



# THE PATRIOT

Newsletter of the John Hampden Society

No. 90 - Summer 2019



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

## A MILITARY HISTORIAN'S CIVIL WAR



The talk on this subject by Professor Ian Beckett, delivered at the County Museum in Aylesbury on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> July, was full of interest and information.

Professor Beckett (*left*) who is a professional historian, a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society and a Vice-President of the John Hampden Society, spoke of how the writing of military history, especially that of the Civil War, has altered over the years.

Originally such writing was the preserve of retired military professionals who believed that it taught practical lessons, but then this gave way to the 'new military history' in which war was seen as a link with society to produce social change. It was even seen as necessary to the formation of the modern nation state.

Professor Beckett stated that in the military historiography of the Civil War pride of place must go to *The History of the Great Rebellion and Civil Wars in England* by Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, but he went on to list such well-known authors as S.R. Gardiner, Sir Charles Firth, Dame Veronica Wedgwood, Brigadier Peter Young and (naturally) the Society's President and Hampden biographer Professor John Adair. John Hampden's other biographer, Lord Nugent, came in for severe criticism; Professor Beckett considered that the noble Lord had 'muddled the waters' with his supposed exhumation of Hampden's body and the erection of the Chalgrove monument in the wrong place and 'had form in this regard'!

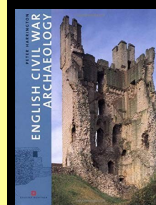


Chalgrove

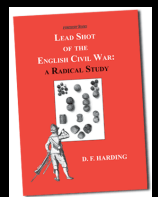
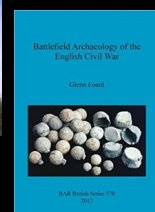


(Above): Hampden (attributed to Robert Walker)  
(Middle): George, Lord Nugent (1789-1850), by Sir Thomas Lawrence  
(Right): The Chalgrove Monument, 1843

The ways in which the changing attitudes to the Civil War, from the study of it through the prism of the county communities through the 'Noble Revolt' of John Adamson to the obsession of Marxists such as Christopher Hill who saw it as a class struggle, were skilfully detailed, with mention of an impressive list of publications. Even books on the archaeology of the Civil War were included.



### Archaeology



The talk was illustrated by some interesting photographs (*above*), and was not lacking in amusing anecdotes. Despite the pre-publicity the event was not as well attended as we had hoped. However, there were some new faces in the audience, including a couple who had heard some of us talking in *The King's Head* at lunchtime - proving that all publicity is good publicity!

**Roy Bailey**

• The text of Professor Beckett's talk, together with all the illustrations, is available as a pdf file in the Archive section of the Society's website. Go to <http://www.johnhampden.org/a-military-historians-civil-war/>

# DID JOHN HAMPDEN GO TO THE THEATRE?

by  
**Bruce Alexander**



We know that Puritans were famously agin the Theatre. To them it was a new vicious force symptomatic of evil times. Theatre meant bear-baiting, sword-fighting, foul language and immorality - on and off the stage.

It attracted huge crowds. You may have been to Shakespeare's Globe on London's South Bank. Nowadays, Health & Safety allows 2,000 in. Back then, 3,000 or more could hear profanities, see licentiousness, witness lewdness and imperil themselves with the plague. On a sunny afternoon London's total theatre capacity was, after 1610, about 10,000 - 5% of the population. But shouldn't right-minded folk be at work? Not mixing with pick-pockets, roisterers, prostitutes, con-men, etc?

Actors didn't help matters. They fought each other, sued each other and would do any prideful thing to promote themselves. Their profession was deeply suspect. Weren't actors paid to *lie*? They, too, were spreading their evil. The lead-player of the Queen's Men, William Knell, while on tour was killed by a fellow actor in Thame in 1587, run through with a sword - in self-defence, indeed the Queen herself pardoned the murderer. Ben Jonson, later a favourite playwright of King James, killed a fellow actor and 'got off' by pleading Benefit of Clergy, merely having his thumb branded with 'M' for Murderer for his sins.

Puritans had ample excuse for regarding the theatre as the Devil's work. "...if we flock to Theatres to gaze upon plays, we walk in the Counsel of the ungodly...plays are the proceedings and practices of Gentiles in their Idolatry" wrote Stephen Gosson in 1582.

John Hampden's grandparents (on his father's side) were avowedly Calvinist, judging by their wills. His mother was aunt to Oliver Cromwell and *her* step-mother died as a result of witchcraft; the perpetrators (a family of three) were executed for their falsity. Such was the young Hampden's family-culture. Anthony Wood, who was at school in Thame over 40 years after Hampden, refers to its Master in Hampden's time as "obliged to the... Ingoldsbys and Hampdens in Buckinghamshire, and other puritanical and factious families". After Thame, Hampden went to Magdalen College, Oxford dubbed in 1610 as 'the very nursery of Puritans'

So, did Hampden, a student at the Inner Temple from 1613, actually go to the theatre?

One of the first things to say is that we, living in polarised times, are maybe too eager to polarise opinion of the early 17th C. 'Extreme' Protestantism hadn't the populist support it later achieved. Arguably this future development was due to the tin-ear of Royalism as much as the stridency of religious radicalism. While Hampden was at Magdalen the hopes of 'pure' Christianity were pinned on Prince Henry and, after his untimely death, on Princess Elizabeth and her new anti-Catholic husband, Frederick of the Palatine. Certainly Hampden with his life-long colleague Arthur Goodwin wrote published verses eulogising both.

London's theatres represented a kaleidoscope. You could, of course, visit sybaritic pleasures, but the extraordinary flowering of the Globe and Blackfriars Theatres under the aegis of, yes, 'The *King's Men*' was a huge draw too. The evolution of Shakespeare's subtle art-form, capable of examining the human condition in profound language (stemming from Marlow's 'mighty line' and Lyly's quick wit) had combined with the fantastical new skill of 'personation'. Actors like Richard Burbage created hypnotic emotional reality before contemporary intellectuals. Schoolmasters urged pupils to visit theatres to see Rhetoric at its best made manifest. Students of the Inns of Court, whose very metier revolved round language, flocked there. Shakespeare's company too gained the reputation as an oasis of consensual living and right-thinking. They stood out from other players; lending each other money, making each other godparents to their children, mentioning each other in their wills. It'd be an un-curious young man who shunned all this.

But matters were to coarsen. Repertoires came to rely on regurgitating old plays, acting apparently became overblown, theatre itself opted for sensation (why, they even tried to put women on the stage in 1629!) and the theatre's Court protectors, especially Queen Henrietta Maria, hardened their hearts against free-thinking satire, engaging their chums to write plays.

By the 1642 Parliament, after it gained control of London following Charles' vainglorious attempt to arrest The Five Members, quickly banned plays. But even then this wasn't just for immorality, but more the unsuitability of entertainment in times of civil strife.

Did Hampden go to the theatre in 1613? It seems to me pretty probable.

\* \* \*

(Editor's note: This article by Bruce is based on the talk he gave at this year's Annual General Meeting.)



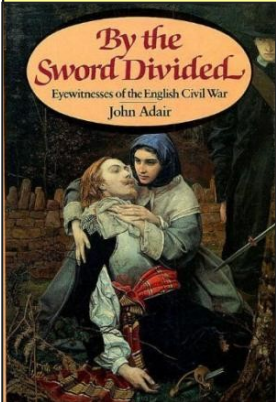
## BOOK REVIEW

### By The Sword Divided - Eyewitness Accounts of the English Civil War

by  
John Adair

Publisher: Century Publishing Published: 1983

Format: Hardback Pages: 240 ISBN: 0-7126-0241-0



This is not a new publication; Professor Adair wrote it just 11 years after his splendid 1972 biography of John Hampden, but *By The Sword Divided* should be on the bookshelf of every student of the Wars of the Three Kingdoms.

'All were Englishmen', wrote Bulstrode Whitelock, and although this work rarely strays north of the Cheviots or west of the Bristol Channel, it contains the authentic voices of Englishmen and women caught up in perhaps the nation's greatest tragedy, when the sword divided brother from brother and father from son.

The letters and accounts of more than fifty participants are skilfully arranged and placed in context by Professor Adair's sympathetic prose. There are heartbreaking letters from wives to loved ones and soldiers to their families; accounts of battles, sieges and marches; and details of neighbourly disagreements - some of them running to many pages.

*By The Sword Divided* contains many excellent photographs, both colour and monochrome, including one of John Hampden's spur. The Society holds a copy of this book in its library, and although it is long out of print, second-hand copies can be found online in both hardcover and paperback.

*Roy Bailey*

## DIARY DATES

### 2019

**Monday 14<sup>th</sup> October** A talk by Sam Hearn about Sybil Penn to Croxley Green U3A at the Royal British Legion hall, 161 Watford Road, Croxley Green WD3 3ED, commencing at 2.30 pm. Doors open at 2 pm.

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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### MEMBERSHIP

The annual membership subscription to the Society, payable on 1<sup>st</sup> January each year, is:

Single members	-	£15.00
Joint members	-	£20.00
Junior/students	-	£10.00

This newsletter is distributed free to members

## HISTORY IS BUNK

(Henry Ford - 1921)

In the second week of July this year, BBC TV broadcast a programme in three parts, each 1 hour long, entitled *Charles I - Downfall of a King*, presented by writer Lisa Hilton.

This purported to show that the 50 days between the King's return from Scotland and his flight to Hampton Court on 10<sup>th</sup> January 1642 was a power struggle between him and John Pym, with almost no assistance from anyone else. It met with a mixed reception from JHS members and other interested parties, with most rejecting it as serious history.

One member found that the limited period covered heightened the drama and made it clearer what the two protagonists were trying to achieve tactically, leaving him better informed.

Most, however, found it very disappointing, with another member deciding that it



was one of those programmes that was more about the presenter than the subject, and that it was slow, disjointed and at times repetitive.

The re-enactments, which the previews praised, were some of the poorest I have seen, with lots of silent mouthing and gesticulating by 'John Pym' and his colleagues. And were we really expected to believe that when they met, the King would put his arm around Pym's shoulder?

More than one person complained that John Hampden was almost totally ignored; he was mentioned only once and seen just three times, portrayed by an actor with long thick hair and a large bushy beard, resembling an ageing rock musician or a biker! He didn't even appear in the scene of the attempted arrest of the Five Members. But, as one member said, 'I've come to expect limited verisimilitude from TV programmes but I suppose this is better than nothing. Regrettably the early 17th century doesn't seem to be the flavour of the month with TV producers'.

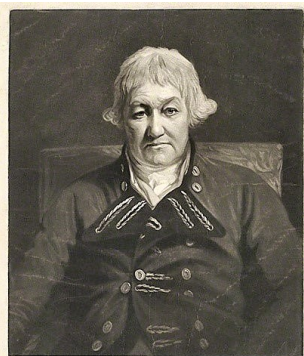
In all, for any serious student of the period this was a very disappointing programme and by presenting stereotypes will only have reinforced existing attitudes concerning Royalists and Parliamentarians.

*Obadiah Sedgwick*

## THE HAMPDEN CLUBS AND THE PETERLOO MASSACRE (part 1)

It has often been noted that John Hampden's reputation continued to expand and metamorphose after his death. One of the more interesting aspects of this was to be the formation of the Hampden Clubs in the early nineteenth century and the impact of their activities on the cause of constitutional reform.

In the 1810s William Cobbett, Sir Francis Burdett and Henry Hunt were the widely accepted leaders of the reform movement. They nevertheless acknowledged that they owed a huge debt of gratitude to Major John Cartwright (1740 -1824), the inveterate campaigner for political reform and the prime mover in the setting up of Hampden Clubs.



The very first Hampden Club was established in London by Thomas Northmore in 1811. Soon afterwards Cartwright (*left*) toured the north of England encouraging respectable like-minded people to set up local branches. His idea was to unify the existing working-class and middle-class support for parliamentary reform. Contemporary commentators were dubious believing that the objectives and approaches to reform of the two groups were radically different and even contradictory: The idea of universal suffrage was for example, popular amongst factory workers but held little appeal to most property owners.

Cartwright is usually credited with coming up with the idea of a mass petition for reform. He argued that such a document if signed by tens of thousands of people would be difficult for the Government to ignore. Reformers were united in believing that the country was poorly governed and that the remedy was the radical reform of parliament through the extension of the franchise.

The first Hampden Club in Lancashire was established at Royton in 1816 by local surgeon William Fitton. It was soon followed by others in Oldham, Rochdale, Stockport, Middleton, Eccles, Macclesfield and Manchester. The membership fee was set at a penny a week.

Samuel Bamford (*right*), a weaver, was elected secretary of the Middleton Hampden Club. In his autobiography he describes the impact of the Clubs and their founding principles on the working-class.

*'Instead of riots and destruction of property, Hampden Clubs were now established in many of our large towns, and the villages and districts around them; Cobbett's books were printed in cheap form; the labourers read them, and thenceforth became deliberate and systematic in their proceedings... by such means, anxious listeners at first, and then zealous proselytes, were drawn from the cottages of quiet nooks and dingles, to the weekly readings and discussions at the Hampden Clubs.'*

However the Home Secretary, Henry Addington, was receiving regular reports from paid informers on the activities of the Hampden Clubs. During 1816 these reports became increasingly lurid and fed into the fears in government circles that the North West was ripe for an uprising. The leaders of the Hampden Clubs were identified as amongst the chief agitators. In December 1816 William Chippindale, an informer, reported:

*'Everything connected with them [The Hampden Clubs] and their proceedings, in my opinion, indicate that they are rapidly advancing to an insurrection and I hope that you will not fail to impress this on the mind of the Secretary of State.'*

Matters certainly seemed to be coming to a head. Sir Francis Burdett, Chairman of the London Hampden Club, called for delegates from affiliated clubs to meet at the Crown and Anchor tavern on the Strand in Westminster on 24<sup>th</sup> January 1817. The purpose was to agree what reforms Hampden Clubs should be petitioning for. In the event over fifty delegates attended including Samuel Bamford from Middleton. The meeting was chaired by Major Cartwright who had led campaign for a national petition to Parliament signed by tens of thousands of disenfranchised adult males.

At the meeting a dispute erupted between those who favoured limiting the franchise to householders (Cartwright and Burdett) and those who wished for nothing less than universal adult male suffrage (Hunt). Ultimately the delegates overwhelmingly supported Hunt and universal male suffrage.

An unsuccessful assassination attempt on the life of the Prince Regent in January and the increasing fears of insurrection led Parliament to agree to the Home Secretary's proposal to temporarily suspend Habeas Corpus on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1817. The pressure was building for a confrontation between the Reformers and the Government.

*to be continued*



**Sam Hearn**

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