

Epilogue: Debtors and Duchesses

The Pride family after 1660

Thomas Pride's widow, Elizabeth, remained at Worcester House after her husband's death, managing the family's estate in much the same way as she must have managed the brewery business while her husband was away fighting during the Civil War. It is regrettable that contemporary records cannot furnish us with as much information as we would like on such a resourceful and determined figure as Elizabeth Pride. A clue to her personality can be gleaned from an anecdote concerning William Gouge, the minister at the church where Elizabeth and Pride had married. Gouge had preached to his congregation that that all wives should have only a limited control over property within marriage; his parishioners (among whom may have been Elizabeth) shouted him down.¹

Elizabeth continued selling timber from the park until 1660,² but in June of that year the Crown, busily requisitioning lands lost when the monarchy had been abolished, reclaimed both Nonsuch Great Park and Worcester House and Elizabeth was forced to quit the property. The Crown would later attempt to recover 'goods, chattels and jewels' belonging to the late Charles I that were believed to be in the possession of 'Elizabeth, relict of Tho. Pride'.³ By 1662 Elizabeth was living in St. Bride's parish, Farringdon, having returned to the area of London where the family had lived before she and her husband had made their fortunes.⁴

In 1663 Worcester Park was leased from the Crown by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Robert Long. All the saleable wood had by this time been cleared from the park and the land ploughed to such an extent that the new tenant believed it would cost more that the park was worth to rectify the damage. The Prides, in their business-like manner, had systematically stripped the park of all its assets. Consequently, in June 1663, the land was officially 'disparked'.⁵ The recently reinstated keeper, Charles Kirke, compensated for the loss of his position when Pride had taken over the lease, was now dismissed from his job and ordered to vacate the small lodge on the estate in which he lived. The Great Meadow, which had been granted to him by Pride, was sold with the rest of the land. Kirke received no