



THE PATRIOT



Newsletter of the John Hampden Society

No. 41 - Winter 2004/5

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

TRIUMPH AT THAME!

First joint Day School an outstanding success

Where to begin? Looking back through my files I find that the first reference to a joint event was in a letter from Pat Barnes, the Secretary of the Cromwell Association, dated July 2003 (writes Hon. Treasurer Sam Hearn).

Many months later and after seemingly countless phone calls, emails, letters and meetings the day finally dawned when more than seventy people descended upon the Spread Eagle Hotel in Thame (right) for a very special event - the first joint Day School organised by The John Hampden Society and The Cromwell Association.

As I entered the function rooms one of the day's sponsors, Paul Meekins, was already setting up his enormous mobile book shop. Maurice Kirtland had also arrived early and was fixing the Hampden banner to the front of the building.

I had just laid out the reception desk when the first of the participants began to arrive; old faces, new faces, people whose voices I recognised only from phone conversations and others who until now had just been names at the bottom of e-mail messages.

In no time at all the function room was full and buzzing with anticipation. We were ready to roll. Our Chairman for the morning, Miles Buckinghamshire, welcomed us all to 'Patriot and Protector'. The lights were dimmed for the slide-show with which Julian Hunt introduced us to the contents of *The Civil War in Buckinghamshire Exhibition*.

His enthusiasm for the exhibition was infectious. Later in the day he and Ian Beckett would be attending the official opening

of the exhibition by Lord Carrington at the Museum in Aylesbury.



Julian's presentation set the scene for Professor Ian Beckett who delivered a comprehensive but rapid review of the main aspects of the Civil War in Bucks. It was an impressive performance, especially from someone who claimed not to be an expert on the seventeenth century!

The exhibition catalogue contains the

text of Ian's speech and can be purchased from the Society. It was fascinating to hear how the Old County elite had survived the social disruption of the Civil War and had even staged a revival under the Protectorate.

The serious business of the day resumed, following a break for refreshments, with Roy Bailey's reflections on John Hampden's rise from obscurity - a title with which he tended to disagree.

Roy raised many interesting issues whilst simultaneously setting out the basic details of Hampden's early life and political career. He pointed out that even before Hampden had entered Parliament he was by no means obscure.

He came from a wealthy land owning family with a long tradition of public service at both local and national levels. Roy compared Hampden's position with that of his cousin Oliver Cromwell who though he came from a more humble background still considered himself, "... by birth a gentleman, living neither in any considerable height, nor yet in obscurity."

Roy speculated on Hampden's possible subsequent career had it not ended tragically in 1643, and greatly amused the audience by informing them that whenever his wife Annabel is asked, "Who was John Hampden", she replies, "If he had lived, he would have been Oliver Cromwell!"

During the lunch break those that could tear themselves away from the Spread Eagle's magnificent buffet and tempting desserts descended upon Paul Meekins' large stock of historical literature, and the bookstall and display stand of the John Hampden Society.



Arriving delegates take coffee and browse Paul Meekins' collection of historical books

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Valerie Horne (*above*) and Liz Morris manned the bookstall and signed up at least one new member. Everywhere old friendships were being renewed and new acquaintanceships were being made.

Dr Peter Gaunt, of the Cromwell Association, assumed the Chairmanship for the afternoon session. Much was expected of Professor Morrill and he did not disappoint. He not only reviewed and summarised the known connections between the Patriot and the Protector but also flushed out a whole covey of possible new lines of enquiry and research.

Professor Morrill drew particular attention to the family networking role of Joan Barrington, sister to both Hampden's mother and Cromwell's father. He speculated also on the likely links between Hampden and Cromwell that might be deduced from Cromwell's friendship with the second wife of Oliver St John, Hampden's counsel during the Ship Money trial.

The Professor also believed that there was probably an element of truth behind the tradition that the two cousins had planned to go to America together. He accepted that some of the dates suggested for this planned emigration were implausible.

In answering questions at the end of his session Professor Morrill added fuel to the debate that had begun in the morning about whether, if Hampden had lived, he would have had 'the bottle' to execute the King. The Professor added a further twist to the day's counter-factual musings. How, he asked would history have been changed if not only had Hampden survived the first Civil War but Cromwell had not? It was, as he reminded us, a simple matter only of two bullets and three inches.

Professor Blair Worden closed the day by tackling the esoteric but fascinating topic of the posthumous reputations of the Patriot and the Protector. He limited his review to the period up to 1900. In his

judgement the beginning of the twentieth century marked the end the era when the majority of educated people looked to the past to illuminate the present and to provide a source of guidance. In his opinion most of us today believe that the past is a foreign country and they do things differently there.

For many members of the Society it was a revelation to hear how Hampden's reputation grew in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. His name became linked in political toasts with that of the Whig martyr, Algernon Sidney. Later still revolutionary American colonists saw in the Patriot a fellow rebel, high principled, courageous and an advocate of no taxation without representation.

Leaders of the Romantic movement, such as Shelley, respected Hampden's integrity and the tragic sacrifice that he made in the cause of Liberty. Much more was said about Hampden and the revival of Cromwell's reputation in the nineteenth century, particularly the huge impact of the work of historian Thomas Carlyle.

Peter Gaunt brought the meeting to a close at the allotted time. As the room emptied the staff of the Spread Eagle set about preparing the room for an evening function. Within minutes a theatre style lecture hall was transformed into the venue for an early Christmas party. It had been a memorable day for the Society and there was much to be reflected upon.

The Cromwell Association will publish the full text of the speeches in a single volume next summer and this will be made available to the members of both organisations. It will also be posted on our website.

The catalogue which accompanies the *Buckinghamshire in the Civil War* exhibition can be purchased from the Society's Treasurer or at the County Museum, Aylesbury.

SUNDAY, BUSY SUNDAY

Following the rather sedentary Saturday of the Day School, the Sunday was a day of more physical activity.

In the morning Derek Lester and Gill Blackshaw led an intrepid party of 25 members of both societies across the Chalgrove Battlefield. It was a chillingly cold day but fortunately the rain held off until the very end of the walk. Great powers of imagination were required to imagine the scene on a hot summer's day in June 1643!

Blair Worden, one of the speakers from the Day School, entered into the spirit of the battle reconstruction and took the part of Prince Rupert. He leapt the hedge in magnificent style riding an imaginary horse and was reportedly heard shouting, "This insolence cannot be borne!"

Liz Morris, the Society's membership secretary, found herself sinking into the mud of a boggy field. Fortunately two strong men were at hand to pull her free. The Society is extremely grateful, as good membership secretaries are hard to find.

As is traditional the walk finished in the warmth of the Red Lion at Chalgrove. Special thanks should be extended to Derek Lester who insisted on leading the Walk despite the fact that he was recovering from eye surgery and sporting a large eye patch.

In the afternoon Julian Hunt led two guided tours of the *Buckinghamshire in the Civil War* exhibition at the County Museum in Aylesbury. The exhibition was several years in the planning and is a real triumph.

Julian was able to share with us several of the behind the scenes stories of how the individual items were obtained from their owners for this temporary exhibition. Much Hampden memorabilia is on display including the Hampden Jewel, the Robert Walker portrait, Elizabeth Hampden's gloves, and the Plaque recently purchased by the Society.

As well as the two chairmen and the five speakers already mentioned, grateful thanks for all their hard work must go to the members of the Joint Committee: Derek Lester, Mike Portsmouth, and Sam Hearn (JHS); David Smith, John Hunt and Pat Barnes (CA); and (on the day) John Hampden Society members Maurice Kirtland, Valerie Horne, Liz Morris and Sarah Barrington.

ARTEFACTS OF HAMPDEN

It is interesting that *The Civil War in Buckinghamshire* exhibition at the County Museum in Aylesbury contains not only the Port Eliot portrait of John Hampden, but also the Hampden Jewel.

The portrait, painted by Robert Walker and said to have been given to Sir John Eliot's elder son by Hampden's son Richard, will be familiar to members. Thanks to the generosity of the Earl of St. Germans, Sir John's descendant, the Society has been able to use reproductions of it extensively on letterheads, leaflets, postcards, the website, etc. Some of us were privileged to view it at Port Eliot following the visit to Grampound in 2001.

The Hampden Jewel, on the other hand, is much less well known, and is one of the few



other hand, is much less well known, and is one of the few pieces of memorabilia associated with the Patriot. These include locks of hair in Carisbrooke Castle on the Isle of Wight, and at Lord Williams's School in Thame, both of which were taken from the body exhumed by Lord Nugent in 1828. Most familiar of these various relics will be this small oak chest owned by one of our Buckinghamshire members.

This was featured in issue no. 8 of this newsletter in 1994, but to recap, it is about 10 inches high and 8 inches square, and has 'John Hampden 1638' carved on the top. It was given to the present owner's father by

the 8th Earl of Buckinghamshire ('Bertie Bucks'). There is a legend that it was actually made by Hampden himself; with no Parliament sitting and the final verdict on the Ship Money Trial not being given until June 1638, it is not impossible that the Patriot amused himself by making this delightful piece of furniture.

Another alleged example of John Hampden's carpentry skills is this wooden candlestick. I was told about this by a resident of Great Hampden in 1966, who wrote, "We went to see it yesterday - it's very small, barely 6" high. V. elaborate but neatly done. It was given to the mother of the 2 old ladies who now own it at a School Treat at Hampden House some 90 years ago by Lady Vere Cameron, sister of the then Ld. Bucks, and stated to be carved by John Hampden. Personally I do not place a great deal in this story beyond perhaps a tradition that he did a certain amount of carving in his spare time."



It was arranged that I would also go and see the candlestick, which reposed with its owners in a village north of Aylesbury. The photo which I took at the time has recently come to light in a collection of old negatives. It would be interesting to know what has become of the candlestick.

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The Hampden Jewel, on the other hand, is still very much around. I first came across mention of it years ago in Lord Nugent's 1832 biography of Hampden. A footnote on page 438 of volume 2 states, 'In the Ashmole (sic) Museum is a locket of plain cornelian which, it was said, was worn upon his (Hampden's) breast. On the silver rim in which the stone is set these words are inscribed:

'Against my king I never fight,
'But for my king, and country's right.'

Back in 2000 I spent a good deal of time in correspondence with the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford in an effort to get to see this interesting piece of jewellery. Dr Arthur MacGregor, Head of the Department of Antiquities, confessed that he had never heard of the Jewel, but that the Museum had a spur said to have been taken from Hampden's boot after the Battle of Chalgrove. I haven't followed that up yet.



The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.

It transpired that Nugent was wrong, and that the Hampden Jewel had been in the Bodleian Library in Oxford since 1795, when it was among four cabinets of English coins presented to the Library by Thomas Knight Esq. of Godmersham, Kent. There is no record of how Mr Knight came by the Jewel.

In July 2001 Dr Bruce Barker-Benfield, of the Department of Special Collections and Western Manuscripts, allowed me to inspect this beautiful piece of memorabilia.

I'm glad to say that they look after it very carefully; it was kept wrapped in tissue and I had to wear white cotton gloves to handle it. You can imagine how thrilled I was to touch something so intimately connected to the Patriot.

As our picture shows, the stone is a reddish-orange cornelian set in a filigree silver mounting on which the words quoted by Nugent are engraved. It has been said that those who accused Hampden of subtlety and deviousness pointed out that the meaning of the words varied depending on the interpretation placed upon the word 'but'.

The Bodleian arranged for the Society to purchase 3 colour transparencies of the Jewel; gave us permission to reproduce it in *'The Patriot'*, on the website, and in our exhibition; and kindly waived all reproduction fees. The only downside of my visit was to learn that 2 years earlier the Jewel had been on public display in an exhibition of the Bodleian's Civil War artefacts - and we had known nothing about it! At least we shall have a chance to see it in Aylesbury until the end of February.

Roy Bailey



DIARY DATES

2005

April (date to be advised) The Society's Annual General Meeting.

Saturday 18th June. The Society's Annual Dinner at The Spread Eagle Hotel, Thame.

All meetings commence at 8 pm, unless otherwise stated.

For up-to-date information, see the Diary page on the Society's website at:
www.johnhampden.org/diary.htm



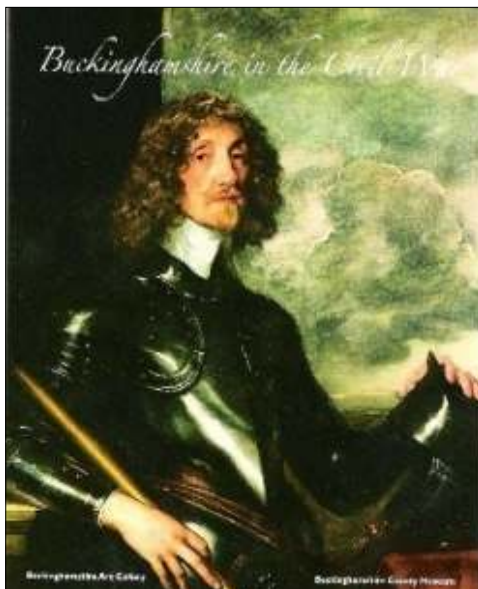
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BUCKS IN THE CIVIL WAR EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

This catalogue is 62 pages long and contains 87 illustrations, most of which are in colour including the famous portrait of John Hampden by Robert Walker. It was produced to accompany the exhibition that runs at the County Museum in Aylesbury until 27th February 2005.

The text includes not only well researched captions accompanying the pictures but also a twelve-page essay by Society Vice-President Professor Ian Beckett and thumbnail biographies of the painters whose work is represented in the exhibition.

Forget E-Bay - this is your chance to add several Van Dykes to your collection. We are able to offer the catalogue at the amazing price of £6.00 per copy including postage and packing (£7.00 to overseas purchasers). Don't delay - order your copy now!

Contact: The Hon. Treasurer at 134 Park Road, Chiswick, W4 3HP or treasurer@johnhampden.org.