

# THE PATRIOT

Official newsletter of the John Hampden Society

Issue 108 - December 2023

## WELCOME TO THE PATRIOT 108!

Many thanks to the contributors to this quarter's newsletter. The Patriot is now the home for longer items, and I hope you will enjoy the discussion items included in this edition, which has a strong theme of Battles. We have regular short news items on Facebook and Instagram thanks to the creative work of Pat Moody and Pat Claus, so please follow their excellent work if you "do" social media. You will also have seen updates about our activities coming through on the Society email and website.

Dr Beth Rogers, Chair (and reluctant editor 😊)

## IN THIS EDITION

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Correction to Patriot 107 – for those of you receiving by email only, apologies that some of the page headings referred to 106.

Please make a note in your diary for MARCH 23<sup>rd</sup> 2024 when we return to Broughton Castle for the Society's AGM. A private guided tour of the Castle will be available for £11 per person. Broughton is near Banbury, Oxfordshire. The castle is a fortified manor house, the home of the Barons Saye and Sele. The first Viscount was an opponent of Charles 1<sup>st</sup>, and Broughton Castle was used as a meeting place by John Hampden, John Pym and other Parliamentarians.



Chair Beth Rogers gave a talk to the Chiltern Medical Society in October. Ironically, it was in the King's Chapel at the King's Arms (in Amersham).

## SOCIETY DISPLAY AT BUCKS LOCAL HISTORY CONFERENCE

This year's Buckinghamshire Local History Network conference was themed "Buckinghamshire's Unsung Heritage", and focused on the democratisation of local history, with local people getting involved in the listing of buildings and sites of historical interest and broadening their understanding of the development of their towns and villages. 20 local history societies had stalls at the conference. The purpose of the JHS presence at this event is primarily having conversations with delegates about the importance of John Hampden to Buckinghamshire.

Peter Marsden, the organiser of BLHN, was very complimentary about our display board, recently restored by Sam Hearn, shown on the bottom right.

It was, as usual, a wonderful opportunity to catch up with people, such as JHS member Professor Ian Beckett, who did a recent John Hampden podcast and was at the conference representing the Buckinghamshire Military Museum Trust. The stall was also visited by representatives from Amersham Museum, John Milton's Cottage, the Chiltern Society, the Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust, Haddenham U3A and many more. Visitors to the stand were interested in John Hampden, but also Hampden Church and Hampden House.

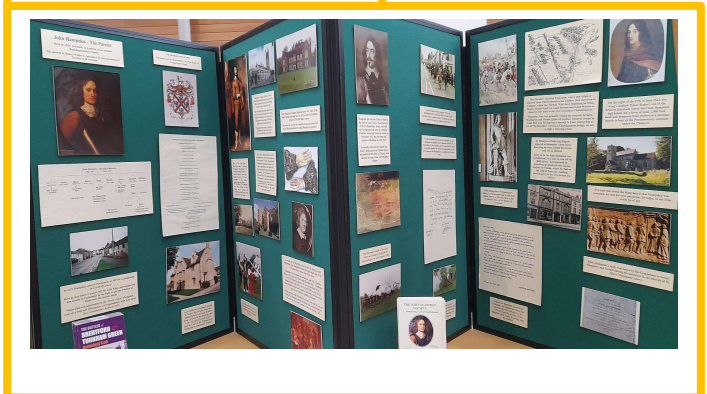
Ian Beckett (right) and Peter Marsden (below) at the John Hampden Society stall at the Bucks Local History Conference.



## BETH ROGERS



In a walk round Wendover, you can find many places named after John Hampden, including Hampden Meadow and Hampden Pond. The logo of the now defunct Aylesbury Vale District Council was based on the Aylesbury statue and is still proudly displayed on the wheelie-bins.



## THE BATTLE OF TURNHAM GREEN – THE CASE FOR CAUTION

By **SIMON MARSH**

I very much enjoyed Pat Moody's 'what if' discussion of the battle of Turnham Green in Patriot No. 107. However, I felt that I should respond, not least because I wrote a book (*Battle for London*, Stroud: Amberley Publishing, 2010), with my friend, Dr Stephen Porter (deceased) about that battle, and the battle of Brentford that preceded it. I also lead guided walks across the battlefield for the Battlefields' Trust.

Pat is correct in identifying, as a key moment, the Earl of Essex's decision to take the high ground south of Acton, around 500m to the north of the left flank of the royalist deployment at Turnham Green. To achieve this, royalist musketeers had first to be cleared out of the hedged fields on the north side of what is now Acton Lane. This seems to have been a hard-fought battle, probably involving Colonel James Wardlaw's parliamentary dragoon regiment and some of Essex's musketeers. Once the royalists were cleared from the hedgerows, Colonel John Hampden was able to advance with four infantry and two cavalry regiments to the higher ground from where he had a commanding view over the royalist forces. Once in position, Hampden called for artillery with which to bombard the royalists. However, when the two cannon were on their way they were recalled, and Sir John Merrick, Essex's infantry commander, was despatched to order Hampden's force to withdraw.

Bulstrode Whitelock MP, serving as a volunteer with Hampden's regiment, questioned Merrick about the decision to withdraw and Merrick said that 'some were false who gave the advice to the general [Essex]'. Hampden jokingly told Merrick that he risked being shot as a mutineer if he repeated such sentiments and Merrick was indeed called before Parliament the following week to answer for his comments.

Had Essex allowed Hampden to deploy the artillery it may well, as Pat suggests, have caused serious problems for the royalists. A bombardment with round shot (case shot would not have had sufficient range), combined with an attack by the main parliamentary force, could potentially have routed the King's army. This view was expressed by at least one London newsbook the following week. However, any attempt by Hampden's detachment to encircle the royalists would have been a far riskier proposition since this would, at some point, have involved more hedge fighting in which the attacking parliamentary force could have become bogged down.

Essex had good reasons for withdrawing Hampden's force: Splitting an army in the face of the enemy is always a risky manoeuvre and Essex was uncertain how his un-tested militia regiments would perform; the infectious flight of soldiers at Edgehill, just weeks earlier, was fresh in his memory. He knew that if he kept his force together and blocked the royalist's path, his numerical supremacy meant that the King would not reach the City: the battle was therefore his to lose.

Many MPs and members of the House of Lords had joined Essex on the battlefield. These included the Earl of Holland, Essex's commander during the ill-fated Scottish expedition in 1639, and Merrick's comments mentioned above suggest that Essex received the full benefit of his political masters' advice. This doubtless exacerbated his natural caution and made it unlikely that he would attempt any bold initiative. Finally, many parliamentarians still hoped that the King would return to the negotiating table and discuss a peaceful resolution. A bombardment of the royalist positions and a frontal attack on the King's army would have removed that possibility.

Another counter factual question about the battle often raised is: If the royalists had won could they have captured London and ended the war? This seems unlikely. They would still have had to fight their way through hedged fields and built-up areas with an army that had just fought two major battles in two days. At least five militia regiments were held in reserve to defend the City, and some of the fortifications that would protect the capital fully in 1643, had already been constructed. Furthermore, whilst Parliament's forces were easily re-provisioned, the royalist supply lines were dangerously extended. The real importance of the battle lies in the lessons that both sides took from it. For the parliamentarians this was that the King was not to be trusted and that Londoners overwhelmingly supported them rather than the crown. For the King it was that he would not take London without first defeating Parliament's armies in the field and that he could not rely on a Fifth Column in the Capital. Both sides also realised that the war would not be over quickly.



Information board about the Battle of Turnham Green at Acton Green Common. The John Hampden Society worked with the Battlefields Trust and local history groups to make these boards available to raise awareness of the significance of these battles.



Simon Marsh speaking at the launch of the British Civil War Memorial Database in October. Look out for an article on the BCWM by Sam Hearn in Patriot109.

## THE BATTLE OF AYLESBURY

By DALE SMITH

**WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE BATTLE OF AYLESBURY, 1<sup>ST</sup> NOVEMBER 1642?**

In Aylesbury's Market Square below the statue of John Hampden is written: "He took part in the Battle of Aylesbury 1<sup>st</sup> November 1642". The only account of this battle was in *Good and Joyfull news out of Buckinghamshire, being an exact and true Relation of a Battel* published on 3rd November 1642. This claimed 10,000 Royalist horse and foot led by Prince Rupert were routed by a force of 1,500 horse and foot led by Sir William Balfour with help from townspeople and Trained Bands. There is, however, evidence the story was fabricated.

The Earl of Essex was at Northampton with his army after the Battle of Edghill (23<sup>rd</sup> October 1642). John Hampden wrote letters dated 31<sup>st</sup> October and 1<sup>st</sup> November to Col Bulstrode who was to be appointed Governor of Aylesbury. The first said: "The army is ... moving every day nearer to you." The second letter explained that there had been a delay so the army hadn't moved: "We cannot be ready to march till tomorrow." Hampden asked to be informed "what posture you are in, and then you will hear which way we go." The army didn't go to Aylesbury when it left Northampton on 2<sup>nd</sup> November. It proceeded via Olney, Dunstable and St Albans to London. Published newsbooks also show Essex intended to go to Aylesbury but changed his mind.

Below – The familiar statue of John Hampden in Market Square, Aylesbury.



Why would an account of a fictitious battle be published? Because it was propaganda created at a critical moment. The King was advancing on the capital. It was imperative for the people of London and its Trained Bands to be reassured that the Royalists could be defeated, so that they would stay and help defend the city. It also made Essex look good.

If such a victory had been won at Aylesbury, would it not have been reported more than once during the Civil War? It wasn't, but another broadsheet might contain a germ of truth about a skirmish at Aylesbury between Trained Bands and Royalist cavalry on a foraging raid, possibly on 29<sup>th</sup> October 1642. Charles Cordell argues that Lord Wilmot led a raid targeting beef cattle in Aylesbury around this time and engaged with Balfour's cavalry.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, after human remains were found near Holman's Bridge, Lord Nugent, MP for Aylesbury, embellished the story and, perhaps because of those finds, decided to locate the battle of Aylesbury there. Lord Nugent built a monument for the remains at Hardwick Church. An early newspaper report refers to many headless skeletons, which could mean they were executed in Saxon times. It's easy to forget that Aylesbury was laid waste by the Danes in 921 AD. Intriguingly, evidence of combat "mid-17<sup>th</sup> century" has been found near Holman's Bridge but could relate to a different encounter.

A paper on this topic, benefiting from research by Ian Beckett and others, will be available online in the John Hampden Society archive.

A detailed paper on this topic, benefiting from research by Ian Beckett and others, will be made available online in the John Hampden Society archive.

**FORTHCOMING DISPLAY AT WYCOMBE MUSEUM**

We are delighted to announce that there will be a display about John Hampden in the café of the Wycombe Museum in Priory Avenue from mid-February to September 2024. The committee is extremely grateful to JHS members who have offered to loan from their personal collections of artefacts.

It is also hoped that the information boards from this display may be re-used in the permanent exhibition, so that more can be said about The Patriot.

Photos of the display will be included in later editions of the Patriot. In the meantime, if you live nearby, please make a note to visit the Museum to see the display.



**JHS TALK - OLIVER CROMWELL AND THE BATTLE OF WORCESTER**

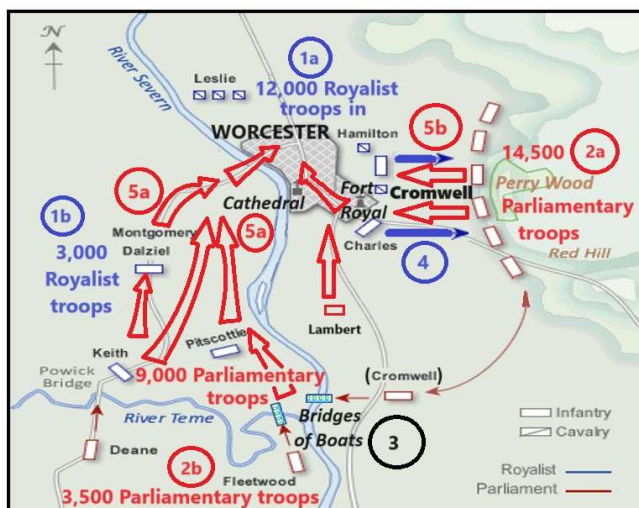
On November 19<sup>th</sup>, Howard Robinson of the Cromwell Association and Battle of Worcester Society gave a Zoom talk to John Hampden society members on the Lord Protector, his reputation and his greatest battle – the Battle of Worcester.

Oliver Cromwell had a similar background to John Hampden, grammar school and university, before becoming an MP. He had no military experience before the Civil War, but he was the architect of the New Model Army and many innovative combat tactics. He was a brave commander, returning to the field after a receiving a wound at Marston Moor. Contrary to modern myths, he was a religious moderate and not directly responsible for banning Christmas.

Little attention is given to the continuation of the Civil Wars after the execution of Charles the First, in 1649, but it was not long before Charles the Second was proclaimed king in Scotland. The speaker emphasised the importance of the Scottish campaign leading up to the Battle of Worcester. At Dunbar in 1650, the New Model Army inflicted a devastating defeat on the Scottish army supporting Charles the Second, despite being weakened by famine and disease. Both armies marched south, and it was at Worcester where the final battle of the Civil Wars was fought.

Cromwell's tactics at Worcester were very effective. He had pontoon bridges built across the Severn and Teme and attacks began across these bridges and Powick Bridge. Cromwell had to track back to counter a Royalist move on Perry Wood. The division of his forces was high risk, but in the end, despite spirited fighting from the Scots, a successful pincer movement from west and east was achieved. The Royalists were trapped in a small town, and crushed. The New Model Army had fought from hedge to hedge and house to house to secure a remarkable victory. The Founding Fathers John Adams and Thomas Jefferson visited Worcester in 1786 and pronounced that it was "holy ground".

Members thanks the speaker for a fascinating and enthusiastic talk.



**REVIEW – MAYFLOWER LIVES**

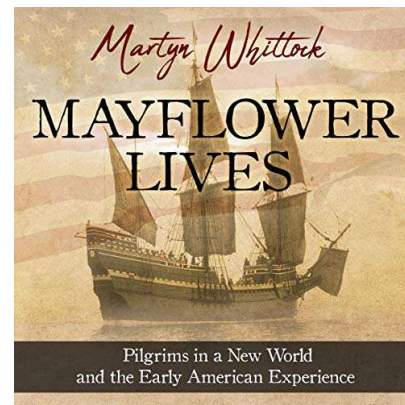
On 18<sup>th</sup> October, Martyn Whittock gave an online talk to the Bucks Historical Association, based on his book "Mayflower Lives". He explained that, like many other early attempts to settle in the New World, the Pilgrims faced hardship and disaster. They had been heading for Virginia, but landed in Cape Cod, and half of the people arriving died in the first year.

Given that only a minority of arrivals on the Mayflower were Puritans who saw themselves as pilgrims and saints, he posed the question why they had become such a "creation story" for the United States.

Clearly these families were very different from the earlier colonists in Jamestown, who were single, male, economic migrants. The Pilgrim Fathers had an ideological identity and were in America to build a new Jerusalem. Their first Thanksgiving became a national institution. Children still dress up as Puritans at Thanksgiving.

It was a hopeful beginning which encouraged several waves of migrants, but few were as godly. The speaker observed that, after 1660, the idealism of the early settlers became diluted and tainted by conflict with the Native Americans, slavery, and violence between settlers, such as the Salem Witch Trials.

BETH ROGERS



The committee of the John Hampden Society wishes all members a very Happy Christmas and a New Year! Thank you for being part of the society in 2023 and we look forward to your continued membership in 2024.

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 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.  
 Every effort is made to attribute facts and contributions correctly. If any mistakes have been made, they will be corrected in the next issue after notification has been received.