



# THE PATRIOT

Newsletter of the John Hampden Society

No. 56 - Autumn 2008



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

## CHALGROVE - BATTLE OR SKIRMISH?

Was Chalgrove just a skirmish as Brigadier Peter Young and many other distinguished historians would have us believe? The Chalgrove Walk gave us the opportunity to present our findings to a knowledgeable peer group. We met close to where Prince Rupert's narrator described our location in the 'Late Beating Up' and read from the text, *'that a body of the Rebels were discovered in the village hard upon the left hand of us. Presently whereupon some half score of their Scouts were discovered upon the sides of the Becon - hill, beyond the Village'..... 'the Rebels Horse fell upon their rear; skirmishing lightly with them for a while'*. Now the inexactitudes written in the Earl of Essex's letter to Parliament (19<sup>th</sup> June 1643) were exposed for all to extract the facts while comparing the topography to the text. Everyone agreed that Aston Rowant was the site of the first skirmish, which Essex deliberately confused with the battle at Chalgrove.

Following the 'Highway to Weston', a track shown on a 17<sup>th</sup> century map, we *'kept still upon the rear for almost five*

*miles.'* We crossed a footpath where John Hampden and Sir Samuel Luke most likely joined those who had fought earlier. On we strode in the



Intrepid explorers enjoying the sunshine whilst studying the lay-out of the Battlefield at Chalgrove

tracks of the Royalists to Golder Manor picking out other events and geography from the 17<sup>th</sup> century narration.

At Golder more walkers joined the fray. This intrepid group set off, beating down stinging nettles and jumping brooks to get to a *'Chalgrove cornfield'* for us to show where the protagonists faced each other across a 'Great Hedge'. Some historians have the battle here, but no, *'the Prince with his Horse made show of a Retreat'*, to a field near Warpsgrove House where he jumped a hedge to face his enemy

and look John Hampden in the eye.

That dip in the ground is where Warpsgrove House stood and that hedge is the Great Hedge all accurately depicted in a 1612 map, we related. This area is also described in remarkable detail in the 'Late beating Up'. We just had time to explain the tactics and manoeuvres of the combatants and which part of the hedge it was that Rupert jumped before re-grouping at Hampden's Monument to

take questions. We also gave a brief explanation of the Monument's significance, before retiring to the 'Red Lion' for a well earned pint.

The Battlefield Trust, who have been tasked by English Heritage to maintain our battlefield heritage, have taken up our labour of love to get the Battle of Chalgrove correctly and officially described. We have also been nominated by them to be the Custodians of the Chalgrove Battlefield. It was such a pleasant and productive Sunday morning's walk.

**Derek & Gill Lester**

# A Glorious and Happy VICTORY

obtained by the volluntiers of Buckingham, Bedford, Hartford, Cambridge, Huntington, and Northamptonshire, being almost seven thousand able souldiers against the Lord Wentworth, sonne to the Earle of Strafford, with 8000 horse and foot nere Alesbury and Wickham in Buckinghamshire, December 6, 1642

Declaring the manner of the battaile, which lasted five houres, and the number that was slain on both sides, being the greatest victory that hath bene obtained since the beginning of these vvares

December 7. 1642

(Printed for I.H. and J. Wright, December 8, 1642)

Official records have been somewhat secretive as to the part High Wycombe played in the Civil War. The following two reports have come to my knowledge, both containing basically the same information, and further reports will be included in the winter edition of *The Patriot*. If you can throw any further light on the happenings at High Wycombe, please share your knowledge in order that a fuller picture of events can be built up.

## Report 1: (origin unknown)

“Due to Hampden’s strong opposition to the King, the Chilterns have been called “The Cradle of the Civil War” and it is likely that, because of its strong Puritan element, Wycombe became a Parliamentary base. The country roughly divided itself into 3 sections. The west supported the Royalists and the east supported the Parliamentarians, with the area in between tending to host the major battles.

Hampden was an able man who played a major part prior to and at the start of the war, both as politician and soldier, in contrast to Oliver Cromwell, whose progress was due to his military capabilities. Had Hampden lived he would have been a powerful force in the revolution and its aftermath. As it was, at the beginning of the Civil War he served on the Committee of Public Safety and raised his own regiment of infantry locally.

Early in the war, Charles had gone to Nottingham and intended to march south and seize London. Edgehill was indecisive and did not stop his progress, but when he reached Brentford the Parliamentarians stopped him and he was forced to set up his HQ in Oxford. By fleeing London in the first place, he left the city to the Parliamentarians. The mechanism for government was still intact and there was a store of munitions in the Tower of London. London was some ten times the size of any other city and correspondingly wealthy.

Wycombe being situated in a narrow valley, effectively blocked Charles’ direct route back to London and it was in his interest to capture the town. As early as December 1642 there was a raid on the town by Lord Wentworth, Earl of Strafford. He descended upon Wycombe, having secured two posts on the hills, one near Penn Woods and the other on Wycombe Heath. Entering the town by the Rye he was stopped by the local garrison and, after several hours fighting, Wentworth retired wounded. The Royalists lost ‘near nine hundred men’ and the garrison about three hundred.

Hampden headed off another raid on Wycombe in 1643, said to have been organized by Prince Rupert, the Kings nephew. Later that year Hampden was in the Parliamentary army sent to stop the Royalists capturing the town. The Royalists had come from the King’s stronghold at Oxford and the two armies met on the Oxon-Bucks border near the village of Chalgrove, where Hampden was mortally wounded and died some days later in Thame”.

## Report 2: (“Memorials of John Hampden” by Lord Nugent, 1880).

“A strong body of horse, near five thousand, with artillery, proceeded, under the command of the young Lord Wentworth, Lord Strafford’s son, by the way of Thame, to menace Aylesbury and Wycombe. Wentworth made a promising attempt. Finding Aylesbury well fortified to the northward and westward by strong batteries, and to the east by a redoubt on the rising ground towards Bierton, and not wishing to waste time in a siege, he suddenly left it, moving rapidly by the lanes across the Chilterns, and coming down through the woodlands upon Wycombe. There he took post on the two high hills towards the side of Wycombe Heath and the Penn Woods. To such as know the appearance of Wycombe from either of those heights it would seem that the assailants would not have required artillery, nay, hardly more than the firearms of the dragoons, to render it untenable. But Lord Wentworth “sounded his trumpets and made a glorious show,” and then, descending into the valley, endeavoured to take the town from the side of the Rye. Here he was taken in flank by about four thousand pike-men, volunteers raised in the neighbourhood, and opposed in front by the small garrison of regular troops commanded by Captain Hayes, who were supported by some guns. After several hours fighting, Lord Wentworth retired, himself wounded, having lost near nine hundred of his men, and with no other success than the having slain about three hundred of the Parliamentarians”.



Anthea Coles

**We have pleasure in announcing that Viscount Saye & Sele and Dr Paul Hooper have both very kindly agreed to become Vice Presidents of the John Hampden Society.**

## 2009

At a recent meeting of the Executive Committee, several ideas were discussed for the coming year. Firstly, the AGM (date to be announced, but normally held during April), will follow a different format to previous years. Following the meeting, there will be an interactive discussion, open to all members, on how to attract new members to the Society. Since it's inception in 1991, membership has remained fairly constant, increasing some years and dropping slightly in others. Increased membership would enable the Executive Committee to organise more events, seminars and research projects, meaning that we would all feel the benefit.

If you have any ideas on how this would best be achieved and how you would like to see the Society move forward, please ensure that you attend this meeting and put your ideas forward. Alternatively, if you are unable to attend, please send any ideas/suggestions to a Committee member, either by post or e-mail, for discussion at the meeting.

Refreshments will be available and it is hoped that, following the formalities, it will be possible to visit the old Lord Williams School, now offices, which was attended by John Hampden. This is very close to the proposed venue for the AGM, The Barns Centre, Thame.



The old Lord Williams' School

It would be appreciated if you would indicate whether you would prefer the AGM to be held on a Saturday or a Sunday.

Plans are under way for a long overdue return visit to Broughton Castle (*see right*), the home of Lord Saye & Sele.

This beautiful castle has featured in films, including Shakespeare in Love, The Madness of King George and The Scarlet Pimpernel. It was also the location for the 1975 Morecambe & Wise Christmas Show. The Castle has close connections with John Hampden. A visit to Broughton makes a lovely day out.



Also on the agenda is a visit to Magdalen College, Oxford, where John Hampden was educated. It is hoped that it will be possible to arrange a tour of the College and a talk by an archivist, to be followed by a meal at a local hostelry.

Negotiations are currently taking place to arrange a Church Service at the Church of St. Mary Magdalene, Great Hampden. This event will include readings, psalms and hymns pertinent to John Hampden, and it is hoped that it will be possible to arrange for refreshments to be served after the service.

The deadline for receipt of articles for inclusion in *The Patriot* is the 20th of January, April, July and October. Please send items, either by post or e-mail to the address shown on the adjacent panel. Photographs will be scanned and returned and all items are published at the discretion of the Editor.



## DIARY DATES

### 2008

#### Sunday 16 November

A walk around the battlefields of Brentford and Turnham Green, organised by [The Battlefields Trust](#). Meet at 11 am at Brentford Magistrates Court and 2 pm at Turnham Green Underground Station.

For further information, contact the Society's [Vice-Chairman](#) on 020 3166 6607.

### 2009

#### Wednesday 13 May

An illustrated talk about John Hampden to Old Beaconsfield Probus Club at The Fitzwilliam Centre, Windsor End, Beaconsfield Old Town, Bucks, commencing at 10.30 am.

#### Wednesday 9 September

An illustrated talk about John Hampden to Great Kingshill Ladies Club at the Village Hall, Great Kingshill, High Wycombe, Bucks. (*Time to be advised.*)

*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](http://www.johnhampden.org/diary.htm)



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## Punching below their weight .....(Part 2)



In part one of this article we explored the suggestion made by Professor John Morrell that in the fifty or sixty years before the birth of the Patriot the Hampden family had been “punching below its weight” in terms of its influence on national politics. There is certainly considerable evidence that several members of the Hampden family were directly involved in the Wars of the Roses and served the Tudor dynasty at a senior level.

Part two of the article focuses on fates of the seven men from Buckinghamshire that we can be fairly certain were present at the Battle of Bosworth in 1485 where Henry Tudor became Henry VII. One of these seven, Sir Edmund Hampden, John Hampden The Patriot’s great (x 3) grandfather, we have already met in part one. Despite initially serving Richard III he was involved in an unsuccessful rebellion and fled to Henry Tudor’s Court in exile. He returned with Henry in 1485 and was subsequently rewarded by the new King for his “service done in France and England”.

From the 12<sup>th</sup> Century the Crown had appointed an escheator in each county to enquire into the estates of dead land owners to ascertain if the King had any rights over the lands that they had held. Thirteen writs of *diem clausit extremum*, relating to male deaths, were sent to the Buckinghamshire escheator in the first year of Henry VII’s reign. Five of these deaths were recorded as having occurred on 22<sup>nd</sup> August, the day of the Battle of Bosworth

The dead men were Thomas Hampden of Kimble, Thomas Straunge, John Irwardby (whose mother was a Hampden), Thomas Lynde and John Whittingham. The first two were commissioners of array and would have been instructed by the King (Richard III) to muster troops for him in Bucks.

A sixth man, Thomas Hampden of Hampden, Sir Edmund Hampden’s uncle, is recorded as having died and on the 21<sup>st</sup> August. This convenient date of death may simply have been a legal device to prevent the new King from attainting his estate. In fact Henry VII was remarkably restrained and only twenty eight men were attainted after Bosworth. Few of these were drawn from the ranks of the lesser gentry.

We know that Sir Edmund Hampden fought for Henry Tudor but we cannot be certain about the other six men. An account by the Tudor historian Polydore Vergil states that a distant relative of the Hampden’s, William Hungerford, a household knight, changed sides whilst on route. He left Sir Robert Brakenbury a little beyond Stony Stratford and “went away to therle Henry”. Others also changed sides and many simply “forbare to fyght who came to the field with Kinge Richard”.

However we know that six men of Buckinghamshire, including two Thomas Hampdens, did not return from Bosworth Field. As mentioned in part one there is a great deal more information about these men in the paper by Lesley Boatwright that was published in 2003 in *The Ricardian* – The Journal of the Richard III Society. Appendix II of the article contains an interesting extract from the Hampden family tree. From this we learn amongst other things that Sir Edmund Hampden’s son William married Audrey the grand daughter of Thomas Hampden of Kimble.

**Sam Hearn**

### THE BATTLES OF BRENTFORD AND TURNHAM GREEN, NOVEMBER 1642

**Battlefield Walks led by Stephen Porter and Simon Marsh of the Battlefields Trust - Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> November 2008**

The Brentford walk starts at Brentford Magistrates Court (not the Crown Court) at 11am. The Turnham Green walk begins at Chiswick Park tube station at 2pm. It is entirely up to you whether or not you do both walks. The walks include no hills or muddy paths and hiking boots should not be necessary.

This is a wonderful opportunity to follow in the footsteps of the Patriot in the company of two very knowledgeable and experienced guides. You will also be able to confirm whether or not the six battlefield information boards installed with assistance of the Society have remained intact and free of graffiti.

There is no charge for the walks but donations to the Battlefields Trust will be gratefully accepted at the end of each walk. If you want like any more information then please contact Sam Hearn on 020 8995 2666.



Monument commemorating the Battle of Brentford

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