

The Seventeenth Century

Politics

The Catelyst family were Royalist in the Civil War. Neville Catelyst (1634-1702) was deputy lieutenant for Norfolk in 1676 and Suffolk in 1680. In the 1685 general election he was unopposed as one of the two members for the city of Norwich and was listed among the opposition to the supporters of the Catholic King James II. In the Convention Parliament of 1689 he was fairly active, being appointed to 15 committees.

Crime

Social control in the County came from the Sheriffs, the Lord Lieutenants, constables, and reeves, to name only some. Assizes for the county of Norfolk were held before royal judges and dealt with felonies which carried the death sentence. The Quarter Sessions were held before JPs (Justices of the Peace) and dealt with offences that did not carry the death penalty. JPs also dealt with local licences and the poor law. County courts were held by the sheriff. They oversaw elections and adjudicated in small claims cases. Hundred courts dealt with the broader local issues such as flooding. Petty Sessions for the Hundred swept up all the nuisances. Manor courts had their own constable and reeves and could fine or whip wrongdoers, and there were probably stocks set up. The church was still a major power, exerting it locally through the clergy and churchwardens.

Agriculture

There was a growing proportion of enclosed fields and managed woodlands: dairy farming (cheese market at Bungay) and hemp growing in small closes near the farmhouses. Fen reeves were important. Three quarters of the population worked on the land. A day labourer working to supplement his income from a small-holding, (work was seasonal, and they might only work half the year) might earn less than 1 shilling a day, which was not enough to keep a family on. They were expected to work for around 80 hours a week. Those in permanent service fared rather better, but were more likely to be male. The English ate twice as much meat (at least the upper classes did) as our neighbours in France and Holland, a lot more ale and slightly more dairy products. Turnips were beginning to be grown after wheat, barley or oats to replace nutrients into the soil. Turnips were offered for sale as winter animal fodder and taken in tithe. Hemp was a major crop of the Waveney valley with hemp weaving at Diss.

Communications

The Waveney Valley had access to the ports and therefore access to non-local goods and news. It was probably still quicker to go to London coastwise than by road, which were basically trackways for which there seems to have been no consistent responsibility for maintenance, though money was left in wills for the repair of bridges. Ellingham still had fords. Most of the people in the villages would have been illiterate, including the landowners.

Military militia

See under [1626](#).

Health

Ill health was considered a trial from God, and therefore to be accepted. Where a physician was called in (only by the rich) the ideas of Galen, a 2nd century Greek, still held sway. The poor resorted to cunning women who dealt in herbs and charms, childbirth and laying out of the dead. Where access to clean water and fuel was restricted, hygiene was minimal (ale was the main drink, safe because the water content had been boiled). Fleas and lice spread disease.

