



THE PATRIOT

Newsletter of the John Hampden Society

No. 60 - Autumn 2009



The John Hampden Society is a registered charity which exists to bring together people with an interest in John Hampden, and to encourage wider knowledge of this great 17th century Parliamentarian, his life and times

JOHN HAMPDEN COMMEMORATION SERVICE



Following a suggestion at a recent Annual General Meeting, the Society was pleased to organise a Service to record the life and death of John Hampden and to do so in a manner appropriate to commemorate his contribution to our history, both locally and nationally.

Having regard to the Hampden family's connections with Great Hampden, the Service was held on Sunday 25 October 2009 by kind permission of the Rector, the Rev Deiniol Heywood, and the Churchwardens at St Mary Magdalene Church, Great Hampden. This Church was the regular place of worship of John Hampden and the Hampden family during his lifetime and, after his death, his remains were laid to rest there.

The form of the Service chosen by the Rector was in the form of a pre-Common Prayer Book Matins Service from the Elizabethan Prayer Book current in John Hampden's lifetime. The Rector's address drew apt parallels between the Patriot's principled stand for fairer system of govern-

ment and the current political scene. Readings, hymns and music were chosen from the relevant period to provide a harmonious context for the Service. Alexandra and Charlotte Reid ably performed violin music during the Service sympathetic to the period and Graham Nash provided organ accompaniment.

The proceedings concluded with Derek Lester, in a short talk, enlightening the congregation on the contradictory theories as to where John Hampden's remains were and where he believed they were actually laid to rest. His conclusions were of great interest and had generated coverage in the local press in a way which, it is hoped, will encourage greater interest in John Hampden and the Society.

Gillian and John Goodall had very kindly opened their Barn at Monkton for members and guests and a delightful lunch was enjoyed by all present.

The overall impression was that this was a worthy tribute to the Patriot and reflected well on the Society; the subject had clearly inspired the Rector in his choice of the Service and the content of his address. The Service properly reflected the good regard held for a man of his times but also a man whose principles still have resonance today.

John Gabbitas



REVELATION AT GT. HAMPDEN - 25th OCTOBER 2009

"I am here at Hampden in doing the last duty for the deceased owner of it, whom every honest man hath a share in the loss, and therefore likewise in the sorrow. Truly, Jenny, and I know you may easily be persuaded to it, he was a gallant man, an honest man, an able man, and take all, I know not to any man living, second. God now in mercy hath rewarded him". These extracts, from a letter written by John Hampden's closest friend Arthur Goodwin, sums up the loss felt by all who knew him.



"The bodye was received at ye church by Master Robert Lenthall, minister of ye parish of Great Hampden, and followed by noe small companye of soldiers, country folke & gentry; ye palle being borne of six; viz Colonell Arthur Goodwyn, Mr Richard Greenvil (Sherriffe for ye countye) Mr Tyrell, Mr West, and Dr Giles (minister of Chinnor) and myself William Spurstow; ye last named (Dr Giles) having been with ye deceased Colonell at Thame in Oxonshire, during ye dayes in which he languished of his hurt received in ye fight near Chalgrove and at his death." (Taken from 'A Worthy Discourse' 1647)

On the 20th August 1634, as the black marble monument on the south wall testifies, Hampden suffered the loss of his first wife, Elizabeth. Were his mourning friends and compatriots going to reunite him with her 9 years later, for surely this is where Elizabeth is buried? But Great Hampden was on the front line of this Civil War and in those brutal times it was not unknown for bodies to be disinterred and heads paraded on the ends of pikes!

One hundred and eighty five years later the Earl of Buckinghamshire gave permission to Lord Nugent to disinter John Hampden. He was keen to solve the riddle of whether Hampden had died from two carbine bullets in his shoulder or from the bursting of his pistol. So on the morning of 21st July 1828 Lord Nugent and 11 other gentlemen instructed their men to start digging. Imagine their surprise when they did not find a coffin under the black marble monument. 'The Times' reporter published the following from Lord Nugent's press release. 'After examining the initials and dates on several leaden coffins, we came to the one in question, the plate of which was so corroded, that it crumbled and broke into small pieces on touching it. It was therefore impossible to ascertain the name of the individual that it contained'. Picture the desperation of these Lords unearthing each coffin in turn and not finding John Hampden's. The opportunity of erasing the slur on the Hampden family's name for honesty and integrity slipping away with each coffin unearthed. Dr. Grace, the Earl's steward who was present at the exhumation, relates in a letter to his Lordship, dated 22nd July 1828, 'that they had exhumed William Hampden', John's father! That grave is sited just below the altar on the northern wall. So John Hampden's grave remains undisturbed!

So where lays John Hampden? I have tried to decorate the site of the tomb as it might have been in 1643 with Standards and armour of the day. It seems the honours of war surrounding the tomb were replaced for those from an earlier period to deflect unwelcome visitors seeking the unmarked tomb. In a document compiled by Joseph Yates, rector of St Mary's in 1663, titled Hampden Magna 'At the entrance to the chancel hang a Surcoat of Arms belonging to the Hampdens with Mantle Helmet & crest between 4 Pennons. One whereof is torn another is Hampden's Coat of Armes. Under these Pennons hangs a shield thereon the Arms of Hampden'. The location and occupants of the other coffins in the Chancel were also described. But Joseph Yates in 1663 only alluded to the site of John Hampden's tomb, for the wounds of civil strife were still raw. Richard Hampden, the resident Lord of Hampden, followed his father's Parliamentary policies, a risky strategy especially after the Restoration of the Monarchy. So John Hampden's final resting place remained unmarked, known only to an elite few and later forgotten.

We know from the burial register that John and Elizabeth are buried in the church and it seems odd that the site where everyone suspected they would be interred together is vacant! Was Elizabeth moved to a new location with John to confuse their enemies? Just below the floor beneath this armour are shallow brick burial chambers. What a clever and fitting place at the entrance to the chancel to bury, with full military honours and family prestige, such an illustrious person whose very soul was in danger of humiliation.

(At this point Ian Hollenden, a direct descendant of the Patriot, was invited to lay a wreath)

Ian, will you lay the wreath in celebration of John Hampden's life? We cannot be totally sure that Hampden's final resting place is here and too many coffins have already been disturbed to satisfy peoples' curiosity.

Let him rest in peace here in St Mary Magdalene Church, with his first wife, as the hero of Chalgrove Battlefield and saviour of the rights of the common people. Hampden, a true Patriae Pater. Amen.

Derek Lester



HAMPDEN HOUSE DOWNING STREET

Downing Street as we know it, occupies the site of a much older property, demolished towards the end of the reign of Charles II. The earliest description of this house comes from the 17th century, when Parliamentary Commissioners took over Crown lands. The house was described as “built part with Bricke and partly with Tymber and Flemish walle and covered with Tyle, consisting of a Large and spacious hall, wainscoted round, well Lighted and Paved with brick Pavements, two parls whereof one is Wainscoted round from the seelings to ye floor, one Buttery, one seller, one Large kitchen well paved with stone and well fitted and Joynted and well fitted with dresser boards. And above stayres in the first story one large and spacious dyneinge Roome, Wainscoted round from the seelings to the floore, well flored, Lighted and seeled and fitted with a faire Chimney with a foote pace of Paynted Tyle in the same. Also 6 more Roomes and 3 Closets in the same flore all well lighted and seeled. And in the second storey 5 garrets...” Earlier history of this site would indicate that the site was previously occupied by a brewhouse called The Axe belonging to the Abbey of Abingdon.

In the grant of what was later to be known as Hampden House to Sir Thomas Knyvet in 1604 the premises were said to have formerly been in the tenure of Everard Everard, Goldsmith, which information made it possible to identify them with a tenement for which a rent of £7 was paid, further identified, by an entry in the Ministers’ Accounts, with a tenement formerly called The Axe, later The Kings Head.

In 1650 the property is described as adjoining on the south, a house or Inn called The Peacock, belonging to the Dean and Chapter of Westminster who, on 30th April 1605, leased to Sir Thomas Knyvet “all that tenement called The Peacock in Kinge Street, between the tenement of the said Dean & Chapter of Westminster on the south parte and the tenement sometimes appertaining to the Abbott and Convent of Abington on the north part.” Therefore the site of Hampden House was occupied by the property of the Abbey of Abingdon and it has been shown that, so far as this was situated in King Street, it corresponded with the brewhouse called The Axe, owned by Elizabeth Palle, the abbot’s lessee.

Even before the role of Prime Minister existed, the inhabitants of today’s Down-

ing Street were involved with politics. Sir Thomas Knyvet, Member of Parliament for Thetford, and a JP for Westminster, was famed for arresting Guy Fawkes for his part in the Gunpowder Plot in 1605. The property was leased rent-free to Knyvet on 3rd April 1581, by Queen Elizabeth I, in whose Court he was highly esteemed, being a Gentleman of the Privy Chamber and later the Queen’s Keeper of the Palace. He was knighted in 1604 by James I and the lease on Knyvet House was extended in the same year in order to ensure that Sir Thomas’ heirs would hold the property for 60 years after his death. At that time it was named ‘Knyvet House’.

On the death of both Knyvet and his wife in 1622 the house passed to their niece, Elizabeth Hampden, and the name was changed to Hampden House. Elizabeth lived there for 40 years until her death in 1665. She was the mother of the Patriot, John Hampden who was, of course a Member of Parliament and one of the leaders of Parliamentary opposition to King Charles I. Hampden House afforded Elizabeth a prime view of the events of the Civil War, including the execution of Charles I in 1649, on the scaffold in front of the Banqueting House in Whitehall. She was still living in the house when King Charles II was restored to the throne in 1660.

On 24th June 1651, the Parliamentary Commissioners sold the Crown’s interest in the property to Robert Thorpe and William Proctor and on 24th November 1654 George Downing acquired the interest from Thorpe, following the demise of Proctor. This transaction became void at the Restoration, but in 1662 Downing petitioned the King on the grounds that he had been forced, for a sum of money due to him, to take a tenement of the King “in King Street.... in the possession of Mrs Hampden”. He pointed out to the King that he (the King) had promised he would take care of Downing’s estate, and asked him for a reversionary lease of the premises, to enable him to rebuild. The King, to gratify Downing, directed the Lord Treasurer to arrange for a grant, with sufficient provision ‘for the handsome and Graceful building of the said house’. On 23rd February 1663, a lease of the property was given to Downing, subject to certain conditions. On the death of Mrs Hampden, the unexpired term of the lease on Hampden House was left to her four grandchildren, Richard Hampden, Sir Robert Pye, Sir John Hobart and Sir John Trevor, but it was not until 1682 that the lease finally expired and Downing was able to take possession and commence rebuilding. Downing died in 1684 and

there is no evidence that he actually lived in the street that now bears his name. Designed for a quick turnover, Downing’s houses were cheaply built, with poor foundations for the boggy ground. Instead of neat brick façades, they had mortar lines drawn on to look like even-spaced bricks. Three centuries later, Prime Minister Winston Churchill wrote that Ten Downing Street was “shaky and lightly built by the profiteering contractor whose name they bear.” and in the 1960s the property was rebuilt, retaining the original façade.

Anthea Coles

A WARM WELCOME

is extended to new members:

Wendy Grant and Jane Skinner, who joined the Society in October, and hopefully will by now have received their membership packs from the Membership Secretary, despite the vagaries of the postal service.

We hope you will both have a long and happy association with the Society and that we will meet at many future events.

STOP PRESS...

The Society has some spare copies of the Order of Service booklet produced for the Commemorative Service at The Church of St Mary Magdalene, Great Hampden on 25th October. If anyone would like a souvenir copy, please contact Sam Hearn by e-mail at: thechairman@johnhampden.org or by telephone on 0208 995 2666.

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Book Review....

Cavalier and Roundhead Spies - Intelligence in the Civil War and Commonwealth.



Author Julian Whitehead
Published by Pen and Sword
ISBN 978 84415 9574. 243 Pages

The author, Julian Whitehead, explains in his notes at the end of the book that his approach has been to sift through the generally accepted history of the period and highlight and comment upon intelligence matters. He has not only successfully achieved this objective but in doing so he has provided a powerful narrative of the wider political and military events of these revolutionary times.

Part of the book's appeal lies in its author's intimate knowledge of the trade-craft of intelligence gathering and security. After reading history at Oxford he began a long and relatively distinguished career in British military intelligence. His empathy with his seventeenth century counterparts and the challenges that they

facéd runs through the book like a golden thread. That being said he does not stint from condemning sloppy practices, naïve mistakes and the many failures properly to analyse and use high grade and timely intelligence.

This is not a dry academic study but, rather, a full blooded account of the activities of those men and woman who ran such risks to gather or intercept valuable information often for the most venal motives. The author slips convincingly into the minds of those responsible for; covert operations, ciphers, information gathering, interrogations, data analysis and the application of intelligence to tactical and strategic decision making.

The book contains many insights into the role that military intelligence played in the outcome of battles. The greatest commanders, Fairfax, Cromwell, Prince Rupert and Montrose all relied heavily on information provided by highly mobile scouts who often operated deep inside enemy territory. Rupert's scouts were highly esteemed for their bravery and efficiency by their opposite numbers but little first hand evidence survives of their activities.

The author speculates that Rupert's use of intelligence accounts, at least in part, for his reputation of magically being in two places at the same time and for anticipating the moves of his opponents. The author asserts that by contrast the Earl of Essex made little tactical or strategic use of the reports of the scouts controlled by Sir Samuel Luke, Parliament's Scoutmaster General.

The book also encompasses the more overtly political role of information gathering to protect the state and its chief executive officers. The author takes us from a world in which the King and Queen personally encrypted and decrypted sensitive documents, to the professionally organised bureaucracy of the Protectorate's John Thurloe. The author is quite in awe of the ability of Thurloe and his deputy Sir Phillip Meadowe to process and analyse such staggering quantities of data.

In its first edition, the text contains a few errors that a good editor should have spotted and removed. No doubt these will be corrected in future editions. These small blemishes do not however prevent the book from being an excellent read and generally reliable. This is an excellent introduction for those unfamiliar with this topic. Even aficionados and cognoscenti will be intrigued by the author's unusual perspective. The appendix on cryptography is a special treat.

Sam Hearn

HAMPDEN INFILTRATES LOCAL HISTORY CONFERENCE

2009 Bucks Local History Network
10th Annual Conference - 3rd October
- Kermodé Hall, RAF Halton



The theme of this year's conference was great Buckinghamshire figures. Somehow none of the organisers had thought to include John Hampden. However when the speaker on Sir Henry Verney of Claydon dropped out Roy Bailey was asked to speak on Hampden's Buckinghamshire connections. He prepared a new version of his talk for the occasion and for the first time used Powerpoint to present his slides.

Roy was given the graveyard slot after lunch. Fortunately the three excellent speakers in the morning had acted as his warm up acts. Each of them had already mentioned Hampden and his importance to both local and national politics. Of particular note was the talk by Julian Hunt (a Society member) on the Patriot's cousin, the poet Edmund Waller. Although not a fan of Waller's poetry, Julian has clearly been researching the topic with his usual vim and vigour.

This annual event is an opportunity to showcase what the Society has to offer. On this occasion we signed up one new member, Jane Skinner, and handed out thirty membership leaflets (a record). Sadly there were only two members manning the stall this year.

Valerie Horne deserves a special mention for driving herself to Halton to work on the stall despite suffering from a painful back injury. Anyone wishing to help out next year i.e. October 2010 should contact the Secretary. Unless more members volunteer their services it is unlikely that the Society will run a stall at future fairs. Even the offer of ten or fifteen minutes of your time by those members who attend the conference would make all the difference. Those who did not attend this year missed a really well run conference. The catering arrangements were however still in the 'could do better' category.

Sam Hearn