidemic event.[13] Both arguments will be kept in mind in the discussion that follows, but the analysis will be largely kept free of epidemiology, and rather aim to provide the context in which parishes responded to plague as a long-term problem.

4.2 Plague mortality, 1603-25

Historians have identified several years in the first half of the sixteenth century when plague was likely active at epidemic levels in London.[14] The epidemic in 1563 was an important turning point, as this was the last epidemic event to carry greater collective mortality within the walls than without.[15] The localised scale and impact of plague in individual parishes beyond the walls require acknowledgement. Many extramural parishes experienced a far greater number of total burials, which tends to be overlooked in the narrative. Burials were elevated 5.5 times above 'normal' levels in St Botolph Bishopsgate in 1563. This was the result of 427 burial events. St Botolph Aldgate accommodated 629 burials in 1563, an elevation 4.9 times the normal level of burials.[16] And whilst J. F. D. Shrewsbury referred to 'sporadic' plague deaths in London after 1569 and the more general 'smouldering' of plague between the years 1576 to 1580, it was the extramural parishes that shouldered the greater burden in and around those four years.[17] This was also the case in the minor and major epidemics in 1592 and 1593.[18]

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[13] Cummins et al, 'Living Standards', 23-24.

[14] See Slack, *Impact of Plague*, 147; Shrewsbury, *Bubonic Plague,* 169-170.

[15] Slack, *Impact of Plague*, 151, 154, 158, 162.

[16] A. W. Cornelius Hallen (ed.), *The Registers of St Botolph Bishopsgate, London* (Edinburgh: printed by T. and A. Constable, 1889-1895), 255-262; T. R. Forbes, *Chronicle from Aldgate: Life and Death in Shakespeare's London* (Newhaven and London: Yale University Press, 1971), 60.

[17] Shrewsbury, *Bubonic Plague*, 203-206, 212-217.

[18] Slack, *Impact of Plague*, 151, 154, 158, 162.

The major epidemic in 1603 was another important moment in the topographical shift of plague to the suburbs. John Graunt calculated 82% (30,561) of the 37,294 total burials from March to December in 1603 being of plague, and concluded that year to have been the 'greatest *Plague-Year* of this age'.[19] A general Bill of Mortality that spans the period 14 July to 8 September 1603 nuances the geographical distribution of plague burials in the lead up to the epidemic's peak. A total of 21,940 burials, 19,042 of plague, were reported. The intensity of the epidemic experience in the extramural band is reflected in 48% of all plague burials occurring there, with greater intensity to the north-east and east of the walls. The outer and intramural parishes accounted for 29% and 23% of all plague burials, respectively. The former shows the increasing importance of the outer parishes to the mortality experience of metropolitan London.[20]

Paul Slack calculated a CMR of 6.7 for the epidemic in 1603. Plague deaths comprised 79% of all burial events and claimed the lives of close to 23% of a total population of 141,000. This excluded Westminster.[21] Cummins et al, in turn, presented elevations in mortality of 6.2, 6.4 and 7.1 times above normal levels for the intramural, extramural and outer parishes. They showed that the north-eastern and eastern parishes beyond the walls, where plague emerged at the end of June, was the hardest hit with elevations over seven times normal levels. The epidemic peaked in the first week of September and generally conformed to the characteristic seasonal pattern of the disease, although a reasonably sustained tail into the late autumn likely extended the disruption and hardship.[22] Their map of enhanced mortality reflects the graduating scale of severity in the extramural and outer parishes running east to west. The larger intramural parishes in the east of the city experienced more severe elevations than those to the west.[23]

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[19] John Graunt, *Natural and Political Observations, Mentioned in a Following Index, and Made Upon the Bills of Mortality,* 33 - http://name.umdl.umich.edu/A41827.0001.001 [accessed 5 July 2019]

[20] GL Worshipful Company of Parish Clerks., *A Generall Bill for 8 weeks…from 14. July, 1603 to the 8. day of September 1603* (London: Printed by William Stansby, 1625).

[21] Slack, *Impact of Plague*, 151, 155.

[22] Cummins et al, 'Living Standards', 16-17, 23.

[23] Cummins et al, 'Living Standards', 23.

Table 4.1 shows the elevations in burials above normal levels in the sample parishes in the epidemics between 1600 and 1650. The intramural parish sample, which is included for comparative insight, are drawn from those that supported either St Bride Fleet Street or St Botolph Aldgate by way of rates-in-aid through the seventeenth century.[24] The intensity and severity in the north-east suburban parishes stand out in 1603, as does the relative unity in elevations in the western suburbs. Figure 4.2. shows the variation in the seasonal tempo of burials in the sample parishes, which includes the earlier rise and peak of the epidemic in the extramural parishes to the north-east. When burials began to rise, they rose very rapidly to a localised epidemic peak. Except for St Martin in the Fields, and to a degree St Bride Fleet Street, this observation can be extended to the decline of the epidemic, which was quite rapid once the peak had passed.

Parish	Elevation in burials 1603	Elevation in burials 1625	Elevation in burials 1636
St Botolph Aldgate	8.1	6.8	3.8
St Botolph Bishopsgate	9.5	9.9	4.5
St Bride Fleet Street	6.8	5.4	1.4
St Andrew Holborn	6.8	4.9	2.8
St Martin in the Fields	6.2	4.3	1.7
St Olave Hart Street	7.6	6.5	1.7
St Vedast Foster Lane	5.4	4.9	1.9
St Stephen Walbrook	4.4	2.9	-
St Helen Bishopsgate	6.3	6.4	1.5

Table 4.1. Elevation in burials above normal levels in London parishes in epidemic plague years.
Sources: LMA P69/BOT2/A/015/MS09222/001; P69/BOT2/A/015/MS09222/002; P69/BOT4/A/001/MS04515/001; P69/BOT4/A/001/MS04515/002; P69/BRI/A/004/MS06538; P82/AND/A/010/MS06673/001; P82/AND/A/010/MS06673/002; P82/AND/A/010/MS06673/003; Kitto, *A Register of Baptisms, Marriages and Burials*; WAC STG/PR/5/7; W. B. Bannerman, *The Registers of St Olave Hart Street London, 1563-1700* (London: Harleian Society, 1916); B. Bannerman & W. B. Bannerman, *The Registers of St Stephen's Walbrook and of St Benet Sherehog, London* (London: Harleian Society, 1919); W. A. Littledale, *The Resigters of St Vedast Foster Lane and of St Michael le Quern, London* (London: The Harleian Society, 1902); W. B. Bannerman, *The Registers of St Helen's Bishopsgate, London* (London: Harleian Society, 1904).

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[24] Ronald Herlan, 'Poor Relief in London During the English Revolution', *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (1979), 30-51 - for discussion of rates-in-aid.
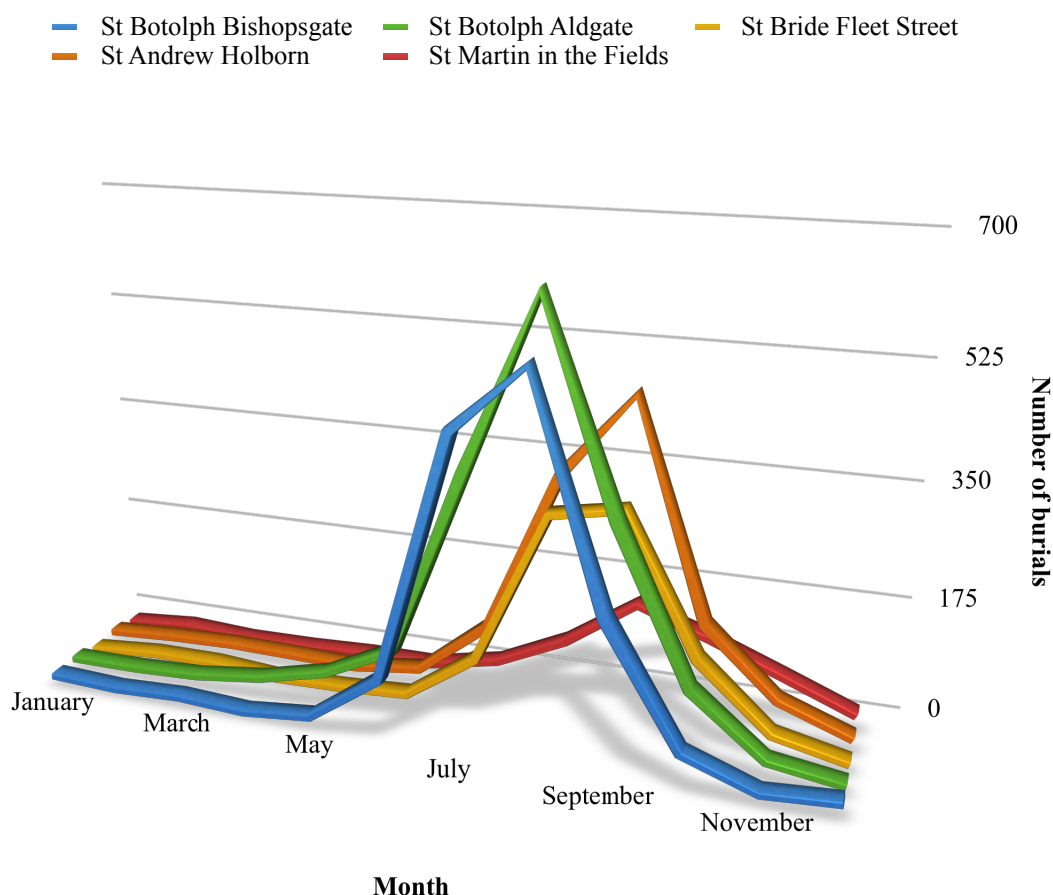
Figure 4.2. Burials by month in suburban London parishes, 1603.
Sources: LMA P69/BOT4/A/001/MS04515/001; P69/BOT2/A/015/MS09222/001; P69/BRI/A/004/
MS06538; P82/AND/A/010/MS06673/001; Kitto, *A Register of Baptisms, Marriages and Burials*.

A persistent period of endemic plague took hold in London's suburbs between 1604 and

1611. John Graunt observed that in some of those years 'died above 4000, in others above

2000, and in none less then 600'.[25] F. P. Wilson referred to reports of plague as a series of

'false alarms' in this period.[26] Paul Slack suggested that plague was responsible for around

10% of recorded burials every year.[27] Table 4.2 shows the number of plague burials in

metropolitan London in this run of endemic plague years. In the more severe endemic years,

plague might account for anywhere between a quarter to a third of all burials. Table 4.3

shows the elevations in burials above normal levels in the sample parishes in the endemic

plague years between 1606 and 1610. As commented above, 'normal levels' of burials are

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[25] Graunt, *Natural and Political Observations,* 33.

[26] F. P. Wilson, *The Plague in Shakespeare's London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1927),
118-122.

[27] Slack, *Impact of Plague,* 145.

calculated on the average total annual burials in the five years before an epidemic event.

'Excess burials' were those taken above the five year average in any given year.

Endemic plague year	Plague burials	Total burials	Plague as % of total burials
1604	896	5,219	17%
1605	444	6,392	7%
1606	2,124	7,920	26%
1607	2,352	8,022	29%
1608	2,262	9,020	25%
1609	4,240	11,785	36%
1610	1,803	9,289	19%
1611	627	7,343	8%

Table 4.2. Plague burials in metropolitan London, 1604-1611.
Source: Roger Finlay, *Population and Metropolis*,156-157. Finlay's data is drawn from John Graunt's calculations and checks by Hull in 1899 and Sutherland in 1972.

Parish	Elevation in burials 1606	Elevation in burials 1607	Elevation in burials 1608	Elevation in burials 1609	Elevation in burials 1610
St Botolph Aldgate	1.6	1.5	1.9	2	1.8
St Botolph Bishopsgate	1.6	1.2	2.4	2.8	1.9
St Bride Fleet Street	-	1.5	1.5	2.2	1.6
St Andrew Holborn	2	1.6	1.6	2.8	1.9
St Martin in the Fields	1.5	1.5	1.6	2.4	1.5
St Olave Hart Street	1.3	1.2	1	2.6	-
St Vedast Foster Lane	-	1.3	-	1.6	-
St Stephen Walbrook	-	-	1.2	1.3	-
St Helen Bishopsgate	1.1	-	1.4	1.5	1.3

Table 4.3. Elevation in burials above normal levels in London parishes in endemic plague years, 1606-1610.
Sources: LMA P69/BOT2/A/015/MS09222/001; P69/BOT4/A/001/MS04515/001; P69/BRI/A/004/ MS06538; P82/AND/A/010/MS06673/001; Kitto, *A Register of Baptisms, Marriages and Burials*; Bannerman, S*t Olave Hart Street*, Littledale, *St Vedast Foster Lane*, Bannerman, *St Stephen's Walbrook*, Bannerman, *St Helen's Bishopsgate*.

The unabated growth of the suburbs, and social problems therein, rendered plague a largely suburban problem and presented a significant cumulative impact in this period (table 4.3). There were years in which an intramural parish might experience no elevation in burials, or any elevation might be driven by a small number of burials. For example, whilst mortality was 1.4 times above normal levels in St Vedast Foster Lane in 1608, this was derived from just twelve excess burials. The same elevation in St Bride Fleet Street and St Andrew Holborn was the result of 94 and 104 excess burials, respectively.[28] A comparatively minor increase in the number of burials could place pressure on the limited burial space available to many intramural parishes but accommodation of the dead was just one problem parishes managed in a plague year.

Plague was scattered and severe across the suburban parishes in 1607 and 1610 and reached minor epidemic levels in many parishes in 1609. Other years display greater variation in geographical severity beyond the walls, even between neighbouring parishes. Whilst the northeastern extramural parishes experienced a similarly middling severity in 1606, St Bride Fleet Street's increase in burials was close to the level of a minor epidemic. However, the neighbouring parish of St Andrew Holborn experienced no elevation in burials. The extramural parishes though were large enough for localised outbreaks.

Plague reached minor epidemic levels in St Botolph Aldgate and St Botolph Bishopsgate in 1608, 1609 and 1610. This provides context to the vestry of Aldgate seeking additional burial ground in 1611.[29] St Bride's experienced three quite severe years and a minor reprieve of sorts in 1607 and 1608, which may have buffered the impact in 1609 and 1610. The more general cumulative aspect of accommodating burials in the period placed pressure on the parish's existing burial space. The vestry established a new burial ground by way of a gift from the Earl of Dorset in 1610.[30] St Andrew Holborn's experience, outside of 1609, was less severe than other extramural parishes and this might reflect its peripheral location and the

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[28] Vanessa Harding, 'Burial of the Plague dead in Early Modern London', in J. A. I. Champion (ed.), *Epidemic Disease in London* (Centre for Metropolitan History Working Papers Series, No. 1, 1993), 53-66.

[29] LMA P69/BOT2/B/001/MS09236, ff.37.

[30] LMA P69/BRI/D/006/MS06617, J1 No10.

undeveloped northern part of the parish (see the discussion below of the spatial patterns of plague in Holborn). The same can be said for St Martin in the Fields. Plague in this period was focused on the extramural parishes more immediate to the city walls, which had grown in the late sixteenth-century and were experiencing accelerated population growth in the first decade of the new century (figure 2.1, p.42).

Figure 4.3-4.6 shows the seasonal distribution of burials in the more severe endemic plague years between 1604 and 1611. There might be variation between parishes in the tempo of burials in an endemic year. This is particularly evident in 1607 (figure 4.4) when the timing of the point at which burials began to rise and the local endemic peak varied in each sample parish. As commented above, suburban parishes were large enough to experience a localised outbreak of plague in an endemic year, and one that might take on a different shape than that of an immediate neighbour. This is the case with St Bride Fleet Street and St Andrew Holborn in 1606 (figure 4.3). The inverse could also be true, in that neighbouring parishes might experience a similar severity and seasonal tempo, as is shown in the experience of St Botolph Aldgate and St Botolph Bishopsgate in 1608 (figure 4.5).

Figure 4.3 Burials by month in suburban London parishes, 1606.
Sources: parish registers. See Figure 4.2 for full references.

Figure 4.4 Burials by month in suburban London parishes, 1607.
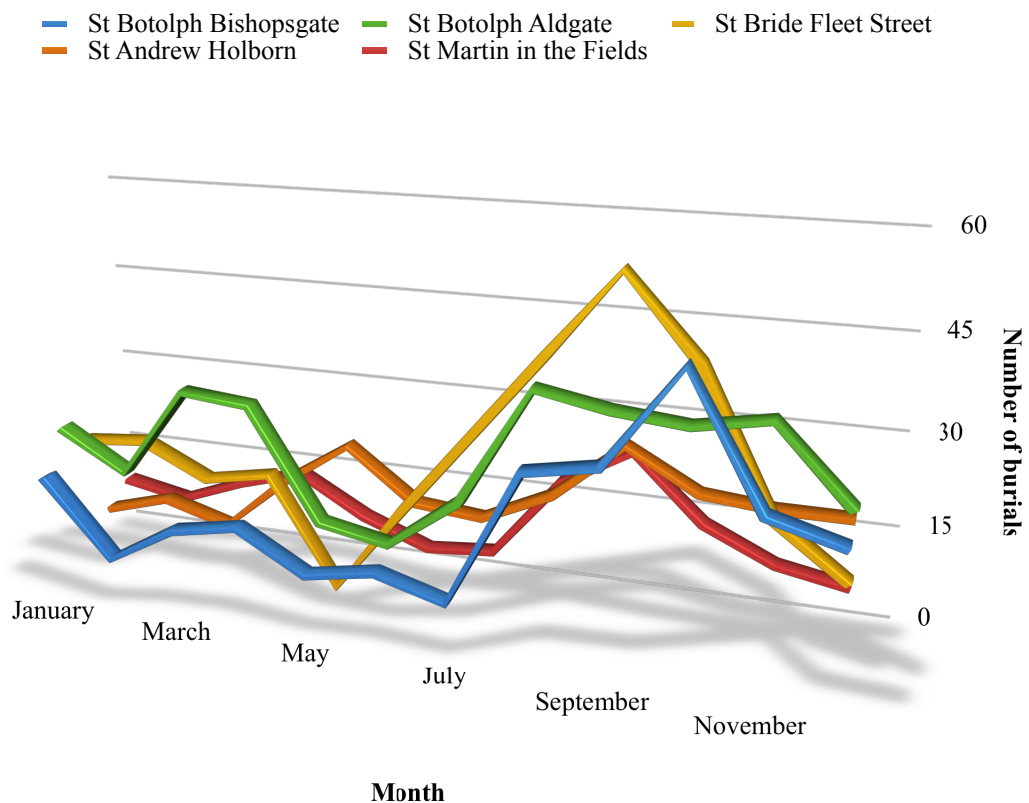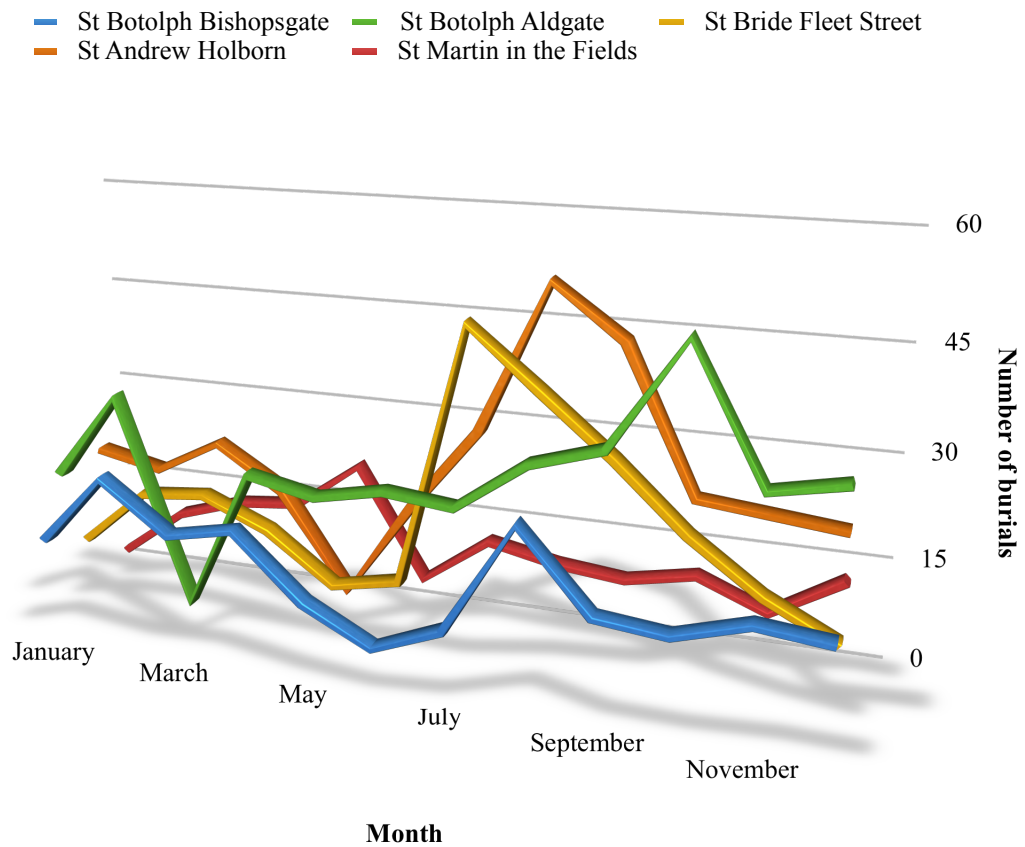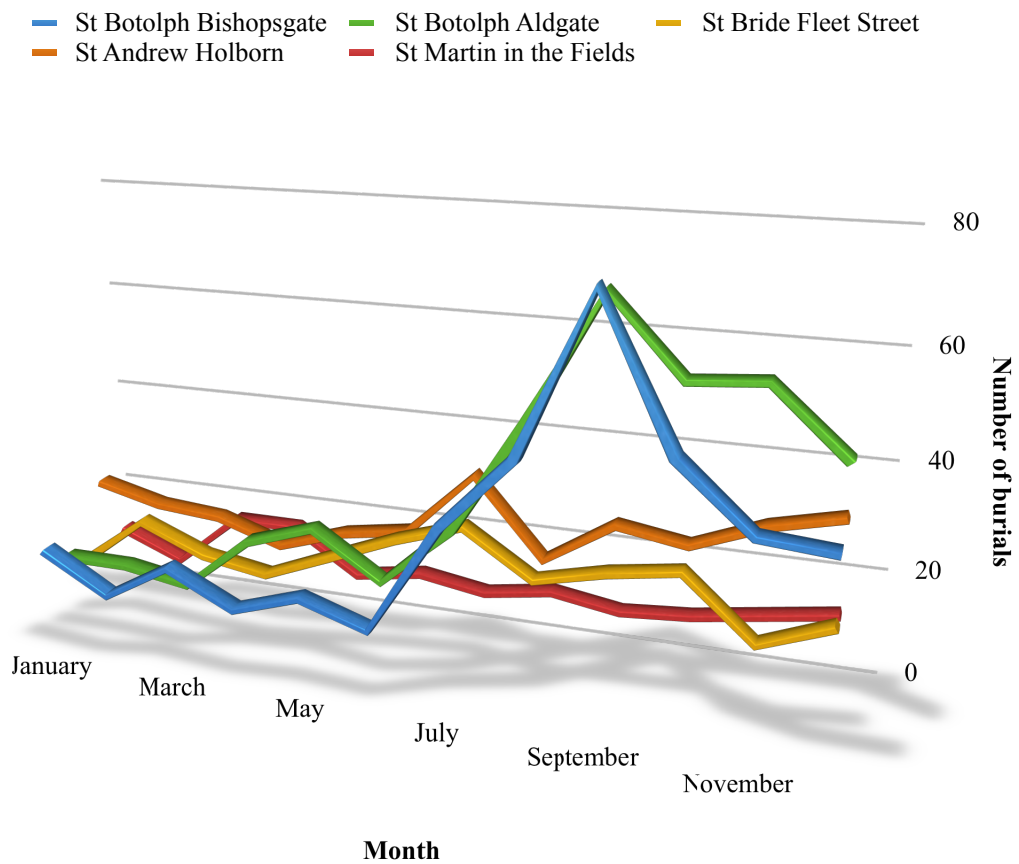**Sources:** parish registers. See Figure 4.2 for full references.

Figure 4.5 Burials by month in suburban London parishes, 1608.
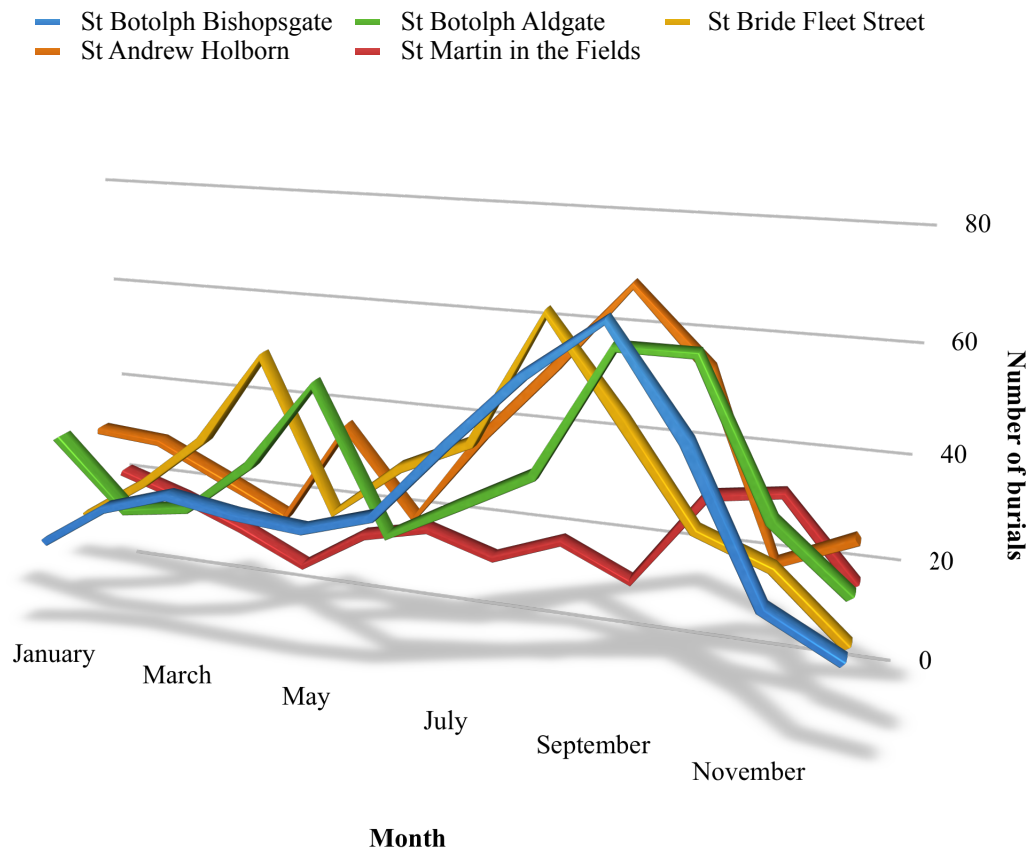**Sources:** parish registers. See Figure 4.2 for full references.

Figure 4.6 Burials by month in suburban London parishes, 1609.
Sources: parish registers. See Figure 4.2 for full references.

The seasonal distribution of burials shows the potential for other disease vectors to be active

alongside plague, or that plague persisted outside the summer and autumn. This is evident in

the rapid rise and decline of burials in St Botolph Aldgate, St Bride Fleet Street and St

Andrew Holborn in the spring in 1609 (figure 4.6). In an extended period of endemic plague,

and given the myriad pool of disease and complaints afflicting early modern Londoners, it

should not be viewed as unusual that another vector might be active in any given year, nor

should the cumulative impact of plague be downplayed.[31] This was particularly marked in

Aldgate, where summer elevations where experienced in each of the years running

1606-1609 (figure 4.4-4.6). This is relevant when set against population growth and social

problems in the extramural parishes. This most certainly helped shaped the pejorative and

pessimistic rhetoric about the suburbs in the literary and civic sources.

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[31] Vanessa Harding, 'Housing and Health in Early Modern London', in V. Berridge and M. Gorsky, (eds.), *Environment, Health and History* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 31-32.

The period of endemic plague between 1604-11 was followed by a period relatively free of plague through to the 1625 epidemic. Vanessa Harding queried whether plague was absent or there was a reluctance to recognise it by authorities.[32] John Graunt reported just 193 plague burials in the years running 1613-1624.[33] Cummins et al identified autumnal peaks in burials in the extramural and outer parishes in 1624, consistent, they suggested, with 'fairly substantial mortality from plague or another disease with a tendency for warmer weather.[34] The intramural, extramural and nine outer parishes buried 3,386, 5,924 and 2,900 each in 1624, and just eleven plague burials were reported.[35] Elevations in burials above normal levels are evident in St Giles Cripplegate (1.4) and St Botolph Bishopsgate (1.8), which was driven by a rise in burials through the late summer and early autumn.[36] Cummins et al identified plague usually emerging in Cripplegate in an epidemic year, and on that basis, and if plague was responsible for the elevation in burials, the epidemic in 1625 possibly had its origins in the previous summer.

Although total mortality exceeded that in 1603, John Graunt concluded the epidemic in 1625, in relative terms, to be only as 'great a *Plague-year* as that of 1603' and 'no greater'.[37] A Bill of Mortality broadsheet reports 68% (35,417) of 51,758 total burial events being of plague in 1625. The intramural and outer-parish divisions each accounted for 26% of total plague burials and the extramural parishes 48%.[38] Whilst the population was growing and total mortality was increasing from epidemic to epidemic, it is interesting to note that at this stage, the proportional distribution of epidemic mortality had not shifted in thirty years from that in 1593.[39]

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[32] Harding, 'Plague in Early Modern London', 49.

[33] Graunt, *Natural and Political Observations,* 64-72.

[34] Cummins et al, 'Living Standards, 27.

[35] Birch, *A Collection of the Yearly Bills* - 1624

[36] W. Denton, *Records of St Giles Cripplegate* (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1883), 200; A. W. Cornelius Hallen (ed.), *The Registers of St Botolph Bishopsgate, London Vol. 1* (Edinburgh: printed by T. and A. Constable, 1889-1895), 395-412.

[37] Graunt, *Natural and Political Observations,* 64-72.

[38] Birch, *A Collection of the Yearly Bills* - 1625.

[39] Birch, *A Collection of the Yearly Bills* - 1593.

Paul Slack presented a Crisis Mortality Ratio of around six and calculated 20.1% of a population of some 206,000 dying, 2% less than the epidemic in 1603. Slack showed geographical variation in the severity of plague in 1625, with a CMR of 5.8-6.6 in the extramural parishes to the north, north-east and east, against ratios of just 4.1 and 3.7 for the intramural and Westminster parishes.[40] Neil Cummins et al presented elevations in mortality of 5.5, 5.6 and 4.2 for the intramural, extramural and outer parishes. Their map of enhanced mortality emphasised that the greater severity of plague was in the eastern suburbs and across the Thames in Southwark.[41]
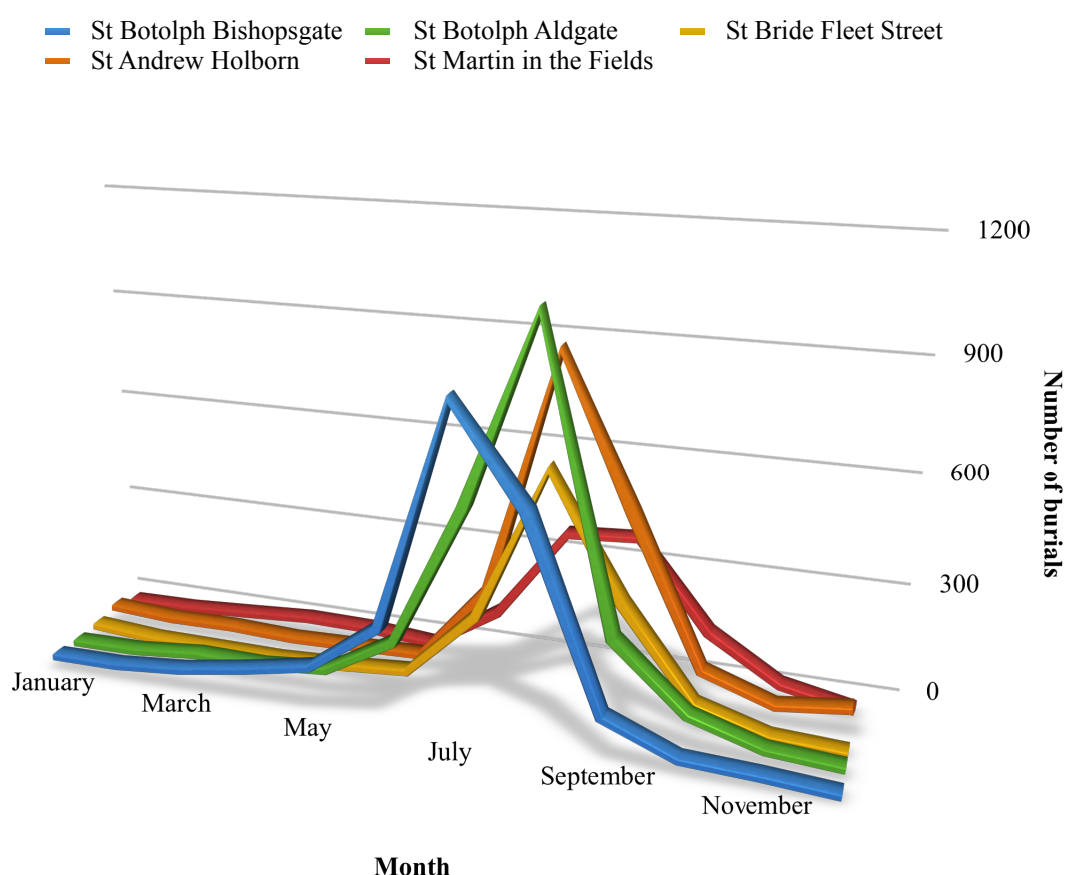
Figure 4.7 Burials by month in suburban London parishes, 1625.
Sources: LMA P69/BOT4/A/001/MS04515/001; P69/BOT2/A/015/MS09222/001; P69/BOT2/A/015/MS09222/002; P69/BRI/A/004/MS06538; P82/AND/A/010/MS06673/002; Kitto, *A Register of Baptisms, Marriages, and Burials*.

The westerly intramural parishes were not as severely impacted as the larger intramural parishes to the east of the city in 1625 (table 4.1). The same can be said for the westerly extramural parishes, whilst to the north-east, the severity of the epidemic stands out,

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[40] Slack, *Impact of Plague*, 151, 162.

[41] Cummins et al, 'Living Standards', 15.

particularly in St Botolph Bishopsgate. Figure 4.7 shows the very rapid rise to the epidemic

peak from June in Bishopsgate. This pattern is mirrored in St Andrew Holborn but from July.

Both the total number of burials and rapid rise to the peak in Holborn give context to the

vestry's decision to open new and temporary ground for burial in 1625, a point the discussion

will return to in Chapter 6.[42] Aldgate's elevation was below that in 1603, but the rise in

burials through June to August was relentless in its build to the local epidemic peak (figure

4.7). Except in St Martin in the Fields, much the same as in 1603, once burials began to rise,

they increased rapidly to the local epidemic peak. Burials declined at a faster rate in 1625.

4.3. Plague mortality, 1630-1648

Reports arrived at the Privy Council in early March 1630 that there were houses infected

with plague in St Giles in the Fields, Shoreditch and Whitechapel, and 'other places near the

City'.[43] Whilst the early stages of the visitation engendered anxiety in Whitehall, the reality

was an unremarkable plague year for most London parishes, particularly those within the

walls and in the western suburbs. The government of Charles I may have been sensitive to

plague due to both the experience of the 1625 epidemic and the increasing preoccupation

with prohibiting building in the suburbs. Charles Creighton referred to plague in 1630 as a

'small affair' and pointed to baptisms exceeding burials as evidence of London's health.[44]

Just 12.5% (1,317) of the reported 10,554 burials in 1630 were of plague.[45] Vanessa Harding

stated that 'most' of the plague deaths occurred in the suburbs to the east, citing plague

burials in St Botolph Aldgate and St Mary Whitechapel as evidence.[46]

Figure 4.8 shows a minor spring elevation in St Martin in the Fields in 1630. The parish

register records two cases of plague in April and May and seven in July before a decline

through to October when ten plague burials occurred. Just 28 plague burials from 459 burial

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[42] LMA P82/AND/B/001/MS04251/001, ff.7.

[43] W. H. Overall and H. C. Overall, *Analytical Index to the Series of Records Known as the Remembrancia 1579-1664* (London: E. G. Francis, 1878), II.15, 64.

[44] Creighton, *Epidemics in Britain,* 527.

[45] Birch, *A Collection of the Yearly Bills* - 1630.

[46] Harding, 'Plague in London', 50.

events were recorded for the year.[47] Despite minor plague incidence, quarantine and associated plague regulations were fully implemented in 1630. The parish had to use parish stocks to fund the support of the poor visited as the 'visited houses were exhibited much exceedinge the said Taxac[i]on'.[48] This illustrates the impact that even very minor levels of plague could have in a suburban parish. St Andrew Holborn also displays a minor spring elevation in burials. Of the total 351 burials marked in the Holborn register in 1630, just 7% (23) were recorded as plague. Five of the eleven burials in July were drawn from the Tarbucke household in Chancery Lane. This location and Fetter Lane, which were both in the built-up south of the parish, was the focus of plague deaths in St Andrew Holborn in 1630.[49]
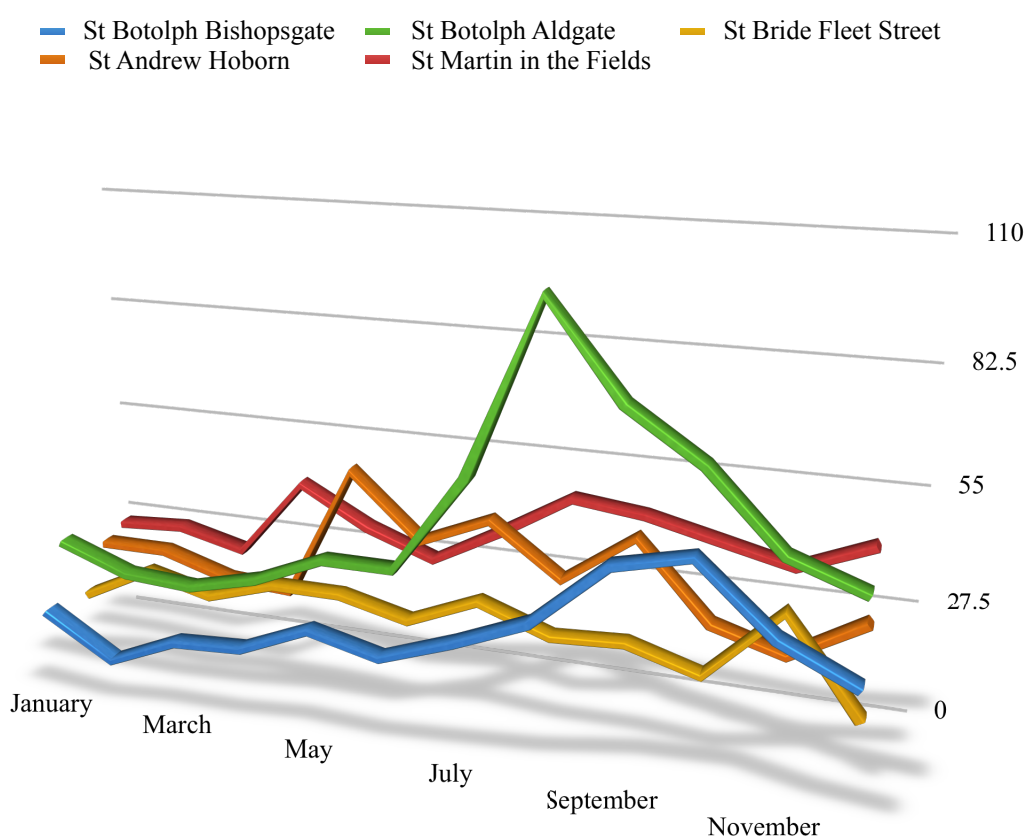
Figure 4.8 Burials by month in suburban London parishes, 1630.
Sources: LMA P69/BOT4/A/001/MS04515/002; P69/BOT2/A/015/MS09222/002; P69/BRI/A/004/ MS06538; P82/AND/A/010/MS06673/002; Kitto, *A Register of Baptisms, Marriages, and Burials*.

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[47] J. V. Kitto, *A Register of Baptisms, Marriages, and Burials in the Parish of St. Martin-in-the-Fields: in the County of Middlesex* (London: Harleian Society, 1898-1936), 250-257.

[48] WAC F3, ff.118v.

[49] LMA P69/AND2/A/010/MS06673/002, ff.127-143v.

The description of St Martin's makes the point that even minor plague years cannot be dismissed as insignificant. It is important to acknowledge the localised impact that might be experienced in a suburban parish. This is also reflected in St Botolph Aldgate, where there was a reasonably fast rise to the local endemic peak in August and slow decline in burials through to December (figure 4.8). The churchwardens' accounts show a moderate level of plague spending, with the plague regulations fully implemented. For example, Thomas Crapper was paid £1. 19s 3d 'for Wardinge this visitation time' and seven other warders were likewise paid for service rendered. The accounts show parish relief directed to 28 quarantined households, of which a number received sustained support, including 'a house in Broadgate at Severall times, shut up' given £4 5s 6d.[50] The accounts only include quarantined houses that were directly supported by the parish, so the number shut up would probably be higher.

Just 3% (274) of 8,562 total burial events were reported as plague in the wider metropolitan area in 1631.[51] Whilst very minor elevations are evident in the summer months for some parishes, the plague deaths are best explained as lingering plague incidence from the previous year. With just eight plague burials in 1632 and one in 1634, the four years leading up to the 1636 epidemic were then relatively free of plague.[52]

The Privy Council wrote to Guildhall in early April 1636 'upon the apprehended increase of plague'. They directed the Mayor and Aldermen to meet the Justices of the Peace in Middlesex, Surrey, and Westminster 'once or twice a week', and advise them as to the 'best courses taken upon former like occasions' for the 'best means to be now taken'.[53] The reference indicates the concern aroused by the emergence of plague beyond the walls and the slow response of Guildhall, to an epidemic in which 44.5% (10,400) of 23,359 total burial events were reported as plague.[54] Vanessa Harding drew attention to the relatively late start of the epidemic and the persistence of plague into the early winter months.[55]

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[50] LMA P69/BOT2/B/031/MS09237, ff.55v-57v

[51] Finlay, *Population and Metropolis*, 156.

[52] Finlay, *Population and Metropolis,* 156.

[53] Overall, *Remembrancia*, II.176.

[54] Birch, *A Collection of the Yearly Bills* - 1636.

[55] Harding, 'Plague in London', 50.

Paul Slack presented a relative CMR of 2.25 and calculated that 7.5% of a population of 313,000 dyed in 1636.[56] Cummins et al presented an elevation in mortality 2.6 above normal levels for the wider metropolitan area and only a slight difference between the city and extramural parishes, the former 2.4 and the latter 2.8. The outer parishes marginally exceeded those divisions at 3.5.[57] The intramural parishes accounted for 11.5% (1,200) of total plague burials. Twelve intramural parishes reported no plague burials and 49 fewer than ten. The nine outer parishes accounted for 31% (3,244) of all plague burials and the extramural parishes 57% (5,956). This was a 10% increase from 1603 and 1625 in the extramural parishes. The eastern suburbs were harder hit than the west in 1636.[58]
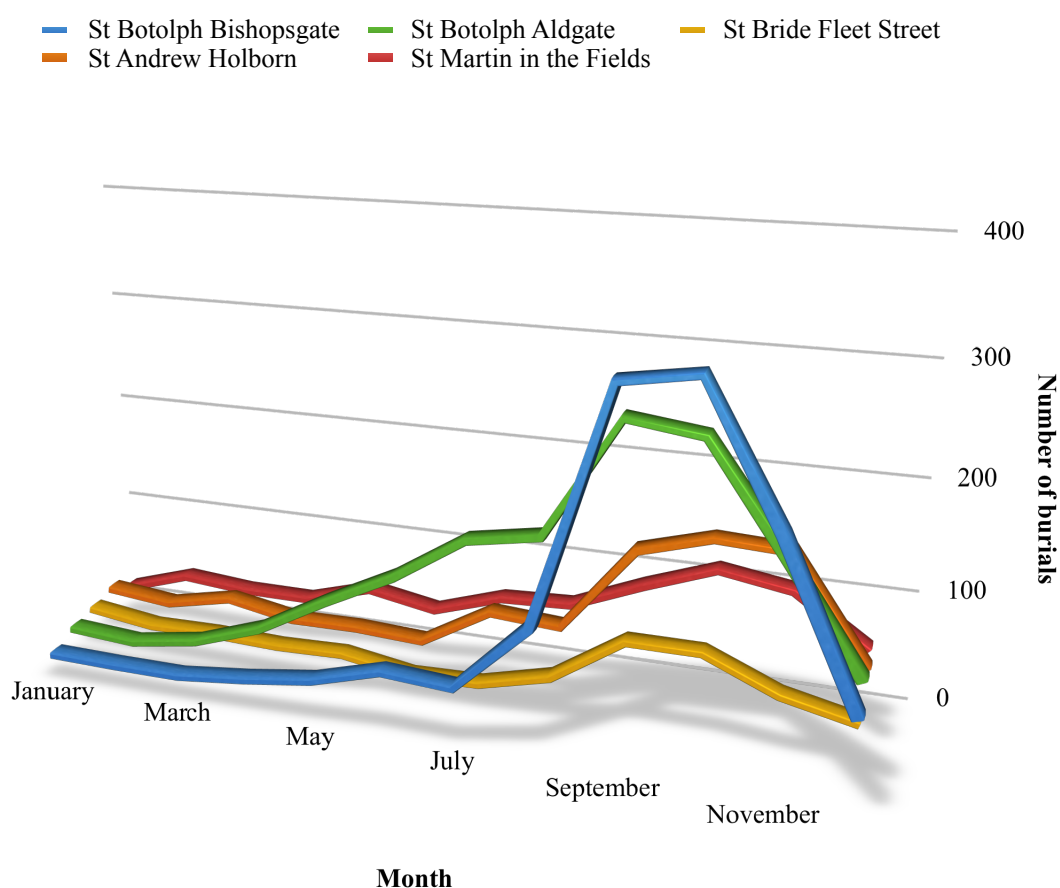

Figure 4.9. Burials by month in suburban London parishes, 1636.
Sources: P69/BOT4/A/001/MS04515/002; P69/BOT2/A/015/MS09222/002; P69/BRI/A/004/MS06538; P82/AND/A/010/MS06673/002; WAC STG/PR/5/7.

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[56] Slack, *Impact of Plague*, 151.

[57] Cummins et al, 'Living Standards, 16.

[58] Birch, *A Collection of the Yearly Bills* - 1636.

The registers support the impression that mortality was more severe in the eastern suburbs in 1636 (table 4.1). The elevations there exceeded that for the wider metropolitan area, and by almost two times in St Botolph Bishopsgate, which meshes with that parish hit harder than most in epidemic events. Bishopsgate, St Andrew Holborn and St Bride Fleet Street show a similar timing and tempo in the rise and decline of burials through their local epidemic peak in the summer and autumn (figure 4.9). The clerk in Holborn marked 46% (425) of 929 total burials as plague in the register, of which 354 plague burials were concentrated between September to December. This accounted for 65% of all burials (541) in that time .[59] The tail of the visitation persisted well into 1637 in Holborn, as it did in the other sample parishes (figure 4.10). St Botolph Aldgate shows variation to the other parishes in their spring increase in burials in 1636 and the sustained peak and gradual decline through summer and autumn.
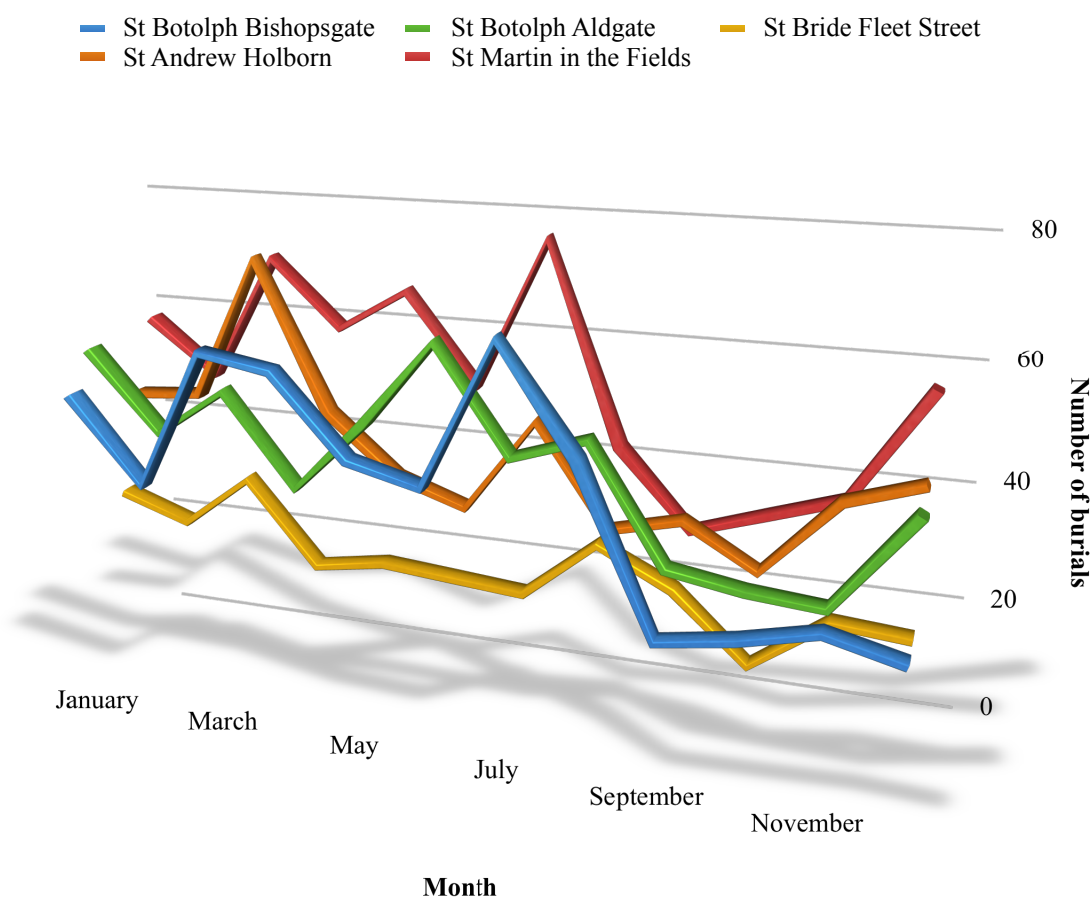

Figure 4.10. Burials by month in suburban London parishes, 1637.
Sources: parish registers. See Figure 4.9 for full references.

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[59] LMA P69/AND2/A/010/MS06673/002, ff.231-264v.

Whilst population growth had accelerated in St Martin in the Fields in the late 1620s, the epidemic's slow start resulted in a visitation of lesser intensity than the other sample parishes. That said, of the 100 burials through September, 35 were of plague, which reflects the localised intensity each parish might endure in a narrow temporal period.[60] St Martin's was maintaining the quarantine of 56 households and 258 people in the last week of September, of which 77% (200) were supported by the parish. Six nurses, seventeen doorkeepers, three bearers and three searchers were deployed in the parish at that time, and the cost in implementing quarantine in that particular week was £32. 11s 8d.[61] The discussion in Chapters 5 and 6 will demonstrate the significant local impact of plague in the parish in 1636 and 1637.

Endemic plague year	Plague burials	Total burials	Plague as % of total burials
1637	3,082	11,723	26%
1638	363	13,624	2.6%
1639	314	9,862	3%
1640	1,450	12,771	11%
1641	3,067	14,834	21%
1642	1.274	13,273	9.6%
1643	996	13,212	7.5%
1644	1,492	10,933	13.6%
1645	1,871	11,479	16%
1646	2,365	12,780	18.5%
1647	3,597	14,059	25.5%
1648	611	9,890	6.2%

Table 4.4. Plague burials and total burials in metropolitan London, 1637-48.
Sources: Roger Finlay, *Population and Metropolis*,156-157. Finlay's data is drawn from John Graunt's calculations and checks by Hull in 1899 and Sutherland in 1972.

The persistence of plague at heightened levels between 1637 and 1648 was largely a suburban phenomenon (table 4.4 and table 4.5). Vanessa Harding calculated that some 15,000 people dyed of plague across nine years of 'minor to medium' plague incidence through the

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[60] Kitto, *A Register of Baptisms, Marriages and Burials*, 305-314.

[61] WAC F4516, ff.5v-6.

1640s. Harding emphasised the cumulative impact and that Londoners were most certainly alert to the 'lurking presence'.[62] This was situated against the disruption of the civil wars after 1642. A total of 18,798 plague burials were reported in the Bills of Mortality from 1637-1648.[63] The marking of plague in some burial registers and evidence of plague activity in parish records, make clear the contribution of plague to the wider mortality experience of London's suburbs.[64]

Parish	1637	1640	1641	1642	1643	1644	1645	1646	1647
St Botolph Aldgate	1.3	1.8	1.3	1.3	1.6	1.2	1.4	2.1	1.2
St Botolph Bishopsgate	1.8	1.4	2.2	1.6	1.7	1.3	2.1	2.2	-
St Bride Fleet Street	1.3	1.7	2.9	1.8	1.4	1.5	1.5	1.7	2.1
St Andrew Holborn	1.6	1.4	1.7	-	1.2	1.4	-	1.2	1.5
St Martin in the Fields	1.3	1.6	1.8	1.3	1.4	-	1.1	1.3	2.3
St Olave Hart Street	1.3	1.6	1.7	-	1.4	1.5	1.4	-	1.3
St Vedast Foster Lane	-	-	1.7	1	1.3	-	1.3	-	1.3
St Stephen Walbrook	1.5	1.9	1.5	2.1	1.4	-	1.2	1.2	1
St Helen Bishopsgate	1.6	1.6	2	1.5	1.4	1.4	-	1	1.3

Table 4.5. Elevations in burials above normal levels in London parishes in endemic plague years, 1637-48. The years included above are those where plague burials comprised 10% or more of total burials in metropolitan London.
Sources: LMA P69/BOT2/A/015/MS09222/002; P69/BOT4/A/001/MS04515/002; P69/BRI/A/004/ MS06538; P82/AND/A/010/MS06673/002; P82/AND/A/010/MS06673/003; WAC STG/PR/5/7; Bannerman, *St Olave Hart Street London*; Littledale, *St Vedast Foster Lane*; Bannerman, *St Stephen's Walbrook*; Bannerman, *St Helen's Bishopsgate*.

The observation was made above that plague in 1637 comprised the tail of the 1636 epidemic and spring and early summer elevations in burials (figure 4.10). Plague declined to minor levels in 1638 and 1639, with just 363 and 314 plague burials reported in London. Fragmentary weekly Bills of Mortality survive for those two years and show the focus of

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[62] Harding, 'Plague in London', 39, 50.

[63] J. Marshall, *A Statistical View of the Number of Persons Reported to Have Died..1629-1831* (London, printed for J. Marshall, 1832), 66.

[64] Harding, 'Housing and Health', 31-32.

plague in the north-west outer parishes in 1638, and St Sepulchre Newgate and St Giles Cripplegate in 1639. Cases of plague were sporadic further to the east and within the walls.[65] These two years demonstrate the geographical variation and narrow focus of plague in certain parishes in very minor endemic years.

As with the period of endemic plague between 1604-11, there was variation in patterns of plague burials between parishes and geographical areas in different years. Elevations were higher to the east in 1640, 1643 and 1646, and to the west in 1641 and 1647 (table 4.5). Those elevations approached minor epidemic levels in St Botolph Bishopsgate and St Botolph Aldgate in 1646, St Andrew Holborn in 1641 and 1647 and St Martin in the Fields in 1647. The cumulative impact in Bishopsgate in the second half of the decade can be assumed from a similar elevation in 1645 to that in 1646. The disease was a persistent presence in the background mortality of each suburban parish. This wrought a cumulative impact, in both the sense of total burials and the exacerbation of social problems.

Plague in this period was also notably a suburban problem, much the same as it was between 1604-11. The intramural parishes show elevations in some years and not others and a decreasing impact through the decade to 1648. The outer parishes figure more prominently than in the period of endemic plague after 1603, which was an inevitable outcome of accelerated population growth in Westminster and on the more general periphery of the metropolis.

A surviving annual Bill of Mortality for 1641 illustrates this point. The bill records an increase of 5,524 total burials and 1,617 plague burials from 1640, which indicates the heightened awareness to plague at the time. Of the total 18,295 burials that were reported, 17% (3,067) were of plague. Whilst the three standing divisions of the Bills of Mortality was maintained, seven 'last parishes' were added at the bottom of the page. These included parishes on the very periphery of metropolitan London, such as Stepney to the east and Lambeth on the south side of the Thames. The 'last parishes' contributed just 315 of the

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[65] *Diseases and Casualties this weeke, 1638-1639* - EBBO http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:citation:22432767 [accessed 4 August 2020]

3,291 plague burials reported in the bill. This was a minor contribution, but their inclusion being a reflection of their connection to the mortality experience of the expanding metropolitan area.

The intramural parishes carried 21% (643) of all plague burials in London in 1641. At 55% (1,697), the extramural parishes accounted for 55% (1,697) of all plague burials, which was a similar proportion to the epidemic in 1636. In contrast to that epidemic, plague was focused in the western suburbs in 1641. The extramural parishes running west from St Giles Cripplegate, accounted for over half of all plague burials.[66] Tracking the seasonal tempo of burials in 1641 and the wider decade presents similar findings to those in the earlier period of endemic plague.

Figure 4.11. Burials by month in suburban London parishes, 1640.
Sources: parish registers. See Figure 4.9 for full references.

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[66] GL Worshipful Company of Parish Clerks, *A Generall Bill for this Present Yeare, Ending the 16. of December 1641* (Worshipful Company of Parish Clerks, 1641).

Figure 4.12. Burials by month in suburban London parishes, 1641.
Sources: parish registers. See Figure 4.9 for full references.

Figure 4.13. Burials by month in suburban London parishes, 1646.
Sources: LMA P69/BOT4/A/001/MS04515/002; P69/BOT2/A/015/MS09222/002; P69/BRI/A/004/MS06538; P82/AND/A/010/MS06673/003; STG/PR/5/7.

St Botolph Bishopsgate　　　**St Botolph Aldgate**
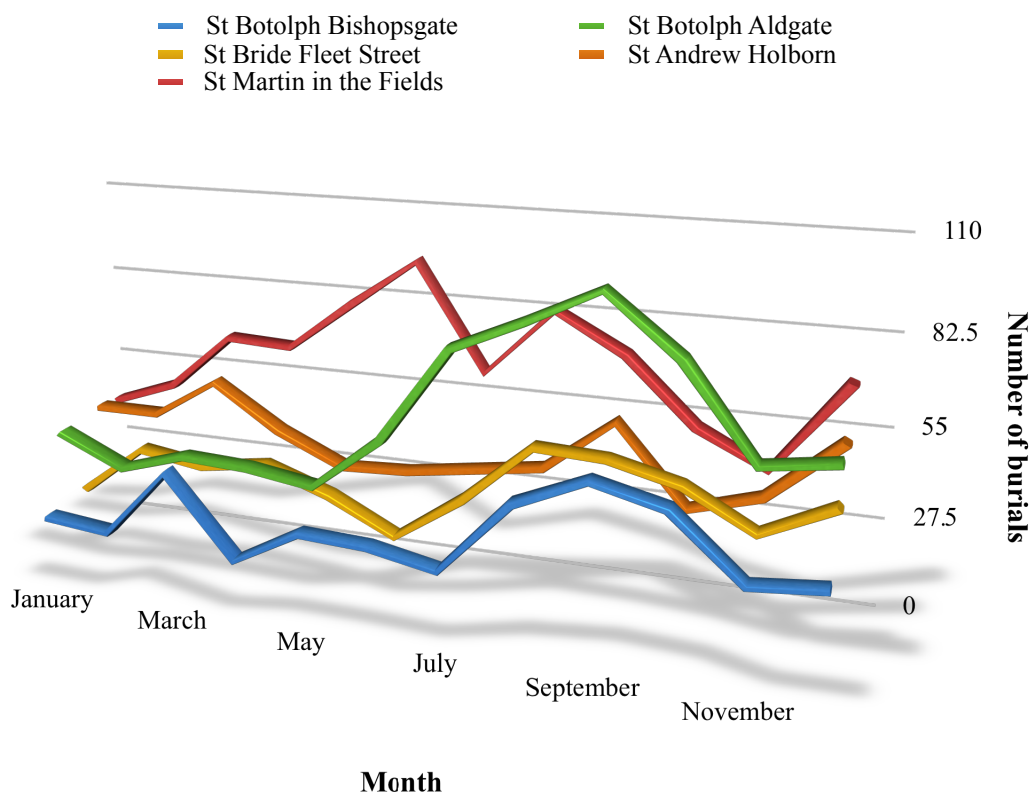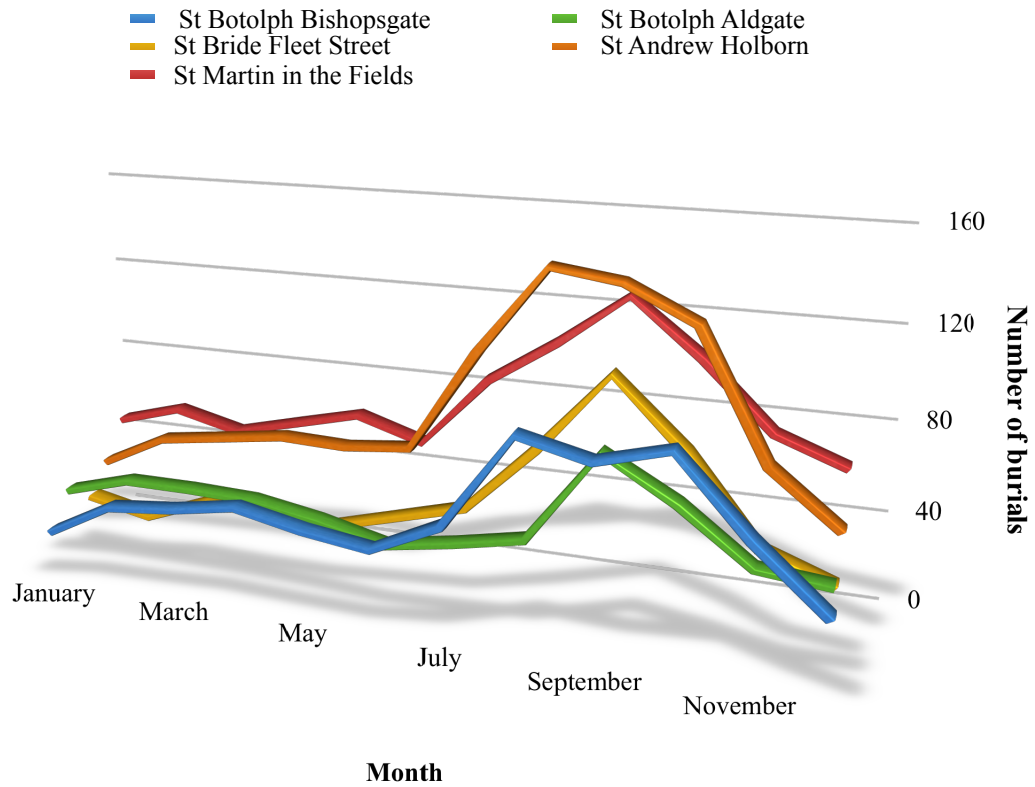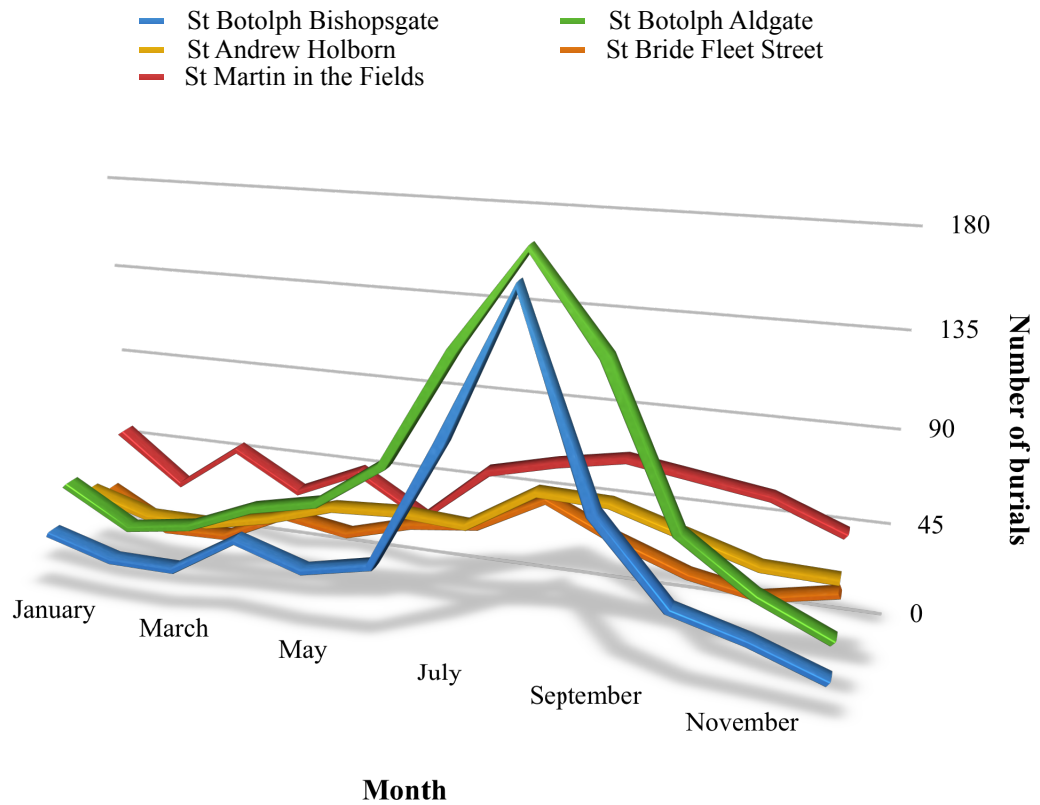**St Bride Fleet Street**　　　　**St Andrew Holborn**
St Martin in the Fields
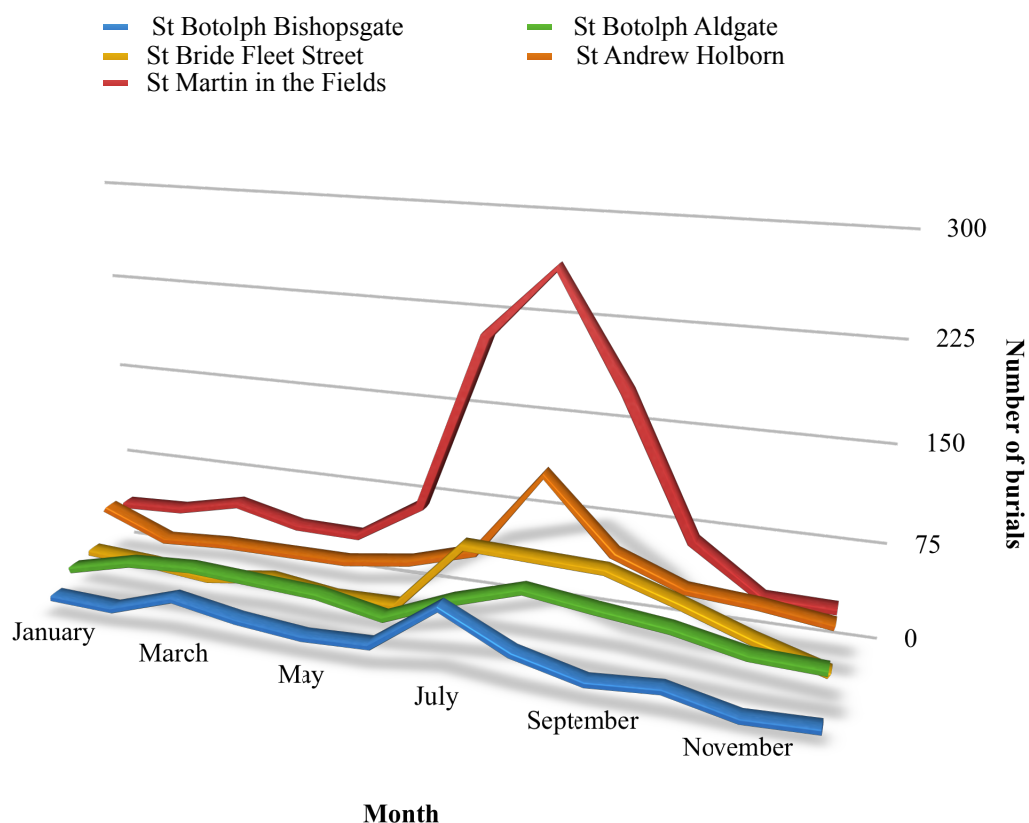
Figure 4.13. Burials by month in suburban London parishes, 1647.
Sources: parish registers. See Figure 4.12 for full references.

Much the same as in 1638 and 1639, the impact of plague might be largely confined to a parish or parishes, as is evident with St Botolph Aldgate in 1640 (figure 4.11). Whilst St Andrew Holborn experienced an elevation of 1.7 (table 4.5) in that year, this was the result of peaks and troughs in burials, which contrasts to the summer and autumn rise and slow decline in burials in Aldgate. The spring elevations in St Botolph Bishopsgate and Holborn might reflect other disease vectors alongside plague or a series of local outbreaks within the parish. The register shows no marked plague burials until June in Holborn and none in December, despite that month returning the biggest number of monthly burials (60) in the parish for that year.[67]

The seasonal distribution of burials in the sample parishes in 1641 and 1646 demonstrate other features of plague in this endemic period. The first is that evident in 1641, which is the general diffusion of plague in the suburbs in a more severe endemic year, yet the different patterns that plague might be present in burials (figure 4.12) in each parish. The second

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[67] LMA P69/AND2/A/010/MS06673/002, ff.316-337.

nuances the view of 1646 and the eastern suburbs largely accounting for plague in that year (figure 4.13). Both 1641 and 1646 were also years in which the elevation in burials in the sample parishes occurred in the summer and autumn months. Whilst the western suburbs were more severely impacted in 1647, it is notable that summer elevations were evident in the eastern suburbs, albeit very briefly in Bishopsgate and slightly sustained in Aldgate (figure 4.14). The latter parish, when taken with burials in the other years, illustrates the cumulative aspect of plague in a period when the disease was endemic. Acknowledging the long-term impact of plague provides important context to understanding the response of suburban parishes to the disease.

Given the geographical size of parishes in London's suburbs and the evidence for localised outbreaks in particular endemic years, this raises questions as to the spatial patterns of plague within the parish. The discussion below will demonstrate the caution needed in reading the spatial incidence of plague in the suburban parish.

4.4 Spatial patterns of plague: St Martin in the Fields

Historians have attempted to deduce some sense of the spatial tendencies of plague in the parish. Paul Slack showed that the urban environment played a strong influence in plague mortality in Bristol in the 1640s and identified the narrow alleys and 'poorest houses' impacted more severely. He did acknowledge it 'foolish' to consider the more substantial citizens unscathed but concluded plague a 'greater menace' for the labouring poor in the 'back streets'.[68] Justin Champion identified a similar pattern in St Dunstan in the West in 1665 and argued that mortality followed social structure, and impacted the 'smaller and poorer' dwellings in the 'labyrinth' of spaces behind the main streets more severely. [69] Using a surviving list of quarantined houses in St Martin in the Fields in 1636 and 1637, Kira Newman showed that a surprising number of quarantined houses were on 'major streets'. Setting this alongside several quarter sessions cases, Newman suggested that the middling

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[68] Slack, *Impact of Plague,* 121-124.

[69] Justin Champion, 'Epidemics and the Built Environment in 1665', J. A. I. Champion (ed.), *Epidemic Disease in London* (Centre for Metropolitan History Working Papers Series, No. 1, 1993), 43-49.

sort bore the financial burden of plague and not the 'disadvantaged', which spurred a tendency for that social group to break out of shut up houses.[70]

It is important to push beyond presumptions as to the character of locations based on locational status. The aforementioned surviving list of quarantined houses in St Martin in the Fields, and the burial register for St Andrew Holborn, in which the clerk marked the locational origin of burials and plague burials, give a finely grained view of the spatial incidence of plague in the parish. This and the sections that follow will show that the stage at which a parish was at in its development and the type of building in certain locations, had an important influence on the spatial patterns of plague. This pushes back on perceptions as to where plague tended to hit hardest. The discussion below will emphasise the caution that should be taken when reading the social character of locations and the plague incidence therein. This provides the context for the response of the parish to plague, which is the focus in Chapters 5 and 6.

As stated in Chapter 1, to a degree, the broad generalisations of east and west propagated by Michael Power obscure differences between individual parishes.[71] Whilst plague tended to emerge in the northeastern suburbs in epidemic years, the westerly outer parishes experienced increasingly severe plague through the second quarter of the seventeenth century. The surviving list of quarantined households in St Martin in the Fields spans the period from June in 1636 to December in 1637. Julia Merritt and Kira Newman used it to present the broad framework of quarantine in the parish, but it has not been systematically analysed to test established understanding of the spatial occurrence of plague and aspects of the implementation of household quarantine.[72] The latter will be explored in Chapter 5.

St Martin's shut up 360 households and 1,752 individuals through 1636 and 1637. This was primarily in houses, although the parish pesthouse was used to support house based

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[70] Newman, 'Shutt Up', 19-21.

[71] Michael Power, 'The East and West in Early Modern London,' in E. W. Ives, R. J. Knecht, and J. J. Scarisbrick (eds.), *Wealth and Power in Tudor England* (London: The Athlone Press, 1978), 171-172.

[72] Julia Merritt, *The Social World of Early Modern Westminster: Abbey, Court and Community 1525-1640* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 296-304; Newman, 'Shutt up', 19-21.

quarantine.[73] A total of 842 people were quarantined in the parish through the main epidemic in 1636, if we take the main epidemic to run to 15 December, the point at which a General Bill of Mortality ends.[74] This is an arbitrary line to draw in an extended period of plague but serves to quantify the most precarious phase of a visitation that extended deep into 1637. If Julia Merritt's estimate of a parish population of some 9,500-11,000 by 1625 is taken, then close to 20% of the parish population experienced some form of isolation directly in 1636 and 1637.[75]

Organised in columns from left to right, the list details location, landlord, householder, the date quarantined and reopened and the total period of quarantine in weeks and days, for each household. Information is also provided as to the number of people in the household at the beginning and end of isolation, and often, the week in which any further deaths were experienced. Incidental detail is included as to the plague auxiliaries attached to a household; usually a doorkeeper, sometimes a nurse, and very rarely, a watcher/warder placed at a specific door. The detail as to whether a household was chargeable alongside the total expended monies was also systematically recorded. The document appears to have been written up after the worst of the epidemic, most likely in early 1637.[76] Evidence of the parish maintaining record-keeping during the epidemic can be taken in a direction to the auditor of the accounts. He was directed to take into consideration the 'diett' of the clerk 'at his howse' who 'continually kept and writt' the accounts between 4 November 1636 and mid-April 1637.[77]

Two entries listed under extraordinary payments in the parish plague account provide some context to the circumstance and date at which the list of quarantined houses was written up. The first shows 3s 6d spent on 8 February 1637, for 'going about the parish to take the Landlords names of the howses w[hi]ch have bene visited in the parish'.[78] The clerk then

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[73] WAC F4514, ff.1-114 - foliation is implied as document is marked in pages.

[74] Birch, *A Collection of the Yearly Bills* - 1636.

[75] Merritt, *Early Modern Westminster,* 261.

[76] WAC F4514, ff.1-114 - foliation implied from page numbers.

[77] WAC F4516, ff.17.

[78] WAC F4516, ff.16.

took to marking when the household was closed and added its reopening at a later date, presumably when the house was reopened. The clerk reverted to writing the full entry at a later date when plague burials began to increase again in the spring, which may indicate increasing pressure in managing more than a handful of quarantined houses.

The provenance of the quarantine record is evident in an undated entry in the extraordinary plague accounts. This specified payment for 'drawing the rolle in parchm[en]t of the names of the Landlords for theire assessm[en]t concerning the charge of the visited'.[79] The entry for Christopher Singleton's quarantined household in mid-September 1637 records £4 11s spent on two families of six people that were shut up for ten weeks. A later hand marked that in May 1640 the sum was 'delivered to Mr Bullocke in full' from the listed landlord William Smith.[80] Taken with the reference above to going about the parish to take the names of the landlords, the list of quarantined households might be read as a receipt of sorts, if the parish was to recoup spending from the landlords on their tenants. This indicates that some financial responsibility for those relieved by the parish might be presented to their landlords, as means by which to recoup parish spending. This is an important point and one that has not been noted by historians.

The parish imposing responsibility on landlords for their relieved tenants was explicitly stated by St Giles in the Fields in December 1640. The vestry directed the 'treasurer' and three of the constables to 'demand and receive' of the landlords whose tenants had been visited and chargeable to the parish, the money disbursed to 'such tenants in their visitation'. The attempt of the vestry of St Giles to recoup spending may also have been linked to their decision at the outset of the visitation to not collect the plague-rate as the 'gentry and p[er]sons of estate were then out of towne'. This was also the stated reason as to the parish borrowing £50 from Theordore Colley, 'Esq'.[81]

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[79] WAC F4516, ff.16v.

[80] WAC F4514, ff.110.

[81] John Parton, *Some Account of the Hospital and Parish of St. Giles in the Fields, Middlesex* (London, 1822), 261-262.

Further insight can be taken from a petition to the Privy Council from the churchwarden, parishioners and collector for the poor visited in the Middlesex area of St Sepulchre Newgate. The parish referred to Sir Abraham Williams of Westminster having 'divers poor tenements' in St John Street, of which two had been shut up of plague, and the parishioners having disbursed £10 17s 3d for relief of those families'. The Justices of the Peace had decided that Williams should pay the sum, but 'neither can petitioners by ordinary course of justice recover the same against him'. The parish asked that the Council order Williams to pay.[82] Sir Abraham Williams was the official London agent to Elizabeth Stuart (of Bohemia) between 1626 and 1640 when she and the elector Frederick were in exile at the Hague. Julia Merritt described that the Crown agreed to pay him £300 for the use of his house in New Palace Yard in the early 1630s, for Charles I to host foreign ambassadors.[83] Williams was an aristocrat of some standing, yet St Sepulchre's was prepared to press him in recouping spending in relieving his 'poor' visited tenants. This reference, and those above, link to the perception that landlords were responsible for allowing the migrant poor to settle in the parish, and were therefore liable if those people were relieved by the parish.

St Martin in the Fields' quarantine record shows plague emerging in Spur Alley, which ran off the south side of the Strand, in early June in 1636. Plague was present in St Martin's Lane, Long Acre and Soho in the north of the parish by the beginning of July. Plague was more generally diffused through the parish by August, with quarantined houses in Drury Lane to the east, St James to the west and Harts Horne Lane in the south of the parish that ran between the Strand and the Thames, and the many alleys, courts and yards in between. The number of quarantined houses increased until November and then gradually decreased to March 1637 (see figure 5.1, p.184).

Kira Newman based aspects of her argument that the 'middling sort' bore the burden of plague and not the 'disadvantaged' on the fact 30% of quarantined houses were located on 'main streets'.[84] The first presumption is that these locations were home to the middling and

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[82] John Bruce (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Charles I, 1636-7* (London: 1867), 306-326.

[83] Merritt, *Early Modern Westminster*, 149.

[84] Newman, 'Shutt Up', 815

substantial. The second is that the ordinary poor lived in the smaller spaces running off the main streets. The discussion in Chapter 2 showed that the late 1620s and 1630s was a period of accelerated population growth and building in the parish. Along with the diffusion of plague across the parish in 1636 and 1637, it should not be surprising that the 'main streets' figure prominently, given the scale and type of building in those spaces.

Of the 360 quarantined households recorded in the list, forty-one have their location marked as the pesthouse and eleven have no specified location. The discussion below is based on the 319 households where the location was entered by the clerk. Where an alley, court or yard was identified with a main street, the smaller space is taken as the location. For example, the household of William Rice in 'Kings Alley/Bedfordberry' was shut up on 13 November 1636. The location is taken to be King's Alley, although the connection in the record to 'Bedfordberry' is an important feature of how alleys, courts and yards developed off the main street. The discussion below will begin with a selection of smaller spaces in the parish and work through to the main streets.

The quarantine record reveals the role of landlords as developers of groups of houses, especially in courts and yards. The connection between development and plague incidence is suggested by this tendency. For example, Christopher Parsons was fined for building seven tenements in Vinegar Yard in Long Acre.[85] The household of Thomas Saules in Vinegar Yard was quarantined for six weeks from 9 December 1636. Saules' landlord was Parsons.[86] Vinegar Yard carried 2.5% (9) of all quarantined households in 1636 and 1637. Nine were shut up between 10 September and 9 December 1636. This included three on 18 October, of which Edward Goddard was the landlord for two of those households: widow Wright and widow Hawkins. Gooddard was also landlord to Thomas Hawkins whose household of four was shut up in the yard on 27 September. The two Hawkins' households appear separate units. Sir William Slingsby was the landlord marked for the other household that was shut up in the yard on 18 October. Slingsby was also landlord to Richard Boares whose household was shut up in Vinegar Yard on 23 October. Whilst ten households were quarantined in the

[85] TNA SP16/408-139, ff.139v.

[86] WAC F4514, ff.74.

yard, these were associated with just four landlords: the aforementioned Christopher Parsons, Goddard, Slingsby, and also one Mr Weeksand. All of those households were relieved by the parish, which indicates the social character of the yard.[87]

The role of landlords as developers of groups of houses in smaller locations is strengthened when looking to other yards and courts. Jeremy Browning was the landlord for five of the six quarantined households (2% of all households in the list) in Joyners Yard. John Moore was listed as the landlord for seven of the nine households in Round Court and Anthony Collett six, in the main epidemic in 1636. Round Court presented a temporal cluster of quarantined houses in September and October, sporadic cases through the wider visitation, and accounted for 4.7% (17) of all quarantined households. John Moore's name recurs in connection to quarantined households in other locations, including the main streets off the Strand and St Martin's Lane and the developing space of Piccadilly.[88]

The references above show the open approach developers might take to building wherever there was available space, and indicate why the vestry might look to recoup the cost of relieving their tenants during a plague event. As described in Chapter 3, John Waters (or Waterers) was fined for turning down a parish post in the early 1630s. He is recorded for a quarantined household in each of Round Court and St Martins Lane, and three in Bedford Berry. 'Mrs' Susan Faldoe was the landlord for the two quarantined households in Marigold Alley and also the four in Bennett Alley.[89] Marigold and Bennett alleys both ran off the northern side of the Strand and were adjacent to one another, which shows the role a landlord might have in developing a more general area where space was available.

Other yards and court locations were impacted in a concentrated time in the main epidemic. For example, White Hart Yard accounted for 3.1% (11) of all quarantined households in the list. Eight of the ten were shut up between 3 September and 28 October. Three landlords were associated with those eight households: the Duke of Holland (3), Mr Duke (3) and Charles

[87] WAC F4514, ff.20, 28, 47, 57, 64, 74, 84.

[88] WAC F4514, ff.14, 19, 21, 32, 35, 36, 40, 42, 47, 52, 74, 83, 99, 103, 104, 107.

[89] WAC F4514, ff.5, 11, 21, 22, 34, 52, 54, 75, 76, 92, 96, 110.

Elmwood (2). All ten of the quarantined households in White Hart Yard were relieved by the parish, which connects to the pattern in Vinegar Yard.

There is one reference to an 'alley' in the building return, that being the three houses built by John Snelling in Spur Alley.[90] The alley ran off the southern side of the Strand and accounted for 7.5% (27) of all quarantined households in the parish in 1636 and 1637. Fifteen landlords were associated with the twenty-three quarantined households recorded, of which Lord Craven was listed for four, and Robert Johnson, Hugh Evans and Philip Greenwood two each. Twenty-two of the households in Spur Alley were relieved by the parish and the other five were chargeable for a doorkeeper only.[91] Harts Horne Lane also ran off the southern side of the Strand to the Thames and accounted for 3.3% (12) of all quarantined households. Robert Fludd and William Fitchett were each associated with two households in the lane, and three other landlords recorded. Spur Alley and Harts Horne Lane show the impact of plague in what the parish termed the 'waterside' area that ran between the Thames and the Strand.

Soho was located on the northern periphery of the parish and was in an early stage of development at the time of the 1636 epidemic. Soho accounted for 7.8% (28) of all households quarantined in the parish in 1636 and 1637. Ten landlords were associated with the 28 households, including one Gladywn and Claryie who were each associated with three. The primary landlord identified with quarantined households in Soho was Dr Henry Shippsey, who was identified with the building of seventeen tenements there in the 1638 building return. Shippsey accounted for 3.1% (11) of all quarantined houses in the parish and 31% of the households shut up in Soho. All of the households associated with Shippsey were relieved by the parish. Of the total number of households quarantined in Soho, three were chargeable for a doorkeeper only and just two were not chargeable to the parish. The reference to Shippsey's building activities suggests a connection between the type of development and plague incidence in certain locations.[92]

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[90] TNA SP16/408/139, ff.139v.

[91] WAC F4514, ff.1, 10, 24, 27, 32, 51, 56, 60, 65-66, 68, 72, 75, 78, 81-83, 88, 90, 97, 113.

[92] WAC F4514, ff.2, 4, 19, 24, 26, 27, 37, 42, 62, 67, 70, 74, 77-78, 81, 84, 86, 89, 91, 99, 104, 109, 112.

Piccadilly was also a peripheral and developing space in 1636 epidemic and accounted for 3.3% (12) of all quarantined households in the epidemic and wider visitation. These were associated with four landlords, although 'Master Baker' was recorded as the landlord for eight households. 'Master' Baker was Mary Baker, the wife of Robert who began the development of Piccadilly earlier in the century. There is evidence that Robert Baker had sub-divided his own house, Baker Hall, by the early 1620s and that seven 'messuages with the stables and other buildinges' had been built in Piccadilly by 1626.[93] Mary Baker was quarantined in the epidemic and was only chargeable for a doorkeeper, indicating that she was otherwise self-sufficient. The parish relieved four of the six households associated with Baker and paid for a doorkeeper for two. Except for one household, Baker was the landlord for all those quarantined between 19 September and 8 November 1636. This demonstrates an interesting temporal focus on the infection of dwelling units under one landlord.[94] The examples of Soho and Piccadilly show the impact of plague on the periphery of the parish and the association of one developer or landlord with many quarantined households in those spaces.

This can also be extended to the main streets of the parish. A third of all building fines in 1638 were associated with Long Acre, where the development was a mix of houses and tenements.[95] Three of the seven developers having built tenements were responsible for the 27 identified in the return: John Moncaster (4), William Joyce (7) and Serieant Francis (13). This is important when set against the 8.3% (30) of quarantined houses that were located in Long Acre in 1636 and 1637. John Wellens and his family were quarantined for eight weeks from the end of October in 1636. The listed landlord was Serieant Francis, who was also landlord to John Leander in Long Acre and John Cocke in Horne Lane. These households were quarantined in July and August and were relieved by the parish.[96] Of the thirty households quarantined in Long Acre, 76% were relieved by the parish and six households were chargeable only for a doorkeeper. Sixteen other landlords were associated with

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[93] F. H. W. Sheppard (ed.), 'The Early History of Piccadilly', in *Survey of London: Volumes 31 and 32, St James Westminster, Part 2* (London, 1963), 32-40.

[94] WAC F4514, ff.8, 11, 27, 29, 59, 61, 72, 83.

[95] TNA SP16/408/139, ff.139v-145v.

[96] TNA SP16/408/139, ff.141,144.

quarantined households there, including John Parker (4), William Smith (3), and Scipio Squire (2).[97] Six of the landlords are recorded in the return for illegal building for having erected buildings in Long Acre. For example, Scipio Squire was fined for building a house and a tenement.[98]

The description of Soho and Long Acre suggest a connection between locations in which numerous tenements were built and plague incidence therein. Drury Lane, with fewer tenements listed in the return for illegal building, accounted for just 2.3% (8) of all quarantined households. Looking at other locations strengthens this observation. Bedford Berry accounted for 3.6% (13) of all quarantined households through the epidemic and wider visitation. Nine of those households were shut up in the main epidemic. The 1638 building return shows the street the location of busy development, where eight developers were fined for building four houses and 23 tenements.[99] One of these men, Samuel Chambers, built eight tenements in Bedford Berry. Chambers was recorded as the landlord for William Hunt who was shut up on 21 July 1636. John Water (mentioned above) is not recorded in the return for illegal building but is identified as the landlord for five of the thirteen households quarantined in Bedford Berry. Twelve of the thirteen quarantined households in Bedford Berry were relieved by the parish.[100]

As was suggested in Chapter 2, the rich, middling and ordinary poor lived cheek by jowl in St Martin's Lane. Six developers were identified in the return for building fourteen houses, including John Bale for seven, alongside the single tenements built by each of John Lenitt and Christopher Stanley.[101] It is worth reiterating that new development might reasonably be said to be 'in St Martin's Lane' before it acquired its own distinctive identity. This is an important consideration when reading the spatial incidence of plague in the main streets. Whilst Bale is referenced as a landlord to quarantined houses in the lane, Lenitt and Stanley

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[97] WAC F4514, ff.3, 12, 26, 31-33, 35, 37, 39, 41, 43, 48, 54-55, 63, 75, 86, 92, 93, 105, 113.

[98] TNA SP16/408/139, ff.139v, 141.

[99] TNA SP16/408/139, ff.139v, 140, 141, 142.

[100] WAC F4514, ff.3, 11, 13, 22, 52, 67, 75-76, 85, 93, 101, 110.

[101] TNA SP16/408/139, ff.139v-141v.

are not.[102] The lane accounted for 9.4% (34) of quarantined houses, of which 68% (23) were shut up in the main epidemic. John Bale was listed as the landlord to two households that were shut and relieved by the parish from 12 September, for eleven and eight weeks. Sixteen landlords are associated with the quarantined households in St Martin's Lane and several others for multiple dwelling units: Thomas Garland (6), Edmund Johnson (3), William Smith (3), Dr Bray (3), Captain Wood (2), Mr Bansfield (2). The parish relieved 86% (26) of the households quarantined in the lane, which included five of the six associated with Thomas Garland.

The discussion above demonstrates the need to consider the impact of the development and social composition of many spaces on the locational patterns of plague in a fast-developing suburban parish. The discussion also shows the leading role of developers in certain locations, which connects to the parish attempting to recoup spending from the landlords. The St Andrew Holborn register provides the opportunity to contrast aspects of the spatial patterns evident in St Martin in the Fields in both epidemic and endemic plague years. It can also be used to gain a sense of the household clustering of plague deaths, which is an issue the discussion will explore in detail in Chapter 5.

4.5 Spatial patterns of plague: St Andrew Holborn

St Andrew Holborn was located partially within the liberties of the City of London, whilst its northern area extended into rural Middlesex and was the larger part of the parish. The Agas map shows the cluster of buildings in and around the parish church around the time of the 1563 plague epidemic and the space north of the Barrs (the boundary between the areas of the parish located within and without the jurisdiction of the City) undeveloped (figure 4.15). The Faithorne and Newcourt map represents little change north of the Barrs by the 1640s (figure 2.3, p.44). The discussion below though will show that this is misleading and that area of the parish under increasing development. This connects to the evidence that locations that were a focus of infection in one plague year were not necessarily so in another. The

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[102] WAC F4514, ff.21, 22.

discussion will also present evidence of limited clustering of household plague deaths, which sets the scene for the analysis of this aspect of the quarantine experience in Chapter 5.
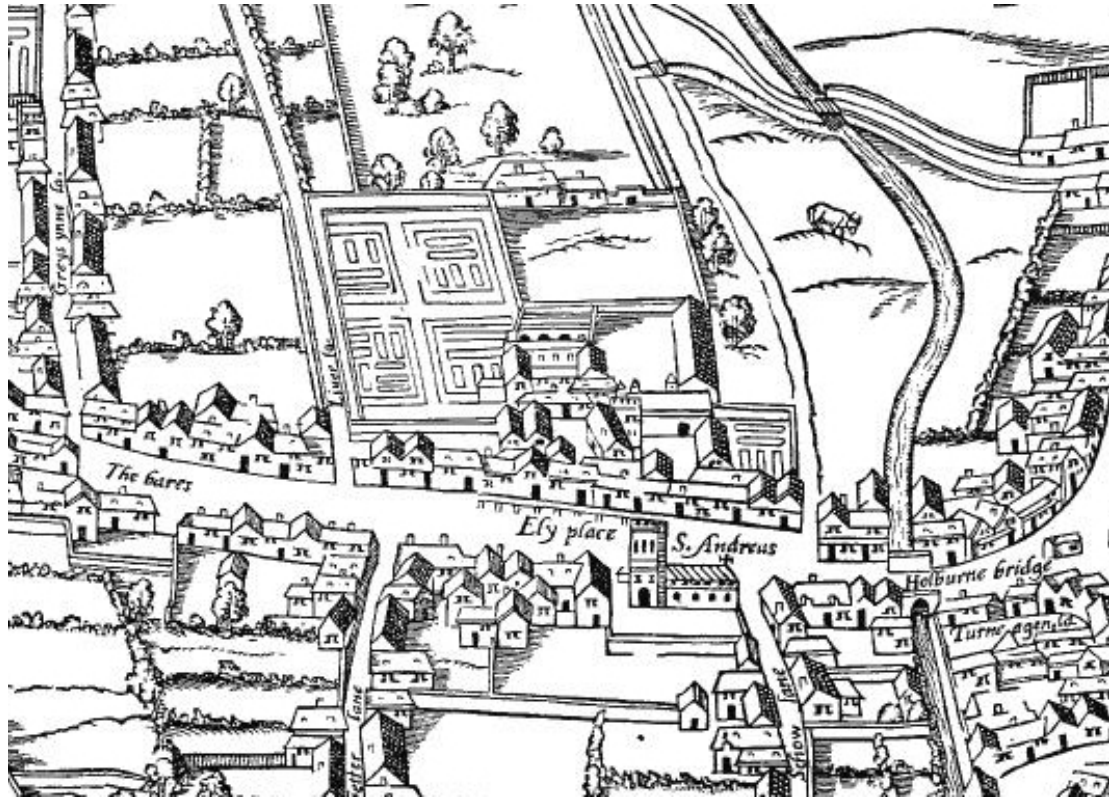
Figure 4.15. Map of the environs of St Andrew Holborn, c. 1560-70. The parish church is located just to the east of Holborn Bridge. The Barrs marks the boundary between the area of the parish under the City's jurisdiction (to the south) and that in Middlesex (to the north).
Source: 'Plan of London (circa 1560 to 1570)', in *Agas Map of London 1561* ([s.l.], 1633), *British History Online* http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/london-map-agas/1561/map [accessed 11 January 2021].

The St Andrew Holborn register records 210 plague burials between 15 June and 31 July in 1625, the point at which the epidemic began to rise rapidly toward its local peak.[103] Figure 4.7 (p.125) illustrates that rapid rise in burials once plague was active in the parish, from the first plague burial on 15 June: Ann Goable in Field Lane.[104] Burials arrived from various locations in the next two weeks, with Rose & Crowne Alley 'in Grays Inn Lane', Field Lane, Maydenhead Alley and Fetter Lane, the location of early clusters of plague deaths. The rural nature of the northern fringes of the parish is evident in the burial of plague dead found in the fields, such as the 'poore man' who 'died in the feilds' on 12 July. Plague burials were

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[103] LMA P69/AND2/A/010/MS06673/002, ff.28v-83.

[104] LMA P69/AND2/A/010/MS06673/002, ff.28v.

reasonably balanced between the lanes and courts, yards and alleys, but the area of the parish below the Barrs and under the jurisdiction of the City was harder hit.

Lane locations accounted for 40% of all plague burials in the first six to seven weeks of the epidemic in 1625. This is closer to half if other main streets or primary locations such as High Holborn and Saffron Hill are included.[105] As in St Martin in the Fields, this should not be read as a social bias to the middling and substantial but rather reflects where development had taken place and where the population was growing.

Fetter Lane and Field Lane, both located below the Barrs, accounted for around a quarter of all plague burials through the first six weeks of the 1625 epidemic. Intensity is also evident in the northwestern corner of the parish. Close to a quarter of all plague burials were drawn from Grays Inn Lane and three smaller locations identified with it: Barne Yard, Rose and Crown Alley and Bishops Head Court. Burials also came from spaces denoted as 'rents', such as 'Titoes' (Titus) and Braziers in Grays Inn Lane, which likely reflects early tenement construction there. The first plague burial occurring in Parpoole Lane, in the north of the parish, was on 4 July.[106] The lane accounted for just 5.3% of all plague burials in the first few weeks of the epidemic and was not hit as hard as the lanes in the south of the parish through the wider epidemic.

The greater focus of plague shifted from the established spaces in the southern areas of the parish to areas of development above the Barrs in the epidemic in 1636. Of the 22 developers identified for building 32 structures in the parish in the 1638 building return, seventeen were recorded as building in the lanes. The developers in all locations collectively built seventeen houses and fifteen tenements, of which twelve of the tenements were erected north of the Barrs: Grays Inn Lane (2) and Parpoole Lane (8). William Price was listed as building eleven tenements in Clerkenwell Close and five in St Andrews 'p[ar]ish in Holborne'. The exact location is not specified but the five tenements may have been in the northern area of the parish, given the construction of his other tenements in the south of the neighbouring parish

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[105] LMA P69/AND2/A/010/MS06673/002, ff.29v, 30, 30v.

[106] LMA P69/AND2/A/010/MS06673/002, ff.30.

of St James Clerkenwell. In the south of the parish, five tenements were erected in Shoe Lane and one in Cussitors Alley, which ran between Chancery Lane and Fetter Lane.[107]

The 898 rents recorded in the tithes and rents survey in 1638 were listed separately for the two jurisdictional areas of the parish. The clergy listed 405 houses and no tenements in the part of the parish under the City's jurisdiction, from which Roger Finlay calculated that 14% of the householders were 'substantial'. That measure was based on rents that exceeded £20.[108] The mean rent there was £12.[109] Finlay did not include the Middlesex area of the parish in his calculations. A total of 493 householders were listed there, the mean rent was £10 and 6.3% (31) of householders were 'substantial' by Finlay's measure.[110] The hearth tax shows the ongoing development of the parish to the north of the Barrs up to the Restoration period, where 73% (1,273) of the 1,755 rated householders were recorded in the Middlesex 'division'.[111]

The clerk marked 46% (424) of the 922 total burials in 1636 as plague. The first plague burial was that of John Lightborne on 11 June, a shoemaker in Scroopes Court in Holborne. Scroopes Court was located off the northern side of the Barrs, adjacent to the parish church. Other burials through June were drawn from locations north of the Barrs: Saffron Hill, Grays Inn Lane, Baldwin Gardens (which ran between Grays Inn Lane and Leather Lane) and a cluster in Blew (Blue) Court in Field Lane.

Over one-third of plague burials were taken from lane locations in 1636. Fetter Lane and Field Lane presented no identified illegal building in the 1638 return and contributed the smallest number of burials for lane locations in 1636. This should be balanced with the number of alleys, courts and yards that were associated with those two spaces in the register.

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[107] TNA SP16/408/139, ff.140v, 141v, 143, 144, 144v, 145.

[108] Finlay, *Population and* Metropolis, 171.

[109] T. C. Dale, *The Inhabitants of London in 1638* (London: Society of Genealogists, 1931), 187-191.

[110] Dale, *Inhabitants of London*, 192-197.

[111] Matthew Davies, Catherine Ferguson, Vanessa Harding, Elizabeth Parkinson & Andrew Wareham (eds.), *London and Middlesex Hearth Tax Returns* (London: BA & BRS Hearth Tax Series IX, 2014), 840, 850, 1085 (indexing for the transcript is by IRN).

For example, Blew Court is usually listed as 'in Feild Lane'.[112] Plague emerged there from the end of June in 1636, and burials clustered through to the end of July, from which sporadic cases occurred through to the end of December. The court showed some social bias in the household incidence of plague early in the epidemic. Of the first four burials from Blew Court, between 28 June and 4 July, two were noted as 'a poore man', one being that of Henry Roberts a 'Laborar died in his house'. Between 18 and 22 July, seven plague burials were taken from the court, including three from the household of the labourer Thomas Marsh and two burials from the household of Robert Brown.[113] From the plague burials occurring in the court up to 22 July, three other household heads were noted as labourers, alongside a Cutler, Taylor and Porter.

As described above, Barne Yard, Rose and Crown Alley and Bishops Head Court were three smaller locations identified with Grays Inn Lane, and with the lane, accounted for 13.5% (57) of all plague burials in 1636. As lanes became more established and the alleys and courts were developed in behind, plague may have shown increasing incidence away from the main street.

The shifting focus of plague to the northern area of the parish in 1636 is evident in Parpoole Lane, which accounted for 15% (64) of all plague burials in the parish.[114] The lane did not have as many alleys, courts or yards associated with it in the register, as was the case with Field, Fetter, Shoe and Grays Inn lanes. The first plague burials in and around Parpoole Lane occurred on 22 and 30 September, when Richard Hill, an 'oulde man out of an ally neare Atkins the Curriar in Poole Lane', and Barbara Blight, a 'woman out of Robert Knowles house', were buried. The former reference highlights some development of alleys off the lane, but the absence of a stated name for the location may indicate that it was in a very early stage of development. This was a point at which plague was more generally established in the parish and from 10 October, there were 24 further burials from Parpoole Lane through to the

[112] LMA P69/AND2/A/010/MS06673/002, ff.32.

[113] LMA P69/AND2/A/010/MS06673/002, ff.240-241v.

[114] LMA P69/AND2/A/010/MS06673/002, ff.239-264v.

beginning of November.[115] The illegal building return shows the erection of tenement housing in the lane by John Prettimen (4) and John Trott (6).

The Holborn clerk also listed family and household connections of the deceased and named the landlord of any not living in a house of their own. The 425 plague burials marked in the register in 1636 were associated with 269 households or houses. The reconstruction of households presents some difficulties, in that many references are associated with a 'house' where the surname of the landlord or household is different from the deceased. In some instances, the connection is obvious, where a maid or apprentice or youth out of the house is stated. Other references though, primarily those with several under one house, are most likely representative of a multi-occupied building or the presence of inmates and lodgers, as discussed in the analysis of St Martin in the Fields. It could also be a group of houses that belonged to one landlord, which are impossible to disentangle when in the same location but less so when houses in more than one location are linked to an individual.

Several of these landlords are locatable in the 1638 tithes and rents survey, which in St Andrew Holborn, only listed those rateable for tithes. Seven plague burials are noted in the register as 'out of' Robert Knowles' house in 1636, and of those just his wife Francis can be linked to him directly. Knowle's rent was rated at £20.[116] It could have been that some of the other six burials were lodgers or Knowles was the landlord and the burials regarded as coming from individual but spatially connected households.[117] Some references to the assumed landlords do state out of 'houses' which gives a firmer indication of plague burials emerging from a multi-occupied building or a series of small dwellings, rather than a single household. John Kettle, his rent rated at £12, is a more obvious example with five plague burials, including a family unit of three and two individuals, assigned to his 'houses' in Parpoole Lane and near Holborne Bridge. Due to these issues, the total calculation in the number of households which experienced plague deaths will have a margin of error.

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[115] LMA P69/AND2/A/010/MS06673/002, ff.248-264v

[116] Dale, *Inhabitants of London*, 187-197.

[117] Dale, *Inhabitants of London*, 187-197.

The discussion of St Martin in the Fields in Chapter 5 will show that many households were shut up based on illness which did not necessarily lead to a plague death. This has some bearing on reading the data for households in which just one plague burial was taken. As such, the beginning of quarantine is judged on the first plague burial in the household in St Andrew Holborn. This is also based on the assumption that a plague death always resulted in quarantine. The discussion in Chapter 5 will show that the practice in St Martin's included the later imposition of quarantine and the quarantining of households in which no plague death occurred. And without data as to the number of people resident in a household, the true mortality rate or extent of household plague incidence cannot be wholly contextualised. As the discussion in Chapter 5 will also show, the plague officers in St Martin's used quarantine as the first response to suspicious illness. Not all households there that were quarantined necessarily returned any plague burial. As such, the 269 households identified in St Andrew Holborn will be an under calculation of the actual number shut up, assuming that any household in which plague was identified or suspected was quarantined.

With several markers of caution, a sense of the clustering of plague deaths in households can be gained. Of the 269 'households' from which at least one plague burial came, 60% (161) returned one plague burial and 27% (72) two. Just 9% (26) of identified households experienced three deaths and 3% (10) four or more.[118] It is difficult to square the prevailing patterns in Holborn with contemporary concerns as to the lethality of plague for the healthy that were shut up with the sick in a household where a plague death had been experienced.

A similar pattern is evident in the parish in the endemic plague years, of which 1641 and 1647 were the two heavier years in St Andrew Holborn. A total of 178 plague burials out of 953 total burial events were marked in the register in 1641.[119] These were taken from 136 households, however, that number is likely an underestimate of the number of quarantined households, for the reasons noted above. Household clustering of plague deaths in 1641 was slightly more limited than in 1636: 81% (110) of households experienced one plague death, 17% (12) two deaths, 4% (5) three deaths, and 3% (4) between five and seven deaths.

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[118] LMA P69/AND2/A/010/MS06673/002, ff.231-264v.

[119] LMA P69/AND2/A/010/MS06673/002, ff.337-36v.

Akin to 1636 and 1641, plague was generally diffused throughout the parish by the end of the visitation in mid-November 1647, although a greater focus in plague incidence is evident in and around Cheeke Lane in the north of the parish and Shoe Lane in the southeastern corner. The clerk marked 139 plague burials in the register in that endemic plague year, of which 27.6% (38) were in lane locations. The first plague burials were three children out of the Taylor Edward Weeston's house in Castle Garden Buildings near the Barrs, on 29 and 30 May. A maidservant followed from a house in Cursitors Alley in Chancery Lane on 8 June, two individuals from separate houses in the Ditch Side of Shoe Lane on 12 and 13 June and the maidservant Anne Tyler from a house in Castle garden 'streete' in Holborn on 14 June. These locations were the main origin of further plague burials through the rest of June. All but one burial was taken from these smaller spaces behind the lanes and High Holborn. This was a marked difference to the spatial patterns in 1641, although the wider endemic visitation did limit that initial spatial bias.

The register shows plague incidence in locations that might have been in a very early stage of built development in the preceding visitations; Magpie Alley in Fetter Lane, Sugar Loaf Alley in Field Lane and Tentor Yard in Shoe Lane.[120] Moreover, the tenement development identified in Parpoole Lane in and around the epidemic in 1636 was connected to plague burials from several 'rents' in the lane in 1647: Gaskinns, Simes and Prettimans'. We would assume the latter connected to John Prettiman, the builder of four illegal tenements in Parpoole Lane.[121] Ely Rents and Fulliers Rents were located in or near the main thoroughfare of High Holborn and Fulliers contributed the last burial of the visitation on 18 November. Burials listed in High Holborn and Holborn accounted for 8.7% (12) all plague burials in 1647. Of the 114 'houses' identified by the parliamentary surveyors in High Holborn in the late 1640s and early 1650s, 21.9% were designated as being in multi-occupancy.[122] This underscores the caution needed in interpreting the social aspects of plague incidence in main street locations in London's suburbs.

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[120] LMA P69/AND2/A/010/MS06673/003, ff.68-80v.

[121] TNA SP16/408/139, ff.141.

[122] Power, 'The East and West in Early Modern London', 170.

Some locations that were hit hard in 1636 were not as impacted by plague in 1647. Blew Court and Blackboy Ally in Cheek Lane are two examples. Other burial entries in 1647 simply refer to an unnamed alley oriented by another location, such as a plague burial out of an 'An ally neare Mr Bradshawes in Parpoole Lane' or an alley near Holborn Bridge on 13 October. The rural fringe of the parish was still evident with the burial of one man from the fields 'under Mr Streets hay ricke' on the backside of the Red Lyon. Other references give context to some burials arriving from bigger locations and suggest the disruption that might be wrought in a heavy endemic plague year. A maidservant was buried on 18 October after being found dead 'against the Starr Taverne doore' in Field Lane, whilst one from the cage in Leather Lane was buried on 2 August.[123] Several individuals were buried of plague from the cage in 1641, including the first burial of that endemic plague year, Mary Jenkinson, 'amaid sometyme to Anthony Aleworth Grocer ag[ains]t Middle Roe' who died in the cage in Leather Lane on 15 April.[124]

4.6 Conclusions

The analysis of the patterns of burials in the first half of the chapter documented the suburban bias of plague after 1600, particularly in the endemic plague years. This is an important contribution to the plague narrative, particularly the variation that might occur between neighbouring parishes and broader geographical areas. The long-term persistence of plague was also documented, and this provides essential context to understanding the response to plague in the suburbs, which is the focus of Chapters 5 and 6.

Analysis of the spatial patterns of plague pushes back to a degree on assumptions and established views of where plague tended to hit hardest. The discussion demonstrated the impact of plague in all types of locations and that caution was needed in interpreting the social impact of plague in the main streets. The analysis of the St Andrew Holborn register demonstrates the diffusion of plague through the parish and no evident bias for the alleys,

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[123] LMA P69/AND2/A/010/MS06673/003, ff.71v, 78, 78v-79.

[124] LMA P69/AND2/A/010/MS06673/002, ff.68-80v.

courts and yards. We see a shifting focus of plague away from the established south of the parish to the developing north after 1625. Much the same as in St Martin in the Fields, the spatial patterns of plague require setting against the stage and locations of development in the parish. In assessing both epidemic and endemic plague in Holborn, it is notable that locations that were a focus of infection in one year were not necessarily in another. The evidence for limited household clustering of plague deaths is an important finding and sets the scene for analysis of the experience of household quarantine in the next chapter.

Chapter 5: Response to plague in the suburbs - quarantine

On 16 May 1641, Nathaniel Upton, the 'Master' (surgeon) of the Pesthouse, was paid 5s by the churchwardens of St Dunstan in the West for viewing the body of 'one that died of the plage' in widow Goodpeeds [sic] house in Ram Alley. On the day following, the churchwardens paid for 'boards and a locke and key a paire of hinges and nayles and a quarter' to nail up her back door and for a day's work for the carpenter.[1] At the heart of the Plague Orders was the isolation of the infected and this reference demonstrates the rapid and rigorous effort to implement quarantine when plague was identified in the parish. The reference also suggests that quarantine was implemented just as rigorously in an endemic plague year as that of an epidemic.

The minutes of the Privy Council indicate some resistance to quarantine in 1641. The Middlesex Justices of the Peace expressed concern in late October that many 'secretly escape' out of their houses 'after the infection is begun and before it be discovered'. The churchwardens and constables of St Andrew Holborn stressed to the Council that 'care has and shall be still continued' for visited houses and 'strong watches'.[2] The reference reflects the anxiety of external authorities about compliance, which did not take into account the logistical and financial challenges suburban parishes faced in implementing quarantine. As such, it is sensible to not overstate these references when they appear in Crown and City sources.

This chapter explores the implementation of household quarantine and provides a more optimistic interpretation of its implementation in London's suburbs. This sets the context for the discussion of a range of responses to plague in Chapter 6. The first section explores the attitude of the Crown and City to quarantine, which sets the scene for the discussion of the application of quarantine in the extramural parishes that follows. The third and fourth

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[1] LMA P69/DUN2/B/011/MS02968/003, ff.617v.

[2] W. D. Hamilton (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Charles I, 1641-3* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1887), 141-142.

sections of the chapter use the surviving list of quarantined houses in St Martin in the Fields to explore the experience of quarantine there. The chapter concludes with a discussion of plague auxiliaries, in the context of their essential role in supporting quarantine. This includes comment on the important contribution of women.

5.1 Crown and City attitudes

Keith Wrightson presented a reasonably positive view of quarantine in Newcastle in 1636. Wrightson took the limited spread of plague into the city's immediate hinterland as a marker of the magistrates' success. He did acknowledge that measures to control plague transformed the experience of space, disrupted the 'patterns and rhythms' of daily life and caused a mood of 'anxiety and watchfulness'.[3] The general diffusion of plague in suburban parishes resulted in those markers visible and added to perceptions of London's suburbs as a pestered environment, which the literary sources amplified. We need to be mindful of how accounts, like that of Daniel Defoe, have influenced perceptions of the experience of quarantine, particularly in its break down and associated violence against plague auxiliaries.[4]

Kira Newman suggested that the purpose of quarantine was to instil 'fear of the consequences' for 'ordinary people' of contravening plague regulations.[5] As described in Chapter 3, the Plague Orders carried a punitive undertone but at the parish level, the approach to household quarantine was driven by pragmatism and flexibility. This was aimed at ensuring compliance and mitigating spending. The financial impact of relieving those that the parish judged could not support themselves in their isolation was potentially debilitating, particularly when set alongside the wider problems of the poor. In early October 1641, the Court of Aldermen, in receipt of petitions from the westerly extramural parishes of St Sepulchre Newgate and St Bride Fleet Street, ordered £50 and £20, respectively, paid for the

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[3] Keith Wrightson, *Ralph Tailor's Summer: A Scrivener, His City and the Plague* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 51-53.

[4] Daniel Defoe**,** *Journal of a Plague Year* (London: Penguin, reprinted 1986)*,* 72, 88.

[5] Kira Newman, 'Shutt Up: Bubonic Plague and Quarantine in Early Modern England', *Journal of Social History* 45:3 (2012), 42, 44, 48.

relief of the poor visited in each parish.[6] The St Bride's churchwardens' accounts record £109

12s 7d as the 'Some lot of charges and paym[en]ts to the visited houses' in 1641.[7] The

petitions reflect the financial strain caused by endemic plague, a theme that will be unpacked

in Chapter 6. The court clerk recorded very few other references to plague related business

by the Court of Aldermen in 1641. Afflicted suburban parishes were on their own in

implementing quarantine and the wider burden of plague in that year.

The logistical and financial burden aside, quarantine drew emotive criticism from

contemporaries, specifically the shutting up of the healthy with the sick. The Apothecary

William Boghurst, who lived and worked through the epidemic in 1665, observed that as

soon as any house was infected, the 'sound people should be had out of it' and not shut up

'therein to be murdered'.[8] The discussion in Chapter 3 showed that there was some attempt

by the Privy Council to address similar concerns in 1593. The cost and practicalities of

establishing a network of pesthouses or a metropolitan-wide board of health, along the lines

of those in the Italian city-states, proved economically and administratively prohibitive.

Household isolation was deemed the most viable method to contain plague. Paul Slack

argued that the City authorities were doubtful about the necessity and wisdom of the policy

and their ability to enforce it. Slack suggested that only in minor outbreaks of plague was

quarantine effectively maintained in London.[9] The case studies herein will test aspects of that

narrative.

Slack also suggested that quarantine was 'enforced more rigorously' following the failure of

Charles I to establish a metropolitan health board in 1630. This expectation is evident in

communications to the Mayor and Aldermen. In response to reports that plague was active in

St Giles in the Fields, Shoreditch and Whitechapel, the Privy Council directed Guildhall in

early March 1630 to see that infected houses were shut up and watchmen set at the doors, 'as

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[6] LMA COL/CA/01/01/059, ff.198, 204, 206, 210.

[7] LMA P69/BRI/B/016/MS06552/001, ff.83.

[8] William Boghurst, *Loimographia: An Account of the Great Plague of London in the Year 1665* (London: Shaw & Sons, 1894), 99.

[9] Paul Slack, *The Impact of Plague in Tudor and Stuart England* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), 219.

usual'.[10] This is suggestive of the suburban dimension that was an increasing factor in the Crown's anxiety and their direction about concerted action. The Crown were of course generally uneasy about the expanding built environment beyond the walls and were frustrated with Guildhall's inertia in addressing the jurisdictional authority there. In February 1640, the Court of Aldermen ordered the Chamberlain to pay the City carpenter £25 for setting up the 'posts and barres' without Aldgate. The purpose was for 'lymiting the bounds' between the City's Liberty and St Mary Whitechapel.[11] As the City set out jurisdictional responsibility and rebuffed the Crown's attempts for the incorporation of or acceptance of suburban incorporation independent of the City, suburban parishes were empowered to take the lead in responding to plague. As the discussion demonstrated in Chapter 3, the plague regulations provided the framework and power by which to implement the orders as the need arose. This was essential given the long-term dimension of plague and the inconsistent intervention of external authorities.

The vestry of St Martin in the Fields ordered red crosses to be marked on the doors of infected houses in early March 1630 and were supporting several households by mid-April. This included that of Cuthbert Crooks and his family of four at 4d each for a week ending 16 April. These and other references in the examiners' plague account booklet show the full implementation of quarantine through the spring months. A woman keeper 'of the ffrenchman in Churchlane' received 2s 3d for 'a weeks pay' and the searchers Thomazen Ellis, and Rose Cooper received 10s for 'a ffortnights pay' on 16 April.[12] The booklet runs through to 18 June and relates to the 24 plague burials of 435 total burials entered in the burial register between January and June.[13] As the discussion in Chapter 4 demonstrated, both 1630 and 1631 were minor plague years. The examiners' account booklet and other parish records show that quarantine and wider plague regulations were fully applied in both

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[10] W. H. Overall and H. C. Overall, *Analytical Index to the Series of Records Known as the Remembrancia 1579-1664* (London: E.G Francis, 1878), II.15.

[11] LMA COL/CA/01/01/059, ff.86v.

[12] WAC F4515 - not foliated.

[13] J. V. Kitto, *A Register of Baptisms, Marriages, and Burials in the Parish of St. Martin-in-the-Fields London* (London: Mitchell & Hughes, 1898-1936), 257-266.

years.[14] The rigorous response to minor localised plague incidence in St Martin's in 1631 may also have been influenced by the Crown's focus on the stringent implementation of quarantine. The records of the Court of Aldermen make no reference to plague between December 1630 and May 1631.[15]

The need to ensure shut-up houses were a visible marker in communities was important in the push to see household quarantine effectively implemented after 1630. The Privy Council complained to the City in April 1630 that their 'former directions' for preventing plague were not observed. They emphasised the need for red crosses and markings to be set on the doors for passers-by to note.[16] In early March 1631, the vestry of St Martin in the Fields ordered that a foot-long red cross be set on the outer door of any house, tenement or seller which was or will be visited with the sickness for 'so longe as the said house tenement of place shalle shutt upp of the said infecc[i]on'.[17] Vanessa Harding argued that the marking of infected houses and the eventual extension of marking doors with a red cross was the most 'ubiquitous textual manifestation' of plague. This fixed itself in the 'popular understanding and discourse' of the disease.[18] In early May 1636, the Council expressed their consternation to Guildhall that crosses and inscriptions were placed obscurely on doors, so to be 'hardly be discernible and that infected houses were 'negligently' looked to with no watchman and people seen congregating at the doors. The Council ordered this to be resolved and any persons failing to comply to be 'shut with the rest of the infected persons' and any officers failing in their duty to be committed to Newgate.[19] In a practical sense, the marking of infected households provided a signpost to where plague was active in the parish and a marker to plague officers and auxiliaries that were charged with securing and supporting the infected.

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[14] WAC F415; F3, ff.95v,-96, 118v-119v, 132v; F2002, ff.82; F3355 - not foliated.

[15] LMA COL/CA/01/01/049.

[16] Overall, *Remembrancia*, VII 26

[17] WAC F2002, ff.82

[18] Vanessa Harding, 'Burial of the Plague Dead in Early Modern London', in J. A. I. Champion (ed)., *Epidemic Disease in London* (Centre for Metropolitan History Working Papers Series, No. 1, 1993), 6.

[19] Overall, *Remembrancia*, VII.26, 180.

The Crown was again spurred to action early in 1636 as the reports of plague in several suburban parishes arrived at the Privy Council. The order was made for the levying of rates in Middlesex and Surrey in late April 1636. The Justices of the Peace there were directed to join with the Mayor and Alderman and make and print 'additional orders' or books for preventing the increase of infection. Churchwardens and other local officers were instructed to 'provide themselves' with those books.[20] The Court of Aldermen were focused on readying the City's pesthouse, which was located in the Middlesex area of St Giles Cripplegate. They also sent a petition to the king for 'stay of sealing the patent incorporating the suburbs', which in May, extended to the formation of a committee to attend the Privy Council regarding the incorporation of the suburbs within three miles.[21] Ian Archer suggested that the City's reluctance to formally extend their jurisdiction into the growing suburbs was due to the fear of 'social dilution' of civic institutions or simply the 'sheer magnitude' of the challenge. They also opposed the Crown's suggestion that the suburbs incorporate independently of the City. The result, as Archer argued, was that government in the suburbs remained 'fragmented and unreformed', which in times of plague, meant the suburban parishes were on their own.[22] A reference in the City's Cash books for the year ending September 1637 indicates that the City was sensitive to that fragmentation. A payment was made by the City Chamberlain for a Commission that was directed to make all the Aldermen of this 'Cittie Justices of peace in all the out places about this Cittie'.[23] No other detail is given, but it suggests that there was some consciousness about disorder arising from an epidemic that largely impacted the suburbs.

By July 1636, financial hardship was emerging beyond the walls and to the south of the river, with petitions presented to the Aldermen by St Sepulchre Newgate and St Thomas' in Southwark for support of their poor. The Aldermen directed the Chamberlain to release £100 from company contributions, for which 'poor infected' parishes might petition the Mayor for relief.[24] The City records do not give the impression that parishes beyond the walls were a

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[20] Overall, *Remembrancia*, II.177.

[21] LMA COL/CA/01/01/054/01, ff.206.

[22] Ian Archer, 'Government in Early Modern London: The Challenge of the Suburbs', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 107 (2001), 138-139.

[23] LMA COL/CHD/CT/01/002, ff.140.

[24] LMA COL/CA/01/01/054/01, ff.188v, 199-199v, 228v, 241v-242v, 283v.

priority. This does not shift when looking to the City's Cash books for the year ending September 1636. The payment of £25 to St Sepulchre was listed under 'Outward ffees'. This was specified as being directed by the 'court' on 14 June 1636 and was to continue for one year. Outside the annual payment to William Upton, the keeper of the pesthouse, in the same section as the payment to St Sepulchre's, and repairs and provision to the City's pesthouse, the only other plague related reference in that year is a payment to the City's printer Robert Young. This was for 500 books of orders that were 'sett fourth by his ma:[jes]tie concerning the Infecc[i]on of the Plague' and £25 for 'binding or stiching' them.[25] This is quite telling as to the City's view of where responsibility for plague resided beyond the reissue of plague directives.

The City's Cash book for the next year, which ends in September 1637, reiterates this observation and Guildhall's priorities. A payment was made to Gregory Oldfield for killing dogs within the city and liberties and to Robert Young for 3000 bills to 'bee sett over the doores of houses infected with the Plague within this Cittie and Lib[er]ties'. Young was also paid for 23 books concerning the fast that was appointed by Charles I, 26 books of the decree in the Star Camber concerning 'Inmates and newe buildings in and about this City', 6000 passes for vagrant and 4000 bonds concerning the restraining of 'Inmates and deviding of Tenements according to the Star Chamber decree'.[26] These references and the discussion above illustrate the wide-ranging focus and inconsistent intervention of the Crown and City in the suburbs. The sections that follow, and the discussion in Chapter 6, explore the response of suburban parishes to plague in that context.

5.2 The extramural parishes

The responsibility to see quarantine implemented was imposed on vestries, who, in turn, delegated oversight to appointed plague officers. A host of plague auxiliaries were deployed to ensure the practical implementation of quarantine in the parish. The size and social character of suburban parishes added a unique financial and logistical dimension to the

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[25] LMA COL/CHD/CT/01/002, ff.40-40v, 54-54v, 55v.

[26] LMA COL/CHD/CT/01/002, 134, 143v-144v.

practicalities of implementing quarantine. This was due to the scale of plague in an epidemic, and in an endemic year, the need to balance quarantine alongside the wider management of the poor. The records for the westerly extramural parishes show continuity in the implementation of quarantine in the suburbs in successive plague events, regardless of the scale of the visitation.

Explicit reference to orders for the implementation of quarantine are rare in the parish records. This tends to be indicated by incidental references to the appointing of officers and auxiliaries, preparation for securing infected houses, and more usually, relief paid to the quarantined. For example, St Dunstan in the West had probably implemented quarantine as early as May in 1593. This is indicated by payment to the 'paynter' for marking crosses on infected houses and payment to the searchers of St Bride Fleet Street. One John Wright was given parish plague relief on 26 May.[27] The clerk marked plague burials at that time and recorded the first two, of separate households, on 3 and 7 May. A further four were recorded between 23 and 29 May. Alexander 'Righte', out of John 'Rightes' was buried though on 26 May. Caution is advised in assuming that all payments to visited persons necessarily implied they were shut up.[28] The painter though was paid again for four crosses on 4 July and five on 11 July, and around this time the churchwardens paid 12d 'for the bills of the sicknes'. This coincides with external direction at that time. In the interim, the parish was implementing plague regulations, which was an essential outcome of the delegation of responsibility to parishes.[29]

It is also worth noting that plague was active at an endemic level in the parish in 1592. There were 32 plague burials between 8 August and 30 December, and one on 20 January 1593. A gap then emerged in plague burials until early May with the beginning of the epidemic.[30] The churchwardens' accounts record that 6d was paid to 'Mr ffysher for booke[s] touchinge the plage' and 12d was paid for two baskets and red wands, which were presumably for the

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[27] LMA P69/DUN2/B/011/MS02968/001, ff.388.

[28] LMA P69/DUN2/A/002/MS010343, ff.67v-73v - the register shows sporadic plague burials through to August in 1594.

[29] LMA P69/DUN2/B/011/MS02968/001, ff.388, 390.

[30] LMA P69/DUN2/A/002/MS010343, ff.66-68.

searchers.[31] The parish was no doubt quarantining households in 1592, as they did in the epidemic that followed.

Plague spending in St Dunstan in the West was listed in a separate section of the churchwardens' accounts in 1603. The account shows that houses were quite likely being shut up from late June. Money was disbursed on several occasions to one Pinckaman 'beinge a lame man' and having a wife, maid and three children 'all visited and two died since 22 of June'.[32] The Lord Mayor had alerted the Privy Council on 18 April 1603 to the measures taken to prevent the spread of plague in Middlesex and Surrey but it was not until July that the Court of Aldermen directed the Provost Marshall to see the Plague Orders published.[33] The St Dunstan's records show some direction from the Mayor on 18 July, when payment was made for pitch bought by 'comandem[en]t for. the Lo: Maior for bonfires'. The accounts are not consistently dated but an entry in late October indicates that quarantine was probably maintained at some level through the worst of the epidemic: money was given to goody Leake 'since the visitac[i]on of her boy att sev[er]all tymes'.[34] Again, we need to be cautious of assuming that all infected households were necessarily shut up but given the onus on parishes to implement the plague regulations, and when set alongside other references, there is little reason to doubt the policy was generally applied.

The cumulative financial and logistical pressures that resulted from the rise to the peak of a major epidemic would not necessarily be alleviated in the decline through the late autumn. The minimum period of household quarantine was forty days and the plague regulations stipulated that to be extended when plague deaths were experienced in a household during the quarantine.[35] As such, the cost and logistical burden of maintaining quarantine might continue deep into the winter months. This will be evident below in the discussion of quarantine in St Martin in the Fields. As will be described in the next chapter, a muted

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[31] LMA P69/DUN2/B/011/MS02968/001, ff.378v.

[32] LMA P69/DUN2/B/011/MS02968/001, ff.482v.

[33] Overall, *Remembrancia*, II.234; LMA COL/CA/01/01/028, ff.180.

[34] LMA P69/DUN2/B/011/MS02968/001, ff.479v, 483.

[35] Daniel Defoe**,** *A Journal of a Plague Year* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, revised edition 2010), 36-39.

charitable impulse and difficulties in bringing in all due rates exacerbated these challenges in the suburbs.

The records of the Court of Aldermen are relatively devoid of reference to plague in the endemic period that followed the 1603 epidemic. As suggested in Chapter 3 and above, this demonstrates that the City lacked understanding or were disinterested in the experience of plague beyond the walls. The City Chamberlain was ordered in August 1609 to make payment for charges disbursed for the poor visited sent to the pesthouse by the Mayor, Aldermen and Provost Marshal. It would be assumed that this applied more practically to the intramural parishes. As the discussion in Chapter 6 will show, the extramural parishes made very limited use of the City's pesthouse. An entry on 13 November illustrates the main concern with plague in that endemic period. The Aldermen discussed commandment from the King to confer with the Justices of the Peace in Middlesex and Surrey for taking care of the 'stay of the infection of the Plague' for the six months ensuing. They were also directed to set down orders 'towching newe buildings Inmates and dividing howses into severall inhabitac[i]ons'. This demonstrates the perceived link between suburban expansion and plague.[36]

The discussion in Chapter 4 showed that plague was largely a suburban problem in this endemic period. St Dunstan in the West implemented quarantine and associated measures as necessary. In midsummer 1607, the churchwardens paid one Cowly for 'warding sev[er]all dores being vissited beginning at Mr Hewes howse'. The vestry agreed on 20 October to pay the warders for the 'poor householders houses in the tyme of their visitat[i]on'. The reference indicates the social bias of plague in that year and measures taken to ensure compliance. On 28 July 1610, Thomas Cheshire and Richard Blackway were appointed examiners for the visited for the three months ensuing.[37] The tardiness or absence of City direction was not a barrier to the vestry of St Dunstan's managing their local plague problem.

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[36] LMA COL/CA/01/01/032, ff.68v, 125.

[37] LMA P69/DUN2/B/011/MS02968/001, ff.537v; P69/DUN2/B/001/MS03016/001, ff.57.

This was also the case in the epidemic years. The slow response of Guildhall in 1625 aroused the ire of the Privy Council. They complained in March that despite plague 'daily increasing' in the City, the Council had not heard 'any good course' taken for preventing it.[38] As the discussion showed in Chapter 4, plague emerged in the northeastern extramural parishes, possibly as early as the summer in 1624. The complaint of the Privy Council coincided with a petition from the parishioners of St Botolph Bishopsgate, for relief in light of their 'extraordinary expenditure' with the visited of plague.[39] Assuming that the aforementioned 'poor visited' were shut up, Bishopsgate appears to have been operating quarantine and implementing wider plague regulations well ahead of any formal direction in the early spring in 1625. The primary focus of the Aldermen in early May 1625 was the punishment of several constables from intramural parishes in and around Lombard Street. This was for not seeing vagrants, rogues and beggars moved on, and suggests a more general focus on order within the walls.[40]

As was described in Chapter 4, plague was slower to take hold in the western extramural parishes in 1625. In early July, following direction from the Privy Council via Guildhall, the vestry of St Dunstan in the West appointed plague examiners. One Felman was also paid for 'watchinge at Hindes doore' for five days and four nights around this time. The junior churchwarden's account lists 79 individual payments to the poor from 21 May 1625 to 3 January 1626. This emphasises the intersection of the problems of plague and the poor in an epidemic year, where disruption to the economic rhythms of parish life caused general hardship for the ordinary poor. There is a gap in the record from 14 October to 20 December, which possibly reflects the disruption of the epidemic. This presents the question as to whether quarantine broke down alongside the record keeping. The last specific reference to quarantine in St Dunstan's in that year was a payment in September to two warders for 'watchinge Gascoinges house'. The tail of the epidemic and extended implementation of

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[38] Overall, *Remembrancia,* VI.57.

[39] LMA COL/CA/01/01/043, ff.158.

[40] LMA COL/CA/01/01/043, ff.184-184v.

quarantine into the new year though is shown in the payments to one Williamson for 'wardinge at Whitbyes dore more' on 23 February 1626.[41]

Paul Slack suggested that the Crown was sensitive to the dangers of plague in 1630 and 1636. This is evident on 22 April 1636 when the Privy Council directed the Justices in Middlesex and the Mayor and Court of Aldermen to make and print 'additional orders' for preventing plague and making further orders 'as they see fit'.[42] The first explicit reference to quarantine in St Dunstan in the West was not until 10 August, when money was spent on the 'Marshall' (presumably the Provost Marshall) and the examiners for shutting up of three infected houses. Elevations in burials were not evident in the western suburbs until the mid-summer, which coincides with the timing of this reference (figure 4.9, p.140). Examiners were sworn in before the Lord Mayor in November, the point at which plague was more active within the walls. This is not to say that the aforementioned examiners were not a second group, given they tended to serve for a defined period of anywhere between one to three months. They may also have been sworn in at the point when the City provided some direction to parishes. The extended timing of the visitation is evident in plague burials in the early months in 1637. For example, in March 1637, the churchwardens disbursed money 'for buring 2 of the plague out of Warners house' and John Harvey who died of the 'plague at Tayers house in Crowne Court'.[43] As commented above, this does not necessarily imply quarantine was in place but indicates plague was active in the parish, and that the vestry was probably implementing quarantine.

These patterns are evident in endemic plague years. The churchwardens' accounts of St Bride Fleet Street reserve separate sections for the 'visited houses and other persons' in 1646-48. The first entry in the account in 1646 is 4 July when four bearers were paid 4s to carry one to church 'supposes dye of the plague'. Two days later 2s was disbursed to a 'woman visited' in Rackett Court. If quarantine was in place then this mirrors the evident trend in St Dunstan's, where external direction was not a precursor to implementing quarantine. Rather, when

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[41] LMA P69/DUN2/B/011/MS02968/002, ff.288-296.

[42] Overall, *Remembrancia,* VII.177.

[43] P69/DUN2/B/011/MS02968/003, ff.510-513v.

plague was active in the parish, vestries quickly implemented plague regulations. This is made more explicit in the payment to one Fisher for three locks on 22 July.[44]

The social character of the plague dead in St Bride's in 1641 is suggested by the 66 burials marked as plague in the burial receipts section of the churchwarden's accounts. Just four were recorded as having paid a fee and the majority were buried in the lower churchyard. This was additional ground that was acquired by gift in 1610 and was generally the preserve of the less substantial.[45] We might reasonably speculate that the families could not afford to pay. The ordinary poor might be self-sufficient but lack the reserves required to cover a period of household quarantine. Vanessa Harding commented that the shutting up of households may have contributed to a failure to pay burial fees, as families were not able to organise and pay for burial as they normally would under the financial pressure and physical restrictions of quarantine.[46] Harding also suggested that the mass burial pits dug by the parish in 1665 were most likely located in the lower ground and not the upper ground around the church, where restrictions were imposed by the vestry.[47]

The St Bride's plague accounts also reflect the paradox of strict isolation and care and the important role plague auxiliaries played in seeing quarantine through in an endemic plague year. The churchwardens paid for a lock and hinge for 'Growes doore' and for 'lookinge to Millisent Growes in her sickness' in early October 1647. Growes, a parish pensioner, did not survive her isolation, the searchers were paid 'for winding of her upp' and one Cooke for 'cleansinge her howse'. The vestry later ordered her goods appraised and disposed of to the benefit of the parish poor, a necessary measure to recoup spending and ensure provision for other quarantined households deemed deserving of plague relief.[48] Moreover, the determination to see infected houses secured does say something about the ability to enforce the regulations in a more severe endemic plague year. This extends Paul Slack's observation

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[44] LMA P69/BRI/B/016/MS06552/001, ff.165v-166.

[45] LMA P69/BRI/B/016/MS06552/001, ff.62v-67.

[46] Harding, 'Burial of Plague Dead', 53-66.

[47] Harding, 'Burial of Plague Dead', 53-66.

[48] LMA P69/BRI/B/016/MS06552/001, ff.172v-174.

that quarantine was not maintained beyond minor levels of plague. What stands out in St Bride's in the 1640s, is quarantine imposed consistently and rigorously, whether a minor or more severe elevation is evident.

The pressure of implementing quarantine in an endemic plague year caused hardship in suburban parishes, which will be a key theme explored in Chapter 6. The clerk in St Sepulchre Newgate recorded the disbursements to the poor visited in the Middlesex part of the parish in 1647 in a separate account booklet. The accounts, which also included more general payments to the poor, were written up at a later date but do show records and quarantine maintained through the visitation. The account begins on 29 May 1647 and ends on 8 February 1648. A total of £43 1s 10d was spent on the poor visited. Of the 21 quarantined households that received parish support, just three also appear as recipients of casual poor relief in 1647. Two of the individuals were designated as the 'poor of the parish' in a special list recording payment from the Butchers gift (described below in the discussion of plague auxiliaries). William Wagg, whose house was also shut up, was a recipient of that gift. This shows that the perceived responsibility of the parish was with those already judged to deserve and belong, and also illustrates the intersection of the two problems in an endemic plague year. Eighteen of the twenty-one households in receipt of plague relief had also received poor relief at different times, which was listed in that part of the account booklet. The financial strain of maintaining quarantine and supporting the chargeable in that endemic plague year is evident in payment on 17 January 1648 to a scrivener for making a book for the 'second assessm[en]t' for the visited. This followed an initial assessment in late September.[49] It is important to situate the response to endemic plague events within the context of wider social problems and the more general approach of suburban parishes to the poor.

The discussion of the westerly extramural parishes shows continuity in the implementation of quarantine, in both epidemic and endemic years. The independent manner in which parishes operated and the potential financial and logistical strain is also evident. A more finely grained view of the experience of quarantine can be gained from the list of all quarantined

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[49] LMA P69/SEP/B/123/MS09080/001B - not foliated.

households that was maintained in St Martin in the Fields through the epidemic in 1636 and the wider visitation in 1637.

5.3 Scale of quarantine

As commented in the previous chapter, Julia Merritt and Kira Newman used the list of quarantined houses in St Martin's to present the broad framework of quarantine in the parish.[50] It has not yet been systematically analysed to test aspects of the established understanding of the quarantine experience. The discussion below will demonstrate that the interpretation of quarantine, as set down in the plague regulations, was far more pliable and pragmatic than has been perceived. This was focused on ensuring compliance and mitigating the financial cost, which was an important approach, given the scale of quarantine that parishes might manage in an epidemic.

The first plague burial marked in the St Martin's register in 1636 was on 12 June, and the first household was shut up that day and the second on 29 June.[51] Payment was made in July to a stationer for 26 books for his 'ma[jes]ties printed Instructions and for printed bills for the 'Visited doores to sett upon them'. These were given to the plague examiners, as ordered by the Justices of the Peace'.[52] As described in Chapter 4, the parish quarantined 360 households and 1,752 individuals through 1636 and 1637. This was achieved primarily in dwellings, although the parish pesthouse was used. As the discussion in Chapter 4 also demonstrated, plague was diffused across the parish and quarantined houses would have been an openly visible marker, as opposed to being secreted away in the alleys, courts and yards of the parish.

The discussion in Chapter 4 suggested that some 20% of the parish population experienced isolation in some form in the epidemic and extended visitation in 1636 and 1637. The proportion of the parish affected by quarantine might be slightly increased if we take into

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[50] Julia Merritt, *Early Modern Westminster, Abbey, Court and Community 1525-1640* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 296-306**;** Newman, 'Shutt up', 815-816, 819-821.

[51] Kitto, *A Register of Baptisms, Marriages and Burials,* 309-310**;** WAC F4514, ff.1.

[52] WAC F4516, ff.14v.

account the flight of the more substantial members of the community. This is a factor that would impact the rate-paying base and cause a more general economic impact in St Martin's, given the service sector that existed to cater to the elite therein.[53] Absence did not negate responsibility. The parish had imposed a double rate on any ratepayer who fled the parish in 1625, although rate arrears were still being chased down in 1627.[54] The vestry recorded the names of 214 persons that were 'out of town' in 1636, so that the rate could be collected on their return. The list of absent ratepayers may well not record all those who fled the parish. The list is not dated but was probably compiled in the early stages of the epidemic when the first rate was called. The assessed amount that was outstanding across the absentee ratepayers was £90 5s 10d.[55] As the discussion in Chapter 6 will show, the vestry of St Martin's experienced difficulties in gathering all due rates in and beyond 1636.

A general Bill of Mortality broadsheet reported 850 total burials in the main epidemic in 1636, of which 294 were reported as plague.[56] The fact the number of quarantined houses (360) exceeded the number of plague burials says something to the limited household clustering of plague deaths. Moreover, a household might be quarantined if an occupant was showing symptoms associated with plague, as stipulated by the Plague Orders.[57] As such, there were many instances when a household was quarantined yet no actual plague deaths might be experienced during the period of isolation. This might be evident in that not all burials in the register connected to a quarantined household were marked as plague. This may not have been an administrative error, rather it reflects uncertainty or that plague was not the cause of death, and that quarantine was used as a precautionary measure.

The autumnal rise and sustained peak of the epidemic are evident in the 60 or so households that were shut up in each of September, October and November (figure 5.1).[58] The number of

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[53] Merritt, *Early Modern Westminster*, 178-179

[54] WAC F3354; F002, ff.53, 63.

[55] WAC F3356 - this document is not foliated.

[56] T. Birch, *A Collection of the Yearly Bills of Mortality, from 1657 to 1758* (London: A. Miller, 1759) - 1636.

[57] Daniel Defoe, *A Journal of a Plague Year* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, revised edition 2010), 36-37.

[58] WAC F4514, ff.15-71.

people in isolation declined slightly, the measure taken in the last week of each month. The number of newly shut up houses was three times the number reopened in September, as the number of new households quarantined doubled from the previous month. The burden was alleviated on some level with the reopening of houses at a similar rate in October and November. For example, whilst 59 houses were quarantined through October, the reopening of 67 households reduced the burden on the parish. This needs to be set against the increasing percentage of chargeable households in quarantine (figure 5.2). Equally, the tail of the epidemic could prove challenging, as evident in the lingering burden through December and into January and the parish organising loans to cover the shortfall in rates at that time.
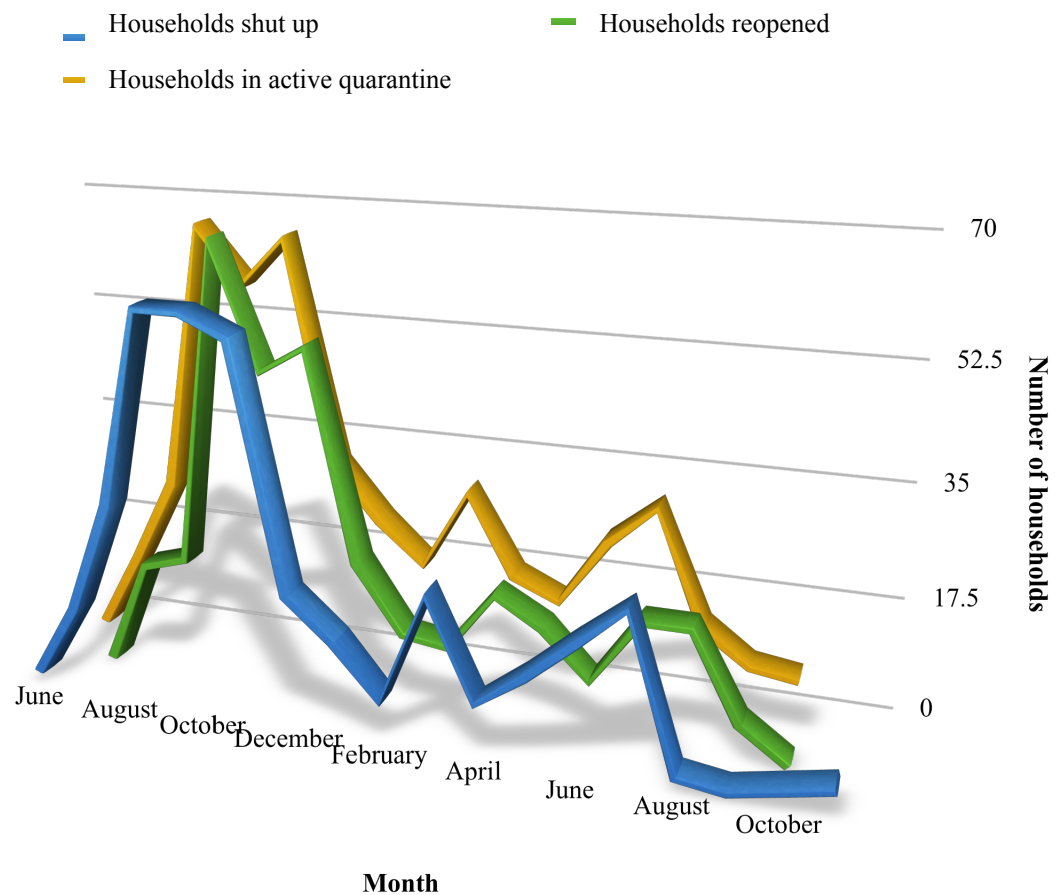
Figure 5.1. Scale of quarantine by month in St Martin in the Fields, June 1636-December 1637. Source: WAC F4514.

The parish also maintained a list of the number of households shut up and persons chargeable in each week (figure 5.2).[59] The term 'chargeable' in the list was used to show those who

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[59] WAC F4516, ff.4-12v.

were given relief in their quarantine by the parish. The numbers of quarantined individuals who were 'chargeable to the parish' increased from 71% (183) of 258 persons in the last week of September to 84% (185) of 224 persons at the end of October. And whilst the number of quarantined households dropped away in December, the actual proportion of the isolated that were chargeable to the parish increased to 90%. Kira Newman compared this to the 15-19% of parishioners 'regularly' taking poor relief in the parish. Newman was right in her observation that plague pushed otherwise self-sufficient people to the need for parish relief. Newman focused her conclusion on the middling sort.[60]

Figure 5.2. Individuals in quarantine and chargeable to the parish by month in St Martin in the Fields, June 1636-April 1637. The data used was that for the last week of each month. **Source:** WAC F4516.

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[60] Newman, 'Shutt up', 817-818.

Caution is advised in assuming that those 'regularly' listed as in receipt of assistance in a poor rate book comprised everyone in need. That is an arbitrary measure that was driven by both available resources and a discretionary outlook. This was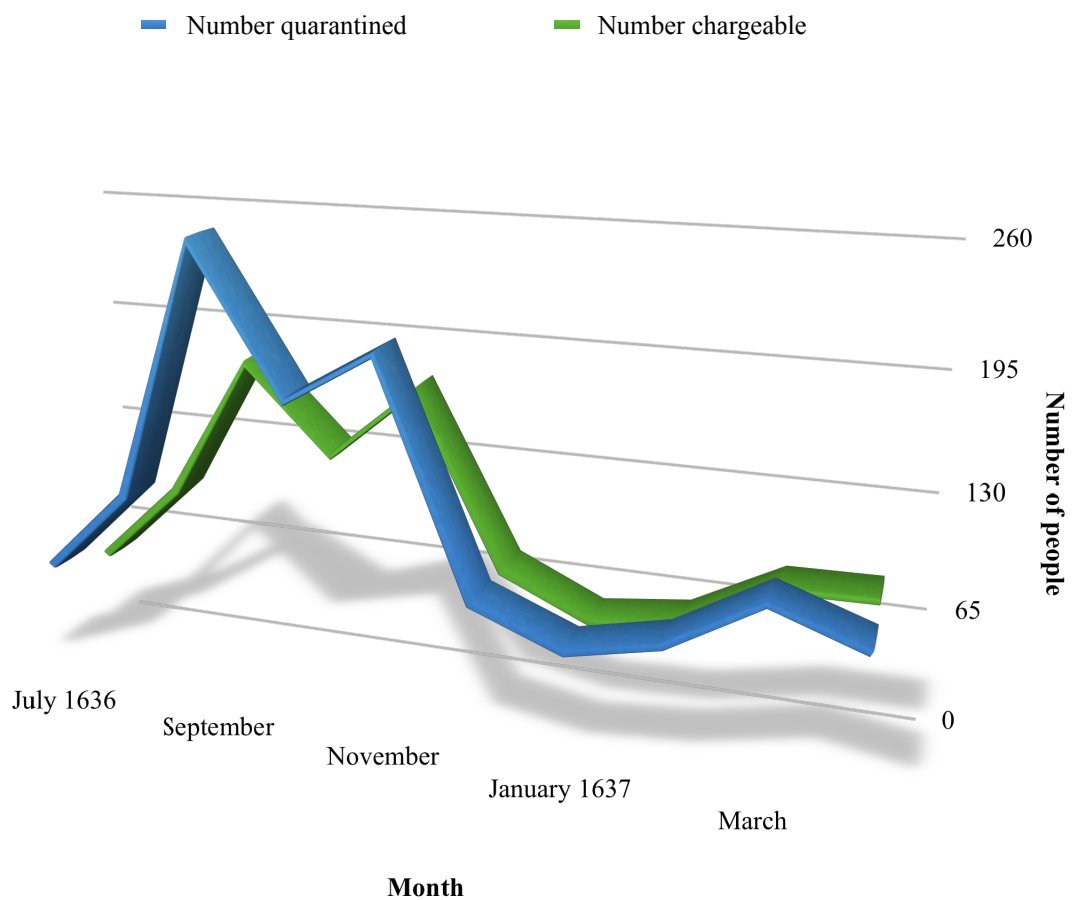 framed by concepts of belonging, amidst expanding populations and increasing social problems. As commented in Chapter 1, the ordinary poor might be generally self-sufficient but easily pushed into poverty and the need for parish relief by a change in life-circumstance or a crisis event. Ian Archer suggested that 7% of householders were dependent on the parish in late Elizabethan London. A further 18% were in need of 'occasional' help and were in danger of 'destitution' in crisis years.[61] The financial situation of the ordinary poor was precarious, and as such, expenditure in the poor-rate book cannot capture the full scale of actual need in a growing suburban parish. These are important considerations in understanding the marked rise in those 'regularly' relieved by the parish to those chargeable in a time of plague.

Moreover, inmates and lodgers did not qualify for parochial relief and would elevate further the gap in the records. A multiple-occupancy household is reflected in the burials of Audrea Filpott (Philpott) on 5 August 1636, an unnamed 'Philpott' on 9 August, the infant William Philpott on 18 August and Augustine 'Filpott' on 23 August.[62] Except for the unnamed Philpott, the family connections are not noted but the household of Augustine Philpott in Russell Street, which comprised eight people in four families, was shut up on 9 August. The house was reopened after seven weeks. In that period of isolation, four of the eight members of the household were recorded in the list as having died. The clerk noted seven people in the house in the second week of isolation, six in the third week and four in the family the last four weeks. Two deaths presumably occurred late in the third week. [63]Audrea is not marked as a plague burial in the register, whilst William and Augustine were. Providing that Audrea was a member of the family, the searchers judged plague not to be the cause of her death but days later identified plague as the cause of the unnamed Philpott's death. No other Philpotts are listed in the burial register and the two surplus deaths probably came from one of the other families, whose names are not listed under the quarantined household.

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[61] Ian Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 153.

[62] Kitto, *A Register of Baptisms, Marriages and Burials,* 311-312.

[63] WAC F4514, ff.7.

As the discussion in Chapter 3 described, inmates and lodgers were an established part of suburban parishes. Relationships and associations can be tricky to disentangle in the list and register. The complexities in household structure are evident in the list of quarantined houses, with 34 households that were explicitly comprised of multiple families. Whilst seven of these were located in St Martin's Lane, the majority were in courts and alleys. The household of John Eastridge in Spur Alley was comprised of four families of seventeen people and was shut up on 29 June and reopened 4.1 weeks later. Eastridge was also listed as the landlord by the clerk. The Plague Orders stated that where several inmates are 'in one and the same house', and if any in the house were infected, then no-one could be removed without a certificate from the plague examiners.[64] The household incurred a total charge of £10 15s 10d with cordial given and 10s lent to 'Sutton's family'. Three members of Sutton's family were sent to the pesthouse 'afterwards', the afterwards taken as the end of the four-week isolation.[65] The names Eastridge and Sutton are not found in the register. Two plague burials occurred around the closure of Eastridge's household but these cannot safely be connected to the household.[66]

Flexibility is evident in the reopening of Eastridge's house after 28 days and the release of three of the four families, despite suspicions in the illness of Sutton's family. In this instance, beyond the initial four weeks of isolation, the parish chose not to maintain the quarantine of the healthy with the sick. The parish pesthouse was an important factor in the ability of St Martin's to exercise a flexible and fluid interpretation in the timing of household isolation, as will be explored in Chapter 6. The number of seemingly unconnected resident families in the Eastridge household, and the charge to the parish, indicates that the families were probably sharing a small tenement or were inmates or lodgers.

Other entries were explicit in their reference to inmates. Henry Hill's household in Long Acre was shut up on 21 July 1636. Two families of four people were quarantined and all were

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[64] Defoe, *Journal of a Plague Year*, 37.

[65] WAC F4514 , ff.1.

[66] Kitto, *A Register of Baptisms, Marriages and Burials*, 310

recorded as emerging at the reopening of the household on 14 August.[67] The register records Johannes Hill buried of plague on 20 July and the likely reason for the decision to shut up the household.[68] The parish provided a doorkeeper and expended a little over £3 on the household. Henry Hill is recorded as 'Henry Hill to the inmates', with Thomas Joyce listed as the landlord. The reference to Henry Hill and others like Thomas Eastridge, shows the quarantine of multi-family households and indicates the social character of those particular units.

Despite ongoing parish anxiety about inmates and lodgers, a flexible approach was taken when quarantining a household where they were present. Thomas Heach's household in Bennetts Alley, which comprised three families of eleven persons, was shut up on 1 August in 1636 and reopened four weeks later. The occupants were relieved for a total cost of £8 12s 8d to the parish, with 30 shillings lent to Thomas Hawker, an 'Inmate in the same house'. In the case of Hawker, the plague officers were keen to mitigate the cost of his quarantine. Not all multi-family households were chargeable to the parish though. Rowland Williams, in Spur Alley, and the three families of nine persons that were shut up on 12 September 1636 were only chargeable for a lock and doorkeeper. The house was reopened two weeks later. The lock presents an interesting dimension in that a household judged otherwise able to make provision for their needs, did not possess locks. It might suggest the need for firm enforcement in some households.[69] This is a feature of the list, in which watchers or warders were used very sparingly and only associated with specific houses.

The references to the quarantine of multi-family 'households' and inmates suggest that these were the ordinary poor. Incidental references in the extraordinary plague accounts show that the ordinary poor were impacted more severely in 1636 and 1637. The parish clerk recorded a sum of £6 14s 3d paid to a Mr Henry Strugnell for 'shrouding for the poore Visited' between October 1636 and April 1637.[70] St Giles in the Fields paid 2s 6d for a shroud for a

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[67] WAC F4514, ff.3.

[68] Kitto, *A Register of Baptisms, Marriages and Burials*, 310.

[69] WAC F4514, ff.5.

[70] WAC F4516, ff.16.

poor Irishman in 1640 and the same for each of ten 'persons dying in the Fields'. This gives some context to the number of shrouds purchased in St Martin's.[71] The clerk also recorded £5 2s 4d paid to the grave maker Edwin Tracher, for making 364 graves for the 'poore visited' from early June 1636 to April in 1637.[72] This would account for the great majority of plague burials in that time.

The extraordinary spending on the poor that is listed in the overseers' account book shows the wider impact on the ordinary poor in a plague year. These payments are casual and additional to the more permanent payments to parish pensioners. In the year ending April 1636, a year that can be judged as plague free, the total of extraordinary payments to the poor was £58 11d. The payments to the pensioners totalled £181 8s 6d. In the year ending April 1637, the extraordinary payments to the poor rose to £153 10s 1d. This retracted to £87 8s 1d in the year ending April 1640.[73] The data demonstrates the hardship that plague caused and that the true impact of plague in a suburban parish went beyond the number of plague burials or houses that were quarantined.

The week by week list of the number of houses shut up specifies the numbers incurring and not incurring a cost to the parish. It is only in the last week of July that any that were not chargeable were listed. In that last week, thirteen houses were in quarantine with 75 persons therein, of which 61 were chargeable to the parish and fourteen were not. In the previous week, spanning 10-17 July, eight houses and 42 persons were shut up and all were chargeable to the parish.[74] The absence of any that were not chargeable through to the last week of July might be taken as an indication of the social bias of plague for the ordinary poor early in the epidemic. The timing in the purchase of the shrouds also suggests the ordinary poor were increasingly impacted as the epidemic worsened through October, which coincides with the percentage of chargeable increasing through the autumn to December.

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[71] John Parton, *Some Account of the Hospital and Parish of St Giles in the Fields* (London: Luke Hansard & Sons, 1822), 261.

[72] WAC F4516, ff.16.

[73] WAC F362, F363, F366 - not foliated.

[74] WAC F4516, ff.4-5.

The financial challenge of the epidemic is evident in the taking up of several loans to pay the cost of quarantine and other plague expedients, a point that will be expanded on in the discussion of paying for plague in the next chapter.[75] Despite the financial challenges in implementing quarantine, the parish did effectively maintain it through 1636 and 1637. This was aided by the fact that the burden was spread over the peak of the epidemic.

Emergent stress though is evident in the second half of September as the epidemic began to rise more rapidly to its local peak. The register shows a temporal cluster of plague burials from 26 August to 12 September, when 37 of 56 total burial events were marked as plague, alongside the shutting up of 34 new households.[76] This was an intense scale-up and is reflected in an increase in the number of plague auxiliaries deployed. In the week of 7 August, the parish deployed ten doorkeepers and three nurses, which was increased to seventeen and eleven in the week of 11 September.[77] Eight households alone were quarantined on 12 September, although the parish did manage to maintain speedy disposal of the dead.[78] William Matthews' house was shut up on 12 September and an unnamed son of his buried the same day, the son presumably the reason for the decision to quarantine the household. The register then shows sporadic plague burials through to the last week of September when temporal clustering in plague burials reoccurred.[79] This might suggest the outbreak was contained by rapid action in quarantining families, but that a new surge of infections occurred in late September.

Discrepancies in the register might reflect difficulties in maintaining record-keeping, at the point at which the parish had experienced a second surge in infections. Twelve households were newly quarantined between 13 and 24 September, the period in which just three plague burials are marked in the register. The household of Henry Smart was shut up in Round Court on 10 September, with eleven people at the shutting and twelve at the reopening five weeks

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[75] WAC F4516, ff.16.

[76] Kitto, *A Register of Baptisms, Marriages and Burials*, 312-313.

[77] WAC F4516, ff.5-6.

[78] WAC F4514, ff.19-23.

[79] Kitto, *A Register of Baptisms, Marriages and Burials*, 312-313.

later on 15 October. The increase was presumably the result of a child born in isolation. The parish incurred the charge of £6 15s 8d for the occupants. John Pecpoint (five people) and Anne Morgan (two people) were noted by the clerk as also resident in the household or what might be assumed a small tenement or similar multi-occupancy building. The clerk lumped these two families together and recorded that there were seven in the family in the first three weeks and eight the last two weeks.[80] The register marks as plague the burial of the infant Robert Smart on 9 September. The infant's death was the likely reason for the shutting up of the household. Susana Smart, William Smart and Elenor Smart were buried on 19, 24 and 25 September but not marked as plague.[81] The proximity of the Smart burials to the shutting of the household and the clustering of the three burials would make it reasonable to assume the names in the register were linked to William Smart's household.

Flexibility is evident in the parish's interpretation of the minimum period of confinement from the last death in an isolated household, and at a point when the epidemic worsened and the scale of quarantine intensified. At the tail end of this first period of plague burials, William Powell's household in Round Court was shut up on 12 September and was reopened five weeks later. There were four people in the 'famely' and three from the second week. The parish expended £2 9s 10d, primarily for a doorkeeper, which indicates that the family were deemed generally self-sufficient by the parish.[82] The infant 'Powells in the Round Court' was buried on 11 September and not marked plague. Edward Powells was then buried on 23 September and likewise not marked as plague.[83] The fact the household was reopened after five weeks, despite a second death there two weeks into the period of quarantine, suggests the examiners were confident that plague was not present in the household.

This also appears the case in the household of widow Ogre in White Hart Yard, which was shut up on 14 September. The burial register records Nicholas 'Ogery' buried the same day

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[80] WAC F4514, ff.23-27.

[81] Kitto, *A Register of Baptisms, Marriages and Burials*, 314.

[82] WAC F4514, ff.21.

[83] Kitto, *A Register of Baptisms, Marriages and Burials*, 313.

but not marked as a plague burial.[84] Eight people were isolated at the onset of the quarantine

and no further deaths were experienced until the seventh week when the clerk noted five left

in the family. The family were chargeable for £8 5s 6d to the parish, which included a

doorkeeper and nurse. The household was reopened after seven weeks of isolation, on 1

November.[85] Given the proximity of the three deaths at the end of the period of quarantine,

we would again assume the parish officers' confidence in plague not being responsible. They

may have maintained the quarantine for a week or so beyond the deaths to confirm this was

the case. The hefty charge the parish had already incurred in supporting the household may

also have influenced the flexible interpretation of the plague regulations. These points will be

expanded on in the next section, which is focused on the length of quarantine and household

clustering of plague deaths.

5.4 Length of quarantine

Angela and Charles Evans found that there was a 'marked' tendency for deaths to cluster

together temporally when there was more than one death in a household in the intramural

parish of St Peter Cornhill in 1603.[86] Despite contemporary criticisms as to the danger of

general quarantine for the healthy, the clustering of plague deaths in household units was

limited in St Martin in the Fields in 1636 and 1637. This contributed to the parish's ability to

manage quarantine, in that the majority of quarantined households were reopened within the

minimum period of time specified in the plague regulations. Whilst we need to take care of

inferring clustering from surnames alone, the list of quarantined houses presents the number

of people who died during the period of quarantine and usually the point at which they died.

The discussion builds on the limited household clustering of plague deaths evident in St

Andrew Holborn that was described in the previous chapter. The discussion will also show

that the parish's attitude to the length of quarantine was inconsistent, though there may well

be factors that we cannot know about that influenced their approach.

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[84] Kitto, *A Register of Baptisms, Marriages and Burials*, 313.

[85] WAC F4514, ff.23.

[86] Angela and Charles Evans, 'Plague – A Disease of Children and Servants? A Study of the Parish Records of St Peter upon Cornhill, London from 1580 to 1605', *Continuity and Change*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (2019), 203.

As commented above, the fact that not all members of a household bore the same surname is an important caveat when assessing clustering and total deaths in a household. The clerk of St Martin's recorded payment in the extraordinary accounts on 17 July 1636 to the bearers in St Giles in the Fields for carrying 'two Corps, the one from Widdowe Kinges howse and the other from Richard Bolds howse'.[87] Richard Bould's household was shut up in St Martin's on 5 July and comprised three families of ten people. The building was opened 7.4 weeks later on 29 August and two people were sent to the pesthouse until 15 September. Just four of the ten who were isolated survived the quarantine.[88] The dates of the deaths are not noted but four children of one Richard Bowles are marked in the register as plague burials in late July: Maria and Elizabeth on 22 July and William and Martha on 27 and 31 July.[89]

The mean number of people within a household at the start of the quarantine in June and July 1636 was 5.1 (72) and 4.5 (63) at the reopening. This presents a survival rate of 87.5%. Whilst the survival rate remained relatively unchanged, the mean household size at the start of the period of isolation declined through the peak and decline of the main epidemic: to 3.5 (202) and 3 (171) in October and 2.9 (57) and 2.7 (55) in December. The mean number of people shut up in a household was four and three at the reopening in 1636 and 1637. Given the ordinary poor tended to comprise smaller household units, this supports further the argument that they were more severely impacted in the epidemic.

Of the total households quarantined, which included those impacted by the removal of occupants to the pesthouse, 70% (252) experienced no deaths beyond the start of quarantine. This argues either for its effectiveness, or that it was unnecessarily applied, a point the discussion will explore. Just 12.5% (46) of households were shut up for seven to nine weeks, 3.8% (14) for ten to twelve weeks and 1.1% (4) more than thirteen weeks. Many of the longer periods of isolation related to those sent to the pesthouse. It is important to disentangle the stay in the pesthouse from the period of household isolation, as only the latter impacted

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[87] WAC 4516, ff.14v.

[88] WAC F4514, ff.1.

[89] Kitto, *A Register of Baptisms, Marriages and Burials*, 310-311.

more than the infected person. The parish's use of the pesthouse will be explored in the next chapter.

The mean period of household quarantine through 1636 and 1637 was five weeks with some 63% (232) of all households quarantined for four to six weeks. This was in and around the minimum period of isolation set out in the Plague Orders. Of households that were reopened within four to six weeks, just 19% (44) experienced a death beyond the onset of isolation and in most of these cases, the death occurred in the first week of the quarantine. Those reopened after four weeks were usually those where no further death had occurred. Oftentimes, a death in the first week might be that of the person for whose illness spurred the initial decision to quarantine. The household of Atwell Fox in Bedford Berry was quarantined for five weeks from 12 September in 1636. Two people were shut up and one died in the first week.[90] The burial register shows this to be 'Atwoell' who was buried on 15 September. The clerk marked his burial as plague.[91] With plague confirmed in the household, the examiners extended the quarantine for a further 28 days.

Some entries at the shorter end of the period of quarantine support the suggestion that precaution and perhaps even social character might have had some bearing on the reopening of a house. John Wallins in St Martins Green was shut up with three other members of his household on 10 October 1636 and the house was reopened after 1.4 weeks. The only charge to the parish was for the doorkeeper. Wallins was able to provide for his household, at least in a brief quarantine. The Plague Orders stated that those believed to be 'sound' be for 'one week at the least shut up and secluded from company for fear of some infection, at the first not appearing'.[92] This was a case of precautionary closure and explains the short period in which Wallins was shut up. Robert Butler, as another example, lived in St Martins Lane with two families that comprised seven people. They were shut up in his house on 22 October and all were released just two weeks later. Butler was recorded as 'not chargeable' by the clerk

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[90] WAC F4514, ff.22.

[91] Kitto, *A Register of Baptisms, Marriages and Burials*, 313.

[92] Defoe, *Journal of a Plague Year*, 36-37.

and that one of his servants 'being sicke' had been sent to the Pesthouse.[93] This short isolation of the family appears a precautionary measure and close interpretation of the Plague Orders used to reopen the house.

The examples above are best viewed in the light that plague officers were on the front line in their communities. They might also neighbour the quarantined, given the geographical diffusion of plague in the parish, and as such were best placed to understand the mood of the parish and how best to navigate conflict or non-compliance. It would be reasonable to posit the pragmatic interpretation of the Plague Orders helping with compliance, alongside minimising the cost and logistical burden of quarantine to the parish. When suspicions remained as to the presence or danger of plague though, the parish was firm. The clerk recorded seven people present in the aforementioned Butler's household at the point at which it was reopened on 2 November 1636. The household continued to arouse suspicion, evident in being shut up again on 14 November. The house was reopened five weeks later. Whilst some social bias may be evident in the early reopening of the household, it would appear that this had no bearing when plague might have been confirmed, rather than just suspected.

The plague officers appear cautious in their approach to suspicious illness at the point at which the parish-wide situation was worsening. James Webster's household in Drury Lane was shut up on 9 August 1636 and was reopened after 10.3 weeks. Only one member of the household of the six survived. Deaths were spread over time rather than clustered, with a single death occurring in each of the second, fifth, eighth and ninth week. The cost of Webster's isolation was not recorded but a nurse was attached to the family, presumably due to the ongoing illness in the household.[94] The register shows Anna Webster buried on 13 August and the infant Vinca Webster on 27 August. The two burials are not marked as plague.[95] Anna's burial would have occurred in the first week of the quarantine, which does not connect with the other burial in the second week of quarantine.

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[93] WAC F4514, ff.39, 46.

[94] WAC F4514, ff.7.

[95] Kitto, *A Register of Baptisms, Marriages and Burials*, 311.

The earlier discussion of the register showed that other burials from quarantined houses were not necessarily marked as plague. This raised the question of either inaccuracy in the record-keeping, amidst the disruption, or another disease vector at play in the household. It is interesting though that despite the clerk not marking the Webster burials as plague that their isolation was maintained for ten weeks. In the case of Webster, it appears that it was judged best to maintain the quarantine, even though this might incur additional cost to the parish if the household was chargeable. The containment of plague was the priority and extended outlay in one household might save the greater cost of maintaining other infected households if the occupants were perceived as posing a danger to the community. This outlook was based on the contemporary understanding of the transmission of plague.

Another example of this is seen in the parish's cautious approach to the household of widow Wright in Vinegar Yard. This example also suggests social bias in the more stringent imposition of quarantine, a point the discussion will return to. As was described in Chapter 4, three households were shut up in Vinegar Yard on 18 October 1636. The household of Henry Burton was opened after four weeks and that of widow Goddard after five weeks. Widow Wright's listed landlord was Edward Goddard, also the landlord for widow Hawkins, who was shut up the same day as widow Wright. This suggests that the two may have lived in a multi-occupational building. Both households comprised three people and although just one death was experienced in widow Wright's household beyond the beginning of quarantine, she was isolated for thirteen weeks. This was one of the longest periods of quarantine in the epidemic and accrued a charge of £5 9s 8d to the parish. The clerk recorded that there were three there in the first two weeks of confinement and '4 in famely the next 3 weekes'. Payment of £1 2s 6d was also made to Nurse Courtoup 'by order from the Justices of peace & Consent of the Examino[r]'.[96]

In situations when the period of quarantine extended to the 40-day minimum or only slightly beyond, this was usually a scenario where deaths had been experienced in the early or middling stages of the isolation. An informal three-week policy was then applied to ensure confidence that the house was clear of plague. Henry Collins was shut up on 20 August and

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[96] WAC F4514, ff.44-45.

his house was reopened 6.4 weeks later. Deaths occurred in the second and third weeks of quarantine.[97] Anna Collins was buried on 26 August and Joanna on 7 September, the register concurring with the list. Both were marked as plague by the clerk.[98] The house was reopened 3.4 weeks after the second death. The household of John Maccey in White Hart Yard was shut up for six weeks from 3 September and presented an even distribution of deaths. There were six in the family at the beginning of the isolation, a death in each of the first three weeks, with three surviving their isolation. A nurse was attached to the household for five of the six weeks. The fact there were no further deaths in the last three weeks of the quarantine quelled any fears that plague was active in the household.[99] The burial register lists no-one with the name of Maccey, but a Johanne Mercy was buried of plague on 5 September, which might well be the same family and show the cause of the family's isolation.[100] The parish had already expended £4 15s on the household. With three weeks having passed with no further deaths, and given the rising scale of plague in the parish at that time, the reopening of the household freed up resources to support others. Maintaining the quarantine into the fourth week beyond the last death was deemed as practically unnecessary.

There were occasional instances though where a dwelling might be opened within four to six weeks even when a death had occurred within the three-week window. John Jennifer's household in St Martin's Lane was shut up on 28 September 1636 and was reopened after 4.3 weeks. The clerk recorded two people therein for the first two weeks and one in the second two weeks. The cost to the parish was just 15s, which presumably related to a doorkeeper, the household was otherwise self-supporting. This again raises the possibility of a social bias exercised in the timing of when a house might be reopened. Widdow Clisby and her household of four were shut up in Harts Horne Lane on 2 May 1637. Despite a death in the last week of quarantine, the house was reopened on 30 May. The charge for the quarantine was £1 16s, which related to the provision of a doorkeeper only. These families were largely

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[97] WAC F4514, ff.10.

[98] Kitto, *A Register of Baptisms, Marriages and Burials*, 312.

[99] WAC F4514, ff.16.

[100] Kitto, *A Register of Baptisms, Marriages and Burials*, 312.

self-sufficient and able to financially whether their period of confinement.[101] These examples suggest that these largely self-supporting households were treated differently from the chargeable ones in similar circumstances, when the deaths during quarantine were not attributable to plague.

Perhaps most strikingly, close to 20% (71) of households were reopened within three weeks of their being shut up. This underscores the fact that while the plague regulations were prescriptive, the parish's interpretation was flexible. If the parish were confident the deaths were not caused by plague then they appear to have been likely to show flexibility beyond the initial caution. This is evident in other situations that do not seem to fit with the plague regulations or the fixed patterns described above. Moreover, and in light of contemporary criticisms of quarantine, the fact that over 80% of households were only confined for the minimum period or less is an important consideration in understanding the lived experience of plague in St Martin in the Fields in 1636 and 1637. Margaret Wray was sent to the pesthouse on 14 October 1636, and discharged just two weeks later, having presumably recovered from her illness. The pesthouse authorities and the plague examiners were probably confident she posed no threat to the community. Ray is one of many examples in which the parish appears to have used isolation as the first recourse in approaching suspicious illness. This extended to confinement in houses also. John Southwood's household of six in Long Acre was shut up for just a week from 3 November due to one of the six isolated 'being sicke', with 2s 'given them for their present releife'.[102] The parish was presumably convinced that the sickness was not plague.

A handful of shorter periods of quarantine are explained by the extinction of the household. Elizabeth Bibby was shut up in her house in '7 Star Alley' on 1 September 1636. The clerk recorded she was 'dead by the 13th of the same' and was only chargeable for a doorkeeper and '10s lent money in all'. The house was reopened after 1.5 weeks. John Devereux's household in St Martins Green was shut up the day after Elizabeth Bibby and the family were 'dead all' by 23 September. The clerk marked three in the family the first week and a nurse

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[101] WAC F4514, ff.31, 95.

[102] WAC F4514, ff.44, 55.

attached to the family for one week.[103] The register shows no Devoreux buried around the closure date but Margaret 'Devoreux' was buried of plague on 7 September. Jaina Devoreux and an unnamed Devoreux were also buried on 7 and 12 September, both marked as plague.[104] These examples are the exception though to the patterns evident in the list of quarantined houses.

The inconsistent approach to quarantine is evident at the higher end of the social scale. Sir Philip Verney's household of 21 was shut up in Covent Garden on 26 September. The clerk recorded that one person was removed the 'same day'. The house was reopened after two weeks. Sir Edmund Verney's household, also in Covent Garden, was shut up on 4 September and reopened after four weeks. The fact three people were isolated and discharged from the house suggests that Verney may not have been present in the house himself.[105] The wealthy would most likely leave servants to secure houses in their absence if they did leave. Verney was a favourite of Charles I and might well have been with the King who had left London.**[106]** Julia Merritt framed social relations in Westminster as 'delicate' and argued that office-holders were required to take on an 'awkward' role between the aristocrats and wider parish community. Merritt suggested that the resultant social complexity in the Westminster parishes led to vestrymen and parochial officers engaged 'almost constantly' in 'careful negotiations' with the gentry.[107] This is an important consideration in the apparent pliable interpretation of quarantine with the resident aristocracy, where 'careful negotiations' may have been needed when plague was identified in their houses. Kira Newman showed that there were difficulties in ensuring compliance with the middling sort in St Martin's in 1636 and 1637.[108] We might assume this inherently more difficult for the plague officers in managing their social betters. The Lord Sterling's house was located in Drury Lane and was shut up on 24 May 1637. Although the household of five remained intact with no recorded deaths through to its

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[103] WAC F4514, ff.15.

[104] Kitto, *A Register of Baptisms, Marriages and Burials,* 313.

[105] WAC F4514, ff.16, 30.

[106] Susan Whyman, *Sociability and Power in Late-Stuart England: The Cultural Worlds of the Verneys 1660-1720* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 15, 44, 56, 115, 124, 143, 145.

[107] Merritt, *Early Modern Westminster*, 133-134.

[108] Newman, 'Shutt-up', 821-824.

reopening, the period of isolation stretched to 7.4 weeks.[109] We have no way of knowing whether Sterling and his immediate family were present but the extended period of quarantine was likely the result of ongoing illness in the house. It suggests again that the parish operated a more stringent policy in a situation where doubt prevailed as to the danger of plague, regardless of social status.

The greater number of households in the list which are recorded as plainly 'not chargeable' to the parish are listed through the spring and into the summer of 1637. This group might be assumed to be the substantial members of the parish, but the non-chargeable might also include the more modest and middling as well as the better-off. A total of 20 quarantined households are listed as 'not chargeable' in that time, mostly located in spaces such as Covent Garden, Drury Lane and Neathouse, the market-garden area in Pimlico. In contrast, just ten households are listed as 'not chargeable from June to December in 1636 with five of those shut up in September.

This pattern might be partly explained by flight, as evident in the parish recording the names of 214 absent ratepayers. In October and November 1636, just three and one quarantined household were marked as 'not chargeable' to the parish. If these were wealthy families that had returned to London after the worst of the epidemic had passed, then they were possibly vulnerable to the recurrence of plague in the spring and summer in 1637. An order sent by the Privy Council to the Lord Mayor of London and the justices in Middlesex, Surrey and Westminster in early January 1637 suggests as much. Concerned at the 'late sudden increase' of plague in London and Westminster, the council suggested that the cause was the return of those whose houses were 'visited during the time of their being in the country have suddenly repaired to them' before 'sufficient airing and purging from the infection'. They also levelled blame at people moving to new 'habitations' from one that had been infected of the plague.[110]

An important factor in the parish's ability to apply the plague regulations was the deployment of assorted auxiliaries. Whilst the vestry directed plague policy and plague officers

[109] WAC F4514, ff.98.

[110] J. Bruce, *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Charles I, 1636-37* (London, 1868), 335-363.

interpreted the regulations in the parish, it was the plague auxiliaries who were responsible for the practical application of quarantine. And in this, women played an essential and valued role.

5.5 Deployment of plague auxiliaries

Despite the financial and logistical challenges, it is notable that at no point did quarantine break down in St Martin in the Fields in the main epidemic in 1636. As Kira Newman showed, non-compliance was confined to a handful of incidents that related to the middling sort.[111] This section explores the role of plague auxiliaries in seeing the plague regulations effectively implemented, and will demonstrate the important contribution made by women. The discussion will also touch more generally on the extent of compliance with plague regulations in the suburbs.

Except for the number of bearers, which remained unchanged at three through 1636 and 1637, the number of other auxiliaries varied with the rise and fall of the epidemic.[112] The clerk of St Martin in the Fields recorded a doorkeeper assigned to 62% (224) of the 360 quarantined households in 1636 and 1637. Kira Newman suggested that doorkeepers were 'assigned' to watch more than one house which reduced labour costs for the parish. An additional point to add is that whilst the parish necessarily scaled up the other auxiliaries in the field, they pushed for greater value in their work. This was necessary given the growing financial burden and may indicate the difficulty in finding others to take the role on in the peak of the epidemic. The records imply that up to September in 1636, each of the eleven doorkeepers was responsible for two houses. Despite an increase in their number to 20 through to November, each was then managing three houses.[113]

Men are referenced as doorkeepers at the pesthouse in St Martin's in 1636. Hugh Boswell, Christopher Sutton and William Hawes, the '3 doorekeepers at the Pesthouse', were paid 7s

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[111] Newman, 'Shutt up', 821-823.

[112] Newman, 'Shutt up', 820.

[113] WAC F4516, ff.5-8.

each per week and earned £11 11s in the period between 18 September to 4 December 1636. Long service is evident with Hugh Boswell who was also paid for watching and warding (the two terms were interchangeable) visited houses in St Martin's in 1625, 1630 and 1631. This suggests that the parish looked to alleviate aspects of the logistical challenge in the management of plague with continuity and valued a core group of favoured individuals.[114]

In a logistical sense, suburban parishes operated the same auxiliary framework and operational outlook in an endemic plague year, albeit on a smaller scale. Doorkeepers were responsible for several houses in St Martin in the Fields in these years also, which as in an epidemic year minimised spending and ensured greater value for money. This was important, given that the parish was balancing the wider management of the poor alongside any plague incidence. References in the churchwardens' accounts in 1641 show several men working as doorkeepers beyond the pesthouse, which again, probably relates to general watching or warding duties. For example, William Clarke was paid for thirteen days 'attendance' upon a house in Brewers Lane.[115] Those called on to ward at the pesthouse tended to do so as an extension of existing roles, for example, John Morgan was a bearer but also marked as a doorkeeper and watcher at the pesthouse. This was also evident during the epidemic in 1625 when the bearers' duties were extended to include carting earth to the parish's new churchyard. They were deployed on three occasions to 'eaise the ground there over the graves where the visited p[er]sons were buryed'.[116] Whilst the parish placed value in the service of a core group of auxiliaries, flexibility was also sought and this benefited the parish logistically and financially.

Nurses were used in a more targeted way. They were associated with just 24 quarantined households in St Martin in the Fields in the main epidemic in 1636 and 41 through to the end of the wider visitation in 1637.[117] This did not seem to follow any social pattern. Widow

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[114] WAC F4512, ff.2v; F4515 - not foliated (22 April) F4514 - not foliated (located at the back of the manuscript).

[115] WAC F3, ff.342.

[116] WAC F3, ff.16-18.

[117] WAC F4514, ff.1, 3, 5-7, 10, 13-16, 18, 21, 23, 28, 33-34, 38, 40, 47, 49, 57-58, 65, 69, 71, 73-74, 87, 90, 92, 100, 109, 113.

Serieant was shut up with her family of three in Brewers Yard on 24 November 1636. The family were removed to the pesthouse in the last week of January. A nurse, at the charge of 2s a week, was attached to the family for the eleven weeks of their quarantine and accompanied Serieant to the pesthouse.[118] None of the four named nurses in the St Martin's plague sources for 1636 was listed as a pensioner in the overseer for the poor's accounts in and around the epidemic year. This suggests that they were called on for their particular skills or experience.[119] This appears the case in other suburban parishes. Elizabeth Crouch was paid in mid-October by St Sepulchre Newgate for nursing Goodwife Haste. She does not appear in the list of 79 parish poor that received 1d from the Butcher's gift or as a recipient of casual giving to the poor in that year, in that parish.[120] This reiterates the value and credibility that the parish placed in the more specialist medical skills of the women that were called into plague service. This supports the findings of Richelle Munkhoff and Lara Thorpe with searchers and nurses in London in the late sixteenth century and in the 1665 epidemic, respectively.[121] It also chimes with Jane Stevens Crawshaw's argument, which related to women and public health in early modern Venice, that women's work within public health could be more extensive and valued than historians have realised. Stevens Crawshaw also commented that women's work in public health might provide them with a degree of independence and support from an institution like a guild or the parish.[122]

This can be extended to searchers who were valued by the parish for their experience and maintained a degree of independence in their work. This is illustrated by an interesting reference in the vestry minutes of St Dunstan in the West in June 1636. The Churchwardens and Common Councilmen there appointed the widows Rose Roosby and Joane Williamson to

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[118] WAC F4514, ff.65.

[119] WAC F4514, ff.44, 47, 58; F363 - not foliated.

[120] LMA P69/SEP/B/123/MS09080/001B - the booklet is not foliated but runs in chronological sequence in each section.

[121] Richelle Munkhoff, 'Searchers of the Dead: Authority, Marginality, and the Interpretation of Plague in England 1574-1665', *Gender and History*, Vol. 11 No. 1 (1999); Richelle Munkhoff, 'Poor Women and Parish Public Health in Sixteenth Century London', *Renaissance Studies,* Vol. 28 No. 4 (2014); Lara Thorpe, ''At the Mercy of a Strange Woman': Plague Nurses, Marginality, and Fear during the Great Plague of 1665', in L. Hopkins and A. Norrie (eds.), *Women on the Edge in Early Modern Europe* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019).

[122] Jane Stevens Crawshaw, 'Families, Medical Secrets and Public Health in Early Modern Venice', *Renaissance Studies* 28 (4) (2014), 618.

view those suspected to 'dye of plague'. Both women were pensioners and described as 'Ancient searchers' and were chosen based on their 'long experience'. Joane was the wife of Robert Williamson who appears to have been a bearer in the 1625 epidemic. The vestry also appointed the widow Mary Cooper and Frances Briggs, wife of John, both described as pensioners, for viewing the bodies of those that 'dye of other diseases not infectious'.[123] Taken together, the appointment of two searcher units with separate purviews based on experience with plague demonstrated the value placed by the parish in that experience. As the discussion of the pesthouse in Chapter 6 will demonstrate, the parish might still defer to the 'master' of the pesthouse for judgement but the searchers' skills and experience were acknowledged. The searchers of St Sepulchre Newgate were paid on 16 December 1647 for 'searching' two quarantined houses 'beinge to be opened'.[124] In this instance, their expertise was called on to judge whether it was safe to reopen the houses and release the occupants therein.

The vestry of St Martin in the Fields also prioritised experience and existing and credible relationships when appointing searchers. Moreover, certain pensioners might have priority in parish appointments in time of plague. On 6 June 1638, St Martin's agreed the widows Anne Moore, Friswith Williams and Edy Plaister (also referred to as Plaster and Plastow in the parish records) would be searchers. Anne Haddock, who at the time was paired with Moore, was to be dismissed for 'that shee is a younge woman and able to take paines'.[125] All of these women were listed as dependent parish pensioners in the overseers for the poor accounts for each year between 1635-41 (those consulted for this study). The vestry presumably thought Moore was capable of finding other paid employment.[126]

The parish's value of particular women is evident in the searching work of Thomason Ellis, whose sustained position and eventual seniority in 1636 and 1637 were based on her experience in earlier visitations. On 4 June 1625, the vestry appointed Ellis and the widows

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[123] LMA P69/DUN2/B/001/MS03016/001, ff.179.

[124] LMA P69/SEP/B/123/MS09080/001B.

[125] WAC F2002, ff.108.

[126] WAC F362-367.

Elizabeth Collins and Catherine Vile to be searchers of all 'persons dying and judging of what disease' as 'neare as they can' and especially those that 'happen to dye of the plague'. Ellis continued to work as a searcher in 1630 and 1631, payment being made to her and widow Cooper for 'searching divers persons who dyed'.[127] Ellis and Edy Plaster were both marked as searchers and matrons at the pesthouse in 1636 and 1637 and earned a total of £10 19s each between 12 June and 23 February in 1637, and another £10 11s each between 16 April and 8 October. Their total earnings in the wider visitation from June 1636 to October 1637 was £21 10s each.[128] This was based on a weekly salary of 7s in 1636 and 17s in 1637; the increase might reflect their recognised seniority by that stage of the extended visitation. Ellis appears consistently in the list of parish pensions recorded in the overseers accounts in the 1630s. Payment for her searching work was in addition to any regular pension payment. These women demonstrate the complex relationship that might exist between the parish and the dependent poor, but equally their value to the parish and importance in implementing the plague regulations.

As was shown in Chapter 4, the westerly extramural parishes were particularly impacted by plague in 1647. The clerk of St Sepulchre Newgate wrote up the special plague account in the same booklet as the poor, which demonstrates the parish's view of the intersecting features of the two social problems.[129] Lower plague auxiliaries might equally appear in the poor account as recipients of parish relief. This shows the social background of those called into the lower auxiliary positions and their fluid circumstances. While key roles were given to a narrow group of parish dependents, others might be called in as the need arose. For example, Mabell Wansworth was paid 1s. for looking to Goodwife Pretties child 'beinge visited with plague' on 14 June 1647. This was the solitary reference to her in the plague account. Wansworth is also referenced in the poor account for 'keeping' the same child with payments made on 18 May and 10 June, her keeping of the child coming under standard parish practice in care for parish children. The intersection of plague and the wider

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[127] WAC F2002, ff.38; F3, 132v.

[128] WAC F4514 - as commented, the payments to plague auxiliaries are not foliated but are located in the back of the booklet.

[129] LMA P69/SEP/B/123/MS09080/001B - as commented above, the booklet is not foliated but runs in chronological sequence in each section.

management of the poor in an endemic year presented Wansworth momentarily as an auxiliary in the plague account, at least as far as the churchwarden and clerk were concerned.

Other references present the gender and social background of those called into keeping service in St Sepulchre's and show the precariousness of their situation. They also demonstrate how a dependent might be called on casually and how this tended to fall to dependent women. Goodwife Lewes lived in White Horse Alley and also kept parish children, primarily the child Thomas Anderson in 1647. The plague accounts record payments to her for him on six occasions through the plague months. Lewes was also one of 79 poor that were given money on 23 December 1647, which was distributed on behalf of the Butchers' Company. A total of £7 5s was distributed amongst the listed poor, which the clerk wrote up in the poor account. Hugh and Rose Gawdy were included in this list with a shared payment of 1s. Rose worked briefly as a keeper in the early autumn: the plague account records payment of 4s to her on 17 September for keeping the house of Dove for 23 days. Rose then reappeared in the plague account when she and her two children were paid 2s. on 20 October, her house being shut up.

Although several women were noted in the account for keeping and nursing work in 1647, Goodwife Godderne emerged as the primary parish keeper. Godderne lived in St Peter's Lane and her social background and age are indicated in a reference in the poor accounts. She was given 1s on 25 June and the clerk recorded that her husband was 73 and 'she lame'. This was not an impediment to her focused service for the parish through the visitation in 1647. She attended to most of the quarantined houses from early September to December, at least those that were supported by the parish and recorded in the plague account. Godderne was paid 6s for a week's work in looking to three houses and a further 3s for attending the Sign of the Castle Inn on 14 October. She received 2s a week later for looking to Browne's house for a week. She was also attending the Mellish household and in total received £4 13s 8d for her services. This was spread across 32 individual payments, at a rate of usually 2s per house each week. Godderne, 'being sick', was herself the recipient of relief, when she was given 6d on each of 13 February and 3 March 1648. The clerk recorded this disbursement in the poor account, which reiterates the fluid situation of dependents and the complexity of judging

whether they or the parish was the greater beneficiary in their reciprocal arrangement. The example of Godderne does suggest that her skills were valued and her character was viewed as credible by the parish.

The focus of vestries in the management of auxiliaries was seeing the plague regulations effectively implemented and compliance ensured. This required rigorous oversight and favouring of a narrow group of individuals, although others might be called on more casually when the need arose. The outlook was both strategic and flexible. The references to watchers or warders are the exception in the list. There are four references in the St Martin's record of quarantined houses to households where the occupiers were 'restrained' and 'watchers' specifically deployed. One example is that of Richard Hill in the Exchange, just off the Strand. His household comprised three families of thirteen persons who were 'restrained w[i]th him' for six weeks from 18 August in 1636. Hill was chargeable for '3 watchmen for the night' and a doorkeeper for one week. The number of watchmen that was required suggests that there was difficulty experienced in shutting up the household. Given that warders or watchers were used in a discretionary manner, presumably where coercion was required to secure compliance, doorkeepers probably maintained a more general watch of quarantined houses. This is made explicit in the entry for Michael Mason, whose house in Covent Garden was shut up on 12 September 1636 and reopened after 4.5 weeks. Mason was listed as the landlord and £6 14s was paid to two doorkeepers for 'keeping the doore and watching by night'. The clerk also recorded that Mason was 'lent money', which indicates that the parish believed he could otherwise support his household.[130]

The parish records do not indicate widespread issues experienced with compliance in St Martin in the Fields in 1636 and 1637. Other records give some insight to instances of defiance but again, these stand out as exceptions. On 27 January 1637, the Privy Council took into account the 'strict command' of the King that all people in houses visited with the plague were to be removed to 'others that had been built for them in the fields'. The Justices in Westminster and officers in St Martin's were ordered to open John Cheek's house, a shoemaker in St Martin's Lane. Cheek had apparently refused to 'yield obedience', and the

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[130] WAC F4514, ff.5, 9, 14, 22.

bearers were to be ordered to 'force' his family to a house 'provided for them in the Pest Field' if he refused to go.[131] The St Martin's quarantine record shows no John Cheek, but a John Clark whose household of five was shut up on 12 January 1637 and removed to the pesthouse on 29 January. Just three of the family survived their time in the pesthouse, which ended on 12 March. They were relieved at a cost of £4 12s 8d to the parish. John Clark is most likely the John Cheek whose defiance was singled out to the Privy Council.[132] Julia Merritt suggested that the example of Cheek reflected a general fear and distrust of the pesthouse, despite the fact that patients regularly survived their stay.[133] There may have been other factors that influenced the need to take a firm hand with the Cheek household that we are not aware of. As commented above, we also need to be mindful of taking these instances of defiance as representative of the more general response of parish populations to the plague regulations. This is particularly valid when taking into account the large number of households in which the pesthouse was used in St Martin's and the other examples of non-compliance, explicit or implied in the records, standing out as the exception.

It should be said that the visitation in 1636 did not rise to the level of a major epidemic and nor did St Martin's experience as many plague burials as the bigger extramural parishes to the north-east. That said, one in five experienced isolation and the general diffusion of plague through the parish caused disruption, whether that was in the experience of space or the economic and social impact. As commented above, Paul Slack suggested that only in minor plague events was quarantine effectively maintained. The experience of quarantine in St Martin in the Fields in 1636 shows that this requires extending to include a middling epidemic.

This might be tentatively extended to the epidemic in St Martin in the Fields in 1625. The account book for the first group of appointed plague examiners survives and covers the period 3 July to 4 September. This was the group of examiners the parish compelled to serve

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[131] Bruce, *CSPD:1636-7*, 393.

[132] WAC F4514, ff.80.

[133] Merritt, *Early Modern Westminster*, 300.

by warrant, and then experienced difficulties in auditing their accounts.[134] The account book itself though is well maintained and reflects the effective implementation of quarantine and management of auxiliaries in those two months leading up to the local epidemic peak. The accounts record £267 10s 7d received, primarily from gifts and collections, and £276 5s 8d dispersed. This covered payments to auxiliaries and the support of quarantined households. The collector Mr Morris was very active from late July to the end of August and turned gathered monies in on seven occasions, although the sums decreased with each return; from a high of £20 on 30 July to low of £3 on 18 August.[135] This probably reflects the impact of flight.

Whilst no examiners' book for September and October survives, a smaller plague examiners' booklet is extant for November and December. It does not contain the detail of the earlier examiners' booklet, but does show plague auxiliaries paid, rated monies collected and quarantined houses supported.[136] This suggests that the parish was maintaining quarantine late in the epidemic.

5.6 Conclusions

Despite any doubts or controversy about its effectiveness, household quarantine was the only viable option by which suburban parishes could attempt to isolate and control plague. This was despite the logistical and financial scale of quarantine that parishes were required to implement in an epidemic, and maintain alongside wider social problems in an endemic year.

The discussion above also shows that quarantine was probably maintained in a major epidemic and most certainly in a middling epidemic year, at least in St Martin in the Fields. General compliance appears to be have been achieved with the ordinary poor. Whilst external authorities were concerned that infected houses were rigorously marked and that any deception as to infection in a house was punished, the parish records do give a sense that

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[134] WAC F3, ff.13.

[135] WAC F4512.

[136] WAC F4511.

once quarantine was in place, it was maintained. The oversight of plague auxiliaries was essential to this. Despite the dominant role of men in decision making, women were valued for their skills and experience and played an integral role in the application of quarantine.

The discussion showed the ordinary poor impacted more severely in St Martin's in 1636 and 1637. This is evident in the incidental references in the parish records and the increasing number of quarantined households chargeable to the parish through the main epidemic. The discussion also demonstrated that the burden of quarantine was to some degree mitigated. Some households came out of quarantine as others were newly shut up, few quarantined household experienced more than one death, and 80% of shut up households were reopened within the minimum time set down in the plague regulations.

The discussion of quarantine in St Martin in the Fields referred to the use of the pesthouse as an aid to the parish's flexible and pragmatic operation of household quarantine. This response, alongside the approach of the suburban parishes to the long-term problem of burial and the increasing challenges of paying for plague, is the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter 6: Response to plague in the suburbs - balancing the needs of the poor living, the visited and the dead

This chapter will explore a range of different responses to plague in London's suburban parishes. These include the experience of the pesthouse, the acquisition of new burial ground and the management of the financial burden of plague. These are framed by the search for greater efficiency amidst increasing need and limited resources, but also balancing the needs of the poor living, the visited and the dead. The epidemic in 1636 and the period of endemic plague that followed are a particular focus for aspects of this chapter. This was a period in which the cumulative impact of accelerated population growth, the changed built environment and poverty had coalesced, and alongside plague and the disruption of the civil wars after 1642, caused acute hardship. This chapter shows that the response of vestries was characterised by pragmatism and independence and situates this within the framework of their more general approach to the poor and associated social issues, as set down in Chapter 3. The comparative approach taken with the surviving parish sources shows that while the plague regulations ensured there were similarities in the range of response, parishes also deployed their resources differently to manage their localised problems.

6.1 The pesthouse

The discussion in Chapter 5 mentioned the supporting role that the pesthouse played in the operation of household quarantine in St Martin in the Fields. A comparative view of parish records shows that the pesthouse was used in different ways by different suburban parishes. This fits with a range of other responses to plague, particularly building projects that were related to managing the poor, namely almshouses, houses of correction and the acquisition of new burial ground. The varied parish approach to the pesthouse was influenced by the Crown and City's inertia in the establishment of an effective plague hospital network. The extramural parishes made limited use of the City pesthouse and viewed the 'master' (surgeon) there as a public health official. The parish-run pesthouses that were

established in areas outside the City's jurisdiction were operated as hospitals where the intention was for the poor visited to be effectively treated.

Whilst an acknowledged aspect of the plague narrative in England, the pesthouse has received limited focused attention in the historiography. Writing in the 1950s, Raymond Williamson showed that the earliest pesthouses in Cambridge were located in the peripheral space of Midsummer Common from 1594 and were a recurring charge in the Corporation's accounts.[1] Paul Slack suggested that the pesthouses tended to not be permanent structures in England and referred to the 'cabins' or 'hovels' in Bristol housing only a minority of the plague sick. A quarter (405) of deaths occurred in the pesthouse in an epidemic in Worcester in 1637 which was 'exceptional', whilst the 10% that died in the pesthouse in Norwich in 1665-6 was 'more usual'.[2] Keith Wrightson identified 'lodges' used as pesthouses in Newcastle in 1637. These were 'substantial' structures and located outside the city walls on the town moor and may have accommodated up to ten people each.[3]

The Crown viewed the establishment of pesthouses as an essential aspect of the Plague Orders. Despite the establishment of the City's pesthouse near Old Street in the Middlesex area of St Giles Cripplegate in 1594, the pesthouse never became an important element in the London plague experience. Just 194 burials were reported in the pesthouse in 1603, which accounted for 0.5% of the 35, 417 plague burials reported in the metropolis. This proportion increased only slightly in 1636, with 100 burial events reported at the pesthouse, which accounted for close to 1% of total plague burials.[4] Slack estimated that the first City-run pesthouse in London accommodated no more than 50 people in its first decade of operation and fewer than 250 in 1665. The capacity of the pesthouse was inadequate from its founding and only made worse by the growing population beyond the walls and the increasing scale and long-term problem of plague. Despite the establishment of 'at least' two new pesthouses

[1] Raymond Williamson, 'The Plague in Cambridge', *Medical History,* 1 (1), (Jan, 1957), 58.

[2] Paul Slack, *The Impact of Plague in Tudor and Stuart England* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), 276-77.

[3] Keith Wrightson, *Ralph Tailor's Summer: A Scrivener, His City and the Plague* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011) 51.

[4] T. Birch, *A Collection of the Yearly Bills of Mortality, from 1657 to 1758* (London: A. Miller, 1759) - 1603, 1636.

in 1630, the network of pesthouses that existed in 1665 accommodated perhaps 600 people.[5] The Crown's complaints about this inadequacy were a familiar trope through the period and in 1630, they proposed that new pesthouses should ring the metropolis and went so far as sourcing directions from the hospitals of St Louis and St Marcel in Paris for building a hospital or workhouse for 'receiving, nourishing, and dressing plague infected'.[6] Until this had been achieved, the Privy Council were increasingly keen to see the existing pesthouse used more effectively.

Making provision for and seeing the common or City pesthouse effectively run was a feature of the Court of Aldermen's response to plague through the seventeenth century, at least in years when the disease was a more tangible presence within the walls. In May 1603, the City Chamberlain was ordered by the Court of Aldermen to 'defraye all mann[e]r of charges' necessary for 'dyett and otherwise' in preparing the pesthouse. In the meantime, the Aldermen would take 'order for how and what sorte' the expended money would be repaid into the chamber. The reference indicates the financial considerations that hindered any extension to the pesthouse network. In July, as the Aldermen established more general direction for their response to the emerging epidemic, they decreed that any person removed to the pesthouse would be 'mayneteyned & relieved' at the charge of the householder, or of the parish, in the event they were not of 'ability' to pay themselves. Care to minimise the cost of the pesthouse is also evident in 1609, an endemic plague year in which some intramural parishes were impacted. In August, the Aldermen ordered the Chamberlain to make payment for 'Phisicke surgery and diet and other charges' disbursed by the keeper of the pesthouse for the 'poore visited' persons, as to any that were sent by the Mayor and Aldermen or the Provost Marshall.[7] The pesthouse tended to preoccupy much of the plague-related discussion in the Court of Aldermen through to 1636. This appearance of proactivity was misleading in light of the small numbers that could be accommodated and the very limited use that the extramural parishes made of the resource. The logistical and financial challenges of

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[5] Slack, *Impact of Plague,* 277.

[6] W. H. Overall and H.C Overall, *Analytical Index to the Series of Records Known as the Remembrancia 1579-1664* (London: E.G. Francis, 1878), VII.19.

[7] LMA COL/CA/01/01/028, ff.139v, 175v; COL/CA/01/01/032, ff.68v.

maintaining the pesthouse, amidst myriad other buildings and facilities that required upkeep, was the likely factor in the City's reluctance to establish an expanded pesthouse network.

The records of the Court of Aldermen do not refer to the provision for or the operation of the common pesthouse in the period of endemic plague after 1636, which indicates that it operated without any extraordinary intervention from the Court. The City's Cash book shows that the pesthouse was in operation in that time, primarily via payments to William Upton, the 'Keeper' of the pesthouse and the appointed individual responsible for acquiring provisions for the pesthouse. These are listed as a standard 'outward fee' each year, even in 1649, when the period of endemic plague had come to an end. This indicates that the operation of the pesthouse was ongoing, rather than reactivated in a plague year. Whether William Upton was related to the surgeon Nathaniel Upton is unclear in the records. The City's Cash books though show the lengthy service of William, during which annual payments of £13 6s 8d were made to him as the 'Keeper' of the pesthouse, and comment that this was based on an order by the Court of Aldermen going back to July 1611. The last reference traced for this study was in the year ending September 1649, when Upton received his usual annuity as keeper of the City pesthouse and was closing in on forty years service.[8]

The City's Cash books also show the City carrying out repairs and improvements to the facility. The plumber William George was paid to lay 336 yards of lead pipes for the 'conveyance of the New river water from Old Street into the Pesthouse' in the year to September 1636.[9] This was listed under 'Extraordinary workes buildings and repairs' in the Cash book. William Upton was reimbursed for 'repayring some decayed places in and about' the pesthouse, which gives a sense of his responsibilities. This entry was listed in the Cash book covering the year up to September 1637 between the City's repair of two stables that they leased in Finsbury (presumably the fields and manor) and the repair of the common sewers in the Old Bailey and Dukes Place. This indicates that the pesthouse was situated in the wider network of building and infrastructure maintained by the City.[10]

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[8] LMA COL/CHD/CT/01/002, ff.40; COL/CHD/CT/01/004, ff.39v; COL/CHD/CT/01/006, ff.264 for examples of payments to Upton, 1636-1649.

[9] LMA COL/CHD/CT/01/002, ff.43v

[10] LMA COL/CHD/CT/01/002, ff.134.

Preparations and provision for the 'use of such people as shale sent thither out of this Citty'
to the pesthouse is recorded in the Cash book in 1636. These are listed under 'fforen charges'
and included payment to two 'upholders' (presumably upholsterers) for 20 'fflock Bedds and
Bolsters' and 20 'paire of Blanketts, alongside 'Chords of straw' and matts. A total of 22
cauldrons of sea coals were also purchased by the purveyor for provisions at that time, James
Bramson. Nathaniel Upton received £5 by order of the Court of Aldermen in early July 1636
as a free gift in 'respect of his greate care and paines' in curing people sent to the pesthouse.
The entry also shows payment to the barber surgeon George Dunn for 'curing certaine poore
people', as attendant to Nathaniel Upton.[11] This was paid in September 1636, which can be
taken to show the elevated workload for the pesthouse staff early in the visitation.

Additional outlay had the potential to cause concern in the Court of Aldermen. In the year
ending September 1638, Nathaniel Upton was paid £10 above his agreed salary, on account
of the 'great charges besides his owne paines' in attending poor people sent to the pesthouse.
This was provided on the understanding that 'he bee no further a suitor in that behalf' but
expect only the allowance 'made him from the parties visited or the p[er]sons or parish from
where they are sent'.[12] The reference, when taken with the others, reflect Guildhall's outlook
that the visited sick, or their parishes, were expected to cover the additional costs of the
pesthouse.

Despite the extramural parishes lying wholly or partially within the formal jurisdiction of the
City's pesthouse, parish records show very limited use of the resource. The detailed plague
records of St Bride Fleet Street for the 1640s and the plague account booklet in the
neighbouring parish of St Sepulchre Newgate for 1647, do not refer to the use of the
pesthouse. Rather, household quarantine was used exclusively to isolate infected households
from the wider community.[13] To the east, St Botolph Aldgate made only sporadic use of the
pesthouse up to 1630. In 1625, the churchwardens paid £1 19s for sending the wife of Gilbert

[11] LMA COL/CHD/CT/01/002, ff.54-54v, 143v.

[12] LMA COL/CHD/CT/01/002, ff.54-54v, 221.

[13] LMA P69/BRI/B/001/MS06554/001, ff.1-69v; P69/BRI/B/016/MS06552/001, ff.1-181; P69/SEP/B/
123/MS09080/001B - not foliated.

Haylis to the pesthouse, and in 1630, paid £2 1s 6d and £2 2s for sending a woman in the Cage to the pesthouse, and another unnamed individual there on 8 July.[14] As was described in Chapter 4, the churchwardens' accounts list 27 households supported in their quarantine in 1630. The parish spent £42 3s 13d relieving the occupants therein. Alongside the limited capacity of the pesthouse, the cheaper cost of maintaining quarantine in houses likely deterred the parish from using the pesthouse more extensively. Moreover, the reference to the removal of the woman from the cage hints that the pesthouse might be used for individuals without a fixed address or of dubious status, as where else would she be nursed or quarantined.[15] As the discussion in Chapter 3 showed, plague was limited to a very small number of local outbreaks in 1630, yet the pesthouse was still not used to any great extent by Aldgate. There are no references in the Aldgate churchwardens' accounts or vestry minutes to the use of the pesthouse beyond 1630.

The handful of incidental references to the pesthouse in the churchwardens' accounts of St Dunstan in the West present a similar theme to those in Aldgate. They also suggest that the master of the pesthouse was viewed by parishes as a public health official. The churchwardens of St Dunstan's paid 2s for carrying of a woman to the pesthouse 'from the Constables dore' in 1603. This was the only reference to the pesthouse in the accounts in that epidemic, amidst 27 specified payments to the poor in the 'tyme of theire visitac[i]on'.[16] The woman found at the constable's door may have been destitute or possibly a servant or lodger turned out of a house, as other examples in the records show did happen on occasion. In April 1647, the parish paid for a 'shrowd and packthredd for a maid found dead in the street 'being turned sick out of the white ffryers'.[17] Taken with the more general payments to the poor in the accounts in 1603, which are interspersed with payments to the poor visited and presumably the quarantined, the reliance on household quarantine stands out.[18]

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[14] LMA P69/BOT2/B/031/MS09237, ff.45, 55v-57.

[15] Paul Griffiths, *Lost Londons: Change, Crime, and Control in the Capital City, 1550-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) for parish cages - 57, 182, 237, 261, 306, 313.

[16] LMA P69/DUN2/B/011/MS02968/001, 482v-483.

[17] LMA P69/DUN2/B/011/MS02968/004, ff.64v.

[18] LMA P69/DUN2/B/011/MS02968/001, ff.483.

Whilst the St Dunstan's records do not refer to the use of the pesthouse in the period of endemic plague between 1604-11 or in the 1625 epidemic, incidental references show some use of the resource in the 1630s and 1640s. The burial register gives some context for those references. In early November 1630, the master of the pesthouse was paid for taking in Alice Evans, a woman 'that came out of Katherins house' and lay sick in the street for a week. The parish paid the master for a further week on 13 November and spent another 5s to 'sende her away into the Country', presumably on her recovery. The reference suggests that she was not settled in the parish.[19] The household of Rowland Katherin in Fetter Lane is traceable in the parish burial register: Rowland and his daughters Margaret and Mary were buried of plague on 18, 22 and 30 September.[20] Alice Evans may have been a servant or a lodger in the house. If we follow the timing from the last plague burial there, she seems to have survived quarantine and been subsequently turned out of the house when it was reopened sometime around the first week in November. In this instance, the parish used the pesthouse to accommodate a sick servant or a lodger made homeless.

All other plague references in the accounts in 1630 are to shutting up houses and supporting visited families, which demonstrates the parish's preference for household quarantine in even a very minor endemic plague year. Around the time of Alice Evans' stay in the pesthouse, the churchwardens paid 3s 2d to Mr Greene for nails and staples 'used aboute the houses' in Fetter Lane and 2s to Mr Sparkes for 'padlockes for the houses shutt upp'.[21] As the discussion in Chapter 4 showed, 1630 was not a particularly severe plague year. Even so, the pesthouse would have been quickly overwhelmed had parishes resorted to its use more generally. This gives some context to St Dunstan's only making use of the pesthouse in an extraordinary circumstance.

The other principal means of using the pesthouse in St Dunstan's was by calling on the expertise of the pesthouse master, which is taken to be the surgeon Nathaniel Upton. This

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[19] LMA P69/DUN2/B/011/MS02968/003, ff.391v.

[20] LMA P69/DUN2/A/003/MS010344 - not foliated.

[21] LMA P69/DUN2/B/011/MS02968/003, ff.391v.

assumption is based on the explicit reference to his services in the parish in 1641.[22] On 6 November 1631, the churchwardens paid the 'master' for searching a gentleman that died in Chancery Lane of the Plague (and on 20 November, for a shroud for the said gentleman).[23] One plague burial is marked in the St Dunstan's register, that of a 'Country man dying in the street of the Plague' on 6 November. This may not have been the gentlemen referenced, but shows the relative absence of plague in the parish in that year.[24] In the instance of the 'Country man', the master or surgeon was called on as a public health official to confirm an isolated case of plague. A reference in the records of the intramural parish of St Anne and Agnes in 1636 makes this deference to the pesthouse surgeon explicit: the churchwarden there paid 6s 3d for the surgeon of the pesthouse for viewing a body after 'our searchers had beene there, for better satisfaction'.[25]

Despite St Dunstan's specifying the need for experienced plague searchers in 1636, the master of the pesthouse was used on occasion to view suspected plague deaths or illness, including 'Mr Foye's maid' on 3 December.[26] The register shows Elizabeth and Mary, daughters of George 'Foye', were buried on 8 and 19 November, and George Foye on 23 November. None of the burials was marked as plague. Elizabeth Dalavell, 'servant unto George Foye', and presumably the maid viewed by the master of the pesthouse, was buried on 16 December and also not recorded as plague.[27] The master of the pesthouse was sought when the maid fell sick in a household where several suspicious deaths had already occurred. The accounts also note calling in the master for 'searching' one Miller's daughter around the time of Elizabeth Dalavell's death.[28] The register shows no Miller buried around the first week of December, so the daughter presumably recovered. The fee paid to the master of the pesthouse on these two occasions was 4s 6d, around double that usually paid to a searcher in

[22] LMA P69/DUN2/B/011/MS02968/003, ff.617v.

[23] LMA P69/DUN2/B/011/MS02968/003, ff.410v.

[24] LMA P69/DUN2/A/003/MS010344, ff.339v, 327v-331.

[25] William McMurray, *The Records of Two City Parishes: A Collection of Documents Illustrative of the History of SS. Anne and Agnes, Aldersgate, and St. John Zachary, London, from the Twelfth Century* (London: Hunter & Longhurst, 1925), 336.

[26] LMA P69/DUN2/B/011/MS02968/003, ff.512.

[27] LMA P69/DUN2/A/003/MS010344 - not foliated.

[28] LMA P69/DUN2/B/011/MS02968/003, ff.512.

St Dunstan's. This indicates the value placed in the master's expertise. It also hints at the anxiety of the parish to confirm plague, presumably so that regulations could be swiftly implemented. This extended into the period of endemic plague that followed the 1636 epidemic. On 2 September 1641, the surgeon of the pesthouse was paid for viewing '2 sev[er]all bodies at the howse of Pybus' and also the body of William Staines, a 'Minister who died in Beriffords house in ffetter Lane'.[29] St Dunstan's reported 36 plague burials in 1641, of 358 total burial events.[30] These and the calling of the master of the pesthouse to view the body of one dying of plague in widow Goodpeed's house in Ram's Alley on 16 May 1641, are the only references to the pesthouse in the decade to 1648.[31]

The situation was different in the westerly outer parishes, which sat outside the City's jurisdiction, and where some parishes began to operate independent pesthouses. This was possibly given impetus by the House of Commons in 1625 when parliament met in Oxford in August and passed a bill to improve the plague statute of 1604. One of the points advised, but not insisted on, was the establishment of a pesthouse in each parish. This was to sit alongside the magistrates being empowered to shut up whole families in their house for forty days. Paul Slack suggested that this was seen as a compromise on the 'vexed issue of isolation'.[32] It was impracticable for the extramural City parishes to establish pesthouses. Several westerly outer parishes though established pesthouses after 1600. This may have been influenced by the proximity of the Crown and the presence of the wealthy and national elite, who might be equally a source of pressure and funding.

The vestry of St Giles in the Fields directed the churchwardens to contract with a landlord for a pesthouse for a lease of ground in 1639, for as 'long time as it can be gotten'. Workmen were ordered to view the space and give the cost to 'make it fit for the poor people to dwell in'. The pesthouse was in use by 1640, when the churchwardens' accounts record £2 10s paid as the ground rent for a pesthouse for one year. Relief was given to the poor there and £1 paid

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[29] LMA P69/DUN2/B/011/MS02968/003, ff.617v-618.

[30] GL Worshipful Company of Parish Clerks., *A Generall Bill for this Present Yeare, ending the 16. of December 1641.*

[31] LMA P69/DUN2/B/011/MS02968/003, ff.617v-618.

[32] Slack, *Impact of Plague*, 224.

to Powell for looking to the pesthouse for a whole year. The location of the pesthouse is not recorded and it was either maintained or rebuilt as the need arose through to 1648. In 1641, a carpenter was paid 3s. for mending the pesthouse and in 1648, the parish 'treasurer' paid for 'building the pesthouse'. A reference in 1643 showed the parish also making use of the City pesthouse when payment of 10s was made to the beadle for conveying away of a visited household in Bloomsbury to the 'Lond[on] Pest House'.[33] This may have been a year in which the parish was not operating a pesthouse or had reached capacity in local provision. It might also be that the parish was deferring to the expertise of the pesthouse master, as described in the discussion above. This might be discerned in St Martin in the Fields for the year running April 1639 to May 1640, when overseers of the poor paid William Huffin for his 'paines goeing to the Pesthouse London' on two occasions, concerning one Mr Holt's house that was 'visited in St Martins Lane'.[34]

The parish pesthouse was not intended to replace household quarantine in St Giles in the Fields. The expense and logistics made that impracticable; rather the pesthouse played a supporting role to the wider policy of household quarantine. For example, plague examiners were chosen for the visited houses in St Giles in 1640 and disbursements were made to several households in 1641, including John Parker in Parker's Lane, whilst staples, hasps and padlocks were purchased for visited houses in 1642.[35] The establishment of the pesthouse in St Giles may have provided the precedent and logistical framework for the vestry to follow in the construction of parish almshouses in 1656, a general workhouse in 1662 and establishment of a new burial ground in 1664. The land for the almshouses was granted by the Earl of Southampton for the express purpose of building houses for old widows. This illustrates the role that private contributions might play in spurring the parish to building initiatives.[36]

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[33] John Parton, *Some Account of the Hospital and Parish of St Giles in the Fields* (London: Luke Hansard & Sons, 1822), 260-261.

[34] WAC F366 - not foliated.

[35] Parton, *St Giles in the Fields*, 260-263.

[36] Parton, *St Giles in the Fields*, 233.

A pesthouse was established in St Martin in the Fields in April 1630. It is first referenced in the vestry minutes on 17 January 1631, when the churchwardens went to Brentford in Middlesex to pay rent to 'Mr Gisby Landlord of the Pesthouse' for the Christmas quarter.[37] Just 28 plague burials were marked in the register in 1630, with 24 of the burials occurring between June and November, and seven of those in July and ten in October.[38] This may have been sufficient to make the vestry anxious, particularly when set alongside the Crown's urging for an expansion of the pesthouse network. St Martin's may also have been influenced by the building of almshouses and a house of correction in neighbouring St Margaret's Westminster in the 1570s and pesthouses from 1606. Julia Merritt attributed the building of almshouses in Westminster as much to the 'independence and ambition' of the parishes there as to the scale of the problem of the poor and associated social issues.[39] This can be extended to the building of pesthouses, which might have been particularly suitable in those parishes with their mixed populations, including the rich who could afford and might wish to send servants there, and who also might be a source of funding.

The establishment of the pesthouse in St Martin's fits with the range of other responses and associated building initiatives taken to manage the poor and plague in the first decade of the century. The parish built almshouses near Charing Cross in 1604, which Julia Merritt suggested was the result of 'parochial orchestration', as the funding was extracted from substantial parishioners.[40] Parish stocks were also directed to the project with £35 received from the former churchwardens for the 'finishing' of the almshouses and a 'house of Correction there adioyning the Round house'. The catalyst for an extension to the almshouses in 1611 came from Roger and Katherine Merricke, inhabitants of the parish for 40 years, when they gifted £10 to the building of 'one or two rooms' for the pensioners. The new rooms were to be built near the existing almshouses and supplemented from the poor stock to

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[37] WAC F3, ff.96.

[38] J. V. Kitto (ed.), *A Register of Baptisms, Marriages, and Burials in the Parish of St. Martin-in-the-Fields: in the County of Middlesex* (London: Harleian Society, 1898-1936), 248-257.

[39] Julia Merritt, *The Social World of Early Modern Westminster: Abbey, Court and Community 1525-1640* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 299.

[40] Merritt, *Early Modern Westminster*, 278.

'fynshe the building fitt for them'.[41] It was also in 1611 that the parish discussed the expansion of a new churchyard that had been established in 1608. This collectively provided the framework in which the vestry worked when later establishing the pesthouse, which was located in Coleman Close in Soho.

The first pesthouse in St Martin's may have been a temporary expedient which the parish sought to make more permanent in 1631 as part of their long-term approach to managing plague and the poor. The original building, one of a dozen that had been erected on the close in 1623, had been leased from the Gisby family for £40 and an annual rent of £8 16s.[42] In mid-April 1631, the parish paid for the expenses in gathering witnesses to attend the 'tendring of the Rent for the Pesthouse' for the Lady Day quarter.[43] A total of 24 plague burials occurred between January and June in 1631, with thirteen in March and four in April.[44] A special plague account book shows the pesthouse in use from early April to mid-June. Goodwife Taylor and Anne Regge received 12d when they came out of the pesthouse on 25 April. Goodwife Gould was paid on 20 April, 27 April, 7 May for attendance at the pesthouse, where she presumably worked as a keeper or nurse. Household quarantine was implemented despite the low level of plague incidence. This included payment to Hugh Boswell for keeping six persons shut up in Robert Montethes house in Harts Horne Lane on 11 June. The parish seems to have used the pesthouse in 1631 for individual cases, servants or for people who may not have had accommodation appropriate for household quarantine. The lady Henage's 'man' was discharged from the pesthouse on 27 April, whilst three persons 'who came from the 3 Coynes' were taken to the pesthouse on 3 May.[45] The pesthouse in its initial form may have been of limited capacity, with just three individuals kept at various points between April and June in 1631.

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[41] WAC F2, ff.35, 44; F2001, ff.65.

[42] F. H. W. Sheppard, *Survey of London: Volumes 31 and 32, St James Westminster, Part 2* (London: London County Council, 1963), 219-229.

[43] WAC F3, ff.96-96v.

[44] Kitto, *A Register of Baptisms, Marriages and Burials*, 259-261.

[45] WAC F4515 - not foliated.

The vestry sought to maintain access to the pesthouse in Soho in 1632, aiming for flexibility to help cover its cost when plague was not present but making it available when the parish had need. In mid-June, the two churchwardens were directed to approach Sir Edward Wardour and offer him the first right of refusal to a lease for a pesthouse, from which an agreement was struck. Wardour had purchased the lease of six acres in Soho from Edward Gisby in 1631.[46] The right of refusal may have been extended as a courtesy to an important member of the parish community and the new landowner in Soho. The vestry directed the churchwardens to repair the house so that it be 'made tenable'. In early August, they were instructed to provide tenants and take what 'Rent they can gett', so that the parish always had the use of the house 'uppon a daies warning, or more'.[47] Given perceptions of the pesthouse and the parish's need to ensure its availability, it was unlikely that the vestry would attract tenants beyond the ordinary poor. Even so, the vestry sought to maintain control of the resource and derive income to support their work with the poor. In late October, the overseers were ordered to maintain the condition of the almshouse and pesthouse from which they would receive the rents for the use of the poor.[48] The register shows no plague burials in St Martin's between 1632-1635, a period in which the parish presumably received rent.[49]

The vestry minutes do not record any decision to reinstate the parish pesthouse or remove any tenants in 1636. Three people were taken to the pesthouse from Thomas Lightwood's house and the Sutton family of three from John Eastridge's, both in Spur Alley, at the beginning and end of June.[50] It is apparent that the parish was able to quickly repossess the basic pesthouse leased of Wardour, whilst the preparations that followed were focused on expanding its capacity. The extraordinary plague payments show the expense and effort taken to expand capacity through July. The total spent by the parish in building and fitting out the pesthouse was just over £163, a significant outlay and indication of the important role the parish intended the pesthouse to play. The accounts provide a detailed outline of the wider

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[46] HMC Hatfield xxiv. 274-5.

[47] WAC F2002, ff.89.

[48] WAC F2002, ff.91.

[49] Kitto, *A Register of Baptisms, Marriages and Burials*, 265-304.

[50] WAC F4514, ff.1.

expense and scale of the subsequent building. The sum of £82 18s was paid for 139 deal boards and timbers for the intended building of 22 pesthouses. The carpenters Richard Rider and Thomas Davis were paid £7 and £6 10s each. Rider was paid for dismantling three 'pesthouses' in the churchyard and then building nine in the 'Pestfeild', while Davis built twelve pesthouses and a 'watchhouse in the Pestfield'.[51]

These were purpose-built multiple-units and most likely under a single administration, and a different kind of physical structure from the permanent building leased from Wardour. The parish took much care and expense in ensuring the durability and comfort of the structures. Water provision and self-sufficiency were ensured with payment of 6s to Richard Collye for digging a well on 24 July. As the building neared completion, a bricklayer was paid £14 16s 5d for materials and workmanship for building a chimney in each of the pesthouses. A payment of £6 9s 10d was also made to Samuel Clarke for locks, keys and 'other Ironworke', which ensured compliance and security. Final preparations involved the purchase of nineteen chaldrons of sea coals, at a total cost of £19 5s 6d, alongside 'earthen wares as panns platters potts and other the like necessaries'. The searcher and pesthouse matron Thomazine Ellis was given £2 10s to buy 'plaisters & salues for the Poore visited'. The purchase of a chair to carry and a common prayer book to be read to the poor visited marked the social group the new structures were primarily intended to cater for.[52]

The new pesthouses in St Martin in the Fields may have been smaller than those referenced by Keith Wrightson in Newcastle in 1637 but were better than the 'hovels' that Slack suggested were established in Bristol. The high survival rate of patients (86% in 1636 and 1637) attests to the quality construction and relative comfort of patients, which in turn, points to the parish's view of the pesthouse as a hospital where the sick were to be effectively treated.[53] Plague officers may have maintained fewer persons within each pesthouse for better care. The pesthouses contained 66 persons in the week of 12 February 1637, which was the highest number across several weeks in which the number quarantined 'in the towne'

[51] WAC F4516, ff.13-16v.

[52] WAC F4516, ff.13-16v.

[53] WAC F4514, ff.1-4, 6, 8-9, 12, 14-15, 17-19, 21-24, 29,32, 37, 40, 44-46, 58-59, 61, 63, 66, 69, 71, 75-78, 80-87, 92.94, 97-99, 102-103, 109, 111-112.

and the pesthouses were recorded in the weekly list.[54] This suggests that three people were

kept within each of the 21 structures that were added to the core building. Given the scale of

plague in the growing outer parishes and limited resources, the pesthouse could never

displace the household as the main location of quarantine. The increased capacity though

allowed the parish to take a flexible and pragmatic approach to household quarantine.
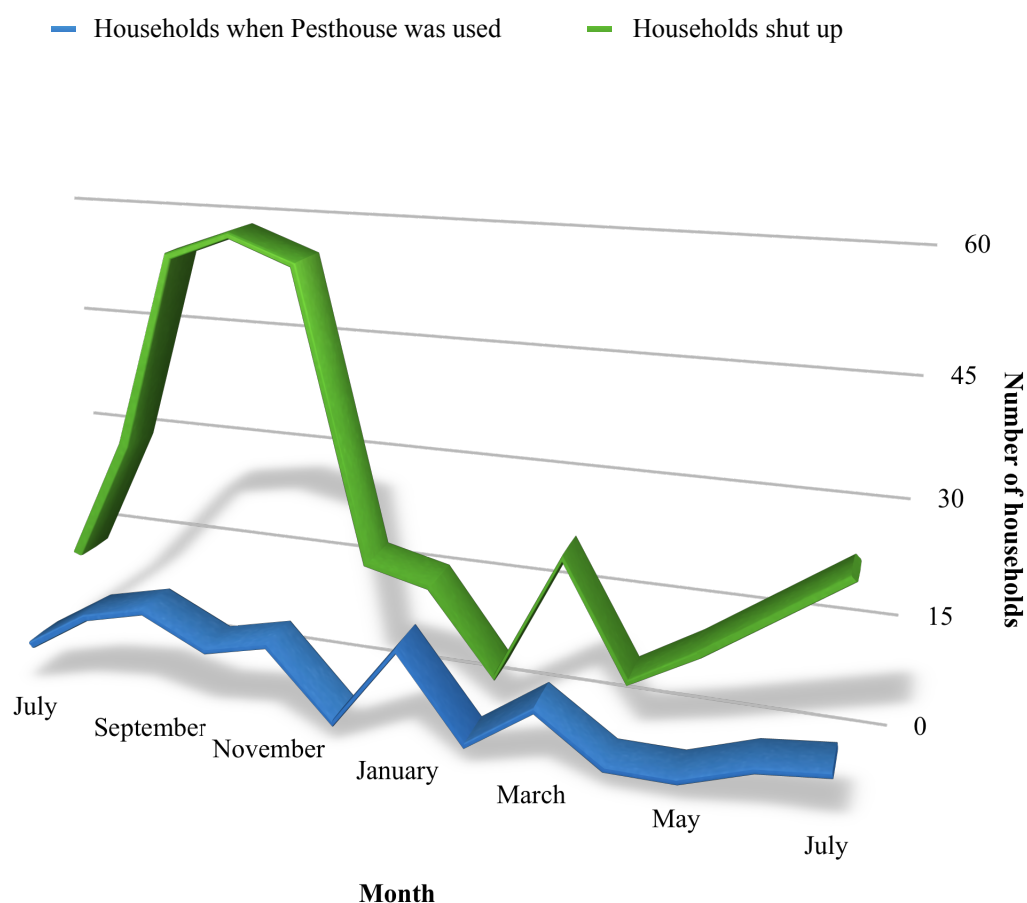
Figure 6.1. The use of the pesthouse by month in St Martin in the Fields, June 1636-July 1637.
The total number of households in which the pesthouse was used in each month was calculated and set
against the total number of households that were newly shut up.
Source: F4514.

The pesthouse was used in the management of nearly a third (107) of the 357 quarantined

households in 1636 and 1637, both as the first and secondary platform of response. Removals

at the beginning of isolation comprised 80% (85) of admissions from households. When used

in combination with house-based quarantine, an individual or small group of people might be

removed there following an initial period of household isolation, often as a means by which

to discharge healthy families in a household. The parish was able to use the pesthouse more

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[54] WAC F4516, ff.9-12.

extensively in the opening weeks of the epidemic but as the scale of quarantine increased and the pesthouse reached capacity, household quarantine greatly exceeded the use of the pesthouse (figure 6.1).[55] The pesthouse was used to manage 25% (59) of the 240 households shut up in the main epidemic from June to the end of December in 1636. The cumulative impact of plague is evident by December 1636 when use of the pesthouse was associated with just 16% of households that were newly shut up, despite declining plague incidence at that time. Many of those removed to the pesthouse in late October and November were still there in December, which limited the parish's ability to utilise the pesthouse for new cases. The pesthouse was used in a higher proportion of cases as the epidemic tailed off further in early 1637. In January, 82% (14) of the seventeen newly shut up households were removed there. This percentage decreased incrementally through the late winter and spring. Even though just six households were newly shut up in February, the pesthouse was not used exclusively. As plague incidence increased again in June and July, the pesthouse was used to manage around a third of newly shut up households. Overall, it was used for 40% (47) of the 118 households shut up in 1637, underscoring that it was only ever intended to complement household quarantine but was an important weapon in St Martin's implementation of plague regulations.

Despite the increasing plague incidence through the early summer in 1637, the vestry ordered the pesthouses pulled down in the first week of July.[56] This related to the new structures and might have seemed premature given the parish had newly shut up nineteen households in June, of which the pesthouse was used to manage the quarantine of six. Moreover, eleven households had been newly shut up in the first week of July. The pesthouse was used to manage the quarantine of just two of those households, which might be evidence of the parish reducing numbers before pulling the structures down.[57] The parish spent £800 on quarantine in the period from June 1636 to April 1637. Loans were taken out, and as will be discussed later in this chapter, ongoing problems were experienced with bringing in all due rates. In that context, the vestry decision to dismantle the pesthouses was probably

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[55] WAC F4514, ff.1-114.

[56] WAC F2002, ff.106.

[57] WAC F4514, ff.99-112.

financially motivated. Some of the materials though were held in reserve for future use. On 21 November, the vestry ordered that the boards and timber of the pesthouse were to be taken down and brought into the new churchyard. After a month there, presumably for decontamination, the materials were to be 'piled up' and locked away in a shed and the bricks and 'other necessaryes' were to be sold to the best advantage of the parish.[58] Some pesthouse capacity was maintained, evident in the sending of widow Robinson to the pesthouse out of the multi-family household of Francis Pasmore in Long Acre, in December 1637. It seems likely the pesthouse referred to in this instance was the structure leased from Wardour, which demonstrates the importance the vestry placed in the permanency of the core resource.[59]

A general continuity is evident in the parish's use of the pesthouse after 1636/1637. In early June 1638, the vestry directed the churchwardens and overseers to 'make the best benefitt' of the pesthouse in Soho and to any person or persons that 'will give most' during the remaining years of the lease's term.[60] In 1639, the parish paid £8 16s to Wardour for a 'yeares Rent for the Pesthowse at Sohoe.[61] Any chance to derive income from the lease was short-lived, as evident in two collectors delivering £20 'towards the visited' on 26 June 1640. Although the vestry minutes record no decision to reinstate the pesthouse, a separate page in the churchwardens' accounts, that spanned 1 May to 28 December 1640, detailed charges 'for the pesthouses' in 1640. Great care and expense were again taken to increase capacity. The disbursements totalled £154 15s with £60 spent on securing land and building the structures. A payment of £4 was made to a Mr Wake for the lease of the ground 'where the Pesthouses new built'. Timber and boards to the value of £26 were purchased and Luke Meakino was paid £24 for building the 'pesthouses'. This included the bricklayers' bill and indicates that the structures were similar to those built in 1636. Around seven to eight pesthouses might have been constructed in 1640 if we compare the £24 12s 8d spent on boards and timber to

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[58] WAC F2002, ff.107.

[59] WAC F4514, ff.113-114.

[60] WAC F2002, ff.108.

[61] WAC F3, ff.292.

the £82 expended in 1636, which was intended to provide for the building of 22 pesthouses, of which 21 were built..[62]

The pesthouse continued to play a role in the parish's repertoire of response to plague through the civil wars. On 20 September 1643, the vestry ordered the two churchwardens to become 'tenants' unto William Oxindon for the 'feilds called the Pesthouse feilds in this parish'. The same churchwardens were asked to bring their accounts in early June 1645 and also give an account of the pesthouse boards and other materials 'belonging to the same' and how and in what 'manner they have bine expended'. New space was sought on 25 June 1647, when the churchwardens were ordered to view the 'Rydeout' between the 'Forte in Tyburne and the Crab Tredd' as to whether it was a convenient place for a pesthouse.[63] It was at this time that burials in the parish began to accelerate rapidly toward the peak of a visitation that reached minor epidemic levels in the parish in that year (figure 4.14, p.147). The 'Crab Tredd' in question was probably the parliamentary fort that was built adjacent to Soho and just to the north of St Giles in the Fields.[64] Soho was presumably selected in 1632 due to the availability of space and as the parish continued to develop, the vestry may have looked to a location that was then on the new periphery of the settlement.

Whilst the extramural parishes used the City's pesthouse in a discretionary and limited way, the westerly outer parishes included the building of pesthouses within a wider strategic response in the building of structures to manage the poor. The efforts of suburban parishes to acquire additional ground for burial is another aspect of that part of that response.

6.2 Establishing new burial ground

Over a million deaths occurred in London between 1550 and 1666, with between ten and fifteen thousand burials every year. Whilst epidemics sparked anxiety about the consequences of overcrowded burial space, accommodation for the dead was a long-term

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[62] WAC F3, ff.110.

[63] WAC F2002, ff.130, 142, 154.

[64] Norman Brett-James, *The Growth of Stuart London* (London: London and Middlesex Archaeological Society, 1935), 272 - for 'Map of London Showing the Fortifications of 1642-1643'.

problem in the suburban parishes.[65] The City's concern with burial tended to sit with public hygiene and compliance with plague regulations in the more immediate intramural parishes, rather than forming any long-term burial strategy.[66] Vanessa Harding queried whether the City's failure to establish any new non-parochial burial grounds between the opening of the New Churchyard in 1569 and Bunhill Fields in 1665 was the result of less sensitivity to an increasingly suburban problem.[67] Harding showed that problem was confronted at the 'intimate and local level' of the parish, where vestries used their initiative and resources to ease local pressures. This section aims to expand on Harding's extensive work but will avoid simply describing the expedients taken to accommodate vastly increased numbers of dead in a major plague epidemic. Rather, this section will connect with her comment that parishes faced the conflicting imperatives of the need to bury the dead and the growing needs of the 'poor living'.[68] The problem of limited burial space was marked in the suburbs where parishes possessed fewer resources and faced greater need, and experienced unique spatial challenges as they were built over. The discussion will show that the needs of the poor living took a slight lead over the dead in the priorities of parishes.

Harding emphasised that the medieval expectation for burial in parochial ground remained unchanged by the Reformation and Protestant attitudes to the disposal of the dead. As such, vestries took a conservative approach to burial, seeking additional parochial ground to alleviate pressure on existing burial ground and reworking and managing resources. A few intramural parishes established new burial ground in the sixteenth century, in the space made available by the dissolution of religious houses and precincts within the walls. The availability of space and lower land values in the suburbs, alongside growing need, resulted in parishes there establishing new grounds after 1600. These tended to be new sites that were

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[65] Vanessa Harding, 'And one more may be laid there': The Location of Burials in Early Modern London', *The London Journal*, Vol. 14 (2) (1989), 112.

[66] For example, Overall, *Remembrancia*, II.60.

[67] Vanessa Harding, 'Burial of the Plague Dead in Early Modern London', in J. A. I. Champion (ed.), *Epidemic Disease in London* (Centre for Metropolitan History Working Papers Series, No. 1, 1993), 63-64.

[68] Vanessa Harding, *The Dead and Living in London and Paris 1500-1670* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 68.

not attached to the church and were inevitably situated amongst people and dwellings or in waste space on the periphery of the parish.[69]

Anxiety about the consequences of overcrowded burial space inevitably surfaced following the epidemic in 1603. The combined cumulative impact of endemic plague and accelerated population growth in the decade that followed though were equally important in spurring vestries to acquire new parochial burial ground. St Botolph Aldgate nominated several vestrymen in 1611 to 'do there best endeavour' to find a 'Conveynent' burial place, the churchyard not being 'sufficient inough'.[70] The parish's existing ground had been placed under immense pressure in 1603, with 1,413 total burials, of which 1,280 were reported as plague.[71] The mean total of annual burials in Aldgate in the five years up to the epidemic was 240, and this increased to 409 in the five years up to 1611. The mean total of annual baptisms increased from 211 to 280 in the same five year periods.[72] These pressures, particularly that of endemic plague, would have made it problematic for the parish to manage the recovery of the existing churchyard. The need for additional space, and slow progress in its acquisition, was evident in April 1612 when the vestry ordered the sexton to dig the graves of adults to at least a depth of five feet and four feet for children.[73]

As the additional ground was acquired in the east Smithfield part of the parish, the vestry agreed in June 1612 that the inhabitants of Portsoken and East Smithfield would equally bear the cost of erecting a brick wall around the burial ground.[74] The location of the new ground in the southern half of the parish was most likely influenced by the availability of space there at that stage of the parish's development. The enclosure of churchyards was required by Canon Law and Harding commented that the construction of walls comprised a significant proportion of the cost of establishing a new burial ground. Harding also commented that

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[69] Harding, *Dead and the Living*, 73; Harding, 'Location of Burials', 113, 117-118.

[70] LMA P69/BOT2/B/001/MS09236, ff.26.

[71] GL, *A True Report of All the Burials and Christenings within the City of London and the Liberties thereof, from the 23. December 1602 to the 22. December 1603.*

[72] T. R. Forbes, *Chronicle from Aldgate: Life and Death in Shakespeare's London*, (Newhaven and London: Yale University Press, 1971), 60.

[73] LMA P69/BOT2/B/001/MS09236, ff.28.

[74] LMA P69/BOT2/B/001/MS09236, ff.29.

parishes increasingly attempted to control public use and access through new churchyards.[75] This extended to the use of locked doors to the churchyards in Aldgate, evident in repeated payments for installing or repairing locks. These references sit alongside a general focus on security and controlling access to parish administered space. For example, in 1615, a locksmith was paid for mending the lock of the vestry door and 'other lockes about the Church and Church-yard doores' and for 'taking' of 21 locks on pew doors in the church.[76]

The new churchyard in Aldgate was consecrated by the Bishop of London on 18 April 1615. The four-year gap from the initial decision to acquire additional ground might be taken to show the difficulties that the parish encountered in seeing the project through. The significance of the project though is evident in the parish clerk's celebratory note that a 'Great & Sumptuos dinner' was organised for the special guests and 'this Busines Ended'.[77] Harding reported that St Botolph Bishopsgate spent £24 on a dinner to mark the consecration of a new churchyard in 1617 and £160 in total in establishing the ground.[78] Whilst parishes aimed to derive revenue from burial fees, given the social composition of parishes beyond the walls, vestries did expect to subsidise a large proportion of burials.[79] This reflects the dilemma of burial in the large and socially diverse suburban parishes. Whilst burial provided an income source, a significant proportion of burials presented a cost to the parish, a situation which plague exacerbated. For example, the clerk in St Martin in the Fields entered two general entries under burial receipts in the churchwardens' accounts in 1625, 'by reason of the heat of sickness' omitting 'great nombers that paid nothing'.[80] The discussion in Chapter 5 also showed that the greater proportion of plague burials in St Bride Fleet Street in 1641 paid no burial fee.

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[75] Harding, 'Location of Burials', 118.

[76] LMA P69/BOT2/B/012/MS09235/002, ff.254v.

[77] LMA P69/BOT2/B/001/MS09236, ff.37; P69/BOT2/A/019/MS09234/008, ff.217v.

[78] Harding, 'Location of Burials', 117-118.

[79] Harding, 'Location of Burials', 118, 120.

[80] WAC F3, ff.9.

Acknowledgement of the parish's responsibility to see all parishioners buried is evident in St Botolph Aldgate following the consecration of the new churchyard. The vestry agreed in July 1616 that all pensioners that 'shall happen to dye in oure parish shall be buried without paying any duties'. In September 1618, they further ordered that any poor dying in the parish, 'which are not of the abilitie to have theire buriall paid for', were to be buried and the churchwardens to pay 6d. to the minister and 3d. to the clerk and sexton.[81] These references demonstrate the close connection between the management of the poor living and the dead in the suburbs.

Given the size and social character of parish populations in the suburbs, the establishment of new parochial grounds was set within the framework of wider building related to the management of the poor. The vestry of St Botolph Aldgate had demolished and rebuilt tenement housing in Woolsack Alley through 1609 and 1610. The project aimed to secure a long-term source of income. The vestry planned to fund the construction with collections for £225 in each of the Portsoken and East Smithfield ends of the parish.[82] The establishment of the new burial ground and the construction of the tenements were significant projects, both in terms of funding and logistics. The vestry had to decide their priorities at different times in making provision for the dead and catering to the needs of the living in the community. Whilst endemic plague placed cumulative pressure on burial resources at that time, it is notable that the vestry prioritised the direction of funding for the building of the tenements. This suggests that the needs of the living poor were placed slightly ahead of the dead and that the acquisition of new burial ground was sought when the need was urgent rather than pressing. This is understandable when considering the tangible presence of the poor. The responsibilities for the poor that was imposed on vestries by the Poor Laws also played a role in framing priorities.

The vestry minutes and churchwardens' accounts do not refer to further additions to the burial grounds in Aldgate beyond the initiative taken between 1611 and 1615. This should

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[81] LMA P69/BOT2/B/001/MS09236, ff.55, 61; P69/BOT2/A/019/MS09234/008, ff.217v, 234v - this reference shows the vestry stating fees for the old and new burial grounds in November 1615.

[82] LMA P69/BOT2/B/001/MS09236, ff.20, 24.

not be read as the parish having resolved the problem of burial. The establishment of new grounds may have temporarily relieved pressure but had certainly not resolved the issue permanently. Despite having acquired new ground in 1617, St Botolph Bishopsgate was seeking additional ground as early as 1622.[83] To the west, the churchwarden in St Dunstan in the West paid for a warrant for the 'consecratinge of the newe Church Yarde' before the epidemic in 1593, and in 1625, additional ground was consecrated in the 'Westparte of the new Churchyard in ffewter lane'.[84] No further effort to acquire ground is evident in St Dunstan's beyond 1625. The parish was largely built over by the 1630s, which suggests that the opportunity to acquire ground had most likely passed. This is important in judging the strategic outlook of vestries in the extramural parishes after the establishment of new burial grounds earlier in the century.

The catalyst for the establishment of a new burial ground in the extramural parishes might come from outside the vestry. The Earl of Dorset gave three garden plots to St Bride Fleet Street in 1610. These adjoined the parish's existing space in the south of his mansion grounds between Shoe Lane and the Fleet Ditch.[85] The absence of parish records before 1639 means that we do not know if the vestry was actively seeking ground at that time. The Earl's gift was both conditional and self-serving, in that the burial of corpses was an 'Annoyance' and he stipulated that the parish could not bury any corpses on the south side of the new churchyard or erect buildings there. This stipulation indicates that the dual use of the ground was an expected possibility. The increase in the mean number of annual burials in the parish from 147 in the five years to 1602, to 312 in the five years up to 1610, make clear both the source of the Earl's complaint and the parish's need to acquire new ground amidst endemic plague.[86] The vestry subsequently walled the additional ground and left a roadway between the Fleet Ditch and the wall to carry corpses. Harding made the point that new burial grounds

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[83] Harding, *Dead and the Living*, 50.

[84] LMA P69/DUN2/B/011/MS02968/001, ff.390; P69/DUN2/B/011/MS02968/002, ff.288.

[85] LMA P69/BRI/D/006/MS06617, J1 No10.

[86] LMA P69/BRI/A/004/MS06538, ff.5v-59v.

in the extramural parishes tended to occupy marginal space near the ditches or waterways, as was the case with the plots gifted in 1610.[87]

Despite the evident need for greater burial capacity, the vestry looked to balance other communal needs against the addition of new burial ground. A row of almshouses was built adjacent to the Fleet ditch for the 'lames people'. The building there was most likely spurred by the windfall of available space, as opposed to any intention to place parish pensioners in a liminal location. It does show the temptation, or rather need, for the parish to put available land to other uses and the difficult decisions suburban vestries were required to make in prioritising the best use of available space. The incorporation of some provision for parish dependents demonstrates a strategic outlook on the part of the vestry of St Bride's and fits with the building of structures for the poor in other parishes beyond the walls. This takes on an added significance when considering the Earl's condition that the land was to be used for burial, in that the vestry circumnavigated his stipulation of no building to the south of his mansion.

The vestry of St Bride Fleet Street took no further measures to establish additional burial ground up to the Great Fire. Much the same as St Dunstan in the West, and as the discussion in Chapter 2 suggested, the parish was also completely built over by the 1630s. This can be extended to neighbouring St Sepulchre Newgate, where a new burial ground was established in 1612, and no additional ground beyond that initiative. St Giles Cripplegate opened a third churchyard in 1662.[88] The Repertories record an earlier extension to and consecration of the churchyard in Cripplegate in 1609.[89] The 1638 tithes return reflects increasing development in the Middlesex area of Cripplegate but the parish was large and extended up to Old Street. There was no problem with finding open space within the parish at this stage of its expansion.[90] Parishes were increasingly meticulous in their record-keeping after 1600. It is unlikely the dearth of references to new burial grounds in most extramural parishes after

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[87] Harding, *Dead and the Living*, 69.

[88] Harding, *Dead and the Living*, 69.

[89] LMA COL/CA/01/01/032, ff.32.

[90] T. C. Dale, *The Inhabitants of London in 1638* (London: Society of Genealogists, 1931), 236-239.

1625 was due to the clerks not recording any new initiatives, given the funding and logistics that were required.

Extramural parishes continued to manage existing space in the absence of new ground. This was a challenge in the run of endemic plague years following the 1636 epidemic. St Botolph Aldgate paid 4s. for the 'Carryinge in of Stones into ye Church y[a]rd' in 1642.[91] The sexton of St Bride Fleet Street informed the vestry in July 1645 that the lower part of the ground in the churchyard was full, to which the vestry ordered the upper part of the ground in the churchyard 'broke upp for a burying place'.[92] The churchwardens of St Dunstan in the West employed several labourers for work done in the churchyard for 'digging a pitt for burying the bones, and emptying of the Charnell house of them' in 1647.[93]

Much of the discussion of the extramural parishes has demonstrated independence and strategic thinking in action earlier in the century. Short-term expedients might also form the practical response in an epidemic event. The clerk of St Andrew Holborn recorded that new ground was broken in 1625 due to the 'wofill mortalitie'.[94] This was the result of 2,190 total burials, of which 1,636 were of plague.[95] The vestry reported a parcel of unconsecrated ground near the church being 'charitably & presently' laid out and 'inclosed for buriall'. It is not clear how the ground was organised, as to whether single graves or open pits were dug, but it was to be used only for such 'tyme as it shall please All mighte God to give noe good occacon to consecrate that grounde'. The reference suggests that the opening of the ground was a temporary expedient and the surviving records show no earlier or later burial initiative taken by the parish. This was despite the establishment of other building for the living poor. We might speculate that the lack of available space in the south of the parish and possible complexities in negotiating land ownership in the rapidly developing north of the parish may have been a hindrance.

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[91] LMA P69/BOT2/B/031/MS09237, ff.93v.

[92] LMA P69/BRI/B/001/MS06554/001, ff.8.

[93] LMA P69/DUN2/B/011/MS02968/004, ff.66.

[94] LMA P82/AND/B/001/MS04251/001 ff.7.

[95] Birch, *A Collection of the Yearly Bills* - 1625.

The establishment of a new burial ground may have simply not have been viewed a priority, rather the parish focused its resources on the establishment or acquisition of housing for the dependent poor. The vestry had ordered in 1618 that no poor tenants in St Andrews alley or 'elsewhere dwelling in the Church land' could take in any 'maid or maids men Childe Children freind or friends (out of service) or anie of them being married' without consent of the parish.[96] The parish was working within the framework of erecting or acquiring buildings to support the management of the poor, which continued beyond the epidemic in 1625. The vestry was accepting gifts to fund a new building project in late 1630 and in March 1631, invested £200 of parish stocks and took loans for building five new houses in Shoe Lane. The total cost of the project was £1065.[97] The investment of a significant sum of parish stocks demonstrates the importance attributed to the project by the vestry. It also suggests that the needs of the living poor were prioritised at a time of accelerated population growth and a changing built environment. This is similar to St Botolph Aldgate twenty years before.

Several outer parishes also sought to establish additional burial ground after 1600. As in the extramural parishes, the timing of new initiatives tended to relate to the cumulative impact of local population growth and endemic plague and the construction of buildings to manage the poor. Despite the availability of space, an epidemic event might still spur an outer-parish to action, as was the case with the large easterly outer-parish of Stepney, following difficulties in accommodating burials in the 1625 epidemic. The parish speedily established new ground through 1626, no doubt due to the availability of space in an expansive and underdeveloped parish that comprised several hamlets.[98] To the west, the addition of a succession of new grounds in St Margaret Westminster, in 1611, 1620 and 1627, demonstrates the fast-changing situation in that area, and the availability of space there on the very periphery of the wider metropolis, at least up to the 1630s.[99]

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[96] LMA P82/AND/B/008/MS04249, ff.24v.

[97] LMA P82/AND/B/001/MS04251/001, ff.29, 31.

[98] G. W. Hill and W. H. Frere (eds.), *Memorials of Stepney Parish* (Guildford: Billing & Sons, 1890-91), 108-118.

[99] Harding, *Dead and the Living*, 69.

Complexities in land ownership and the availability of space might have been a hindrance though to acquiring new ground in some westerly outer parishes. St Giles in the Fields was still reworking existing space as late as 1640. A reference in that year records digging and levelling in the churchyard. It was not until 1664 that the parish sought to or was possibly able to extend their burial space. A committee of the vestry was directed to 'treat' with the present tenant of a parcel of land adjoining the south of the existing churchyard.[100] Whilst the reworking of the existing churchyard reflects the need for new ground, the fines for illegal buildings in 1638 indicate the scale of building and possibility that the parish found it difficult to acquire new ground.[101] The vestry was successful in this regard in 1664. The parish paid to fence the 'new churchyard' and a bricklayer completed work done about the extension in 1665. This followed the establishment of almshouses in 1656 and a parish workhouse in 1662, which suggests the vestry prioritised the needs of the poor living amidst rapid population growth and associated social problems. As just one example, the vestry of St Giles blamed the inadequacies of the poor-rate on the fact that the 'many new-comers' to the parish did not find 'entertainment', being mostly 'dwellers, or inmates or lodgers'.[102]

St Martin in the Fields established an additional burial ground in 1608, slightly earlier than neighbouring St Margaret Westminster. Much the same as St Botolph Aldgate to the east, this reflects the impact of the 1603 epidemic but also the more immediate endemic years that followed. The discussion in Chapter 2 showed the growing confidence and power of the vestry after 1600 and this may have encouraged their long-term strategic outlook in approaching the problems of the poor and plague. This included the establishment of the new churchyard. Vestrymen visited Greenwich at 'sundry times' in 1606 to deliver a petition to the King for his consent in 'obtayening the graunt of the newe Churchyarde'. In November, the King's grant in perpetuity was delivered to the churchwardens for one acre of ground lying near the existing churchyard. The project would take two years to complete and was to be funded by the parochial community. An entry in the churchwardens' accounts records payment for writing up a 'gathering book' for the visited houses and another 'for the

[100] Parton, *St Giles in the Fields*, 289.

[101] TNA SP16/408/139, ff.139v-145.

[102] Parton, *St Giles in the Fields*, 314, 322.

Churchyard'.[103] The power and systems by which to raise rates that were granted to parishes under the Poor Law were important in providing the framework and confidence with which to fund building projects. This is important when considering the establishment of new burial grounds in the suburbs in the first fifteen to 25 years of the seventeenth century. The building of the new burial ground caused some disruption, evident in payment to the 'keeper' of Durham house for a 'Reward' when parishioners did 'trouble the house, and Chappell during that tyme w[hi]ch they went thither to service', when 'o[u]r Churchyard was about to be builded'. The new ground had been laid out by February of 1608, evident in the clerk recording payment to a mole catcher for killing moles in the new churchyard.[104]

The vestry sought to restrict access to the older ground when it also ordered in February 1608 that there should generally be no further burials in the old churchyard, 'according to the necessitie', except for any persons who had borne public office in the parish. This was extended to wives and children and a 5s fee was specified for breaking the ground. The new churchyard was consecrated in June 1608 and two labourers were paid in late August for three days work in removing the earth, and 'dead Corps' out of the old churchyard, into the new churchyard. Two labourers were paid again at the beginning of September for 'two daies and a half a peece', to 'remove earth in the old Churchyard'.[105] This could be viewed as a measure to ensure the ground surrounding the church was more socially exclusive, in an increasingly diverse parish. Equally though, and as Harding demonstrated, a gradient of fees might be used by vestries to encourage burial in the new ground, as means by which to override any preference for the old.[106]

The confluence of ongoing population growth and persistent endemic plague beyond the opening of the new churchyard in St Martin in the Fields likely spurred the writing of a petition for the enlargement of the church and churchyard in April 1611.[107] This underscores

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[103] WAC F2001, ff.45, 73, 75, 111-113.

[104] WAC F2001, ff.88, 109.

[105] WAC F2001, ff.56; F2, ff.111-113.

[106] Harding, 'Location of Burial', 120-122.

[107] WAC F2001, ff.144.

the difficulties vestries faced in achieving any long-term solution to the problem of burial, even in the outer parishes where it might be thought there was available space. When taken with the parish's erection of almshouses and a house of correction earlier in the decade, there is again a sense that the living poor were given priority. As detailed earlier in the chapter, the parish had also received a gift for the building of one to two rooms for pensioners to dwell in near the existing almshouses in 1611. Population growth in St Martin's accelerated from 1615, with over three times as many baptisms occurring annually by the early 1620s than at the time of the consecration of the new churchyard in 1608.[108] The vestry ordered that the churchwardens were to build a shed 'fitt for a private house of Correction' near the almshouses in October 1617. This reflects the vestry's anxiety about the social pressures associated with accelerated population growth and the ongoing process of prioritisation in the use of resources.[109]

The cumulative burden of burials in the decade before the epidemic in 1625 inevitably played a part in the difficulties the parish faced in accommodating burials. St Martin's accommodated 1,470 total burials in 1625, of which 973 were of plague.[110] The vestry ordered expedients to alleviate pressure and ensured that burial resources were not overwhelmed during the epidemic. This is similar to the conclusion that Vanessa Harding presented in her analysis of St Bride Fleet Street in the 1665 epidemic.[111] As was described in Chapter 5, the bearers for the 'visited persons' in St Martin's were paid to carry earth into the new churchyard on 29 October, 16 November and 23 December. This was intended to 'eaise the ground there over the graves where the visited p[er]sons were buryed'.[112] This suggests that burials were accommodated across the surface of the churchyard, rather than concentrated in open or mass burial pits. In the aftermath of the epidemic 'Laboure & inquirie' was taken to track down the families of the many burials that had been 'laid into the

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[108] Kitto, *A Register of Baptisms, Marriages and Burials*, 1-56.

[109] WAC F2001, ff.114v.

[110] Birch, *A Collection of the Yearly Bills* 1625; Kitto, *A register of baptisms, marriages and burials*, 193-219.

[111] Harding, 'Burial of the Plague Dead', 53-64.

[112] WAC F3, ff.17-18.

graves & pitts' in the night, for which fees were not taken.[113] This reflects the administrative disruption experienced by the parish, and although it is tempting to take the reference to 'pitts' as evidence of mass burial, caution is advised. Whilst literary evidence suggests open and mass burial pits were used in the 1603 and 1625 epidemics, the parish records used in this study do not throw up any definitive references to confirm that narrative.[114]

The aftermath of the epidemic and the acceleration of population growth in St Martin's between 1629 and the epidemic in 1636 resulted in the vestry having to carefully manage and rework space, alongside controlling access to the churchyards. In 1634, a carpenter was paid for mending the door of the 'newchurchyarde, w[hi]ch was broken, and shattered', and a gravemaker for work done 'in & about the Church and Churchyards'. The ground was levelled and rubbish carried away in 1635. The epidemic and wider visitation in 1636 and 1637 compounded difficulties and led to the parish once again seeking new ground and a 'new churchyard' was consecrated in 1638. Many entries in the churchwardens' accounts in that year detail the management of the project, which indicates its scale and importance. This involved delivery of 63 loads of gravel in May 'to make walkes' in the new churchyard and payment to labourers in September to level the new ground. Payments were also made at this time for going to St Paul's to 'search the Records' for the consecration and several trips across the river to Lambeth to meet with the Justice, Dr Bray, about the new churchyard. This included paying fees.[115] This sits alongside the vestry managing the almshouses and house of correction and operating and intermittently expanding pesthouse provision.

The patterns in the establishment of new burial grounds in suburban parishes were remarkably similar. Whilst burial was a long-term problem and epidemics placed significant pressure on available resources, parishes were also faced with growing social need and were required to decide their priorities at different times. The establishment of additional burial grounds and other building aimed at managing the poor came at a significant cost to parishes,

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[113] WAC F3, ff.9.

[114] Thomas Dekker, *A Wonderfull Yeare* (1603) http://www.luminarium.org/renascence-editions/yeare.html[accessed 16 December 2020]; Thomas Dekker, *A Rod for Run-Awayes* (1625) https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=eebo;idno=A20080.0001.001 [accessed 16 December 2020].

[115] WAC F3, ff.183v, 202, 269-271v.

alongside the increasing financial burden in implementing plague measures. The final section of the chapter will show the pragmatic and firm manner in which vestries set about meeting that challenge.

6.3 Paying for plague

The clerk of St Martin in the Fields commented on the last page of the churchwardens' accounts for 1630 and 1631 that the 'greater visitation of the sicknes' had 'happened' in the parish 'especially of the Poorer sort', and that several rates had been 'made'. The cost of maintaining plague regulations though was 'much exceedinge' the collected rates and the £115 1s 2d deficit was subsequently made up from parish stocks.[116] A surviving plague collection book for 1630 recorded 652 ratepayers. The number had doubled from 305 in 1603, yet the population had grown threefold.[117] The discussion in Chapter 5 demonstrated the full and rigorous implementation of quarantine in 1631. The churchwardens' accounts recorded a series of 'extraordinary' payments to the poor that totalled £58 19s 10d. This included payments to fourteen individuals 'upon petic[i]ons to the Vestry' in December 1630.[118] This was focused and discretionary support and linked to the general hardship in the parish, not necessarily caused by plague but exacerbated at a time of accelerated population growth and plague. This was a characteristic of the plague experience in the suburban parishes.

The financial challenge of managing plague was an increasing problem in the 1630s and 1640s when persistent endemic plague and growing social need intersected with ever-increasing force. The muted response of external authorities and local ratepayers meant that vestries were largely on their own. Julia Merritt argued that the financial burden of plague increased in Westminster through the seventeenth century due to 'worsening' levels of plague and more rigorous implementation of quarantine. Merritt also suggested that the years of 'occasional' plague incidence did more damage to parish finances than the more general scale

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[116] WAC F3, 118v.

[117] WAC 3355 - not foliated; J. V. Kitto, *St Martin in the Fields. The Accounts of the Churchwardens, 1525-1603* (Simpkin, Marshall, Kent, Hamilton & co, 1901), 577-579.

[118] WAC 4515 - not foliated; F3, ff.115, 118v.

of poverty, particularly as the large charitable donations that she says characterised epidemic events did not 'pour in'.[119] This section will outline the characteristics of the financial burden of plague in the 1630s and 1640s and will show that the measures taken by vestries coincided with the wider social problems they managed. This included the epidemic in 1636.

St Botolph Aldgate reported 735 plague burials out of 1,501 burial events in 1636 and whilst plague did not overwhelm its wider ability to function, the vestry did redirect certain income streams to cover the cost of implementing plague regulations.[120] A vestry meeting on 12 September was focused on the 'raisinge of moneys for releife' for the quarantined, from which the special plague rates listed in the accounts were probably ordered. The only decision specified by the clerk was that all money raised by fines for offices would be given over to the use of the visited as 'neede shall require'.[121] Although several supported householders were named in the accounts, many other entries were more general, such as that for the 10s 'giuen to ten pore families shut up' by order of the examiner. Instead, the clerk marked the total sums given to the individual examiners who had responsibility in each precinct delegated to them. For example, William Dawsten and Henry Bennett in the High Street Precinct were given £26 and £13, to dispense at their discretion where support was needed. Payments to the examiners accounted for £196 of the £228 disbursed in the plague account.[122]

The churchwardens balanced their accounts with receipts and disbursements listed under plague related measures that totalled £229 10s 1d and £228 respectively. The receipts included £36 received from the outgoing and incoming Lord Mayor, which was taken in three separate payments. Guildhall's financial support though, at least in this middling and largely suburban epidemic was the result of solicitation. This is evident in the churchwardens going to the Lord Maior 'for releife' on three occasions.[123] Given the difficulties in collecting

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[119] Merritt, *Early Modern Westminster*, 301-306.

[120] Birch, *A Collection of the Yearly Bills* - 1636.

[121] LMA P69/BOT2/B/001/MS09236, ff.267v.

[122] LMA P69/BOT2/B/031/MS09237, ff.69-73v.

[123] LMA P69/BOT2/B/031/MS09237, ff.70-70v.

plague rates and paucity of gifts, contributions from Guildhall, albeit limited, were no doubt an appreciated supplement to parish stocks.

The Court of Aldermen established a process in July 1636 for parishes within their jurisdiction to seek relief. The Chamberlain directed £100 to the Lord Mayor, which was derived from the livery companies who had each been asked to give one-third of the savings from their postponed dinners. The Mayor was to use his discretion as to which of the 'poore parishes infected in and about this Citty' would receive relief.[124] Except for the £25 paid to St Sepulchre Newgate, the City's Cash books show no other disbursements to parishes from the Court of Aldermen. Parishes looked instead to the plague rate to meet the financial burden of implementing the plague regulations.

The total sum of £62 13s 8d was raised from special plague rates in St Botolph Aldgate in 1636. This was mostly derived from the work of two pairs of collectors, who brought in £28 3s 6d and £26 10s 2d from rates, and 'severall collections upon a brief for our visited people' that totalled £8 6d. This probably does not reflect the full rateable monies available to the parish, given that two warrants were raised for 'those that would not paie'.[125] An interesting contrast to this and the sums that might be raised in the parish with concerted effort and willingness in the community is presented at the beginning of the account. The clerk recorded that £152 16s 9d had been collected for church repairs. The collection is not dated but was most likely carried out earlier in the year, as the list of payments for the repairs, which totalled £134, date the mason's reports to June and November and the carpenter's bill for work done on 12 October and 15 November.[126] This presents an interesting point in the parish seeing the work completed amidst the management of the epidemic and the sum that might be obtained when the rated were motivated. This chimes with the collection for the extension to the church gallery in St Martin in the Fields in 1630, which was described in Chapter 2.

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[124] LMA COL/CA/01/01/054/01, ff.283v.

[125] LMA P69/BOT2/B/031/MS09237, ff.70v.

[126] LMA P69/BOT2/B/031/MS09237, ff.69-69v.

Many of the entries in the 'poor visited' section of the account are for the support of quarantined households but several are payments to the poor more generally. For example, a total of £8 10s was distributed amongst 60 poor people on three occasions and this was listed under plague payments. These were most likely viewed as extraordinary payments and shows the difficulties the churchwardens faced in untangling the impact of plague and more general need in an epidemic year. Notably, the churchwardens' accounts were not overwhelmed by plague-related spending, with £709 received and £703 expended. The disbursements covered all facets of parish business including those related to the management of the poor, such as payments for nursing and relief. Moreover, the running social challenges the parish faced were not displaced by the epidemic, rather they were brought more starkly into focus, evident in the clerk marking £1 11s 4d under disbursements to the Lord Mayor's office for money spent at 'diuers inquiries for Inmates & poore that would work'.[127] The fact that the parish had balanced their accounts in 1636 was the result of the exercise of discretion in the direction of relief. This illustrates the symbiosis that existed in the parish's complex management of the plague and the poor.

This was also evident in St Martin in the Fields, where the cost of maintaining quarantine from June 1636 to April 1637was £809 13s. A rate book was drawn up for a double assessment, 'by reason of the long contynuance' of the visitation. A total of £392 11s 2d was assessed across 513 householders with £278 18s 2d collected between the end of July 1636 and 16 April 1637. Half the rate was for the visited and half for the poor and 38% (196) of the ratepayers were in arrears, two-thirds of them for both rates, the remainder almost equally for one or other.[128] The parish's ability to collect all due rates in the course of the epidemic was undermined by the flight of the more substantial members of the parish, evident in the listing of 214 absent ratepayers.[129] Whilst any arrears might be pursued on their return, the vestry was faced with the financial challenge of implementing the plague regulations in the meantime.

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[127] LMA P69/BOT2/B/031/MS09237, ff.69v-73.

[128] WAC F3358 - this document is not foliated.

[129] WAC F3356 - this document is not foliated.

The parish received fifteen 'free guifts' between June 1636 and April 1637 and these totalled £122 2s, which included £40 from Charles I and other gifts of assorted titled residents, alongside £10 from the Recorder of London.[130] Julia Merritt suggested that private charity was important in bridging the gap between any decision to levy plague rates and the date of collection in Westminster but also that gifts did not 'pour in' in plague years outside the epidemics.[131] This was also true of causal gifts in the suburban parishes more generally. Jeremy Boulton suggested that private charity and neighbourly support were perhaps more generally falling away as people increasingly saw the support of the poor as 'parish business' and their obligation discharged by paying the local poor rate.[132] This might also have been the case with plague-rates and communal perceptions about wider responsibility for the visited poor outside of an epidemic year. This cannot have applied to all ratepayers though given the increasing problem with collecting rates. Moreover, it would be a mistake to see the fifteen gifts in St Martin's, of which a third was accounted for by the King, as evidence of overwhelming giving in a parish that was home to a significant stratum of substantial householders.

A total of £1039 7s 2d was received in 'generall' by collection, gifts, loans and parish stocks in St Martin in the Fields between early June 1636 and mid-April 1637. Thus was a surplus on paper but not in reality as close to £400 of receipts was derived from loans and the use of parish stocks.[133] In the absence of extensive casual giving, loans were an important means by which the parish might bridge the gap as they waited for rates to come in. A scrivener was paid for making two bonds for £50 each borrowed of Henry Wickes and Samuel Clarke in February 1637, and another for writing up three bonds and for £100 'more of Clarke' and £50 lent by Mr Thorpe.[134] The fact the loans were taken up after the worst of the epidemic had passed suggests that the expedient was a last resort and was influenced by the difficulties in

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[130] WAC F4514 - this part of the manuscript is not foliated. The gifts are recorded in the front before the list for quarantined houses begins on ff.1.

[131] Merritt, *Early Modern Westminster,* 305.

[132] Jeremy Boulton, 'The 'Meaner Sort': Labouring, People and the Poor', in Keith Wrightson (ed.), *A Social History of England, 1500–1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2017), 325.

[133] WAC, F4516, ff.1-4.

[134] WAC F4516, ff.13-17.

bringing all due rates in, a point which will be expanded on below. A total of £310 was taken in loans by the parish, which the vestry presumably envisaged being repaid out of the plague rate when it was brought in, although this was an extended process and not easily resolved. In April 1637, the parish clerk recorded payment for going with a messenger to the Warden of the Fleet, the debtors' prison, to return the names of such 'p[er]sons that refused to pay the assessm[en]t according to our bookes of Collection.'[135] As the wider discussion will show, the vestry was still attempting to gather all rate arrears due from the 1636 epidemic in 1641.

The difficulties in bringing in the plague rate were not confined to the door-to-door collection in St Martin's but extended to plague officers and the auditing of accounts and return of surplus money. This only served to compound the long-term financial impact of the epidemic. A particularly recalcitrant group of examiners had been compelled by warrant to serve in 1625 and were later threatened with arrest in the process of attempting to render their accounts.[136] This might be taken as heavy-handed but the vestry's priority was to mitigate the cost of maintaining plague regulations, specifically the loans that were taken up, and they were necessarily relentless in attempting to resolve the problem. On 21 November 1637, the vestry noted that the accounts of the collector for the poor visited Thomas Snelling and that of two overseers for 1636 had not yet been audited, and the men were ordered to submit their accounts by 29 November. This either did not happen or some negotiation occurred, as the deadline was extended until St Thomas' Day (21 December) at that next vestry.[137]

An issue also emerged with the allegation that three other collectors for the poor had £146 11s 3d remaining in their hands from a collection in 1636. We cannot know whether the problem was due to irregularities or corruption on the part of the collectors, or more simply the result of the pressures of the epidemic and the onerous task of gathering and managing the rates. The churchwardens made explicit the financial burden of the epidemic in their report that they were bound in several obligations for payments totalling £250 which had been laid out in the last year for the poor visited. The collectors were likewise given until St

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[135] WAC F4516, ff.13v, 16v.

[136] WAC F3, ff.13.

[137] WAC F2002, ff.107.

Thomas' Day to pay the disputed sum to the churchwardens, which they would use to repay the loans. The measured approach of the vestry, as opposed to invoking judicial proceedings, suggests that they did not believe the collectors had intentionally attempted to defraud the parish. The churchwardens' accounts do not show the money incoming and the vestry minutes make no further reference to the issue, although as late as December 1638, the vestry was still accounting for the income from other collectors for the poor visited. Richard Stretton and John Denson, overseers for the poor in 1636, delivered £5 4s in December 1638.[138] Problems persisted with the arrears as late as 1641 and were followed by increasing difficulties more generally experienced by the parish with rates through the decade.

Whilst conflict and resentment may have been aroused by the vestry's unwavering pursuit of all due money, it indicates the increasing hardship they were managing. As such, other income streams were necessarily directed to support the parish's work with the poor as the epidemic merged with the beginning of an extended period of plague-endemicity. In late 1637, the overseers were given £36, ironically being the sum of fines for those not serving as overseers in that year. Whether the sum was significant or small, the need was real and ongoing and exacerbated by the persistent presence of plague in the parish. Two overseers of the poor alerted the churchwardens and vestry in early June 1638 to the fact that they did not have money 'for to pay the present necessities' of the poor and requested £3 upon their security, which the vestry granted. The churchwardens' accounts record payments to the petitioning poor, several payments for passes for the constable and beadle to pass away vagrants. Printed bills were purchased for the 'doores of the visited houses' in April 1638. Plague may have declined from the levels of 1636 and 1637 but it was a persistent presence through to 1648, and might rise to quite severe local levels in a particular year, as was demonstrated in Chapter 4.[139]

Plague was not necessarily given priority over other problems associated with the poor. This is an important feature of the response to plague in the period of endemic plague up to 1648. This is evident in St Bride Fleet Street when setting plague spending against the

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[138] WAC F2002, ff.107-109.

[139] WAC F3, ff.248v, 271v, 272; WAC F2002, ff.108.

churchwardens' disbursements to the 'poor and needy' and the nursing and appareling of parish dependents in the 1640s (table 6.1). The accounts show more spent on wider need in the community and the significant expense of supporting parish children. This is evident in even a very mild endemic plague year when of the 26 possible households quarantined in 1646, just fourteen received parish support.[140] The other twelve were judged by the parish to have sufficient means to support themselves. Moreover, the vestry was anxious about wider demographic pressure, evident in the constables and churchwardens going about the parish to 'take the names of lodgers and inmates' on 9 and 15 September.[141] The increased spending on the poor and needy in 1648 suggests that there was growing need at the end of the decade.

Endemic plague year	The 'poore visited'	The 'poor and needy'	Nursing, children and apparelling
1645	£2 17s 9d	£63 4d	£168 8s
1646	£10 1s 2d	£55 8s. 11d	£184 12s. 9d
1647	£17 9s 6d	£69 5s. 4d	£184 9s. 2d
1648	£4 12s 3d	£101 14s. 5d	£185 4d

Table 6.1. Spending on the poor and poor visited by St Bride Fleet Street, 1645-48.
Source: LMA P69/BRI/B/016/MS06552/001, ff.82v, 155-156, 166-167, 174-179, 183-187.

A discretionary approach to the support of the infected was necessarily taken, influenced by the availability of funds to support the quarantined. This is evident in St Botolph Aldgate in 1637 when £24 5s 7d was received into the special plague account and £21 14s 7d was expended. This was focused on the support of fourteen quarantined houses.[142] Parishes worked within their means and distributed money as it became available in endemic plague years. The accounts included £20 4s 8d paid to an examiner for the 'visited people' in 1646 and this was probably the £20 received from the Lord Mayor for the visited. Another sum related to the poor was an amount distributed daily (in casual payments) through the year,

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[140] LMA P69/BRI/A/004/MS06538, ff.225-230v; P69/BRI/B/016/MS06552/001, ff.165v-166 - possible number of quarantined households were calculated in register and compared to the named supported households in the plague account.

[141] LMA P69/BRI/B/016/MS06552/001, ff.62v.

[142] LMA P69/BOT2/B/031/MS09237, ff.77-77v.

which total of £62 13s.[143] This frames the wider financial burden parishes were managing and reiterates that plague existed within that framework, rather than the being the overriding priority.

St Sepulchre Newgate spent £43 1s 10d on the 'poor visited' in 1647, which was essentially the total sum of the gathered plague rates. This seems to be a case of the parish deciding not to spend more on plague than was specifically collected for that purpose. As described in Chapter 5, this related to the sustained support of 21 quarantined households. A scrivener was paid for making a book for the 'second assessm[en]t' for the visited on 17 January 1648, which, followed an initial assessment in September when the parish increased quarantine. The muted support from Guildhall meant parishes were generally on their own in managing plague in this period. The parish also distributed £33 15s 4d for the general relief of the poor, alongside an additional £12 2s 6d 'paid to poor people and otherwise', which was the income from parish rents in 'Chred' (Creed) House Lane. The sum of £13 06s 1d was brought in from collections at the church door and fines for 'tiplers, swearers, unlycensed Alhouses etc' and a small surplus of £4 13s 7d was returned by the churchwarden.[144]

The Court of Aldermen recorded petitions for parochial relief only in 1641, presumably by the process established in 1636. St Bride Fleet Street received payments in 1641 and these reflect the interplay of plague and the poor: the sum of £20 from 'the Lord Maior towards the charge of oure visited howses' is noted, alongside two sums totalling 30s for the visited poor and £5 from the Bishop of London for the poor.[145] The £20 payment was the outcome of the vestry's petitioning of the Court of Aldermen for relief of the poor visited. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the Aldermen also received petitions from the vestry of St Sepulchre Newgate and the churchwardens and overseers of the poor in the Portsoken part of St Botolph Aldgate, granting £50 and £20 respectively.[146] Beyond 1641, it would be assumed that parishes were petitioning the Mayor directly as churchwardens' accounts show payments coming from

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[143] LMA P69/BOT2/B/031/MS09237, ff.108-109v.

[144] LMA P69/SEP/B/123/MS09080/001B - not foliated.

[145] LMA P69/BRI/B/016/MS06552/001, ff.48v.

[146] LMA COL/CA/01/01/059, ff.198, 204.

Guildhall. St Bride's received a single sum of £5 'of the Lord Mayor from the Chamberlain' in October 1646 and £2 for the 'poor visited' in December 1647.[147] The hardship of the civil wars might explain decreasing payments from Guildhall through the decade, but the reality for parishes was the need to fund the implementation of plague regulations and their more general work with the poor.

The City's Cash book records the payments to St Bride's, St Sepulchre's and Aldgate in 1641 and other details of the collected money for the poor visited, notable in a year when plague was a more tangible presence within the walls. Under 'Receipts ordinary', the Cash book running through to September 1641 records the outgoing mayor Sir Edward Bromfield having received more for the 'releife of poore people visited with the Infection of the Plague within this Citty' than he disbursed. The remaining money was to be returned to the Court of Aldermen. The Cash book that covered the year from September 1641 shows the payments to the three parishes drawn from this sum of money. Apart from the payment of the annual salaries of the pesthouse keeper and purveyor of provisions there, and £13 6s 8d to the infected prisoners in the Woodstreet Compter, the Cash books present no other plague related references between September 1640 and September 1642. There were no payments to the City printer for any plague related work, nor was there in 1647, the other more severe endemic plague year in the 1640s that had some impact within the walls. The only plague-related references between September 1646 and September 1649 are payments to the pesthouse keeper and purveyor of provisions. A payment was made to the printer for passes for constables to pass away vagrants in the year ending September 1648, which indicates wider stress and Guildhall's priorities.[148] The evidence in the Cash book reiterate the City's view that responsibility for the management of plague resided firmly with the parishes.

As touched on in Chapter 3, and above, the work of suburban vestries was made difficult by a growing problem in the refusal to pay rates in the 1630s and 1640s. References are generally incidental but when taken across time within a parish and between parishes, the evidence shows the extent of the problem, particularly to the west where parishes tended to contain an

[147] LMA P69/BRI/B/016/MS06552/001, ff.159, 170.

[148] LMA COL/CHD/CT/01/004, ff.30v, 39v, 55, 135, 142v, 223v; COL/CHD/CT/01/006, ff.41, 53v, 56v, 160v, 253, 264.

upper stratum of substantial and middling parishioners. A combination of factors was probably at play: weariness in paying assorted rates and resentment about the power of the vestry to impose rates, alongside increasing hardship in the 1640s and the possibility of decreasing empathy for the growing problem of the poor. Three payments that totalled £43 8s 2d were received 'of the Collectors for the visited howses att sev[er]all tymes' in St Bride Fleet Street in 1641. The raising of two warrants 'against them that would not paie to the visited howses' demonstrates the reluctance of some rated parishioners to pay. As was described in Chapter 3, the parish also experienced wider difficulties in gathering tithes and poor rates through the decade. A 'recorders warrant to get the poores money of the parishioners' was drawn up in 1641 and money was taken on two occasions in August 1646 'of those that were behind for the poore when they were called into the Vestry'. The vestry considered calling in those refusing to pay tithes before the Lord Mayor in August 1648.[149]

The hardship of war, and in the case of tithes, religious non-conformity, no doubt influenced rate arrears after 1642. Nehemiah Wallington provided some idea of the general disruption caused by the war: the trading in his shop failed 'very much' and he lost 'costomers and charges and Taxes grew grater'.[150] Ben Coates highlighted contemporary views that high taxation during the war exacerbated hardship and want, particularly in the suburbs. Coates argued that wartime poverty affected a 'broad cross-section' of London's population and that resources available for relief were likely reduced.[151] This is an important argument, but it is notable that these issues did predate the war, suggesting it exacerbated an existing or emerging problem. The overseers for the poor accounts of St Martin in the Fields list those in arrears and in the year ending April 1635 the total sum owing was £34 5s 2d 'menc[i]oned' in the account and £51 6s 10d in general, the latter presumably including any carryover from the previous year. The impact of the plague epidemic is significant in the year ending April 1637, with total arrears of £228 19s 10d listed. The ongoing impact of the endemic period that followed is evident when looking to arrears in 1639 when 495 individuals are listed as

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[149] LMA P69/BRI/B/016/MS06552/001, ff.72-74, 81, 158v; LMA P69/BRI/B/001/MS06554/001, ff. 64v.

[150] David Booy (ed.), *The Notebooks of Nehemiah Wellington, 1618-1654, A Selection* (Aldersgate: Ashgate, 2007), 293.

[151] Ben Coates, 'Poor Relief in London During the English Revolution Revisited', *The London Journal*, 25:2 (2000), 42, 44-45.

owing the total of £178 4s 12d. This chimes with the vestry endeavouring to bring in arrears from each year since 1636, in 1640.[152]

As the discussion of St Martin in the Fields above showed, the difficulties in rate collection were not confined to ratepayer resistance. Then, as in the period of endemic plague that followed, there were problems with plague officers and the speedy auditing of their accounts and return of surplus money. The firm measures taken to resolve these problems reflected the scale of need and financial pressure that vestries were managing. As suggested with the problems experienced in 1625 and 1636, and the discussion in chapters 2 and 3, the complex and onerous nature of middling parish office and perhaps some resentment about the heavy-handed manner of the vestry may have contributed to the difficulties. The vestry, understandably, pushed for full collection and accounting, but already put-upon examiners and collectors were less concerned with this. On 10 December 1640, the vestry of St Martin's ordered the churchwardens and overseers for the poor to submit their accounts, and the collectors for the visited to do the same along with their collection books and an outstanding £5. A crossed out but readable entry in the vestry minutes in late January 1641 indicates that the auditing of the collectors' books presented difficulties and shows that the vestry resorted, or at least threatened to resort, to outside authority. The collectors were ordered to 'speede Collect' the remainder of the sums of money in their books or they would be subject to the 'Indictm[en]t' at the next quarter sessions for Westminster for 'their neglect'.[153]

In mid-November 1641, the vestry of St Martin's ordered three vestrymen to calculate the sum spent on the visited houses and the poor in 1636, 1638 and 1639 and make new books for levying the arrears for the 'satisfacc[i]ons of the p[ar]ish debts'. The clerk initially included 1637 but crossed this year out. The men were asked to make separate schedules of the arrears for the plague and the poor. On the same day, the vestry appointed two other vestrymen to examine the three rate books for 1640 and 1641 and calculate the total rates assessed, how much had been paid in by the collectors, how much had been expended by the examiners and whether the receipts or expenses were greater. The men were asked to

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[152] WAC F362 - not foliated; F363, ff.47-49; f366 - not foliated.

[153] WAC F2002, ff.114-115.

'expedite' the request. Moreover, the vestry minutes through the wider decade, and particularly in 1645, demonstrate the vestry's concern with auditing accounts and collection books and seeing all due money brought in, which reiterates the issues stated but also the increasing need and the financial pressure on the parish.[154]

Some insight into the strategic use of plague collections for a particular initiative in an endemic year can be gained from the account relating to the expansion of pesthouse capacity in 1640. This details the money 'received for the Pesthouses' by the churchwarden between 1 June 1640 and 10 March 1642.[155] The account demonstrates the concerted effort of the parish to cover the cost of building and operating the expanded pesthouse and their flexible and sustained use of the plague rate to maintain the pesthouse going forward. The account records 28 receipts, most of which were sums gathered and presented by the collectors for the visited and totalled £197 3s 8d. A total of £109 was collected in 1640, which fell short of the total expended in expanding and operating the pesthouse but went some way to cover the cost. No further monies were gathered by the collectors until early April in 1641, the point at which plague incidence increased again in the spring.

The account also shows the less conventional means by which the vestry might look to cover the financial burden of consecutive plague years. As the political situation unravelled between the King and Parliament, the Triennial Act of May 1641 forbade the collection of Ship Money without Parliamentary consent.[156] The vestry directed collected sums to the use of the poor visited and used this to cover the cost of maintaining the pesthouses. Two receipts were entered in the account from the collectors for the ship money on 10 March 1642. These totalled £13 17s and match an entry in the vestry minutes on 12 November 1641. William Baker and John Martin, the 'late' collectors for the Ship Money, were agreed to be 'saved harmless' for the sum of £13 17s they had delivered to the examiners for the visited and use of the poor visited. This and another entry show the vestry's consciousness of the means by which they had seized the ship money. One of the sums returned by the collectors for the ship

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[154] WAC F2002, ff.120.

[155] WAC F3 - this year is not foliated.

[156] Samuel Rawson Gardiner (ed.), *The Constitutional Documents of the Puritan Revolution, 1625-1660* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906), Chapter 27.

money was £10 of Mr Johnson and Mr Corbett. This is also evident in an entry in the vestry minutes on 1 March 1642. The clerk recorded that £10 had been paid to the churchwarden George Blenerhassett, who maintained oversight of the pesthouse accounts in 1640-42, and that it was to be repaid to them 'if they be in question for it, or suffer any damage thereby'.[157]

The financial burden of plague and the poor appeared to worsen through the civil war years and measures were taken by the vestry of St Martin's to alleviate the strain, for which they looked to the parochial community. On 14 June 1647, the vestry ordered four of their number to cast up a special rate with the churchwardens to pay the parish debts. They agreed ten days later that 'One whole rate' on the inhabitants of the parish should be raised. The discussion in Chapter 4 and reference to the intended acquisition of new ground for a parish pesthouse in 1647 illustrate the severity of plague in the parish in that year. A sense of the ongoing efforts to manage the burden is suggested on 7 July, when the vestry ordered that three rate books be made up for the visited and that examiners and collectors were to be chosen.[158] Surviving rate books for the relief of the poor visited in 1647 record 363 individuals rated for £36 19s 10d in the part of the 'High Streete with Drury Lane and Long Acre' on 10 July and 299 individuals rated for £27 8s in the St Martins Lane book.[159] The rateable base of parishioners was unchanged from 1636, which suggests that while need increased, the parish was continuing to draw from the same pool of householders. What is apparent at the end of the decade is the vestry anticipating issues in collecting rates and introducing expedients to ensure ratepayers met their obligation. On 19 July 1647, the overseers for the poor and examiners for the visited were ordered to come to the vestry every day at 2 pm and bring the names of those that refused to pay their rates so that 'further cause may bee taken'.[160] This fits with the generally pragmatic but firm outlook of the vestry in managing problems associated with the poor and plague in the period.

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[157] WAC F2002, ff.119, 124.

[158] WAC F2002, ff.153-154.

[159] WAC F3359; F3360.

[160] WAC F2002, ff.154.

6.4 Conclusions

Suburban parishes faced increasing difficulties in managing the burden of plague and associated social problems in the period after 1636. Vestries approached local problems independently and pragmatically and within the framework and outlook of the plague regulations and the Poor Laws. The relative inertia of the City authorities and lack of interest on the part of the Crown rendered this necessary. Although not without difficulties, vestries took the necessary initiative to address their local social problems, which included and were exacerbated by plague. Care and expense were taken to see plague regulations implemented effectively and this was carried out within a proactive, flexible and strategic outlook, and except for but possibly even during a major epidemic, within available resources. A discretionary approach to support the poor infected was based on rising need and limited resources. Although not without flaws, given the rising scale of social problems, the relative absence of external support and difficulties with internal support, the omnipresence of plague and uncontrollable demographic growth vestries faced, the discussion in this chapter supports a more positive appraisal of their performance.

Chapter 7: Conclusions

Whilst plague was not solely a suburban problem in seventeenth-century London, it was the ever-growing suburban parishes that were confronted more starkly by the long-term impact of the disease and its intersection with other social issues associated with the poor. In certain respects, the suburban bias of plague might seem obvious. It was there that London's demographic expansion was accommodated, which transformed the built environment, and presented myriad social problems for parishes. As was set down in the introduction, scholars have tended to base their understanding of plague, and to a degree the poor, more on the experience of the parishes within the walls. This has resulted in a corpus of important work but leaves a gap in our understanding of the response to plague at the local level and its intersection with the management of the poor and associated social problems.

A pervasive feature of the historiography is the persistence of the broad distinctions between the east and west ends of suburban London. This retains relevance and validity when taking a metropolis-wide measure of wealth or social character. To only focus on broad distinctions though misses the distinctiveness of the individual parish experience and the variation that might exist between and within parishes. The overview of the three sample parishes in Chapter 2 demonstrated the uniqueness of each context in the periods when accelerated population growth was experienced and the built environment changed. It also showed the variations that existed in the distribution of wealth and social character in each parish. Study of those and other suburban parishes brings out both the long-term impact of plague and the fact that it was largely a suburban problem. The shared aspects of the plague experience in individual parishes were also obvious, but equally, the peculiarities of the experience in each parish require acknowledgement. This was influenced in part by the fact that each parish was a separate territorial division that was governed by an independent vestry and that each of them included a wide and very diverse range of neighbourhoods.

What has been overlooked by historians is the pragmatic and flexible way in which suburban parishes responded to plague, which is evident when situated within the context of the wider

response to the poor and the rise of select vestries. Parishes were transformed from territorial units that carried a largely spiritual role in the lives of individuals in the medieval period to the nexus of local government by the early seventeenth century. This was influenced by the Crown's view that parishes were best placed to manage increasing social problems. The impetus for the full transformation arrived with the codification of the Poor Laws in 1598 and 1601, whereby a range of powers was confirmed on the parish. This is an important theme against which the wider discussion of the parish response to plague and the poor was situated.

The codification of the Plague Orders in 1578 and issue of London's special regulations in 1583 were also important moments. This imposed responsibility on the parish to manage plague, from which vestries subsequently derived confidence and independence. As the discussion in Chapter 2 showed, the take-over over of parish government by select vestries occurred independently of external authority. Ecclesiastical permission was often sought retrospectively, if at all. Historians appraising the 'take-over' of parish government by a narrowed, socially exclusive and co-opting group tend to look upon this process pessimistically. The discussion in Chapter 2 recast that narrative to take into account the scale of the problems suburban parishes faced. This underscored that the vestry was motivated by the practical search for greater efficiency within the context of growing and diverse populations and long-term social problems, which included plague.

The vestry's consolidation of control after 1600 was focused on minimising controversy in the vestry, the establishment of separate and closed vestry space, closer control of parochial officers, and expressions of authority to the parish community. As the discussion in Chapter 2 and Chapter 6 showed, there were instances where complaint might be made about the heavy-handedness of the vestry, or where vestries experienced difficulties with getting ratepayers and parish officers to comply with the vestry's decisions and interventions. The extension of vestry control by a select group would inevitably cause conflict as private and vestry interests clashed and the vestry's exercise of power sparked resentment. Moreover, caution is advised in reading the inquires into parish government in the 1620s and 1630s as confirmation of wide-ranging challenges to the legitimacy of select vestries, as Julia Merritt

suggested. This is evident, at least in the suburban parishes, where the attempt to restructure vestry membership and push for transparency in the Presbyterian era of the 1640s barely interrupted the forward momentum of select vestries**.** The clock could not be turned back, given the ongoing process of demographic and social change in those parishes. A return to a traditional structure that was open to a wider stratum of householders was impractical in parishes so big and diverse. The continuance of narrowed and select structures was necessary for the parish to attend efficiently to worsening social problems through the 1630s and 1640s, the latter against the backdrop of the civil wars and hardship caused by high taxation. Administrative efficiency trumped wider participation in the suburban parishes. Plague made a hitherto under-examined contribution to the problems of large suburban parishes.

London's suburban parishes led the way nationally in the movement to select vestries, when compared to other places experiencing rapid social and economic change. The point at which demographic and social problems became urgent was the point at which vestries, both in and beyond London, moved to select structures. The description of the evolution of select vestries in Chapter 2, their response to the poor in Chapter 3, and to plague in Chapters 5 and 6, support a more positive interpretation of their motivations and interventions. Moreover, the long-term problem of plague that was outlined in Chapter 4 explains the exacerbation of social problems experienced in extended endemic periods. This underpins understanding of the response of parishes to the intersecting problems of plague and the poor. The increasing focus of suburban parishes on the right to belong and the discretionary approach to the poor influenced their approach to plague. This was an essential feature of the response to plague in the suburban parishes.

Whilst suburban parishes moved quickly to take advantage of the power to raise statutory rates under the Poor Laws, voluntary income streams, whether casual gifts or legacies and benefactions, continued to be valued and sought. The financial situation for suburban vestries though was increasingly precarious and careful management of resources was required, which is reflected in increasingly meticulous record-keeping and scrutiny and management of parish officials. This was marked in the 1630s and particularly in the 1640s, amidst increasing hardship, difficulty in getting all due rates brought in, and inertia in the local

charitable impulse. This may reflect the disruption and hardship of the civil wars. The issues with rate arrears and a declining charitable impulse predated the wars though, which suggests the wars exacerbated an existing problem. This impacted the income of the parish and undermined the scope and depth of support that could be directed to alleviating need, whether during or outside a plague year. This influenced vestries' increasingly rigid definition of the right to belong in the parish community. Ratepayers shared elements of the vestry's anxiety and narrowed viewed of the parish community. Private interests, such as those of landlords, might bring about a less rigid outlook for some. This inevitably clashed with the hardening platform of the vestry who sought to impose responsibility on those they held responsible for providing accommodation for the migrant poor, which they viewed as contributing to the problem of plague.

Moreover, the preoccupation of historians with the question of a decline in neighbourliness distracts from an important factor in understanding the parish response to plague and the poor. This was that failure to manage income efficiently affected the scope and direction of support that could be provided, and sharpened perceptions of the right to belong. This is evident with the itinerant poor, for which intervention might be requested from external authorities, but suburban vestries were as equally if not more concerned with inmates and lodgers. Plague amplified these concerns, particularly in the run of endemic plague years that followed the 1636 epidemic.

Vestry activity in searching out the floating population increased through the first half of the seventeenth century. There is ample evidence in parish sources of a disjunction between the vestry view of inmates and lodgers and the reality on the ground in the suburbs where inmates and lodgers were part of the communal fabric. For those who derived income or profit from providing accommodation, we might assume they were, to a degree, a welcome presence. This flexible interpretation of the parish community clashed with the rigid outlook of the vestry.

Plague placed added urgency to the vestry's imposing responsibility on landlords, and to their removal of individuals of dubious resident status who posed a direct and long-term financial

threat to the parish. This was accepted practice in suburban parishes, where vestries were required to find the most efficient path forward in implementing the Poor Laws and achieving provision for the 'deserving' poor within available resources. The pragmatic and discretionary attitude that characterised the management of parochial affairs was also the way in which plague, as a long-term social problem, was approached.

Outside of the major epidemics, plague did not dominate the focus or resources of the parish, rather it exacerbated existing social problems that arose from the growing and mobile populations that were balanced toward the ordinary poor. Even during the dislocation of an epidemic, the parish's engagement with the poor that was not directly linked to plague continued, though features of the two might be indistinguishable. Outside quarantined households, the more general communal hardship imposed by plague greatly exacerbated the difficulties experienced by the wider parish community. The localised outbreaks and persistent presence of endemic plague in the period after 1603, the minor plague years in 1630/31, and particularly the years following the epidemic in 1636, presented a significant cumulative total of plague deaths and local elevations in mortality. These years were also notable for the absence of City intervention, which increased the burden on parish vestries.

Roger Finlay sought to downplay the long-term impact of plague outside the major epidemics and suggested other diseases and complaints were more important. This is true to a degree, in that consumption and infant mortality both exceeded plague in total burials in the years calculated by John Graunt up to 1650. Total burials though do not reflect the real or full impact of plague in London's suburbs. This is relevant to Cummins et al's comment that there were fewer sporadic 'minor' outbreaks after 1600. More significant though were the years of endemic plague in suburban London between 1604-12 and 1636-48, of which the former followed a major epidemic and the latter coincided with a more general period of hardship in the 1630s and the civil wars after 1642.

Outbreaks of endemic plague in these years might be quite localised and show variation in chronology and intensity between western and eastern suburbs, and between individual parishes in those broad geographical areas. Whilst the odd year might present lesser mortality

in a particular parish, the temporal patterns of plague could extend beyond the summer visitation, or show wider seasonal variations, and extend across two to three years. Even though plague epidemics did tend to emerge in the northeastern suburbs, as shown by Cummins et al, an interesting variation is the potential re-emergence of plague in the northwestern and westerly suburbs following the epidemics in 1603 and 1636. The key conclusion drawn in Chapter 4 was the need to acknowledge the long-term impact of plague within the mortality experience of London, or rather, the suburbs, where it was more of a problem in the seventeenth century. The epidemic events, which did have a more wider impact across the metropolis, require situating within the wider plague chronology that takes in the endemic plague years, and in particular, the cumulative impact of total deaths and the resulting exacerbation of social problems.

The analysis in Chapter 4 also identified the importance of taking into account change and continuity in the social character of locations and connecting the type of building and stage of development in a location with the spatial patterns of plague. This pushed back on aspects of the established narrative and demonstrated the importance of moving beyond presumptions of character based on the type of location, whether a main street, lane, alley, close or yard. The discussion promoted the need to consider the stage and type of development at play in each parish, and in particular locations. This gave context to Kira Newman's revelation that around a third of quarantined households in St Martin in the Fields in 1636 were located on what she termed main streets. This discussion highlighted the importance of local case studies and comparison of contexts.

The discussion of the parish response to plague in Chapters 5 and 6 was structured around the implications of the Plague Orders in the suburban parishes in Chapter 3, and their use in responding to local plague incidence. The first theme relates to the significance of the plague regulations for the suburban vestries, beyond the obvious prescriptive provisions for managing plague. Historians have identified the influence of regulatory developments in continental Europe on the English plague regulations. When thinking about the codification of the regulations in 1578 and the special orders for London in 1583, it is important to acknowledge the influence of a run of endemic plague years, largely occurring in the

extramural parishes, from the mid-1570s to early 1580s. This no doubt brought into sharp focus for the Crown that besides the obvious size of London and the rapid expansion beyond the walls, plague was emerging as a long-term problem there. Increasing numbers of migrant poor and a changing built environment, necessitated special orders, which were well received in the parishes beyond the walls. This boosted the central role of the vestry, which vestries were quick to take up.

The key achievement of the regulations in the suburbs, putting aside any inherent flaws or controversies relating to certain features, was that it gave vestries the practical framework by which they could independently and flexibly manage plague in their communities, as the need arose, and in the same vein as the Poor Laws. This point is perhaps easily missed when the understanding of plague has been largely based on the intramural experience, where the burden was far less than in the suburbs and City authorities were more attentive to the situation. As the discussion in Chapter 3 demonstrated, in an epidemic year, by the time that the City might provide direction, suburban parishes had already implemented plague regulations. There might be no external direction in an endemic plague year, but parishes were able to get on with managing the disease as it emerged in their local context. This might entail occasional recourse to City funds in moments of particular stress, but the implementation of the regulations themselves was carried out independently. When twinned with the Poor Laws, the regulations presented vestries with significant powers to address their local problems. If we put to the side any criticism of poor levels of external support, this was the advantage of the poor and plague statutes for vestries in the suburbs.

Quarantine was the cornerstone of the plague regulations and the size and social character of suburban parishes added a unique dimension to the practicalities and expense of implementing that policy. Paul Slack commented that only in minor plague years was it workable and maintained. The list of quarantined houses in St Martin in the Fields in 1636 was very useful in testing this and several other aspects of that narrative. As was highlighted in Chapter 5, the incidence of plague in a quarantined household, beyond the decision to shut it up, was very limited. The majority of households were reopened within the minimum period set down by the plague regulations, though social status might have had some bearing

on the reopening of a household sooner than otherwise. The discussion of St Martin in the Fields and St Andrew Holborn also demonstrated the limited clustering of plague deaths in a household. The key theme in the parish's seemingly inconsistent interpretation of quarantine was flexibility and pragmatism, which was likely focused on ensuring compliance and mitigating the cost and logistical burden. This mirrored the more general approach of the parish to local social problems. The analysis of the St Martin's list, when taken together with other parish sources, also demonstrates that at no point was the parish overwhelmed, nor did quarantine break down through the main epidemic or the wider visitation in 1637. This can be tentatively extended to the earlier epidemic in 1625, at least in that parish where quarantine was still in operation in the late autumn and early winter. As commented in Chapter 5, the total number of houses quarantined in 1636 requires setting against the ebb and flow of houses closed and reopened, which eased the logistical burden through the extended peak of the epidemic.

The approach to quarantine in St Martin in the Fields was not marked by overreaction and unnecessarily shutting people up for any longer than was necessary. The reality was that the great cost to the parish in implementing quarantine encouraged a pragmatic response, rather than any ambivalence about plague. This was quite likely an important factor in the impression of general compliance with plague regulations in St Martin's in 1636. The list betrays little sense of difficulties in enforcing quarantine, though there is a danger in reading the silence of the sources. That said, and when taken with a host of other parish sources, there is little indication that difficulties were experienced in maintaining quarantine. The records of other suburban parishes are equally sparing in references to any issues with compliance. This could result from a policy of ensuring the recorded activities of the parish were free of controversy and outwardly projected control and confidence. The silence though may indicate general compliance, at least outside the major epidemics. The communications of the Privy Council with Guildhall and the Quarter Sessions of the Peace present instances of individuals sporadically contravening plague regulations but these do not indicate a general failure to comply, and most certainly not a complete breakdown. It is important to acknowledge the extent to which Defoe's lurid account of defiance and violence against

quarantine and plague auxiliaries has influenced perceptions of compliance with plague regulations.

It is clear in the endemic plague years that plague regulations were implemented as in a major epidemic, the difference being the scale. This enabled the parish to effectively maintain quarantine, although the local severity of endemic plague in particular years should be kept in mind. Parishes had to decide their priorities and recorded spending on plague may not reflect the true impact of the disease. This was greater than the number of houses the parish judged they were obligated to support, just as the number listed as in receipt of poor relief may not reflect the true scale of need in the community. Moreover, whilst endemic plague elevated hardship and want, particularly in the years after the 1636 epidemic, it was not necessarily given priority by the parish but was absorbed into the more general activities of managing the poor. The exacerbation of hardship in an endemic plague year is perhaps best viewed through vestry interventions in the parish community. This includes concerted action against inmates and lodgers, or the fact that rates were raised in even the very minor endemic years. This points to the precarious financial position of parishes and anxiety as to the ability to provide for those judged to possess the right to belong. The more severe endemic plague years then caused significant stress for vestries, but it was the general persistence of plague in the period from 1636 to 1648 that requires acknowledgement. This served to elevate the social problems parishes managed, which were compounded by the civil wars in the 1640s and the high levels of taxation.

The financial challenge of plague was an increasing problem for parish vestries, particularly in the 1630s and 1640s. The discussion in Chapter 5 outlined the cost of implementing plague regulations, the support of the quarantined and the large number of auxiliaries needed to see the plague regulations effectively implemented. Whilst parishes sought to mitigate the cost, loans might be taken or parish stocks were drawn down. These measures were taken on the basis that rates would be used at a later date to restore the parish to a positive financial position, although this was reliant on the payment of the rate. The discussion in chapters 3 and 6 showed this process to be increasingly fraught and problematic, particularly in the westerly suburban parishes. Refusal to pay the plague rate was part of a more general

problem with other rates, that worsened through the 1640s. The problems did predate the wars, which suggests a weariness with paying rates and resentment about the power of the vestry to collect rates, if not fading notions of neighbourliness about the poor. Moreover, the evident problems in collecting the poor and plague rate, and to a degree tithes, underscores the need to place the difficulties in gathering the plague rate within the context of the parish's management of the poor and not consider it in isolation.

The discussion in Chapter 6 showed that vestries were necessarily persistent in their efforts to see all due rates brought in. This concurs with the general theme of parishes maximising income streams, in order to manage their myriad social burdens. The discussion in Chapter 6 also showed that the problem with rate collection extended to parish officers. This was probably a result of the complex and potentially fraught roles they were charged with executing, alongside the heavy-handed manner of the vestry in seeing all revenue and accounts returned. The latter relates to the rise of the select vestries, associated with the search for efficiency amidst increasing need and the reality that all expected funds were required to meet the vast burden of plague and the poor. This quite likely added to the burden of the role and contributed to the numbers that increasingly fined out, which presented the paradox of income to the parish, but equally, the difficulty in seeing the positions taken up. This was not a problem confined to plague though and extended to the parish officers more directly associated with the poor.

The sample parishes more broadly reflect the increasing problem of rate refusal in parishes that contained a reasonable base of ratepayers, specifically those to the north-west and west. Aside from the reference to difficulties in the epidemic in 1636, St Botolph Aldgate records no instances of rate refusal through the period of endemic plague that followed, in otherwise detailed and well-maintained records as to the activities of the parish. This presents an interesting contrast to the west where St Bride Fleet Street and St Martin in the Fields experienced worsening difficulties through the civil wars. This might be taken as evidence of prejudice about the poor or a fading sense of obligation, but equally, and as mentioned above, the heavy taxation imposed on London in the wars likely had some bearing also. We can but speculate as to the cause of this problem. The limited giving to the poor though failed to plug

the revenue gap whilst parishes waited for rates to be brought in. As with rate arrears, the dearth of gifts was a problem before the civil wars, which again suggests that the wars exacerbated an existing or emerging problem. As stated in the discussion of the Poor Laws in Chapter 3, these tendencies undermined the financial position of the parish and influenced directly the vestry's hardening perceptions of the right to belong and the definition of the poor and poor visited they judged they were obligated to support. As argued above, the Poor Laws and Plague Orders presented parishes with independence and flexibility to respond to local problems.

Whilst the sample parishes shared common features in their approach to plague and the poor, equally, they might respond in different ways to find the best, most practical or cost-effective solution in their local context. Vestries knew their communities and were best placed to decide the priorities in addressing local and immediate problems. The use of the pesthouse is a good example of this: it was an important weapon for some parishes in their response to plague and epitomises the different ways parishes might use the same resource. The discussion identified the significant variation of use in the extramural and western outer parishes. The limited use of the City pesthouse by suburban parishes was linked to its inadequate capacity and comparative cost compared with household quarantine. Moreover, the discussion in Chapter 6 demonstrated the gap between the Crown's aspirations for an expanded pesthouse network and the City's lack of interest in following that course.

The City's pesthouse was inadequate and in any case out of reach for the outer parishes to the north-west and west of the City, and they responded by funding and building their own. The records of St Martin in the Fields show the care and expense taken. The chronology might vary between parishes, which in itself was linked to the long-term impact of plague and the stage of the parishes' development. As commented in Chapter 6, the initiative to establish a parish pesthouse may have been linked to pressure on the vestry from substantial parishioners, who equally, could be a source of funding. A permanent and flexibly administered pesthouse that could be rented out and quickly repurposed when the need arose, alongside expanded capacity and the care and expense taken in preparing these facilities, indicates that they were viewed as hospitals where the sick were to be effectively treated.

This is an important conclusion to draw, particularly given that the pesthouse was largely intended for the use of the poor: the establishment of the parish pesthouse was situated within the context of the wider building programme aimed at managing the poor and plague. This is an important marker of the strategic and long-term outlook of suburban vestries. The building of a pesthouse tended to follow on from the building of almshouses or a house of correction, which taken together provided the confidence and framework to establish the pesthouse.

An important theme presented in the discussion of burial and one that formed an undercurrent in Chapters 2, 4 and 5, was the challenge vestries faced in managing the conflicting imperatives of provision for the dead and the poor living. The discussion demonstrated that the needs of the poor living tended to take priority when it came to deciding the direction of parish spending on new structures. The acquisition of new burial ground can also be seen as part of the parish building programme and was a practical feature of the parish's long-term outlook on the problems of plague and the poor. As was argued, despite the best intentions, these measures could never be a long-term solution. The limited acquisition of additional ground after 1625, particularly in the extramural parishes, was influenced by the declining availability of space as parishes were built over. This is an important caveat when judging the crisis of space vestries faced in the 1665 epidemic. Whilst full burial grounds presented logistical and public health challenges, outside of an epidemic year, which drew attention to the precariousness of burial resources, the growing numbers of poor living were given priority.

This thesis has argued that the powers and responsibility bestowed on London's suburban parishes by the Poor Laws and Plague Orders empowered a pragmatic, flexible and independent approach to the myriad social challenges they faced. The thesis rejects the pessimistic characterisation of the response to the intersecting long-term and social problems of plague and the poor in the suburban parishes. It sets that response in the context of the significant and worsening demographic and social burden that suburban parishes were called on to manage, and argues that this justifies a far more sympathetic appreciation of their performance.

Appendix: The number of burials by year in suburban London parishes, c. 1559-1650

	St Botolph Bishopsgate	St Botolph Aldgate	St Bride Fleet Street	St Andrew Holborn	St Martin in the Fields
1559	148	190		112	132
1560	59	119		85	57
1561	40	106		83	53
1562	65	105		69	49
1563	427	629		485	163
1564	52	68		46	44
1565	47	89		88	59
1566	54	83		53	49
1567	52	69		63	50
1568	53	103		92	62
1569	165	156		121	68
1570	234	285		210	80
1571	107	166		146	102
1572	91	124		97	58
1573	133	159		106	57
1574	225	237		155	73
1575	148	186		148	138
1576	124	147		86	69
1577	158	230		200	114
1578	335	327		197	147
1579	168	129		109	74
1580	113	129		89	86
1581	145	177		193	97
1582	190	304		213	144
1583	220	281		173	153
1584	112	174		112	118
1585	71	160		117	119
1586	112	189		153	97
1587	163	298		181	111

	St Botolph Bishopsgate	St Botolph Aldgate	St Bride Fleet Street	St Andrew Holborn	St Martin in the Fields
1588	128	210		178	95
1589	133	256		151	68
1590	123	202		162	78
1591	134	215		172	106
1592	282	382		355	149
1593	964	1463		710	297
1594	157	224		168	84
1595	122	175		169	91
1596	160	234		200	94
1597	249	358		274	152
1598	139	229	148	198	111
1599	208	259	163	209	88
1600	112	206	120	183	73
1601	162	222	139	189	78
1602	183	285	164	212	92
1603	1535	1948	1001	1356	548
1604	155	202	143	190	135
1605	180	263	204	307	140
1606	251	369	313	215	154
1607	193	350	256	322	152
1608	382	446	248	320	162
1609	446	477	439	468	245
1610	304	418	305	351	156
1611	167	355	217	284	173
1612	219	394	238	231	201
1613	214	317	238	310	161
1614	200	307	204	277	180
1615	248	363	235	343	192
1616	210	285	211	377	245
1617	259	359	207	359	240
1618	312	379	251	311	312

	St Botolph Bishopsgate	St Botolph Aldgate	St Bride Fleet Street	St Andrew Holborn	St Martin in the Fields
1619	209	318	194	403	280
1620	243	322	220	397	332
1621	217	378	253	381	391
1622	215	403	273	398	333
1623	264	461	312	361	375
1624	420	505	313	729	495
1625	2273	2479	1493	2210	1466
1626	226	250	171	255	407
1627	196	293	227	277	338
1628	288	417	284	404	443
1629	273	434	244	414	402
1630	342	605	282	351	459
1631	223	296	340	352	435
1632	291	416	368	363	489
1633	258	363	261	411	387
1634	370	538	340	462	619
1635	275	479	331	426	617
1636	1275	1534	466	929	843
1637	517	542	307	514	643
1638	434	616	364	629	886
1639	263	409	288	511	588
1640	390	736	455	548	816
1641	625	532	547	953	931
1642	462	534	-	594	679
1643	473	659	360	471	694
1644	371	501	463	480	409
1645	590	578	329	494	543
1646	609	877	385	559	647
1647	265	513	504	676	1185
1648	233	406	307	484	512
1649	267	533	218	519	541

	St Botolph Bishopsgate	St Botolph Aldgate	St Bride Fleet Street	St Andrew Holborn	St Martin in the Fields
1650	260	435	207	419	491
Total burials	**26, 159**	**35, 933**	**16, 550**	**30, 867**	**26, 351**

Sources: LMA P69/BOT4/A/001/MS04515/001; P69/BOT4/A/001/MS04515/002; P69/BOT2/A/015/MS09222/001; P69/BOT2/A/015/MS09222/002; P69/BRI/A/004/MS06538; P82/AND/A/010/MS06673/001; P82/AND/A/010/MS06673/002; P82/AND/A/010/MS06673/003; J. V. Kitto (ed.), *A Register of Baptisms, Marriages and Burials in the Parish of St. Martin-in-the-Fields: in the County of Middlesex* (London: Harleian Society, 1898-1936); WAC STG/PR/5/7. The surviving registers for St Bride Fleet Street begin in 1595.

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