

Notes on JOHN HAMPDEN'S ENGLAND

by John Drinkwater

In May 2020 the John Hampden Society purchased at auction a collection of artefacts including a locket containing a lock of hair said to be that of John Hampden. These items appear to have belonged to the author and poet John Drinkwater, as included in the collection was a 'much corrected' copy of the typescript of Drinkwater's 1933 book, John Hampden's England, dedicated to a mysterious 'Seff' as a birthday present.

On the back of a number of the pages of this document are copious notes in the author's tiny handwriting, referring to and amplifying passages in the text. These notes have been transcribed for study purposes.

P13. In the old building of the Thame Grammar School, no longer used for scholastic purposes, they still show the attic and the bed that are traditionally said to have been John Hampden's when he was a boarder. The school, endowed by Lord Williams of Thame, and opened in 1570, has many notable names on its roll. Among its earliest scholars was George Croke, who, as a judge of the King's Bench, was to play a conspicuous part in Hampden's Ship-Money trial. William Basse, a good poet honoured by Izaak Walton, attended as a local boy, and another poet of far greater merit was one of the seniors when Hampden was a junior. Henry King was born at Worminghall in 1592. His birthplace is somewhat invidiously celebrated (with three other villages of the Thame district) in the rhyme:

Brill on the hill,
Oakley in the hole,
Shabby little Ickford
And dirty Worminghall.

Dirty or not, however, Worminghall did well by English lyric poetry. Henry King became Bishop of Chichester, but he did much more than that. W.J. Howard Brown, in his excellent history of Thame School, cites him as a minor poet whose 'Tell me no more how fair she is' has been praised by that great critic, George Saintsbury. But Saintsbury, in his short History of English Literature, did not note, nor does Mr Brown, that King wrote the Exequy on his Wife, which is one of the glories not of minor but of major seventeenth century lyric verse. Hampden was a lucky boy to have had such a schoolfellow. Among scholars of a later date were George Etherege, the restoration dramatist and diplomat; Shackerley Marmion, less disreputable as a playwright than as a citizen; Anthony Wood, the Oxford antiquary; the Doctor Fell who somebody did not like; and Thomas Ellwood, Milton's Quaker friend. These men were Thame scholars indisputably. On less secure evidence the school also claims William Lenthall, perhaps the most famous of all Speakers in the House of Commons, born at Henley-on-Thames; Arthur Goodwin, Hampden's close associate in the Buckinghamshire militia; Edmund Waller, poet and political adventurer and Hampden's 'horseman'; and John Wilder, the squint-eyed but not unsuccessful amorous who was so disturbing to the age of George III.

P14. Hampden House, magnificently situated on the slope of the Chilterns, has undergone many changes since the Patriot's time, but one may still stand in the stone-flagged room where he was arrested and see there the gilded helmet that was borne on his coffin during the last journey from Thame; and from the windows looking towards London, the view is still dominated by the splendid sweep of the clearing through the woods that was made by Griffith Hampden to please Queen Elizabeth. A family tradition has it that Her Majesty arrived at Hampden in the evening, was gracious about her entertainment, but adding that the timber which then grew close to the house must be obstructing a remarkable prospect, woke next morning to find the clearing made.

P32. The confinement is said to have left its mark on him for life.

P61. He had expected trouble, and seems to have made material provision against it. On being fined two thousand pounds, he observed that he had 'two cloaks, a few books and two pairs of boots and gallashees, and that was all his personal substance, and if they could pick up two thousand pounds out of that, much good might it do them.'

P65. The manuscript of Eliot's treatise The Monarchy of Men.

P66. As early as 1629, when Eliot had temporarily been removed from the Tower to the Marshalsea, Hampden hoped that the change would be attended by less rigorous wardership, and asked for perusal of 'the paper of considerations concerning the plantation [of New England] which 'after transcribing should be safely returned.'

P 67.i Writing to Eliot of his son, he assures him that 'if ever you live to see a fruit answerable to the promise of the present blossom, it will be a blessing of that weight as will turn the scale against all worldly afflictions and dominate your life happy'. Of a recommendation from his friend he writes, 'that man you wrote for I will unfeignedly receive into my good opinion.'

P67ii. In December 1631, a year before his death, Eliot wrote to Hampden. 'That I write to you nothing of intelligence will be excused, when I do let you know that I am under a new restraint by warrant from the King, for a supposed abuse of liberty in admitting a free resort of visitants, and under that colour holding consultation with my friends; my lodgings are removed and I am now where candlelight may be suffered, but scarce fire.' He was allowed a little correspondence until March, on the 22nd of which month he wrote to Hampden: 'These three weeks I have had full leisure to do nothing, and strictly tied to it, either by their direction or my weakness. The cause originally was a cold, but the symptoms that did follow it spake more sickness, a general indisposition it begot in all the faculties of the body. The learned said a consumption did attend it, but I thank God I do not feel it or credit it.' That Hampden replied asking urgently for further news, though the letter has been lost, is clear from Eliot's further communication dated only a week later, March 29th: 'Beyond the acknowledgement of your favour that has so much compassion on your friend, I have little to return ...' He continues in a strain of almost lyrical trust in the mercy of God, and concludes on a note of deeply touching affection. Thereafter his correspondence ceased, and nothing further is recorded of him until his death in November, 1632.

P86. When Hampden ultimately made his active revolt, it was uncompromising. But in the meantime he was studious in preserving his moderate attitude under all provocation. In 1634 he was called before a diocesan court to answer charges of having held 'a muster in the churchyard at Beaconsfield and having gone sometimes from his own parish church.' He was discharged on an undertaking to behave properly for the future.

P113. He was further to be progenitor of that Henry James Pye, of whom the Dictionary of National Biography says with unwonted irony that he was 'poetaster and Poet Laureate.'

P165...that many of them contemplated emigration. Hampden, who in 1632 had been one of the patentees under a grant of land in America that was later settled as Connecticut, is even said to have actually embarked with Cromwell when an order from the Privy Council stopped their sailing. The legend seems to have no more than a doubtful if any foundation in fact, but it was widely current, and was in any case a reflection of reality.

P197...who, on the dissolution of the Short Parliament had been arrested and searched, with no compromising results, was...

P218. It is true that, after the charges had been laid, he wrote from the Tower on February 4th, a brave letter to his wife:

'Sweet Harte, It is long since I wrote unto you, for I am here in such trouble as gives me little or no respite. The charge is now come in, and I am now able, praise God, to tell you that I conceive there is nothing capital, and for the rest I know at the worst His Majesty will pardon all, without hurting my fortune, and then we shall be happy by God's grace. Therefore comfort yourself, for I trust these clouds will away, and that we shall have fair weather afterwards. Your loving husband, Strafford.'

These were gallant words, but there was little comfort in them.

P266. Gardiner rejects this speech, in the words of Firth who follows him, as a 'palpable forgery'. It is printed by Nugent from a contemporary pamphlet, and at length is an obviously confused report, a circumstance with which Robert Southey makes heavy play in his ill-tempered and sprawling notice of Nugent's work in The Quarterly Review (Vol XLVII July 1832). Hampden, in the printed version of his speech, contradicts himself more than once, but the confusion is obviously of the reporter's making. Gardiner bases his rejection chiefly on evidence that he brings against another that was reported in a separate pamphlet on the same occasion as having been delivered by Pym. Even this evidence is flimsy, and certainly has no bearing on the Hampden pamphlet. I see no reason, on a careful examination of the facts, for

regarding the latter as a 'palpable forgery'. Gardiner allows that, on the morning of the 4th, the accused members defended themselves. In substance the reported speech is precisely what Hampden might have been expected to say. I think that Nugent, in accepting it, was right, and scientific critics, in rejecting it, was wrong.

P301. If the Mercurius Aulicus, the Court Intelligencer published in Oxford, is to be trusted, this was not the sum of his private griefs. On April 15th that paper wrote: 'It is advertised by some who have been envious in the observation that Mr Hampden, one of the five members so much talked of, hath had many great misfortunes since the beginning of the present troubles, whereof he hath been a principal mover: particularly that he hath buried since that time two of his daughters, one grandchild which he had by a daughter married to Sir Rob. Pye the younger, and his own eldest son and heir, there being two only sons surviving, whereof one is said to be a Cripple, and the other a Lunatick. Of which, whatever use may be made by others, it is not unfit that the party whom it most concerns would lay it close to his heart, and made such use thereof, as the sad case invites him to.'

P315. This was in August 1643, on the 29th. Hampden was engaged in an action with Northampton when that nobleman was taken prisoner.

P332. This prayer is attributed by some writers to Lord Lindsey, but this is due to a misreading of the somewhat ambiguous passage in Philip Warwick's Memoirs from which the story is taken.

P344. No strictly consistent and authoritative account of the Battle of Edgehill has survived. In all probability none was ever recorded. The principal features of the day, however, were substantially as here given. There is conflicting evidence as to the movements of Hampden himself. Ludlow says that he arrived, with other regiments, during the night, after the action was closed. But Ludlow, though he was present as cadet with Essex at the battle, was as likely as not to be imperfectly informed as to the movement of troops on other parts of the field. Whitelock makes a similar statement, and Frith, in the Dictionary of National Biography follows these authorities, saying summarily that Hampden was not at Edgehill. Gardiner, on the other hand, asserts that he was there, but that his encounter with Rupert took place on the road beyond Kineton, along which the undisciplined pursuit of the broken Puritan wing was extending. Nugent's account, compiled from an exhaustive examination of all available authorities, leaves us reasonable doubt that Hampden's arrival was in fact instrumental in making Rupert's return to the main action ineffective.

PP366/7. This account of events at Reading earlier than the more celebrated siege of April 1643, is taken from a contemporaneous pamphlet entitled The True Relation of the Proceedings of His Excellency The Earl of Essex with his army since his Departure from these Parts, in Pursuit of the Cavaliers. With the Taking of Reading by Colonel Hampden and Colonel Hurry with Their Regiments [etc]. By H.G. Loudon. Printed for John Matthewes. The pamphlet is undated, but clearly refers to and is contemporaneous with Parliamentary movements during the period following Turnham Green. Gardiner discusses the publication as 'one of the many lying reports' of the time, but I see no reason for doubting its authenticity, apart from the fact that the figures of Kirke's casualties are no doubt exaggerated, they are given as four hundred, it is a dry and detailed narrative, with no sign of invention in it. It is impossible to trace the movements of Hampden, or any other figure in the Civil War, from day to day in these early months of action, but there is no doubt that when he was not at Westminster he was chiefly employed with his Buckinghamshire men in their own midland neighbourhood. Apart from the specific occasions upon which he is known to have been there, the general circumstances warrant the assumption of his presence. He was Colonel of the Green-coat militia that he himself had raised, and as Mr F.J. Varley points out in his admirable book *The Siege of Oxford* (1932) 'the territorial attachments of the units of each army carried a marked reluctance to serve outside a particular area, so that locally recruited units often melted away when taken far from their homes. The Royalist armies naturally contained more professional soldiers without local ties, and were to this extent less hampered than the Rebels in distant expeditions'. In other words, Hampden and his Buckinghamshire regiment were active always in the midlands of the Thames valley, and Reading was within the natural scope of this activity. It would have been perfectly natural for them to be there in December 1642; a straightforward and circumstantial account says that they were; and until evidence is forthcoming to show that they were not, it seems unnecessary to stigmatise H.G., whoever he may have been, as a liar.

In view of the uncertainty attaching to this episode in Hampden's brief military career, the situation in Reading at the time may be more particularly noted. As early as September 2nd 1642, it was ordered by the Mayor and Aldermen of the town, in 'consideration of the great danger by reason of the Cavaliers abroad' that scouts should be sent out daily into the surrounding country. On October 5th a further resolution was passed 'that watches and ward both day and night' should be continued. On the 10th eighteen householders were specified for this duty by night, and twelve by day. The town was still openly Puritan in sympathy. On

November 7th, a letter to the news sheet Truths form Several Parts of the Kingdom stated that Colonel Martin [Henry Martin, the Parliamentary Governor] had left the town to the Royalists on Rupert's advance. Coates's History of Reading assigns this departure to November 1st. On the 9th, a correspondent to another newsletter True and Remarkable Passages [etc] wrote: 'Here we have been in a great fear this two or three days of Prince Rupert and his Cavaliers, who like roaring lions go about seeking whom they can devour, plundering and pillaging the countries round about us. No man's estate being his own, or secure from the fingers of these Harpies.' On the same day the Reading Corporation debated 'the execution of the King's warrants and despatch of other His Majesty's business.'

The town, by that date then, three days before the affair at Brentford, was in royalist possession, under the Governorship of Sir Arthur Aston. A levy of two thousand pounds a month was exacted from the very unwilling inhabitants to meet the King's charges, until in January the Corporation protested that the resources of the place had been drained dry, and that it was unable to attempt any further exactions. In these records, published as the Diary of the Corporation of Reading, under the Revd. J.M. Guilding's editorship, in 1896, no mention is made of Hampden's attack in September 1642. But neither is any mention made of the fully authenticated siege in April 1643. On January 2nd 1643, however, a suggestive entry appears in the Corporation minutes. On that day it was resolved 'that the town shall join with the county in a petition as well to the King as to both Houses of Parliament for an accommodation.' This implies a freedom of action that would hardly have been possible under Aston's authority in the town, which at the beginning of November had been absolute, had in the meantime been shaken in its security. A successful assault, such as that which is reported to have been made by Hampden, even although the gain had been relinquished, would constitute precisely the kind of threat that seems to be indicated.

P370. He was troubled at times on questions of discipline, being perplexed, in a letter to Essex, 'with the insolence of the soldiers already committed, and apprehensive of greater;' he asks for stricter control, fearing, no doubt with Rupert in mind, that their army may grow 'as odious to the country as the Cavaliers.'

P383i. The King's Mercurius Aulicus wrote, on April 11th: 'It was today reported exceedingly confidently by some who came from London lately, how it was noised in the City that the Earl of Essex was to leave the place of General to Mr Hampden, as one more active and so by consequence more capable of the style of Excellency.'

P383ii. The personal relation between the two men seems not to have been affected by differences on military policy. In a will drawn by Essex in 1642, John Hampden is named as one of the executors.

P388. Essex, in his official despatch to Westminster, reported 'Colonel Hampden put himself in Captain Crosse's troop, where he charged with much courage, and was unfortunately shot through the shoulder.' How unfortunately, Essex did not know when he wrote. Urry is said to have ridden about the field, pointing out the most distinguished of his old friends to the marksman of his new command.

P389. The Mercurius Aulicus having on 15th reported Rupert's success at Chinnor, wrote on Monday 19th that the victory was greater than had at first been thought, the action having been renewed on the Sunday when 'the rebels lost divers of their prime Commanders and most able officers, Hampden himself (who did most eagerly persuade to give the onset) being so sore wounded in two places, and his body so extremely bruised, that it was verily conceived he would not live.'

P390. What until recent years was the scene of this last episode in Hampden's life is, today, after three hundred years, curiously unchanged. The field of Chalgrove, with the village lying a mile to the south, is perhaps a little more cultivated when the corn was surrounded by scrub. But on a sunny day the peace is as unbroken in these convulsive times as it was when the milkmaids were startled on that June morning by the glint of Rupert's spears. Within living memory a Yeoman family in Chalgrove was going daily on the occupations that had been followed by forebears who had stood agape at the strange violence that was invading their pastoral industry. The Pyrton Manor towards which Hampden's instinct had led him in his extremity has been a little refashioned. The old mullions have gone: and the church within a stone's throw has been restored by Victorian ineptitude. But the long unbroken perspective and the quiet security of the place remain. The fishponds are still there, with drifting weeds and lazy carp. The path across the meadows to Great Haseley could still be recognised by Hampden, and the brook that caused him so fatal an effort is yet a trap to many an experienced rider with the South Oxfordshire. There is hardly a landscape in England that has been less affected by the course of centuries.

P391. The report of Hampden's dying words was taken by Nugent from what professed to be a contemporary narrative by one Edward Clough contributed from family papers by a correspondent to The Gentleman's Magazine in 1815. C.H. Firth, in a letter to The Academy dated November 2nd and 9th 1889 (not

29th as stated by Gardiner) gives his reasons for suspecting the authenticity of the document. On the whole they are convincing, but it does not necessarily follow that it was not based on authentic material. It is true, as Firth maintains, that the diction and orthography of the narrative bear signs of a source later than the seventeenth century, and at points there are suggestive resemblances to Clarendon's published account of Hampden. Nevertheless, I see no reason for dismissing Edward Clough out of hand as an impudent forger and no more the narrative, although it was doubtless put on paper at some later date, may still have been arranged from notes in the writer's family. Indeed, its tone by no means supports the theory of mere invention. Historical evidence may be too easily accepted; it also may be too easily, and no less dangerously, rejected.

That 'Edward Clough' was right at least in the spirit of his narrative is confirmed by other testimonies. With Hampden at Chalgrove Field was his friend Arthur Goodwin of the Buckinghamshire Horse. There is even an unsupported tradition that Goodwin conducted the wounded man to Thame, that he was with him during his last hours, as shown by a letter that he wrote to his daughter, Lady Wharton:

Dear Jenny,

I am now here at Hampden doing the last duty for the deceased owner of it, of whom every honest man had a share in the loss, and therefore will likewise in the sorrow. In the loss of such a friend to my own particular, I have no cause of discontent, but rather to bless God that he hath not according to my deserts bereft me of you and all the comforts dearest to me. All his thoughts and endeavours of his life was zealously in the cause of God's, which he continued in all his sickness even to his death. For all I can hear the last words he spoke was to me, though he lived six or seven hours after I came away as in a sleep. Truly Jenny ... 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 ... I have writ to London for a black suit, I pray let me beg of you a a broad black Ribbon to hang about my Standard. I would we all lay it to heart that God has taken away the best amongst us. I pray the Lord to bless you.

Your ever, dear Jenny, most affectionate father,
Hampden June 26th, 1643.

A^r Goodwin

Goodwin himself did not long survive Hampden, his Will being proved in November 1644. In it, symptomatic of the distracted times, was discovered an unrevoked bequest of £20 in token of affection to his dead friend.

P393. Even the Mercurius Aulicus, recording his death, referring to him now not merely as one but as chief of the Five Members, did not go beyond reminding its readers of the moral that it had drawn in April from the fallen rebel's private misfortunes.

P416. The correspondence between Hampden and Eliot is to be found in a small privately edition of The Letter Book of Sir John Eliot published in 1882 for Lord St Germans by Alexander B. Grosart. Particulars of Hampden's schooldays are given in Mr J. Howard Brown's Short History of Thame School (1927)

Insert (Note AX) Finally.

The illustrations, with one exception, need no comment and due acknowledgements have been made on the plates. The frontispiece calls for a word of explanation. There is no known portrait of Hampden which can claim undisputed authenticity. There are several of some contemporary standing: Mr C.K. Adams of the National Portrait Gallery has kindly provided me with an annotated list of no less than nine of these, which were the source of a multiplicity of posthumous engravings. None, however, has a clear title, though a common resemblance among many gives them some authority. In the circumstances I have felt free to choose the one that most took my own fancy, a charming portrait, by an unknown artist, in the possession of the Earl of Buckinghamshire at Hampden House. It has the support of family tradition and is the likeness most esteemed by Hampden descendants.

Insert BX

To the Earl of Buckinghamshire, of Hampden House; the Hon. Montagu Eliot of Port Eliot: and Major Ducat-Hammersley, of Pyrton Manor, I am indebted for many courtesies. Mr F.J. Varley has been generous in placing his scholarship and his Civil-War material at my disposal. Mr A.I. Ellis and Mr H.R. Aldridge of the British Museum, and Mr C.K. Adams of the National Portrait Gallery have given me valuable assistance, as also have Mr Arthur Lett and Mr H.J. Caterer of Watlington. Mr Alistair N. Taylor has again been so kind as to read my proof.

J.D.