

Whilst such a tax had on occasion been raised previously, it had been restricted to maritime counties. It was when the tax was imposed on inland towns and villages that deep nation-wide resentment was caused, particularly to the aristocracy and landed gentry, many of whom, very vociferously, refused to pay their assessed portion of the tax. They were, by and large, taken to court, fined or imprisoned. John Hampden was one of them.

His refusal and subsequent court case was probably the most notorious case of all. Buckinghamshire, Hampden's county, was assessed for £4,500: the equivalent of providing a warship of 450 tons, fully equipped and manned for six months. Hampden's assessment was only for 20 shillings but he refused to pay on principle. So did Richard Cartwright of Aynhoe, on the borders of Northamptonshire and Oxfordshire, a wealthy landowner and near neighbour of William Fiennes, who was assessed at 45s.6d. Cartwright's son John, ironically, was married to Noy's daughter Catherine. The Northampton bailiffs actually called at Aynhoe to take Richard to prison at Northampton, when he, as they all did in the end, caved in and paid.

On a lower social scale, the mayor of Banbury, directed to levy the tax in the Borough, found it impossible to raise the money, except by 'distresses', and in 1637 had yet 'many parcels of goods which lie rotting'. Writs were continually issued to raise Ship-money in the years 1635, 1636, 1637, 1638 and 1639.

Superimposed on all Lord Saye's colonial business and his reasons for these enterprises was his active opposition to the Ship-Money tax. He not only headed the resistance of Oxfordshire landowners, but as High Steward of Banbury, Keeper of Banbury Castle, Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire, Cheshire and Gloucestershire, he would have been seen as a very powerful influence on others who might be of a like mind. King Charles therefore tried to win him over by offering the office of Privy Councillor, which he refused. By January 1641 the Long Parliament had declared the tax illegal; in June that year a bill was brought in declaring this so. The bill received Royal assent in August. By then it was too late: it had become the catalyst that sparked off the English Civil War in 1642.

As England was rapidly sliding towards civil war Lords Saye and Brooke sold Sayebrook to the Connecticut government in 1641. However, during the conflict Parliament found time in 1643 to appoint Lord Saye one of the Commissioners for the Plantations. The commissioners were all men with financial interests in the New World and part of their duties was to appoint state governors to the new colonies.

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