

# CAKE AND COCKHORSE



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**Details of the Society's activities and  
publications will be found on the back cover.**

# Cake and Cockhorse

The Magazine of the Banbury Historical Society  
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the Banbury Area in the Civil War 122

For a map showing many of the places mentioned in this article, see the back cover.

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There is a different, though temporary, look to this issue of *Cake and Cockhorse*.

Its appearance so soon after the preceding issue is thanks to the Warwickshire Local History Society and Dr. P.E. Tennant, who have generously allowed us to reprint the article which appeared in the Winter 1989/90 issue of *Warwickshire History*, vol. 7, no. 6. This has enabled us at last to catch up with seasons, which fell badly out of step in consequence of our editor David Hitchcox's illness in the summer of 1989. The issue itself has been produced by a 'guest' (and again quite temporary) editor.

It is a fortunate coincidence that the subject of the first meeting of our 1990/1991 season, arranged as usual by Penelope Renold, details of which are distributed with this journal, is "1642 and the Battle of Edgehill". Anyone who finds Dr. Tennant's article interesting is sure to find it worthwhile to come along to the North Oxfordshire Technical College on Thursday 13th September.

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Earlier this summer we were sorry to say goodbye to Melissa Barnet, Curator of Banbury Museum for the past three years. On Sarah Gosling's departure she very willingly took over as Hon. Secretary of our Society, and has acted as source of all information and general public relations medium ever since, undertaking all the usual unsung chores of such a post. However, we could not compete with her husband's change of job and, much more important, the arrival of their baby. We wish them all the best in Bristol.

In Melissa's place we welcome Julia Nicholson, the new Curator of Banbury Museum. She has accepted the Secretaryship of our Society with such enthusiasm that she was even prepared to take the Minutes at the A.G.M. before she had been elected! Members will enjoy meeting her.

J.S.W.G.

'Parish and People' is copyright of the Warwickshire Local History Society on behalf of Dr. P.E. Tennant.

**Cover illustration:** detail from an engraving of Compton Wynyates by John Smith, from a drawing by J.C. Smith, for the *Architectural Antiquities of Great Britain*, published in 1808 by Longman and Company.

PARISH AND PEOPLE:  
SOUTH WARWICKSHIRE AND  
THE BANBURY AREA IN THE CIVIL WAR

P.E. Tennant

In recent years academic interest in the English Civil War has increasingly focused on its regional context, and the result has been to transform popular notions of a conflict confined essentially to politicians and military commanders, with a few set-piece battles taking place in suitably remote areas, leaving the bulk of the population unscathed or even, perhaps, actually unaware of events. The deafening silence of most of the earlier *Victoria County History* articles on the impact of the war at parish level<sup>1</sup> and the persistence of folk legends illustrating the ignorance of the native inhabitants of momentous events unfolding on their very doorstep have both helped to perpetuate such a myth. The Marston Moor ploughboy astonished at being interrupted at his work by the arrival of two armies may perhaps appear inherently implausible;<sup>2</sup> but nearer home Dugdale's story of Richard Shuckburgh blithely intent on hunting near Edgehill, oblivious to his king's preparations for a supposedly decisive battle, or the anecdote of the Tysoe youth surprised by the arrival of a troop of cavaliers and quite unable to identify them - these surely have the ring of authenticity.<sup>3</sup> Yet if the extent to which the Civil War fundamentally and permanently changed English society is still cause for legitimate debate among historians, the more one examines a specific area the more it becomes clear that, for a few short years at least, the lives of ordinary people, with their age-old preoccupations of field and market, weather and harvest, labour and rest, were profoundly disrupted. The purpose of this essay is to substantiate this claim by exploring the impact of the war on a limited area of the south Warwickshire Feldon for the period 1642-46 and to attempt to determine to what extent it is true that 'the Civil War from

- 1 E.g. Warwickshire's Kineton Hundred, Vol V. The section on Stratford-upon-Avon by Philip Styles in Vol. III is an outstanding exception to the rule, and more recent sections, like those on Warwick and Coventry (VIII, 1969), follow this lead.
- 2 Told by P. Young, *The English Civil War, a Military History* (Eyre Methuen, 1974), p 53 (without source), but rejected as apocryphal by R. Hutton in J. Morrill, ed., *Reactions to the English Civil War, 1642-49* (Macmillan, 1982), p 51.
- 3 Sir W. Dugdale, *The Antiquities of Warwickshire* (ed. W. Thomas, 1730), i, p 309; W. H. Hutton, *Highways and Byways in Shakespeare's Country* (Macmillan, 1926), p 29. Dugdale was virtually an eye-witness, and the Tysoe story has an impressive pedigree.

below remains hidden'.<sup>4</sup> The emphasis will be on military campaigns (already well documented in standard histories) only insofar as these directly involved ordinary men and women, named individuals whose very obscurity testifies to the all-embracing nature of the conflict in which they were unavoidably caught up.

Warwickshire as a whole was, as is now known, heavily implicated in the events of the Civil War, and nowhere was this more so than in the extreme south of the county where a combination of strategic factors, apparently random events and the presence of influential local personalities made the district a military thoroughfare from the outset and ensured that it staged 'the dress rehearsal for the entire English Civil War'.<sup>5</sup> The major determining factor in this was the initial establishment of the Court at Oxford, with Banbury as '(its) most important outpost... and an integral part of the Royalist scheme of operations in the southern midlands'.<sup>6</sup> The early Royalist re-occupation of Worcestershire and Herefordshire provided a corridor between the King's base at Oxford and the loyal strongholds of Wales and the south-west, a corridor soon broadened by Prince Rupert's conquest of Bristol. Oxford itself was progressively surrounded by a circle of protective bases extending north into Warwickshire and south into Berkshire and Buckinghamshire. Equally important was the King's dependence on the West Midlands and Marches as a major recruiting base, as well as a vital manufactory containing iron-working regions, arms depots and workshops.<sup>7</sup> A string of east-west staging posts was established throughout this corridor, which were periodically fought over before changing hands with the ebb and flow of the war, thus ensuring a constant stream of convoys escorted by local commanders on the east-west transit. From the Parliamentary viewpoint the Cotswolds and Severn Valley were equally vital, to keep open communications between the ports of Bristol and Gloucester with London on the one hand, and to safeguard the north-south route via Warwick, Coventry and

<sup>4</sup> J F C Harrison, *The Common People, a History from the Norman Conquest to the Present* (Fontana, 1984), p 203

<sup>5</sup> R Hutton, *The Royalist War Effort, 1642-1646* (Longman, 1982), p 19 VCH, II, contains a useful summary of the main events affecting Warwickshire, but two academic theses are now indispensable D F Mosler, 'A Social & Religious History of the English Civil War in Warwickshire', Stanford, 1975 (unpublished), and A Hughes s, published as *Politics, Society and Civil War in Warwickshire* (CUP, 1987) Still useful are the much older A Beesley, *The History of Banbury* (Banbury, 1841), M H Bloxam, *Warwickshire during the Civil Wars* (Warwick, 1880), and J W W Bund, *The Civil War in Worcestershire* (Birmingham, 1905)

<sup>6</sup> C D and W C D Whetham, *A History of the Life of Col Nathaniel Whetham* (Longmans, 1907), p 75

<sup>7</sup> This section is based on the excellent introduction by I Roy to *The Royalist Ordnance Papers* (Oxford Record Society, xliii, 1963-64)

Northampton on the other. The result was that not only major market towns like Evesham, Warwick, Stratford, Cirencester, Stow and Banbury assumed strategic importance but that what now seem rural backwaters on the modern tourist circuits witnessed some of the most recurrent military operations as bases like Sudeley, Bourton-on-the-Water, Chipping Campden, Woodstock and Burford were activated. Even in lulls of activity, temporary 'guards' were kept in countless hitherto peaceful villages throughout the Feldon and beyond, like Kineton, Ratley, Balscote, Burton Dassett, Adderbury, Shuckburgh and Combrook, all necessitating burdensome local provisioning in addition to the ever-present gathering of taxes by both sides. Moreover, historians' stress on 'localism' and the notorious reluctance of soldiers to serve outside their home region should not obscure the interdependence of localities or the regularity with which 'foreign' troops crossed regions far distant from their point of origin. The relief of Gloucester in the summer of 1643 was largely achieved by Londoners trekking across the south Midlands, but many other similar expeditions, less well known, affected the region. The Warwickshire parish archives refer with almost monotonous regularity to forces from Newport Pagnell, Northampton, Tewkesbury and Aylesbury criss-crossing their territory on some mission, besides the unwelcome incursions of the standing armies, including Fairfax's New Model and the dreaded Scots.<sup>8</sup> Such regional interdependence is acknowledged by contemporaries: a Royalist commander writes to Prince Rupert that 'the loss of Evesham ...cut off all the intercourse between Worcester and Oxford'; John Corbet, Massey's chaplain at Gloucester, bewails the loss of Sudeley Castle as 'a great stop to our entercourse with Warwick, which was the only way of commerce with London'; and the Parliamentary commander, Colonel Whetham, stressing the importance of Banbury Castle, 'of more concernement to Oxford then any other', notes that 'the taking of this Den of Theeves would much conduce to the straitning of Oxon, and give liberty of Trade to London from many parts'.<sup>9</sup> Often the Warwickshire constables are conscientiously explicit: 'Nuport men when they came from Worcester', 'the carryage of Coll. Whalleys amunition to Evisham & other places', 'when the seege was at Banbury',

8 Public Record Office, Commonwealth Exchequer Papers, SP 28/182-186, from which all subsequent parish references are taken unless otherwise indicated. Miscellaneous Warwickshire items are also in SP 28/136, 201, 215, 247-9, etc. These classes are uncalendared and sometimes unnumbered.

9 Lord Digby to Rupert from Oxford, 2 Apr 1645, in British Library (BL) Add Ms 18982, ff 44-45, cf Clarendon's *History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England* (Oxford, 1888), iv, pp 37-38, Corbet in J Washbourn, *Bibliotheca Glocestrensis* (Washbourn & Baldwyn, 1823), i, p 63, 'A Full Relation of the Siege of Banbury Castle', Sept 1644, in BL, Thomason Tracts (TT), E 8/9

'Northampton men going to Worcester', 'Coll. Crumwells when they went to Stow fight', 'when Sir Thomas Fayrfaxe marcht by Stratford', and 'the Scots Army when they came throughe Warrwicke'. Sometimes the contemporary reference remains obscure: why were Parliamentary troops from Gaunt House, near Standlake, Oxon, stationed in Brailes, or soldiers from 'a castle in Wales' in Tysoe? At other times the manoeuvrings seem almost motiveless, a mystery even to the weary participants, like Richard Randall in Little Wolford: 'For 8 weekes Last I have had foote Souldiers under (*blank*) and for this last Fortnight, 3 Horsmen & how long they will Continew I know not'. Each one of these military expeditions - which considerations of space must exclude from further discussion here - brought to the villagers of south Warwickshire the realities of war, in the shape of quarter and plunder if no worse.

If south Warwickshire was, therefore, undoubtedly a major thoroughfare, it was the dominating presence of the two powerful rivals, Lord Brooke and the Earl of Northampton, which ensured that sooner or later, actual armed conflict would break out in the district. Once Parliament had pointedly replaced Northampton as Lord Lieutenant by Brooke, on 5 March 1642, neither peer lost time in acting. The Earl of Northampton, apparently converted from a life of courtly pleasures to firm political commitment, was prominent among the group of peers publicly declaring loyalty to the King at York on 5 June, while Lord Brooke's adherence to the Puritan cause was well established long before that.<sup>10</sup> Both magnates, with influential regional allies, were active in the spring and summer of 1642 recruiting local forces, holding musters, offering handsome financial inducements to attract volunteers and generally ensuring that issues were becoming dangerously polarized. There was already much warlike activity in the towns. Even in January, following the doubling of the watch throughout the county, tensions were apparent, as at Stratford, where the Corporation thought it advisable to replenish the town's armoury.<sup>11</sup> Soon armed and unarmed volunteers were swelling the numbers of the regular militia there, while many others were trooping in to Warwick Castle, whose small garrison trebled within a month and where large-scale tree-felling was taking place to improve fortifications.<sup>12</sup> By early June the King, through the Earl of Northampton and others, was ready to call the county to arms via Commissions of Array, Warwickshire's being the first

10 Clarendon, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 477-8 Brooke, together with Lord Saye and William Purefoy, had objected to the imposition of Ship Money and refused to swear allegiance to the King in 1639; cf Mosler, *op. cit.*, p 62

11 *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic (CSPD), 1642, passim; Warwick County Records, Quarter Sessions Order Books*, ed S C Ratcliff & H.C Johnson (Warwick, 1935-53), VCH, III, p 235, quoting unpublished Stratford borough council books

12. PRO, SP 28/253B, SP 28/183

such to be issued.<sup>13</sup> This already antiquated procedure involved delegating local loyalists to call open-air rallies, usually in a meadow outside an important town, as at Worcester, Stratford, Warwick and Coleshill. One took place, however in the only recorded instance in the south Warwickshire countryside, in Winderton and Tysoe meadows, at the centre of the Northampton estates, and was organized by William Baldwin, whose family had provided bailiffs for the ancient royal manor of Brailes as far back as the Middle Ages, and who subsequently saw his estate sequestrated for his pains.<sup>14</sup> No description of the proceedings at this gathering survives, but it cannot have been very different from those picturesquely evoked by Richard Gough in Shropshire or, nearer home, by William King at Pitchcroft Meadow outside Worcester, which was attended by 'a great number of men-of mean and base quality as they seemed to me - and having hedgebills, old calivers, shep pikes and clubs'.<sup>15</sup> Lord Brooke, for his part, declared the Parliamentary Militia Ordinance at Stratford in June and July, for which he was thanked in an official petition from Warwickshire notables, by which time his panic - or foresight - was such as to attract comment when he unsuccessfully attempted to seize the county armour from the shop of the Warwick armourer, Tibbot, to whom it had been sent for repair. Tibbot was probably related to the Rowington family whose head, Thomas, was an ally of the Earl of Northampton and himself a Commissioner of Array, and who had recruited some twenty Solihull men for the King's service 'with colours in their hats and acted as their captain'. The Warwick shopkeeper stoutly refused to surrender his charge, and the incident led one commentator to condemn Lord Brooke for 'fuelling jealousies and fears in these days (when) there is none or very little reasons for them'.<sup>16</sup> Northampton had already been designated a 'delinquent' by the House of Commons, an act countered a short time later by the King's warrant to Sir William Dugdale naming Brooke as traitor.<sup>17</sup>

July and August saw the first violence in south Warwickshire in a series of incidents marking a significant escalation towards outright

13 R Hutton, *op cit.*, pp 5-6

14 *Calendar of the Committee for Advancement of Money, 1646-1656 (CAM)*, ed MA E Green (HMSO, 1888), for 13 July 1646, Birmingham Reference Library (BRL) 167904, 168023 (Baldwin accounts)

15 *The History of Myddle*, ed WG Hoskins (Centaur, 1968), p 67, Historical Manuscripts Commission (HMC) *Portland MSS*, i, p 53 (12 August 1642), quoted in A Fletcher, *The Outbreak of the English Civil War* (Arnold, 1985), p 359

16 BL, Harl MS 669, f 5, *CAM*, p 1109, *CSPD*, 25 July 1642, Brooke's activities were scathingly condemned by the (Royalist) author of *The Life of that learned antiquary Sir William Dugdale, Kt* (London 1713), p 13

17 *Journal of the House of Commons*, 27 June 1642, Royal Warrant dated York, 4 August 1642 and printed in full in *Life of Sir William Dugdale*



war: the armed confrontation between the two peers over the county magazine, at Kineton and Banbury, the abortive siege of Warwick Castle by a small force of the Earl of Northampton's (the Earl somewhat unprofessionally lodging at the Swan Inn for the purpose), and the sacking of 'malignant' Southam, with the pillaging of its parson, the elderly scholar Francis Holyoake, by a contingent of Parliamentary troops boasting of their Puritan zeal.<sup>18</sup> In August came the King's commission from York to the Earl of Northampton 'to imprest, raise, enroll and reteyne one Regiment of one thousand Foote furnished and armed', and the proclamation from Stoneleigh of the royal threat to Coventry.<sup>19</sup> Troops of both sides were now manoeuvring and quartering in south Warwickshire villages, Northampton's at Aston Cantlow on one occasion, Colonel John Fiennes's Roundheads at Kineton on another.<sup>20</sup> By the time the King raised his windswept standard at Nottingham on 22 August, divisions within the county were hardening, unease and suspicion were rife, forces were being mobilized. Opinion was sufficiently polarized to inspire at least one petition, from 'the Knights, gentlemen and others' of the shire 'to adventure the utmost hazard of our lives and fortunes' for the King.<sup>21</sup> 'Here is nothing but providing of arms', Midland commentators noted apprehensively, 'the country is like a cockpit one spurring against another'.<sup>22</sup> The more politicized clergy were beginning to take the initiative in some parishes: Richard Wootton, rector of Warmington, collected arms, ammunition and horses for Parliament in August, finally deserting his parish to captain a troop at Warwick; Robert Kenrick abandoned Burton Dassett to join the King; while others, like the obstreperous Royalist, Walwyn Clarke, rector of Oxhill, contented themselves with publicly abusing the enemy.<sup>23</sup> Edgehill, on 23 October 1642, was to be the logical climax in the Hundred of this spiral of violence, but even before then so many cartloads of royal booty were trundling in to the courtyard of Warwick Castle from plunder and ambush that a cellar in the castle was set aside

18 *CSPD and Journal of the House of Commons*, 26 August 1642, Beesley, *op cit*, W B Compton, *A History of the Comptons of Compton Wynnyates* (Bodley Head, 1930), SP 28/253B, *Letters of Nehemiah Wharton* (a subaltern in the Earl of Essex's army), in *Archaeologia*, xxxv (1853), ed H Ellis, p 310

19 Compton papers. Castle Ashby, 1083/3

20 *CSPD*, 26 September 1642, SP 28/182 (Kineton)

21 Compton Papers, 1083/1

22 BL, TT E 109/3. 'Some Special Passages from Warwickshire', E 108/26, 'Terrible News from Leicestershire, Warwickshire and Staffordshire', cf Fletcher, *op cit*, containing many other references

23 SP 28/182 (Warmington). A G Matthews, *Walker Revised* (OUP 1948) and BL, Add MSS 15670 71, CAM, III, p 1412 (Oxhill)

to house it and popularly dubbed 'the pillage house'.<sup>24</sup> It is inconceivable, in view of such activity and the intense pressure on the leading families to declare themselves, that the villages could remain ignorant of the drift of events; in Richard Baxter's oft-quoted observation from neighbouring Worcestershire, where he had to flee for his life, 'the war was begun in our streets before the King or Parliament had any armies'.<sup>25</sup> Those 'able rustics who had not willingly escaped the economic depression of 1642 by volunteering to join local garrisons were labouring on fortifications at Banbury, Warwick or Compton Wynyates or being recruited as scouts or spies, like Thomas Earle of Alveston who joined Lord Brooke's company and, learning of the plan to fetch the magazine from Banbury to Warwick, deserted at Stratford and promptly warned the Earl of Northampton.<sup>26</sup> In September, in what seems retrospectively a symbolic event, the county Quarter Sessions were suspended when armed Roundheads broke into the courtroom: they would not be resumed until Michaelmas 1645. Warwickshire was 'alive with national politics' long before 'like two great blind moles the rival armies quested across Warwickshire for six days' to collide at Edgehill.<sup>27</sup> In Warwickshire at least the point of no return had been reached.

### **The Impact of Edgehill and Cropredy**

If 'Kington fight' gave the Feldon its first experience of warfare, the effects were far from temporary or confined to the actual soldiers who faced each other on the 'great broad Field' below Edgehill.<sup>28</sup> The army in 1642, consisting, it must be remembered, mainly of amateur volunteers, was a cumbersome, ill-disciplined, many-headed monster whose ramshackle progress in any given direction bore little relation to the purely symbolic, neat arrows beloved of military historians. Strategy was rudimentary and professionalism patchy. Moreover, abysmal roads after the recent appallingly wet weather meant that foot marchers as well as cavalry would often prefer to cut across this unenclosed, virtually hedgeless landscape peopled with the labouring poor toiling at their strips, deviating to loot whenever a promising hamlet appeared on

24 *CSPD, 1645-47*, pp 240, 522, etc., *VCH*, III, pp 459-60, *House of Lords Journals*, vi, p 196, SP 16/511, SP 28/253B The Warwick booty was later the subject of protracted enquiry, still continuing in 1651

25 *A Holy Commonwealth* (London 1659), p 457

26 *CAM*, p 1413

27 *Quarter Sessions*, II, pp xxiv-xxv, 125-6, Mosler, *op cit*, pp 57-8, Hutton, *op cit*, p 32

28 'The Account of the Battel at Edgehill, Oct 23 1642, as published by Order of the Parliament', quoted in P Young, *Edgehill 1642* (Roundwood, 1967), p. 306

\*the horizon. Urgency was seemingly a low priority, quartering was often for several days at a time and troops were scattered over a wide area. This was the reality at Edgehill and after. The King's approach, from Birmingham and Solihull via Kenilworth, Southam and Edgcote, was too tangential to affect much of the area under discussion, though Royalist troops quartered in a triangle of villages from Ratley to Wormleighton, Mollington, Cropredy and Wardington. Although there is no conclusive evidence, and although things were soon to deteriorate, the Royalists seem to have been relatively well-disciplined on this approach through what Clarendon describes as hostile territory.<sup>29</sup> The main Parliamentary force under the Earl of Essex, however, intending to relieve Banbury and intercept the king's march towards London, approached Edgehill in an easterly direction from Worcester, quartering unhurriedly as they entered Warwickshire on a very broad front extending from at least Alcester and Studley in the north, for a leisurely two to three days, to Ilmington, some 15 miles to the south, with Stratford and surrounding villages heavily quartered in between. Although unattributed in the archives, it was clearly Essex's men who, disregarding their commander's express proclamation at Worcester only weeks previously,<sup>30</sup> had time to plunder the wealthy Catholic landowner, Richard Canning, at Foxcote manor, Ilmington, when 'I had my house broke into a little before the battle at Edge Hill'. Canning, along with his Royalist neighbour, the rector of Ilmington, Dr Thomas King, was subsequently to be victim of repeated acts of Parliamentarian plunder in addition to suffering the sequestration of his estate when he took up arms for the King and being forced to pay £100 in ransom. Essex's army, still unaware of the proximity of the Royalists, then converged ponderously on a whole cluster of unsuspecting south Feldon villages; Halford, Pillerton Priors, the Tysoes, Radway and Kineton were all heavily invaded 'upon ye Saturday before Kineton fight', with provisions demanded from surrounding villages. At Halford, for example, John Baron received fifty men and horses and the conspicuous Royalists William and Thomas Halford suffered nearer 200, 'a great part of the Earle of Essex his army, before and after Kington fight' Similarly at Tysoe, a whole troop of soldiers quartered on the wealthy Francis Clarke alone, and 'a Captaine and his Troope of horse whose name I know not' at William Bickerton's at Pillerton Priors. Essex himself - who insisted that his coffin accompany him at all times, though its presence is not recorded here - quartered at Kineton, the village constable later reporting: 'The Earle of Essex with his whole Army at the Battell lay here from Saturday untill Tuesday night'. Unavoidably, the district experienced its first plunder and destruction during this long week-end,

29 Clarendon, *op cit* , II, pp 358-9, 364

30 Wharton, *Letters*, 24 September 1642

Kineton alone losing stolen coal, wood, and farmyard equipment such as ploughs, harrows, sheepracks, hurdles, pails, ladders and gates, with the odd hovel or cowhouse for good measure, to fuel the camp fires in the frosty autumn nights. The effect of the soldiers' presence in the household was evidently devastating; in a typical example from Tysoe, for instance, Thomas Calloway

*...had taken forth of his house by souldiers under the comand of the Earle of Essex bookes worth xx<sup>s</sup>, ten Cheeses worth x<sup>s</sup>, five yards of flannell worth ten shillings two Coates worth xx<sup>s</sup>, provision spent in his house worth xx<sup>s</sup> and seaven sheepe taken forth of his ground worth iiii...*

while women, usually widows where recorded, were no more exempt than anyone else. Hester Wootton of Tysoe lost

*...twelve Cheeses worth viii<sup>s</sup> halfe a pigg worth six shillings foure yards of new Cloath worth xiii<sup>s</sup> a flaggon and foure sawcers worth iii<sup>s</sup>...*

By now quarter and theft were usually inseparable; Ralph Ellis of Butlers Marston was not only obliged to provide quarter for twenty men and their horses for two days, losing thirty loads of hay in the process, but also 'Lost att Kineton Fight by the parliament Soldiers 73 sheepe att 10d. p.Sheep'. In view of such experiences nothing appears more credible than traditional folk memories, like that of Essex's soldiers hammering on Oxhill church door during divine service, or those from Upper Tysoe of the theft of the housewife's newly-baked bread from the oven or her husband's hiding valuables by lowering them down the well in a pot until the soldiers had passed.<sup>31</sup>

Meanwhile several other Parliamentary units had converged on Edgehill from opposite directions, though precise movements are difficult to establish: Lord Saye's from his ancestral Broughton in the south-east, where a tradition persists that troops slept on the eve of the battle, and Lord Willoughby of Parham's which, fresh from an encounter with Prince Rupert near Kings Norton, marched its 800 horse and foot southwards, liberally pillaging Stratford on the way. Willoughby himself, apparently separated from his men for some unknown reason, billeted himself at Thomas Wilks's in Brailes, costing the yeoman over £2 on that occasion as a prelude to much more substantial losses suffered later in the war. Also in the district was Sir William Waller who, whether at the battle or not, quartered at Tysoe with thirty of his men at this time, at the house of the wealthy William Browne. The sounds of the battle itself carried far and wide on the still autumn air, clearly audible to

31 W H Hutton, *op cit*, pp 28-9

the fidgety parishioners at Alcester listening to their Sunday afternoon sermon.<sup>32</sup>

The impact of Edgehill on the locality extended well beyond the day of battle, for the district was anything but quickly vacated. The fit dispersed in disorderly fashion in all directions, the Parliamentarians, cold and hungry, loitering for days seeking out their old quarters in and around Kineton, Halford, Pillerton, Warwick, Stratford and beyond, (with the harrying of Rupert's cavalry not preventing more looting as they went), abusing the hospitality of Giles Eliot, the Tysoe alehousekeeper or, according to tradition, quenching their thirst at the Royal Oak at Whatcote. The sick and maimed lingered week after week, left to their own devices in alien billets, dependent on the compassion of the cottager's wife when not being attacked by the hostile villagers as they sought relief,<sup>33</sup> unless the rudimentary surgery at Warwick Castle were their lot. So many Parliamentary wounded resulted from this first major encounter that carts from the King's former train were used for 'the reliefe of maimed souldiers which were to ye number of 3 or 4 hundred sent to Warwicke from Edgehill fight to be cared for and cured of their wounds'. A year later, hundreds of wounded Parliamentarians were still being cared for in the castle.<sup>34</sup> Plundering expeditions were now becoming routine, more ambitious and highly organized: in one typical of many, the mansion of the influential Catholic landowner, William Sheldon, at Weston, near Long Compton, was pillaged shortly after Edgehill by a Parliamentary troop of horse from Warwick, while a Kenilworth contingent even had the leisure to drive a quantity of Sheldon's cattle over twenty miles back to their garrison.<sup>35</sup> The Royalists dispersed equally slowly towards Oxford, capturing Broughton and the crucial garrison at Banbury *en route*, and entrusting local activists, like William Loggins of Butlers Marston, to continue their work of collecting much-needed arms. From now on, the Royalist garrison at Banbury Castle, according to its adversaries a 'most pestilent, pernicious, and vexatious den of Theeves and Royall Robbers'<sup>36</sup>, was constantly

32 BL, Add Ms , 28565 and PRO, SP 28/183, 201 (Stratford) Willoughby presents a puzzle, since Brailes is the only parish to mention him (and not his men), Whitelocke says he joined late evening 23 Oct: *Memorials of the English Affairs* (Oxford, 1853), Young, *op cit* , is confused about Waller, listing him as present, pp 100, 112, but absent, p 99, R Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae* (1696), i, p 43

33 Clarendon, *op cit* , ii, pp 364, 373

34 'The Answer and Defence of Col John Bridges, June 1651', in SP 28/253B, SP 28/184

35 SP 16/511, f 106, 'Examination of Thomas Savage, servant to W Sheldon', 6 Feb 1645/6

36 John Vicars (puritan chronicler), *England's Parliamentary Chronicle, Magnalia Dei Anglicana* (London, 1642-44), iv, p 421

reinforced and provided a continual focus of military activity in the region, while its marauding raids far and wide in Oxfordshire and Warwickshire were to become notorious. The Parliamentary garrison at Warwick was an equally oppressive presence throughout the war and arbitrary imprisonment of innocent wayfarers on the orders of its governor, Colonel John Bridges, became a frequent and lucrative pastime. Anne Malms of Tysoe reported that 'her husband going to Warr. to seeke for his (stolen) horses was there imprisoned & and payd to Collonell Bridges for his libertie 4<sup>l</sup>. Henry Middleton of Tysoe testified to a similar experience when

*...his sonne going towards Stratford Market with two horses and a quarter of barley was taken by Collonell Bridges his souldiers to Warwick Castle and Imprisoned, where he payed to Coll. Bridges for his liberty Six Pounds and for his horses and barley eight pounds.*

The Parliamentary authorities made repeated, conscientious attempts to curb such malpractice, writing to Bridges on one occasion:

*We are informed that Major Castle at Warwick takes money for the prisoners in his custody, and so turns them off. Inform yourself further herein. . that he may be proceeded against for such misdemeanour as it deserves.<sup>37</sup>*

Edgehill constituted, therefore, a unique experience for peaceful south Warwickshire and a foretaste of what was to come, presenting substantial material losses to many villagers and unquantifiable fear and insecurity to as many others. Above all, free quarter and plunder, inseparable companions, were endemic from now on. Altogether, such an experience could not but etch itself indelibly on the community, for not only were there poignant reminders like the quantity of battlefield relics, many surviving today, but also the Edgehill grave-pits containing, according to a local antiquarian vicar, 1,200 corpses, together with others buried in local churchyards and, soon, the odd monument, like that to Daniel Blackford, the Oxhill churchwarden. The almost instant appearance in the folk memory of battlefield ghosts is itself eloquent testimony to the hold these events exerted on the popular imagination.<sup>38</sup> Less than two years later Cropredy Bridge underscored these lessons and ensured that those villages which had largely escaped the effects of Edgehill learnt them.

37 CSPD, 3 June 1645, p. 562

38 Young, *op cit*, pp. 330-1; G. Miller, *Rambles round the Edge Hills* (Banbury, 1896), p. 70. The Oxhill epitaph is quoted by many local historians, from Dugdale to the present church notes by Betty Smith, 1971. For the Edgehill ghosts, see Young, *op cit*, pp. 162-6.

Strategically, the prelude to Cropredy presented superficial parallels to Edgehill. While once again the immediate approach of the Royalists, under the King westwards from Buckingham to Banbury, lay well outside the area under consideration, the Parliamentary army under Sir William Waller struck directly across south Warwickshire north-eastwards from Gloucester, in accordance with Waller's pledge 'to follow the King wherever an army can march', and hoping 'that there may be an universall conjunction of forces agt the ennemy which, with Gods blessing, will make the worke short'. Taking a route roughly parallel to the ancient Fosse Way, after quartering a night near Stow and - such was the rudimentary fieldwork - literally going round in a circle,<sup>39</sup> Waller's forces entered Warwickshire near the Four Shires Stone and spent the next two days and nights scattered in a wide circle of villages centred on Shipston, extending from the Wolfords, Whichford, Burmington, Cherington, Willington, Barcheston and Brailes in the south to Oxhill, Halford, Pillerton, Kineton and Radway in the north. There was thus a distance of some twelve miles at least separating the rearguard at Wolford from the forward contingents, with groups of officers being 'lodged in town' and the common soldiers 'lodged in field', as a contemporary report states. Waller himself, with an increasingly demoralized army awaiting a convoy of supplies and pay, quartered at Oxhill, from where he had time to write to Parliament a letter yielding interesting incidental detail:

*I onely desire that it may not be expected, that I should take long marches and not sometimes rest, this extreame hott weather, especially wth the foote, who are very much diminished, and would quickly be ruined if I should not spare them as much as I can. I am come to Oxhill, neare Keynton feild, and the foote are at Shepstone, and purpose to march in ye coole of ye Evening. I have reced some spplies of Horse & foote from Gloucester & Warwick & Coventry. I humbly desire yt Maior Genall Browne, & such forces of ye Association as can be drawne into ye feild may march to Bedford, & I shall by ye meanes of Sr Sam. Luke, direct a way how wee may ioyne. I humbly beg that a months pay (wch was pmised), may be sent downe wth Maior Genll Browne, and it will be a meanes to prserve this Army from dissolving. I desire all expediency may bee used in this.<sup>40</sup>*

Once again, all the surrounding villages must have been humming

39 R. Coe, 'An Exact Dyarie of the Progresse of Sir William Waller's Army', 24 June 1644, in BL, TT E 2/20

40 PRO, SP 21/16, f 74 (Oxhill, 26 June 1644), cf CSPD, June-July 1644 *passim*

with activity as they were harassed and impoverished by the occupying forces - all the more so as Waller, in view of the exceptionally warm weather, had decreed a day's rest to his forces, giving them time to indulge themselves at the expense of the more affluent local yeoman. Once again William Sheldon was victimized, his servant Thomas Savage later reporting to a Parliamentary committee that an official warrant from Waller had ordered the seizure of 200 of the landowner's best sheep.<sup>41</sup> As before, not just twos and threes but huge contingents of men and horses were foisted upon the unfortunate villagers, especially those known to be Royalist sympathizers like Lot Keyte, of Great Wolford, who reported providing quarter to 'ye rere of ye Army that Night' (24 June 1644). A 300-strong Tower Hamlets detachment batted on the vicar of tiny Barcheston, Nathaniel Horton, for two days and nights, enlivening the Warwickshire lanes with their outlandish London accents. Neighbouring Willington and Burmington suffered particularly, 160 men and thirty horses invaded Thomas Walker's at Willington, with another 140 at Thomas Fletcher's and further units of 100 each with William Ashby and William Humphreys. Other large detachments were billeted in nearby Burmington, sixty foot soldiers spending two days and nights with Nicholas Hunt, another sixty each with Francis Court and Richard Hall, fifty more with Richard Sammon, forty more each with Giles Thomas and Robert Beale. In all, well over a thousand of Waller's men were quartered, with all the attendant imaginable chaos, in Willington and Burmington alone in those two long summer days before moving on to disaster across the hills at Cropredy. As at Edgehill, quartering and plunder resumed unabated in the villages once the battle was over as the various Parliamentary units scattered haphazardly in all directions, falling back in some cases, one suspects, on the same villages vacated only days previously. A dispirited Waller, pressed by a former lady friend to change sides, reported to Parliament that his army was plagued with desertions;<sup>42</sup> yet the indefatigable general was soon back in Tysoe, intent on following the King westwards, quartering with 'about 120 of his Commanders & souldiers, some of them quartered five Dayes', with the same unfortunate Francis Clarke already imposed on by Essex's troops at Edgehill. The hapless Clarke would be forced to entertain further Parliamentary units on at least three more occasions, in August, September and October of this same year, 1644. Each parish for which the Civil War records have survived (and almost certainly several, heavily quartered, whose records have not, like Tredington, Shipston and Long Compton)

41 Cf n 35 above

42 Quoted with source in J Adair, *Roundhead General, a Military Biography of Sir William Waller* (Macdonald, 1969), p 162, *CSPD*, June-July 1644, *passim*



conscientiously itemises its by now familiar litany of losses, complaints and costly provisioning, all recollected years later as the constable went his rounds gathering information on the time when 'the army marched through our town'. Incidental personal comment occasionally adds a further human dimension, like that of John Wilton, vicar of Great Wolford, who touchingly notes:

*for as much as the most part of the sayd Inhabitants are husbandmen and unlearned men and have kept no Accompt of theyr great charges and losses for these tlower or five yeares last past, nor can possibly so call to mynd the sayd charges...therefore they desyre to be excused for making any further Account.*

For their part, the morale of the Cavaliers after the battle was high enough to transform the King's march westwards into a splendid royal progress as it skirted Warwickshire within sight and sound of Long Compton and Barton-on-the-Heath: 'his Majestie with all his army, drums beating, colors flying and trumpets sounding, marched over the Cotswold Hills.'<sup>43</sup>

### **The Experience of 1643**

If Edgehill and Cropredy, as intensely local dramas, both profoundly marked the consciousness of the village community of south Warwickshire, these two campaigns were far from being the only ones to affect the region. Military offensives well outside any given region often had an unpredictable local impact, and the spring and summer of 1643, for example, were particularly eventful for the Feldon even though the main theatres of war were distant. For one thing, 'foreign' troops of either side passing through a district were often even more unprincipled than when nearer home, irrespective of local allegiance. mindless plunder of one's own supporters was not uncommon. In one blatant example, Sir Thomas Aston's Royalist cavalry, which had already plundered largely loyalist Worcestershire on its way north in January 1643, again ran amok as they careered southward in June, smarting from defeat in Cheshire, provoking angry complaints from the inhabitants of the Bromsgrove - Droitwich area and an official petition to the King's Commissioners from the people of Armscote and Blackwell in the parish of Tredington. The text is worth quoting in detail for its sheer human interest:

*...according to or late Information, uppon Saturday the Third of June instant (1643) we were plundered and bereft of 40 of or best horses...Uppon our dilligent and chargeable search*

43 R Symonds, *Diary of the Marches kept by the Royal Army*, ed C E Long, Camden Society, 1859, p 25

*and Inquiry we have found out or horses in the Regimt of  
 Colonell Sr Thomas Aston att their quarters about a place  
 called Black Burton neere Burford in the county of Oxon. But  
 soe incomisserate and unreasonable are theis Plunderers  
 That (not content with the wrongfull takeing or said horses,  
 beating and abusing us for onely requesting to buy them  
 agayne, and att their departure wilfully trooping away neere a  
 quarter of a Mile over a furlong of or Beanes & Pease in a body  
 of 7 or 8 score horse, when a fayre high way of 30 yards broad  
 lay all along by the said furlong) But when or Messengers and  
 servants whom wee ymployed in seekinge after or horses  
 with 4 or 5 dayes expence of tyme found them in the said  
 Regimtt att Black burton aforesaid The soldiers there .. (in  
 contynuance of their mischeivous practizes) did imprison &  
 threaten our said Messengers and servants & rob them &  
 pick their pocketts and take away & deprive them of all their  
 moneyes wch they tooke with them for their necessary  
 expences. Soe that we dare pceed noe further in pursuance  
 of our said horses Except you wilbe pleased honorably to  
 afford us yor assistance and aide herein...  
 And we shall allwayes pray for yor happinesse both here &  
 hereafter <sup>44</sup>*

That horse theft was one of the commonest crimes in the Civil War and that some cavalry units were admitted by their own side to be little better than unscrupulous horse-dealers (Colonel John Fiennes's regiment was a particularly notorious local one<sup>45</sup>) was scant consolation to the inhabitants of these two small hamlets for such a catastrophic loss at midsummer and the sense of outrage is palpable.

Although 1643 saw no battles in the region comparable to Edgehill or Cropedy it was a period no less disturbing for the village communities. Some of the military activity was relatively painless. Neither the passage of Prince Rupert south in January to storm Cirencester, when he quartered successively at Butlers Marston and Shipston-on-Stour, his return northwards in March when he again quartered at Shipston and then Stratford on his way to assault Birmingham and Lichfield, nor his return to escort the Queen south from her sojourn with Shakespeare's grand-daughter at New Place, Stratford, to her emotional reunion with Charles near Kineton in July, seems to have adversely affected the

44 *The Diary of Henry Townshend, 1640-1663*, ed. J. W. W. Bund (Worcestershire Historical Society, 1920), BL, Harl. Ms 6804, ff. 78-9, *The King's Papers*.

45 Sir Samuel Luke to his father, 12 Nov 1644, in H. G. Tibbut, ed., *The Letter Books of Sir Samuel Luke 1644-45* (HMSO, 1963), p. 76.

district<sup>46</sup> However, consolidation of the Royalist bases at Oxford and Banbury, the brief occupation of Stratford by the Royalists in February before Lord Brooke 'beate (them) out of the towne' to defeat at Welcombe, and the Parliamentary relief of Gloucester, besieged by the King in the summer, were events, among many others, that ensured the threat of armed violence was never lifted from south Warwickshire this year. The King's cause was now at its height: in March a Royalist source alleged that the Parliamentary garrison at Warwick was much enfeebled by desertions '... and the Townsmen & Souldiers at greate varians'. The Parliamentary commander, Sir Samuel Luke, later warned of the heavy Cavalier presence throughout the region: 'all the townes betweene Banbury and Stratford are full of the King's soldiers ... and a troope of horse keepe a constant centry upon Edgehill to prevent any forces that may come from Warwicke and Coventry'.<sup>47</sup> Many of these Royalist units had been quartered in the villages since the winter, busy collecting contributions, the Earl of Northampton appealing from Banbury to all his tenants on his south Warwickshire estates to assist to the maximum. Both he and Colonel Gerard Croker, one of the first local loyalists, from Hook Norton, to be equipped with a regiment of horse, were authorized by the king to cover the entire district for this purpose:

*Whereas our deare Nephew Prince Rupert Generall of the Horse of our Army hath by severall orders under his hand and Seale given and assigned for the Quarters of the Regimt of Horse under your Comand the Townes of Long Compton, Barton on the Heath, Storton, Cherington, Brayles, Wichford and Ascott, in our County of Warwicke; Little Compton, Sutton under Brayles and Shinington in our County of Glocester - and Hooke norton in our County of Oxon; and Authorized you to receive contribution out of the same after the rate of Tenn shillings six pence weekly for each Trooper... requiring the Inhabitants thereof to make good unto you all the Arreares... Hereunto wee expect full obedience to be given by all whome it may concerne, as they will avoid our high displeasure...*

There is evidence, however, of local resistance in Warwickshire, as elsewhere, to the increasing burdens of quarter and taxation. Already, by January 1643, within days of the King's warrants authorizing

46 The Journall of his Highnesse Prince Rupert s Marches , ed C H Firth, *English Historical Review*, xiii (1898), VCH, III, p. 235, quoting E Warburton, *Memoirs of Prince Rupert and the Cavaliers*, II, (1849), p. 227

47 VCH, III, p. 235, Tibbut, *op cit* , p. 20. Prince Rupert's Correspondence, BL, Add MS 18980, f 23, dated 2 Mar 1642, 3. Tibbut, *op cit* , pp. 121, 136

collection of contributions, neighbouring Oxfordshire parishes were reported to 'deny the mayntenance of the sd Troopes' and by May several Warwickshire villages were seriously in arrears. Croker's harshness in his task of collecting taxes so alienated the local population, however, that bitter complaints arose from several parishes, involving the rector of Sutton-under-Brailes, Dr Henry Watkins, and Long Compton, Cherington and Brailes particularly, and finally provoking more than one appeal from the Earl of Northampton to Prince Rupert himself:

*Sr I made bold to trouble your highness before concerning Collonell Crokers threatening to plunder Brailes and some other townes thereabouts. I likewise Signified unto your highness ye unreasonable sums hee required of ye constablerie of Brailes, whiche is to great a sum for them to beare, they being as before I wrote very willing to do any thing yt lay in their powers, for ye Kings service. Sr I have raised some troopes whiche have been in service, and now there quarters lying conveniently, either for them to quarter in or to fetche provision from, and mightily complayning of Crokers hard usage I thought good to acquaint yr highness with it, besides Sr if thy pay yt sum whiche hee exacts a great share will fall to my part to pay, besides ye hindrance of my tenants rents, whiche I beleeve is contrary to your highness intents, being yt I have devoted my selfe and all my fortune to his Matie Service, Sr I know yt Croker hath given you misinformation, I shall desire to know your highness pleasure, as soon as conveniently you can, for none shall bee more readie to obey your commands then  
Your highness Most humble and faithfull servant*

*Northampton*

The seriousness of the situation is emphasised by a marginal note:

*Sr to prevent to farther inconveniencies I desire your highness would bee pleased to send a protection under your hand for my tenants in ye constablerie of brailes, and for ye towne of Long Compton, which is mine, being both townes well affected.*

Rupert either never received or ignored this appeal, for a fortnight later the King issued a threatening warrant:

*Whereas by my Orders of the 14th of Janray Last past Colonell Croaker was quartered in your Townes of Long Compton & Brales, and to receive Contribution from your said*

*Towns for such horse as hee did quarter therein: the payment of which Contributions you have till this tyme utterly neglected.. Therefore by Vertue of my Authority and Power straightly Charge and command you... immediately after sight hereof (all delays and excuses set aside ) to pay in to the said Colonell or his Assigns, all such Arrears as are from you to him due... wherein you may in no wise faile, as you will answer it at your utmost perills...*

In June Croker was still engaged in the task, but the fact that the collecting process was then shared between him and the doubtless more respected Colonel Charles Compton, one of the young Northampton sons, who was assigned specifically to Long Compton, the Wolfords, Burmington, Brailes, Whatcote, Tysoe and Compton Wynyates, may hint at an attempt to defuse local hostility.<sup>48</sup> Not that this virtual occupation of south Warwickshire by the Royalists in 1643 made the district much more secure from harassment. Besides the highway kidnapping exploits of Major Bridges, indiscriminate plundering is still reported by marauding troops from the garrisons at Kenilworth and Warwick - in Tysoe in February, Warmington in March, Winderton during the summer - as well as more substantial disruptions to the lives of individuals as when, for example, a massive Parliamentary contingent of Waller's cavalry descended on Widow Meakins of Tysoe Lodge:

*... in June the 4th 1643 the Souldiers in Sr William Wallers Army spent her in mansmeate and horsemeate haveing the number of 500 horses in her groundes besides teames of Oxen wth the pvision and goodes they tooke from her was worth... 12<sup>n</sup> 10s Od.*

As though exorbitant tax enforcement and continued plundering were not enough, the entire district was being forcibly ransacked for men and materials to assist in the Royalist convoys on their east-west journeys already referred to. One order dated 15 June 1643 authorized two officers

*... to impresse and take vpp in the city of Worcester or in any towne parish or village within ye Severall Counties of Gloucestr Worcester Warwicke and Oxford As many Horses Carts and Carters as shalbee requisite and vsefull for the*

48 Compton Papers, 1083/20, BL, Harl MS 6851, ff 70, 105-6, 6852, f 7, 6851, f 120, Compton Papers 1083/21a, BL, Add MS 18980, f 58, BL, Harl MS 6852, f 7 Resistance is also reported from Buckinghamshire in BL Add MS 18980, ff 66, 68 (Lord Wentworth to Rupert, May 1643, quoted by R. Hutton, 'The Royalist War Effort', in Morrill, *op cit.*, p 60, with comment )

*draweing and carriinge of all such Ordnance as are now to be brought from ye saide citty of Worcester to this citty of Oxford.*

Little wonder indeed that local trade was by now becoming severely disrupted, with the fairs at Stow and Evesham - and, no doubt, many other markets - mere shadows of their former selves.<sup>49</sup>

A good example of the local reverberations of distant events is provided by the Parliamentary relief of Gloucester in the summer of 1643. In a concerted operation Parliament assembled a substantial army under the Earl of Essex, which marched north-west from London via Bicester and Brackley, while a lesser force under Lord Grey of Groby was ordered south from Leicester. Essex and Grey joined forces near Aynho and skirmished with Royalist forces at Deddington before resuming their march on Gloucester via Stow. Their route should therefore in theory have avoided Warwickshire altogether, yet as we have seen, Civil War troop movements rarely meant a disciplined and unified advance. In the event, detachments of Essex's army, including the London Trained Bands who quartered at Hook Norton, strayed deep into Warwickshire. Quartering and plundering were reported from several villages in the locality, including Brailes, Cherington, Willington and the Wolfords, the two latter being particularly affected. Lord Grey meanwhile, having approached via Stratford on his way to meet Essex and establish his headquarters at Adderbury,<sup>50</sup> quartered virtually his entire force, in groups of tens and twenties for a seemingly interminable three days and nights, in Ascott and Whichford. Grey himself, with his officers and men amounting to 200 men and horses, quartered on the unfortunate Royalist vicar of Whichford, Dr Richard Langston, 'in harvest time', as the village constable pointedly adds in a hint at the price exacted by war on the rural community. In what looks like a calculated insult the parson had his Bible stolen by the soldiers. About the same time, Parliamentary troops of Colonel William Purefoy were also scavenging in the locality, Tysoe being once again particularly victimized. Five horses, bedding, pewter, brassware and clothing taken from Ralph Wilcox; shirts, linen and another Bible from John Middleton. Even the barber's shop was broken into:

49 M Toynbee, ed., *Papers of Capt Henry Stevens* (Oxford Record Society, xlii, 1962), p. 16, A Hughes, *op. cit.*, p. 257, R. Hutton, 'The Worcestershire Clubmen in the English Civil War', *Midland History*, v, (1979-80), p. 41, quoting the Townshend *Diary*

50 BL, TT E 69/15, 'A True and Exact Relation of the Trained Bands of the City of London', 2 Oct 1643, reprinted in Washbourn, *op. cit.*, TT E 70/10, 'A True Relation of the late Expedition of his Excellency the Earle of Essex, for the Relief of Gloucester', 7 Oct 1643, also in Washbourn

*(Edward King) had taken from him by the souldiers in Collonell Purefoys Regement the 14th day of September 1643 a new broad cloath coate a paire of bootes a paire of layd spurs and a box of Barbers Instruments worth ... 2<sup>l</sup> 10s 2d*

The conduct of the troops on these occasions is well captured in a report by John Eades of Tysoe that

*in September 1643 he had taken from him foure mares by Collonell Purefoys souldiers on (e) by Capt Halfords sergeant cost him to have her againe xxxs. on (e) by Capt Lovehills Lieuetenant cost him to have her againe of Capt Lovehill foure nobles on (e) mare cost him to have her againe xxxs<sup>s</sup> via and on (e) mare Capt Atwood had would not let him have her under ten pound, but she was well worth five pound.*

The irresistible target for foraging soldiers in the area was the wealthy Catholic landowner, William Sheldon of Weston House, Long Compton. Already plundered at Edgehill, and later at Cropredy too, Sheldon was now targeted by Grey's troops, losing five more horses and mares and £300 worth of goods from his mansion. Sheldon's loyal servant, Thomas Savage, himself an active Royalist, attempted to avenge this outrage by publicizing news of the Parliamentary march on Gloucester to alert the besieging Cavaliers.<sup>51</sup>

Before condemning the indiscriminate pillaging by both sides which was such a notable feature of the war, it must be remembered that pay, when it materialized at all, was almost invariably in arrears and that troops were appallingly treated. If a London sergeant's testimony is to be believed, Essex's troops, as they skirted Warwickshire from Hook Norton to Rollright, were literally starving: having eaten little at Aynho, where 'we were very much scanted of Victualls', near Chipping Norton

*Our Regiment stood in the open field all night, having neither bread nor water to refresh ourselves, having also marched the day before without any sustenance, neither durst we kindle any fire though it was a very cold night.*

The following day too, 'we lay all in the open field, upon the plowd-land, without straw, having neither bread nor water..' Little wonder that a few months later the conscientious Essex should bitterly complain to his superiors of 'not being able to stay [with his army] to hear the crying necessity of the hungry soldiers'.<sup>52</sup>

51 CAM, p 1289

52 Sergeant Henry Foster, in 'A True and Exact Relation of the Marchings of the Trained Bands of the City of London', in Washbourn, *op cit*, pp. 255-6. C.H Firth, *Cromwell's Army* (Methuen, 1962), p 23 Royalist finances were equally shaky, cf R. Hutton, 'The Royalist War Effort', in J Morrill, *op cit*, p 60

Not surprisingly, given the heavy presence of troops of both sides in the district at this time, armed skirmishes occasionally involved the villagers themselves. In one incident, at Little Wolford in August, a Cavalier attack on the manor house of the conspicuous local Parliamentarian, Hastings Ingram, forced the occupants to flee for their lives, a neighbour reporting.

*about August 1643 one Hastings Ingram Esquire taking up armes then for ye Parliamt I did furnish him with 4 souldiers whereof one was my eldest sonne wch soldiers did stand out in his house wth him in their defense against part of ye Kings army till he was forced to yeald & they to fly the house being fired over their heads.*

In a largely Royalist area where substantial numbers of inhabitants were tenants of either William Sheldon or the Earl of Northampton, Ingram, who was captured and imprisoned at Oxford only to escape and join the Parliamentary garrison at Kenilworth with 130 fresh recruits, evidently enjoyed local notoriety. In an ingratiating letter to the regional commander, the Earl of Denbigh, Ingram later claimed that his known Parliamentary sympathies had forced him to adopt a lower profile: 'For my p'te thr malignitie & power agt me was ye occasion of ye layinge downe my armes'. This did not prevent a local Parliamentary victory at Stow, where Prince Rupert made an abortive attempt to arrest Essex's advance on Gloucester, after which he 'retreated and that night lay in the field by Compton [Wynyates]'.<sup>53</sup>

Such, then, were a few - by no means all - of the events which enlivened the existence of south Warwickshire villagers in 1643. Within the space of a few months they had suffered an almost constant military presence, with free quarter, plunder and harassment from both sides becoming commonplace. Moreover, it must be remembered that providing quarter, intolerable in itself, was also highly dangerous, since the 'beating up' of enemy quarters was deliberately and routinely practised by both sides. In many cases, the parson was being investigated as politically suspect, and would later be ejected. Above all a crippling financial burden was now a permanent feature of life, for the enforcement of 'contributions' by the Royalists already referred to is only a fraction of the tax-gathering story. Various levies had been imposed on the villages by Parliament from the outset, but the spring of 1643 saw the systematic adoption of compulsory assessment of each village proportionate to its estimated wealth. Colonel William Purefoy, appointed Parliamentary commander for Warwickshire in February, set

53 HMC, IVth Rpt (Denbigh), p 270, dated 19 Aug 1644, *The Life, Diary and Correspondance of Sir William Dugdale*, ed W Harper, (1827) p 47, 'The Journall of .. Prince Rupert's Marches'



about this task with his customary zeal. Henceforth no village was to escape heavy taxation, the county as a whole protesting officially at its unfairly high assessment.<sup>54</sup>

### **The Compton Garrison**

Of all the crosses borne by the long-suffering villagers none was worse than that of having to endure a local garrison. Quarter and plunder associated with periodic troop movements, though intolerable to the individual when they occurred, were random and intermittent, dependent on the vagaries of orders and strategies decided elsewhere, but a neighbouring garrison was a permanent burden. Not only did it invite the constant threat of attack and perhaps prolonged siege, with unforeseeable local repercussions, but even in lulls of activity when the flames of war were flickering elsewhere a local garrison meant an oppressive presence of ill-disciplined troops kicking their heels under an arrogant commander accountable to virtually no-one. Some became notorious even with their own side: to Clarendon's disgust the Royalist garrison at Chipping Campden 'brought no other benefit to the public than the enriching the licentious governor thereof, who exercised an illimited tyranny over the whole country'<sup>55</sup> Of the major garrisons affecting south Warwickshire, including the 'den of thieves' of Banbury, none fits this description better than the Earl of Northampton's captured seat at Compton Wynyates. Warwick and Kenilworth were recognized as virtually impregnable and after the initial months of the war were largely left alone by the Royalists. Banbury's two sieges did indeed affect a wide region and attracted heavy and prolonged quartering, constant pillaging, requisitioning of men, materials and provisioning, as well as excessive financial levies, from all the surrounding villages as far away as Brailes at least. But Compton was even more centrally situated for the region and was not only besieged twice, in June 1644 and January 1645, and threatened at other times, but was manned for two interminable years by a strong Parliamentary force under a particularly unscrupulous commander, Major George Purefoy, an arrogant young kinsman of the indomitable Warwickshire puritan, Colonel William Purefoy. The impact on the local community of the Compton garrison, curiously ignored by modern historians, is difficult to exaggerate. It was clearly considered almost as important as Banbury by both sides - judging on the one hand by the initial succession of Royal warrants

54 BL, Harl MS 158, f 277 and cf *CSPD, 1645-47*, p 289. The financial burden on the community is a huge subject well beyond the scope of a short article. Sums quoted in the parish books and elsewhere suggest very heavy taxation indeed, cf. A Hughes, *op. cit.*. Warwickshire claimed more than once that the whole county was unfairly overtaxed and harshly treated. cf. BL Harl MS 158, f 277, *CSPD, 1645-7*, p 289 etc

55 Clarendon, *op. cit.*, iv, pp 37-8

issued from the Court at Oxford guaranteeing its protection and, on the other, once taken by Parliamentary troops, by the substantial taxes levied on neighbouring parishes to support it, the scale of the fortifications and repairs undertaken to maintain it as a viable base, the Royalist attempt to recapture it and, above all perhaps, by the vastness of the area deemed necessary by Parliament to support it. From Alcester in the north-west to Bicester in the south-east and comprising literally half of Oxfordshire, dozens of parishes in the two counties were compelled to support it financially, besides those nearer home which were bled to provision it.<sup>56</sup> Compton Wynnyates (invariably referred to as Compton House in contemporary sources) was in effect strategically important to both sides as the farthest frontier post between their respective areas of influence, in what was effectively a buffer zone for much of the war.

Intense activity had been building up in the south Midlands for some time and the capture of Compton House in June 1644 was only one of many campaigns. Parliament considered Coventry to be 'in imminent danger' in February, while anxious at the same time to transport a vital convoy of money, weapons and ammunition from London via Warwick to their garrison at Gloucester. Royalists were heavily concentrated throughout the Cotswolds to prevent this, Colonel Massey at Gloucester reporting to the Earl of Essex in March:

*Prince Rupert, with much of the horse from Oxford, is come to Stow. Lord Northampton and the rest at Campden, Sudeley, Evesham, Broadway, Upton, Bredon and Tewkesbury lie very strong, at least 2,000 horse besides dragoons, and 2,000 foot lie between us and Warwick on purpose only to keep back our relief.*

On one occasion in March the Parliamentary convoy under Colonel Hans Behr was forced to turn back at Stratford in face of a determined Royalist attack,<sup>57</sup> while further east the King had ordered greater reinforcement of Banbury. Tension was heightened by a systematic Royalist campaign of destroying the Feldon bridges, like the strategically important ancient one at Halford on the Fosse Way, 'being a great bridge and very useful to passengers from Warwick to Shipston and ... divers other great towns', the Earl of Denbigh reporting to Parliament from Coventry:

56 BI Harl MS. 6804 (The King's Papers), ff 101-2, SP 28/43 Pts iv, v, SP 28/136, 184 (Maj. Purefoy's Account Books)

57 HMC, IVth Report (Denbigh), p 264, dated 4 Feb 1644, CSPD, Feb-Mar 1644, *passim*; BL, Eg MS. 785/5, 7, dated 11 Mar 1643/4; CSPD, 1644, pp. 64, 67-8, 70, etc. HMC, Vth Rpt p 271

*the great (Royalist) forces drawn towards these confines and about Gloucestershire purposely to intercept this convoy, a number too considerable and much superior to our forces ... have likewise cut down the bridge of Halford, and intend to do the like to all the other bridges which lie in the way; and to make the passage more difficult they are cutting trenches in all the fordable places of the River Stour.*<sup>58</sup>

One armed clash which probably took place at this time resulted in fatalities at Newbold-on-Stour; the Tredington burial register recorded 'Two men killed at a skirmish betwixt the Kings Maties soldiers and the Parliaments above Newbold church bridge'.<sup>59</sup> In addition to those Parliamentary forces assigned specifically to escort the convoy to Gloucester under Behr, which included substantial contingents from Warwick and even Newport Pagnell, several other Parliamentary regiments were scattered throughout the area: Brailes alone quartered units belonging to Waller, Denbigh and Fiennes, while Cromwell was keeping guard further north, at Radway and beyond. As usual therefore plundering was rife, with known Royalist sympathizers the first victims; Simon Underhill, of the Idlicote Royalist branch of the family, was divested in June of 'a Beaver hatt a sword a payre of silke stockings 3 gold capps a new payre of bootes one fyne Holland table cloath conteyninge 6 els in length, valued at ... 5i' and many other items. The indiscipline of Behr's troops was particularly notorious, the Earl of Denbigh condemning 'Commissary-General Behr's forces (who) by their plundering and intolerable insolences discontented the people'.<sup>60</sup> Finally in May came a concerted but abortive Parliamentary attempt to recapture Banbury, before the successful assault on Compton House, which finally fell to Parliament on 9 June 1644 after a two-day siege, as noted in the terse official communique:

*Major Bridges wth his forces from Warwickshire & Coventry, having laid before Compton howse Friday & Satturday last, on Sunday morning tooke it, and in it the Earle of Northtons brother, Captaine Clarke Capt Bradwell wth about 12 officers more and 120 common soldiers, 80 good horses wth all their armes and Ammunition, and sent them to Warwicke...*

58 *Quarter Sessions*, III, pp. 21, 33, 65, *HMC*, IVth Rpt . p 264, *CSPD*, 29 Feb 1643/4, pp 29-30 Many local bridges were destroyed, often deliberately, during the war, Kites Hardwick, Bretford, Barford, Bidford, Tachbrook and Clopton Bridge, Stratford cf *Quarter Sessions* index

59 Warwick County Record Office, DR 79

60 *CSPD*, 19-20 Mar 1643/4, 2 Apr 1644; *HMC*, Vth Rpt . p 265

A slightly different Parliamentary version, naming Colonel William Purefoy as the victorious commander, records, probably accurately, that 'besides 120 prisoners, he took £5,000 in money, 60 horses, 400 sheep, near 160 head of cattle and 18 loads of other plunder; besides 5 or 6 earthen pots of money which he afterwards discovered in the fishpond'. The Royalist Dugdale, adding yet another slant, alleges that the Parliamentarians 'drove the park and killed all the deer, and defaced the monuments in ye Church'.<sup>61</sup>

The great Tudor mansion was promptly stripped of its contents, Colonel William Purefoy taking charge of the plunder operations using carts requisitioned locally via hapless village constables like Richard Wilcox of Tysoe and Edward Walker of Brailes to convey the goods to Warwick. An inventory of the stolen goods was later compiled by the Earl of Northampton's trusty bailiff, William Goodman, himself a substantial yeoman farmer from neighbouring Winderton who had in happier times supplied the earl with meat and other goods. The inventory, interesting though it is, suggests that the house had been largely emptied of the most valued possessions by its owner, of late almost entirely absent on active service. Goodman's loyalty to his 'good Lord & Maister' cost him dear: he subsequently claimed on oath that on this occasion alone he lost almost 1500 sheep, twenty-four cattle, eighty loads of hay, £140 in cash divided between money bags, a locked box 'in an inner Roome' and 'a Trunke in one of ye Chambers which was broken up by ye souldiers', besides his wife's purse containing more than £20, three or four gold rings taken from his maid and a further £10 worth of his own gold. He himself was physically searched and robbed in the presence of the officer-in-charge, Major Castle, already notorious with his own Parliamentary superiors for illegal extortion from his prisoners in Warwick Castle. Not content with this, the newly-appointed garrison commander, Major George Purefoy, ordered a large quantity of malt, wheat and peas from Goodman's Winderton farm. The unfortunate Goodman had already had his other estate at Prescote, near Cropredy, plundered the previous October, when over 400 sheep, twenty-five cattle and three horses had been seized and driven to Warwick, besides suffering also at the hands of the Earl of Denbigh's soldiers on another occasion.<sup>62</sup> Nor were such outrages confined to the wealthy, able, it could be argued, to recoup losses. Certainly the more affluent were particularly victimized, especially if Royalist connections

61. Sir Samuel Luke's Letter Books, 1643-45, BL, Eg MS 785, 1 (12 June 1644), J Vicars, *England's Parliamentary Chronicle, Jehovah Jireh* (1643-46), Dugdale, *Diary*.

62. Warwick CRO, CR 556/285, 286, etc., SP 16/539/2/207, PRO, Will (PROB 11/216) dated 8 May 1651, SP 28/253B

were evident: William Calloway of Tysoe, one of those managing the sequestrated Northampton estates, was at one point imprisoned in Compton House and released only on producing 8 cwt of butter and 7 cwt of cheese for the garrison commander. Other notables like Francis Clarke of Tysoe, Richard Canning of Ilmington and Sir Hercules Underhill of Idlicote, together with the many supposedly 'papist' clergy of the district, were persecuted more than once. Some even, like the prominent Brailes Catholic, William Bishop, went abroad for a time, probably as a direct result of the conflict.<sup>63</sup> However, those of very modest means and even the downright poor suffered too, as the new governor, George Purefoy, set about systematically terrorizing the entire neighbourhood. Swingeing taxes were imposed on all the nearby communities, with additional fines as punishment for their past disaffection.

The inhabitants of the adjacent parish of Tysoe, in particular, were appallingly treated, being immediately subjected to a stream of imperious ultimata demanding men, materials and food supplies, the preamble to a typical 'warrant', dated 17 June 1644, reading 'To the most base, malignant Constable and Townes of Tysoe ... upon paine of imprisonment and plunderinge'. Scores of labourers, carpenters and teams of oxen and horses were demanded for week after week of unpaid labour on improved fortifications, the scale of which is evident from one warrant alone among others demanding 'on(e) labourer forth of every household in all the three Townes and three Draftes out of each towne to continue their all that weeke', together with the length of service exacted of husbandmen uprooted from their fields: 'Humphrey Tennant was labouring at Compton cutting Downe trees thaching hayrickes and about the workes Forty Dayes and upwards.' A glance at these Tysoe indemnity claims, among the most detailed and circumstantial of the parish books,<sup>64</sup> leaves the impression indeed that virtually the entire male population was for a time dragooned into Purefoy's service, seriously dislocating the life of the community in the height of summer. Little escape was possible in a close-knit community and arbitrary summonses were issued by the governor to appear at improvised courts, 'charging the constable and other of the Inhabitants to appeare at Cumpton to Answer to such things as should be laide to their charge'. The Compton barns were replenished free of charge with thirty loads of straw and new-mown hay from the Tysoe pastures pending the arrival of more substantial supplies from further afield:

*Itm Comanded by my warrants for ye use of my garrison 120*

63 SP 28/184, 215, BL Add MS 35098, 'The Book of Sequestrations 1646', f 25r (Bishop).

64 SP 28/184 (Tysoe).

*loads of hay, from ye townes neare adjoynenige to the same as Tysoe, Brayles, Oxhill, Idlicott, Whatcott, Epwell, ye Pillertons & Eatenton ye said quantity beinge burned in the barne wn ye enemy stormed ye Garrison.*

Considerable quantities of utensils and food - bread, cheese, butter, bacon, salted beef are repeatedly mentioned - made their way to Compton from the surrounding villages and suggest that the members of the garrison intended to make the most of their temporary quarters and live comfortably. Bedding was particularly prized, with sheets, linen blankets, bolsters, pillows and beds themselves all specified, as many a former ploughboy or shepherd slept more comfortably than ever before in the stately home on sheets supplied by rich and poor alike, from Sir Hercules Underhill in his mansion at Idlicote to the cottage of widow Saul at Brailes. That not all thefts were intended directly for the maintenance of a military garrison is clear, too: besides the usual food and utensils, for example, Thomas Wilkes's losses at Tysoe included a riding coat, waistcoats and petticoats, boys' hats and stockings, silver clasps for a Bible and a pair of 'sifters tipped with silver'. Lest such robbery be ascribed to indisciplined subordinates, the victim insisted on specifying 'the Maior being present himselfe'. Only a few months previously, a Thomas Wilks of Brailes (whether the same man settling in the nearby parish or a case of father and son is unclear) reported losing, at the taking of Compton House, 'in mony plate, household goods & all manner of waring clothes of my owne my wives & 4 children ... to the value (of) 214<sup>li</sup> 16<sup>s</sup> 0<sup>d</sup>.' Such episodes were repeated countless times throughout the district as Purefoy's marauders descended on village and hamlet in the Feldon and across the border into Oxfordshire. Alkerton, where the Royalist rector and scholar, Thomas Lydiate, was brutally treated, was raided several times, Shutford was threatened 'upon paine of plundering, imprisonment and other extremities ... At your perils', and Over Norton similarly: 'I will plunder yor towne and hang yor Constable'.<sup>65</sup> The character of such expeditions may be judged from a petition submitted later by Thomas Tasker, a labourer of the neighbouring Oxfordshire parish of Epwell, to the Parliamentary authorities:

*... yor Petitioner being a poore man and aged, in December 1644, in the middle of the night, a Partie of Maior Purefoys souldiers comanded by Corporall Dizon came into his house, and violently tooke away the most parte of his household goodes, to the valew of tenne Pounds or upwards, and also tooke away yor petition to Compton where he was unistly*

65. VCH, Oxford, IX, quoting A. Wood, *Athenae Oxoniensis* (London, 1813), III, p. 187. Beesley, *op cit.*, p. 397, SP 28/43/IV, f 577

*imprisoned by the space of Five or Six Dayes, and nothing being alleadged against him, the Maior came to him and used many harsh speeches & so gave order to the Marshall for to release him, but never examined him of any thinge at all, neither would he give him leave to speake for himselfe to Desire any of his goodes againe ... His humble request unto Yor Worps is ... in regard he and his wife are aged, and the sudden fright hath made them both so sickly and weake that they are altogether unable for to get their liveing ...<sup>66</sup>*

The highways too were kept under surveillance by Purefoy's men for goods being transported which were liable to be seized and brought back to Compton: 'taken 3 horseloads of Poltry & cheese going to ye enemys garrison', 'taken 6 oxen going to Oxford', 'taken from Mr Osburston within 4 mls of Oxford to victual 40 sheep & 10 qr wheate', 'a Pryze of hatts going to ye enemys garrison of Worcester', a side baron of beef which the Brailes butcher (though unnamed, probably Francis Shirley, a local Catholic) was carrying to the royal garrison at Banbury, 'and the said Beafe was disposed of by the Govnor of Compton who had halfe of it and the soldiers the Rest', £3 taken from the constable of Whichford which was suspected of being taken to Banbury Royalists. In periods of inactivity the garrison's horses were grazed indiscriminately on neighbouring pastures, provoking frequent anger. At other times the tedium was relieved by morale-boosting reprisal raids on notorious, or simply defenceless, local Royalist sympathizers or anyone unfortunate enough to be associated with them, like the curate of Whichford, Lieutenant Henry Smith later confessing:

*I had commande from Major Puryfoy to seise upon the person of Doctor Langstons Curatt, and such cattle of the Doctors as I coulde finde upon his groundes, and to bring the said Curatt and Cattell to Compton Garrison wch I did according to the Govnors Commannde, to the best of my knowledge the Govnor of Compton had eleaven or twelve pounds for the inlargemt of him selfe and the Cowes of wch monies my selfe nor the soldiers had anie parte.*

If by now the unscrupulous Cavalier, Colonel Gerard Croker, had withdrawn from the conflict, his north Oxfordshire family remained as a tempting target for Purefoy:

*Also I was Commanded by the Governor of Compton Garrison to fetch into the Garrison fiftie sheepe from Mr Henry Croker of Hooke Norton, wch sheepe were disposed of by the Governor to his owne particular use ...*

Vindictive reprisals were also carried out against former enemy soldiers now disbanded, like Robert Rose and William Bratford returning home to Tysoe hoping to resume their peaceful former existence. Rose was promptly imprisoned by Purefoy and even though 'he had his Dyett sent him from his Mother' was retained until £5 ransom was paid.<sup>67</sup> As the war dragged on the Royalists threatened more than once to recapture Compton, the most spectacular attempt coming at the end of January 1645 and graphically described by the defending governor, Purefoy himself. The Royalist newsletter, *Mercurius Aulicus*, whose objectivity is, however, clearly somewhat suspect, alleges that the Earl of Northampton's local strength cooped up the Parliamentarian at Compton to such an extent

*that his cummings abroad are more like a theife than a souldier, creeping sometimes in the darke, where he steals contributions to keepe himselfe in heart to pen blustering warrants.*<sup>68</sup>

All in all, the colourful George Purefoy is worth rescuing from oblivion, such was the undoubted impact of his presence on south Warwickshire and beyond during these two years. Although very different in character from those of his formidable relative, William Purefoy, his swashbuckling exploits earned the distinction of attracting comment in Parliament. He suffered a preposterous riding accident in Hyde Park in which he knocked himself unconscious and lost a diamond-decorated hat worth £150 in the process and he rigged local elections in Warwickshire. Not content with managing for a time to enjoy the huge profits from the Earl of Northampton's sequestered estates, he was not averse to appropriating the schoolmaster of Combroom's salary, forcing the unfortunate parson of Butlers Marston, Edward Langley, to teach the children at the new school without remuneration. If the words *plunder* and *highwayman* both made their entry into the language during the Civil War, they might almost have been coined specifically in memory of George Purefoy. He had a good war.<sup>69</sup>

As has already been suggested, the poor were hardly less exempt from the effects of the war than the wealthy, although burdens were differently distributed. Even villagers of very modest status were called upon to provide free quarter. Among the sixty inhabitants of Brailes

67 Maj Purefoy's Account Books, SP 28/136, 184

68. BL, TT E 268/12, 7 Feb 1644/5, reproduced in full in W.B. Compton, *op. cit.*, cf. *CSPD*, 24-25 Dec 1645, pp. 276, 278, and Beesley, *op. cit.*, pp. 390, 400 ff. BL, TT *Mercurius Aulicus* 1513

69. A Hughes, *op. cit.*, pp. 235, 251, 248, etc., BL, Add MS 35098, 'The Book of Sequestrations 1646', f 3, SP 28/201 (Combroom), C.V. Wedgwood, *The King's War, 1641-47* (Collins, 1978), pp. 532-3



submitting complaints of quarter and plunder few were wealthy; Nicholas Bishop was a labourer, Thomas Eddon a shoemaker, and many others, twenty years later, still had only one or two hearths to their name<sup>70</sup> For many a modest husbandmen the war meant severe hardship, as proved by the few cases - the tip of a considerable iceberg - finding their way into the State Papers, like Christopher Mills of Warwick or Silvester Warner of Marston, the latter despairingly ending his petition with the hope 'that God will either take him out of this world or make him more able to undergo these burdens'.<sup>71</sup> As for the destitute living at or below subsistence level, the situation was even worse, compounded by the breakdown of the administration of justice and poor relief at parish level. At Leek Wootton, which had already been regularly plundered by the Royalists, one inhabitant pleaded to the Parliamentary tax authorities: 'I am A poore Tenant which have nothing but upon the rack rent, being tenant at will', while the constable recorded of another: 'Thomas Barnet is very poore and hath nothing but what he getts by his dayly labour'.<sup>72</sup> The situation in most parishes cannot have been very different. In the most populous of all, Brailes - which not so long ago had been receiving assistance from other parishes under the old Elizabethan Poor Law because its own resources were inadequate to relieve its many destitute, and with a substantial proportion of indigent cottagers, including recusants 'soe extreame poore that they have neither lands nor tenements, good or Chattels' - lists of inhabitants in arrears of taxes and others assessed, significantly at 1s were regularly returned by the constable.<sup>73</sup> In other parishes the Quarter Sessions records alone cite cases of hardship arising directly from the war: masters refusing to take back apprentices after serving in the war on the wrong side; war widows requesting relief, like Margery Browne of Pillerton, whose husband was killed at the siege of Banbury; rates being interrupted; an alarming increase in the numbers of pedlars and beggars.<sup>74</sup> In such parishes, complaining, like Barton-on-the-Heath, that taxes had been unjustly raised 'in these late unhappy wars', driven, like Rowington and Cubbington, to protest officially at excessive quartering, or unable to

70 SP 28/184, E. 179/259/9, 10

71 *CSPD, Addenda, 1625-49*, p 692 (6 Feb 1646), *HMC*, IVth Rpt p 264 (and another case, p 266)

72 Cf *Quarter Sessions*, II, pp. xxiv-xxv, SP 28/185

73 Huntington Library, Cal., USA, Stowe Mss. St. 1444, 110, PRO, E. 179/395/23 (22 Oct 1641), Compton Papers 1083/33 Cf the large number of Hearth Tax exemptions, e.g. PRO, E 179/194/334, E 179/347 etc

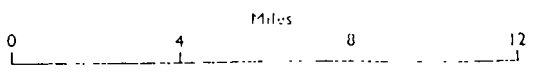
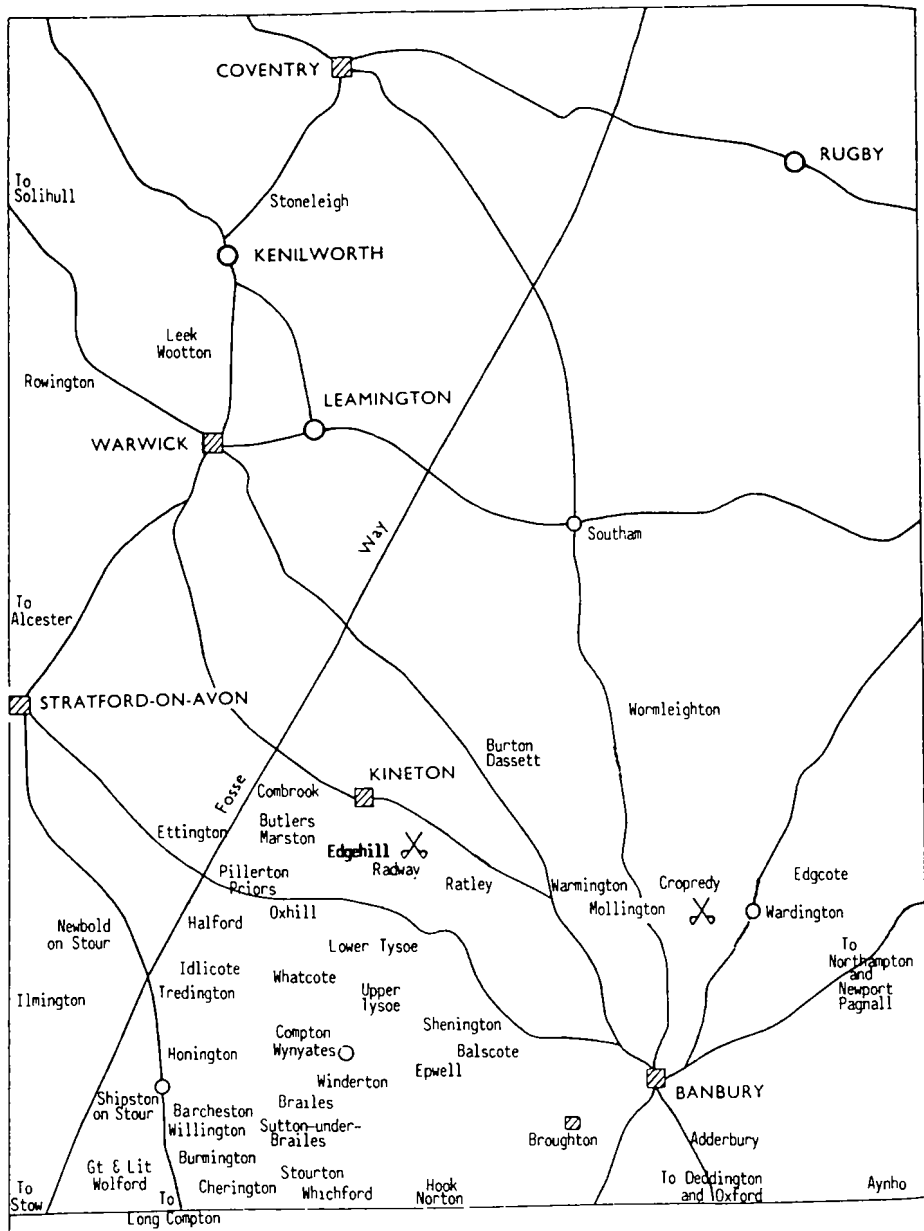
74 *Quarter Sessions*, III, pp 134, 161, II, pp, 177, 179, 231, 256, (cf *CSPD, Addenda 1625-49*, p 693, the case of Hester Whyte), III, pp 107, 274, IV, pp. 185-3, cf *Quarter Sessions*, index, 'Poverty'

continue payment of the poor levies, the simple cumulative effects of swingeing taxation, economic depression, harsh winters, disruption to markets, harvests and trade, 'much decayed . . . in the time of the late distractions', must clearly have affected the whole community<sup>75</sup> An occasional random jotting in the archives conceals, one imagines, many a silent personal crisis aggravated by the hardships of these years, like the touchingly simple note scrawled on a page of the parish book of Ascott in Whichford: 'Jane Sturch, a poore widow, behind'.

At least one scholar, in a nevertheless invaluable study, has concluded that apart from Catholics, 'in civil war Warwickshire the bulk of the population appeared to be relatively unaffected by the traumatic experience of warfare'.<sup>76</sup> Examination of the surviving indemnity claims submitted by parishes to the Parliamentary authorities - and it must be stressed that those for several populous parishes like Long Compton and Shipston and many smaller ones like Barton-on-the-Heath, Ettington, Honington, Sutton-under-Brailes, Whatcote and Tredington have not survived - suggests otherwise, however: that both the village community itself and substantial numbers of individuals, and not only the wealthy, were indeed severely affected. Moreover, space has excluded all but the most cursory reference to at least two major aspects of the conflict from the present discussion. The disruption to religious life, still central to a village community, along with the persecution of the clergy, and above all, the whole question of the crippling financial burden on rich and poor alike, have not been dealt with here. Were adequate examination of these added to the picture drawn above from a mere selection of events, the sheer human toll on the south Warwickshire rural community would undoubtedly appear even more evident.

75 Quarter Sessions, iv, p 178, *HMC*, IVth Rpt (Denbigh) p 272. *Quarter Sessions*, ii, pp 177, 248-9, iv pp 185-6

76 Cf Mosler, *op cit*, p 177



## BANBURY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Banbury Historical Society was founded in 1957 to encourage interest in the history of the town of Banbury and neighbouring parts of Oxfordshire, Northamptonshire and Warwickshire.

The magazine *Cake and Cockhorse* is issued to members three times a year. This includes illustrated articles based on original local historical research, as well as recording the Society's activities. Well over one hundred issues and approaching three hundred articles have been published. Most back issues are still available and out-of-print issues can if required be photocopied.

Publications still in print include:

*Old Banbury - a short popular history*, by E.R.C. Brinkworth.

*The Building and Furnishing of St. Mary's Church, Banbury.*

*The Globe Room at the Reindeer Inn, Banbury.*

Records series:

*Wigginton Constables' Books 1691-1836* (vol. 11, with Phillimore).

*Banbury Wills and Inventories 1591-1650*, 2 parts (vols. 13, 14).

*Banbury Corporation Records: Tudor and Stuart* (vol. 15).

*Victorian Banbury*, by Barrie Trinder (vol. 19, with Phillimore).

*Aynho: A Northamptonshire Village*, by Nicholas Cooper (vol. 20).

*Banbury Gaol Records*, ed. Penelope Renold (vol. 21).

*Banbury Baptism and Burial Registers, 1813-1838* (vol. 22).

Current prices, and availability of other back volumes, from the Hon. Secretary, c/o Banbury Museum.

In preparation: Lists of Tudor and Stuart Banbury Taxpayers, including the May 1642 subsidy for the Hundreds of Banbury, Bloxham and Ploughley (mentioning almost as many names as the Protestation Returns of a few months earlier, for which the Banbury Borough and Ploughley Hundred returns do not survive). Others planned: Selected years from Rusher's *Banbury List and Directory*, 1795-1880; Letters to the 1st Earl of Gullford (of Wroxton, father of Lord North, Prime Minister and M.P. for Banbury); News items for the Banbury area from Jackson's *Oxford Journal* (from 1752) and the *Oxford Mercury* (1795-6); and Selections from diaries of William Cotton Risley, Vicar of Deddington 1836-1848.

Meetings are held during the autumn and winter, normally at 7.30 p.m. at the North Oxfordshire Technical College, Broughton Road, Banbury, on the second Thursday of each month. Talks are given by invited lecturers on general and local historical, archaeological and architectural subjects. In the summer, the AGM is held at a local country house and other excursions are arranged.

Membership of the Society is open to all, no proposer or seconder being needed. The annual subscription is **£8.00** including any records volumes published, or **£5.00** if these are not required.

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