

have discussed military plans to secure the armouries established in each county before the opposing party got to them. The supply and security of weapons and powder in the county armouries was the responsibility of county lords lieutenant. Lords Saye and Brooke as lords lieutenant of their respective counties would most certainly have laid their plans accordingly. No doubt plotters on both sides also discussed other important issues such as the raising and equipping of foot regiments, cavalry troops, obtaining guns and ammunition and making provision to obtain any other necessary supplies. They would also have needed to sound out men known to have served as mercenaries (it must be remembered that there was no standing army to call upon) and to have done this discreetly must have posed all sorts of problems.

According to the Broughton Castle brochure the political plotters who used the Council Chamber included John Hampden and Sir Harry Vane; it also states that they used the Providence Island Company venture as a cover for their plotting. Providence Island Company records, held in The National Archives, show that no business meetings were recorded as being held at Broughton. They do, however, show meetings being held at Richard Knightley's place at Fawsley in Northamptonshire and Lord Brooke's town house in London. It is, however, much more likely that it was the business connected with the creation of the Saybrook settlement in Connecticut that was used as the cover for their other activities, as neither Hampden nor Vane were involved in the Providence Island Company venture. Lord Saye's second and favourite son Nathaniel is also recorded as one of the plotters; he is, however, not listed as either a share holder of the Providence Island Company or a patentee of the Saybrook settlement; James, the elder son, on the other hand did hold a quarter share in the Providence Island Company in 1633.

It is perfectly feasible that Lord Saye did call meetings, in the name of the Providence Island Company, of those patentees who were political plotters, discussing treasonable politics in the Council Chamber at Broughton with no minutes recorded. No one, of course, can prove or disprove such a postulation. Perhaps that is how we should leave the story. William Fiennes, 1st Viscount Saye and Sele was, of course, not dubbed 'Old Subtlety' for nothing!

On the Sunday morning of 23rd October, 1642, completely unplanned, the two opposing sides met in fields between Kineton and Edgehill in Warwickshire: the first major battle of the English Civil War, forever to change the face of England. John Winthrop's prescient letter to his wife that 'God will bring some heavye affliction upon this lande' became all too horribly true.