

## CHAPTER 12

### THE LAST MONTHS AND WAR

After May 1642 there is no mention of Hampden in the journals or the private diaries except that on 14 June 1642 he moved in the House for an order “empowering the deputy lieutenants to execute the Militia Ordinance in the County of Buckinghamshire”<sup>1</sup>. On 26 July it was reported in the House that the Buckinghamshire Militia were being armed and exercised and we assume that Hampden was present<sup>2</sup>. While doing so in August he rode to Ascot House to arrest the Earl of Berkshire who was trying to implement the King’s Commission of Array; Berkshire claimed that he was not doing anything wrong to which Hampden replied that he was sending him to London so that he could not!<sup>3</sup>.

On September 9<sup>th</sup> 1642 the Lord General Essex left London and on the 14<sup>th</sup> reviewed the Parliamentary Army at Northampton, at the start of the Edgehill campaign. We know that Hampden’s Greencoats were involved, in part as a guard for the artillery train, so he must have marched with his regiment in the first week of September from Bucks to Northampton. He was not involved in the skirmish at Powick Bridge on September 23<sup>rd</sup> or in the main engagement at Edgehill on October 23<sup>rd</sup>, arriving late in the evening with the artillery when the fighting was over.

After the battle the King’s army moved quickly to Oxford and then was in Reading by November 4<sup>th</sup>, and Essex had to make haste to get to London before the King which he reached at the end of October, called out the London Trained Bands and prepared to defend the City. The King attacked Brentford on November 11<sup>th</sup> and the Battle of Turnham Green was fought on 13-14<sup>th</sup>; in both actions Hampden’s Regiment was involved. By November 19<sup>th</sup> the King was back in Reading and the City was relieved. There was then a lull in the fighting as the troops moved into winter quarters.

We do not know where the Greencoats spent the winter; probably in Bucks near their families and supply depots, and Hampden was able to attend Parliament. He was present as a teller for a division on February 18<sup>th</sup> 1643 on the debate for carrying on the war (won by 99 to 67 votes). The same day he was appointed to go to the Common Council of the City about a loan of money. On March 7<sup>th</sup> he was again a teller, and in that month he was appointed to no less than thirteen committees, but I think this must have been *in absentia* because on the 20<sup>th</sup> of that month there was read in the House a letter “from commissary Copley this morning directed to Colonel Hampden and Colonel Stapleton informing them of the advancing of Prince Rupert with a great force toward Aylesbury”<sup>4</sup>, and on 23<sup>rd</sup> March “a letter from Colonel Arthur Goodwin, Colonel Hampden and others of the passage and carriage of the forces under the command of General Ruthven, Prince Rupert and Maurice, the Earl of Caernarvon before Aylesbury was this day read and ordered that a copy be sent to my Lord Mayor to be communicated to the City and another to the Lords and that it be printed”<sup>5</sup>. Between April 15<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> he was present at the siege of Reading. There was then some manoeuvring in the area until the battle at Chalgrove on 18<sup>th</sup> June, and the rest we know. On June 20<sup>th</sup> a letter from Essex dated 19 June relating to “a skirmish at Chinner” was read<sup>6</sup>. This stated “they carried off the bodies of diverse persons of quality. On our side Major Gunter was killed; a man of much courage and fidelity. Colonel Hampden put himself in Captain Cross his troop where he charged with much courage, and was unfortunately shot through the shoulder. Sir Samuel Luke was thrice taken prisoner.....We lost two colours, viz; Major Gunter’s and Captain Sheffield’s”.<sup>7</sup>

There was no mention of Hampden’s being wounded, nor is there any reference in the Commons’ Journal to his death which is astounding considering he was one of the most prominent members.

It might be appropriate to end by quoting Gardiner’s comments after describing Hampden’s death.<sup>8</sup> “So little was it Hampden’s habit to put himself forward in political life, that the historian is apt to ask himself whether, after all, he deserved the fame which has crowned him. Other men outstripped him in the senate and in the field. He seldom spoke in the House of Commons, and never at any length. As a soldier he won no battles and reduced no fortresses. Yet the impression he made on his contemporaries cannot be lightly set aside. Friend and foe are of one mind in recognising his power. A thoroughly loyal man, without even the infirmity of

ambition, his first and last thought was his duty to his country. Inspired with the loftiest and most enduring courage, ready to throw himself into the breach in peace or war whenever occasion demanded the sacrifice, he had too high a reverence for the virtue of subordination to resist the authority which he regarded as lawful. He was never heard to murmur.....That Hampden, had he lived, would have brought about a peace on terms satisfactory to both parties is an idea which could only arise amongst those who misunderstand alike his character and the political situation. His ideas on Church and State were such that he never could have come to an understanding with Charles”.