



THE PATRIOT

Newsletter of the John Hampden Society

No. 77 - Winter 2013/2014



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

SHIP MONEY: WAS IT AN ILLEGAL TAX?



THE SHIP MONEY MEMORIAL NEAR HAMPDEN HOUSE

The inscription on the monument is barely legible, but the text is reproduced on an accompanying plaque. See page 3

In his troubled reign of twenty three years King Charles I so alienated his subjects that it ended with his own execution in January 1649. From the outset his relationship with his people was altogether unsatisfactory. He called few Parliaments and for eleven years from 1629-1640 allowed Parliament to lapse altogether. Without the regular grant of taxes by Parliament he found it necessary to resort to unlawful methods to raise revenue such as forced loans and Ship Money. Although this tax had been raised by previous monarchs, particularly by Elizabeth I during her naval wars with Spain, she had achieved a happier relationship with her Parliaments, and had raised this tax mainly from maritime counties who could expect to benefit from sales of supplies to the navy.

During the 1630s Charles I attempted to raise Ship Money, certainly an illegal tax, since it had not been voted by Parliament, nor was there a war at sea. Furthermore he most unusually demanded the tax from inland counties also. The MP and Buckinghamshire landowner John Hampden, having been imprisoned in 1627 for refusing to contribute to a forced loan, also objected to

the second writ of Ship Money levied in 1635. His refusal to pay an assessment of twenty shillings on his lands in Stoke Mandeville resulted in his trial in 1637-8. He was found guilty, but by such a narrow majority that he gained fame as national hero, much to the embarrassment of the King.

WAS THE MONEY ILL-SPENT BY THE KING?

The King's use of this tax was certainly illegal but is the inference that he spent the revenue on his personal expenses and not on his navy an accurate one? Although there was indeed no war at sea which demanded exceptional naval expenditure, there were serious problems with Barbary pirates capturing ships' crews, and more locally the wholesale abductions into slavery from English maritime counties, which certainly called for action by his government.

One historian, M.D. Gordon, researched this question as long ago as 1910, but her work is seldom quoted today. Ship Money was assessed by county and collected by the County Sheriffs so Miss Gordon's research covered the 17th century records from the Audit Office Declared Accounts, the assessments of the Council Register, and the letters of instructions sent with the King's writs by the council to the sheriffs. From these documents she prepared a detailed survey of the collection of the tax by the Privy Council and its use for naval expenses. Her published article (1) concludes that during the 1630s at least, the sums collected and those spent on the navy were in balance.

Further evidence is provided by the naval expedition sent in March 1637 against the port of Sale in Morocco where English seamen were known to be held as slaves. After a four month blockade by the fleet, 293 slaves were handed over. This successful action led by William Rainborowe MP also resulted in an exchange of ambassadors between Britain and the Sultan of Morocco which greatly improved the situation as far as that part of the Barbary Coast was concerned. This expedition was funded by Ship Money.

Most historians now accept that the Ship Money tax collected was used for naval expenses. However, because the illegal tax was so detested, the sheriffs were rarely able to collect the full amounts demanded of each county and funding was therefore not sufficient to cover the needs of a permanent navy or to deal adequately with piracy, smuggling and illegal fishing.

Brian Cox

(1) Gordon M.D. *The Collection of Ship-money in the Reign of Charles I, Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, Third Series, Volume 4 (1910) pp.141-162.*

AS IT WAS IN THOSE TIMES

The Autumn edition of *The Patriot* had two articles recalling visits of members to the Palace of Westminster. As acknowledged, these visits occurred thanks to our Vice-President, Speaker John Bercow MP.

The articles by Philip Storr and Sam Hearn, Chairman, were of considerable interest and on one specific point both commented. That point: what the Palace was like in John Hampden's time. Philip mentioned the position of the door that Members used to pass through from Westminster Hall to go to St Stephen's Chapel, the Parliament House; now I imagine blocked in. Sam included a photograph of a model of the Palace before the conflagration in 1834, illustrating well the relationship between the Hall and St Stephens Chapel.

It occurred to me that should members of Society wish to see a picture of St Stephen's Chapel in those times, they might take from their bookshelves *John Hampden in the Short Parliament 1640* by Dr Paul Hooper. This Society publication has on its cover a most beautiful painting (*below*) of St Stephen's Chapel and also some part of Westminster Hall



By chance this book also informs on how Parliament was 'in those times', although here Paul was translating for us what was said in the Short Parliament rather than the layout of the buildings. Translating is perhaps not the best description. This work requires considerable skill of the author because, although understood at the time, written records were brief, with sentences cut short and unfamiliar words and analogies used. Primarily for our purposes it shows how Hampden had reached his ascendancy over Parliament; an ascendancy he was to take to the Long Parliament. Naturally there were many 'actors'; just two of them being Pym for Parliament and Herbert for the Court. There is no doubt however of the Actor/Director and that was Hampden. The author shows conclusively how Hampden refused to let the House become sidetracked and by his skill and authority kept it focused. Before any other matters were acted on Freedom of Speech in the House had to be first settled and no interference (am I permitted to say 'no nonsense'?) from the Lords or religious bodies was permitted. In this article we can do no better than to recall Dr Paul Hooper's summing up.

One of the features that becomes apparent on perusing these proceedings is Hampden's repeated attempts to keep the House concentrating on the main issues and not to be sidetracked into irrelevant ones. Perhaps it was because of this that when the Long Parliament met in the following November, as Clarendon later wrote 'the eyes of all men were fixed upon him as their *Patriae Pater*.'

Dr Paul Hooper is one of a number of distinguished historians we are fortunate to have in our Society. The Short Parliament only lasted 24 days, yet Paul's account of it is enthralling and I believe fits well into the theme of this article, *As It Was In Those Times*.

Since I am not a historian, rather someone interested in the history of Hampden's times, it is probably better if members reacquaint themselves with the work; in case my findings or words have been a little less precise than they should have been.

Bob Hammond

THE THAME CHARITIES FAIR



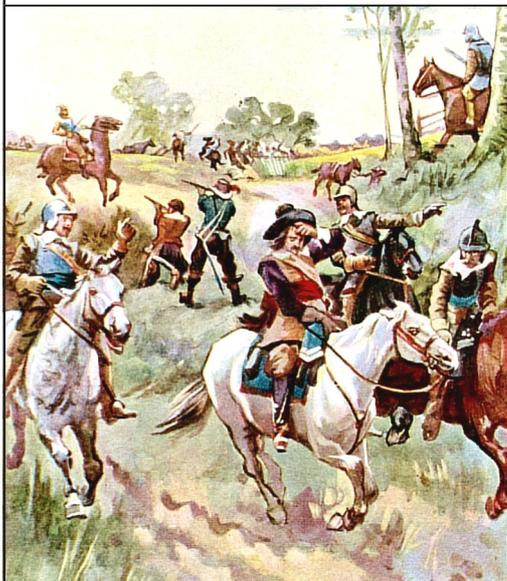
Sarah Barrington and Brian Cox attended the annual Thame Charities Fair on the 9th November 2013. Appropriately it was held on the upper floor of Thame Town Hall (*left*) with a view of the building to the left in which John Hampden spent the last week of his life.

As part of the exhibition we were able to display our publications for sale and to distribute the Society's leaflets and copies of *The Patriot*.

The small boys of the John Hampden School in Thame were most impressed with our new banner which features both the portrait of the Patriot and his statue in the centre of Aylesbury.

The fair was arranged by Beatrice Dobie who is also a member of the Society's committee.

IS CHALGROVE SIGNIFICANT?



A great deal has been made recently over the precise location of where John Hampden received his mortal wound. What field, where in that field, and what he was doing there in the first place.

My contention is that far too much emphasis is placed in the last few moments of his life and not enough on the life itself. Surely the purpose of this society is to celebrate and promote the life of John Hampden - not his death.

Before any standard was raised in Nottingham, Hampden demonstrated his principles both inside and outside Parliament. His sup-

port of Sir John Eliot, his stand on the levying of unconstitutional taxes, and relations in general with both friends and colleagues all go to show a personality that was both honourable and strongly principled. This is reflected in the fact that much of his early days in the House were devoted to committee work, serving on at least fifteen. In the rough and tumble of Parliamentary life in the early seventeenth century you would expect to make as many enemies as friends. It is clear, however, from the outpouring of grief following his early demise that despite his strong views he made very few enemies.

The great 'what ifs' is a favourite pastime amongst historians. Few would argue, however, that had he survived the Civil Wars Hampden would have been a major figure in seventeenth-century political history, no doubt overshadowing his cousin Oliver. Who knows what the political landscape of this country would have been like had Hampden been the Protector rather than his cousin.

I believe it is time to stop worrying in about which muddy field in Oxfordshire John Hampden received his mortal wound and instead concentrate on the inheritance he left this country.

Steve Barriff

- Our picture is of a print purporting to show the wounded Hampden leaving the battlefield of Chalgrove.

2014 SUBSCRIPTIONS

Annual subscriptions are now due. There are no changes in rates for 2014 which are currently:

Single Member £15, Joint Membership £20, Junior/Student £10

Cheques should be sent by post to The Membership Secretary, The John Hampden Society, 9 Mulberry Drive, Wheatley, Oxfordshire OX33 1UT.

Or if you prefer you can transfer the amount to our bank account at the Co-operative Bank, Skelmersdale, to the account of the John Hampden Society - Account **65557909** Sort code **08-92-99**.

Alternatively if you have a PayPal account you may like to submit your subscription via PayPal.

PLEASE DO NOT MAKE PAYMENTS TO OUR FORMER ACCOUNT WITH LLOYDS BANK SINCE THIS ACCOUNT HAS NOW BEEN CLOSED.



DIARY DATES

2014

Friday 21st March. A talk to Chinnor & District U3A at the Reading Room, High Street, Chinnor, Oxon, commencing at 2.30 p.m.

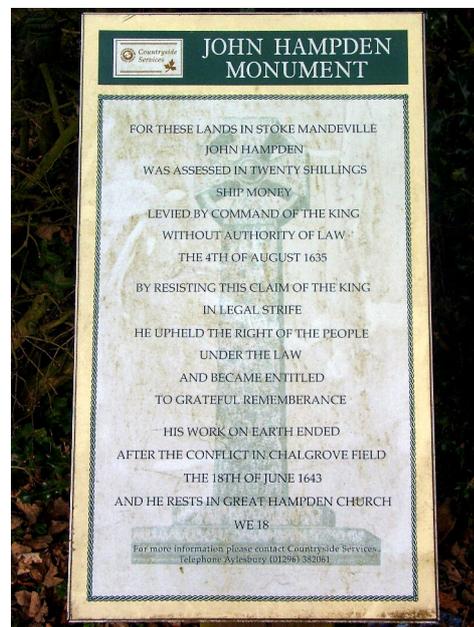
May. The Society's Annual General Meeting. *Date and venue to be announced*

Thursday 24th July. A talk to Chiltern U3A Local History Group in the Barn Hall at Amersham Community Centre, Chiltern Avenue, Amersham, Bucks HP6 5AH, commencing at 10 am.

Monday 8th September. A talk to Abingdon-on-Thames U3A at the Preston Road Community Centre, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 5NR, commencing at 2.15 pm.

For up-to-date information, see the Diary page on the Society's website at:

www.johnhampden.org/diary.htm



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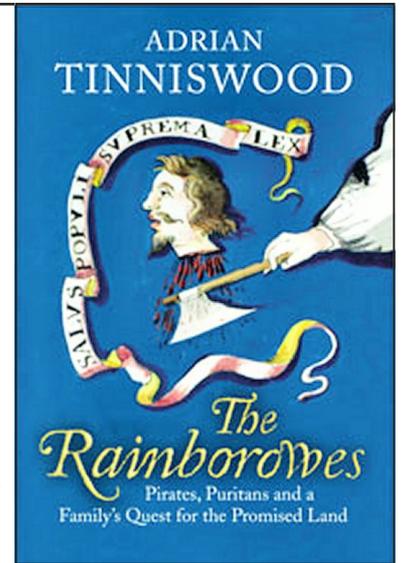
BOOK REVIEW

The Rainborowes

Pirates, Puritans and a Family's Quest for the Promised Land
by Adrian Tinniswood

ISBN 9780224091480

Published in hardback by Jonathan Cape, London - 338 pp



Adrian Tinniswood, a good friend of the John Hampden Society, does not disappoint. Once again he has found a good tale to tell and tells it well. This is a fascinating book that uncovers and explains the web of Rainborowe family relationships against a backdrop of exploration, trading and colonisation. Society members will be intrigued to read how William Rainborowe senior's successful expedition to Morocco was funded by the notorious Ship Money tax.

The story takes us from the mean streets of Wapping, to Massachusetts, the Levant and on to battlefields and sieges of the English Civil War. At the heart of the story is William Rainborowe (junior) the enigma who played such a vital role in the Civil War and our nation's history. His powerful advocacy of universal male suffrage at the Putney Debates has made him a legend.

Tinniswood has dug deep with his research and comes up with some real gems. I personally loved the unexpected links back to Southwold, in Suffolk. At points in the story, however, the documentary evidence is thin and one senses the author's frustration that crucial information lies just out of reach.

The question of whether or not Cromwell played some role in William Rainborowe's murder is not explored in any detail. The evidence is just not there and this book is thankfully not a follow up to the Civil War TV drama series *The Devil's Whore*. Ultimately what Rainborowe achieved in his life is far more fascinating than the manner of his death. His reputation has benefited, like Hampden's, from his being cut down in his prime or at least 'before his work was done'.

Sam Hearn

GRINNERS ARE WINNERS!



The Society's Patron Miles Buckinghamshire is a keen player of real tennis, and in a recent visit to Australia won the handicap doubles division B competition in partnership with Melbourne accountant Jonathan Sears. (pictured)

Miles was a member of the Hatfield Hedonists team who were narrowly beaten by a Melbourne team in the final of the Boomerang Cup. This is the world's largest real tennis tournament, held every two years over three weeks, and this year it attracted 32 teams with 133 players.

Miles could be following in the footsteps of his ancestor John Hampden, who may have played real tennis in Westminster or possibly at Oxford, as there is still a real tennis court at Merton College.

TEN THINGS YOU PROBABLY DID NOT KNOW ABOUT JOHN HAMPDEN

1. He had a Second World War bomber named after him.
2. He is mentioned in Mary Shelley's classic novel *Frankenstein*.
3. His youngest son Richard became Chancellor of the Exchequer in the reign of William and Mary.
4. His second wife was related to Queen Anne Boleyn.
5. The Scots have very kindly named their national football stadium after him.
6. He had rights to land in Connecticut and is said to have considered emigrating.
7. He was the match maker for his younger cousin Oliver Cromwell, introducing him to his future wife.
8. One of his sons-in-law, Colonel Robert Hammond (Governor of the Isle of Wight) became Charles I's jailer.
9. It was at a Hampden Club meeting in 1817 that the first demand was made for universal male suffrage in Britain.
10. For part of the battle of Edgehill Captain Oliver Cromwell was under the command of Colonel John Hampden.

• This list was published in 2002 by *The Bucks Free Press*, whose readers had voted Hampden as 'Buckinghamshire's Greatest Son'.

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