BATTLE IN THE ENGLISH CIVIL WAR AND INTERREGNUM

This article explores why the English Civil War and Interregnum 1642- 1660 seem to have been a quiet time for Battle. We have found no evidence of protest, skirmish or military action in or near the town. The reasons for this are interesting ; and we look at some notable characters along the way.

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The English Civil War and the Protectorate which followed it, comprising the period 1642-1660, had three phases of military activity and many phases of political and religious change. The conflict began as a struggle between the King and Parliament about Charles' insistence on religious reform through Archbishop Laud, particularly the revised Prayer Book and amended ritual; and about his equally firm insistence on a literal interpretation of the Divine Right of Kings, containing only a subservient role for Parliament. The Battle of Naseby in 1645 and the execution of Charles in 1649 clarified that the monarchy no longer had that authority, but Parliament, the Lord Protector and the Army still had to settle who was in charge. As Lord Protector, Oliver Cromwell found Parliaments as troublesome as Charles had, for different reasons, and dismissed them; Parliament found that its authority was as subservient to the Army as it had been to Charles, again for different reasons. The Army found itself divided not only along religious grounds, but also politically, as new sects such as the Levellers, Ranters and Diggers – some of them hundreds of years ahead of their time – developed in a febrile atmosphere of debate and experiment. Contemporary writers speak much of the "world turned upside down".


THE
World turn'd upside down:
OR,
A briefe deſcription of the ridiculous Faſhions of theſe diſtracted Times.
By T.J. a well-willer to King, Parliament and Kingdom.
London: Printed for John Smith. 1646 1647.

In matters of religion, the Presbyterianism which had appeared the alternative to Charles' religion in the 1640s, was outflanked by a more rigid Puritanism in the 1650s, and even mainstream Puritanism was outflanked by more radical sects such as the Quakers and the Baptists, both strong in Sussex. Once Cromwell died in 1658, the country slid towards anarchy as his son Richard was unable to control the Army. In 1659/60 General Monck, as the only one left with an army, subtly – his motives are still debated today – steered events towards the Restoration of April 1660, as gradually opinion came round to the view that a flexibly run monarchy was the only governance model that would work. Against this background, anything could have happened in Sussex – this paper examines why the events were in fact so limited.

Narrowing the view to Sussex, Parliamentarian forces got an early grip on the county militarily, seeing it as being of strategic importance because of its ports and its iron production. The aim was also to cut off supplies of French arms for Charles. In west Sussex[1], Chichester and Arundel experienced sieges as Royalists and Parliamentarians tussled for possession of these important routes to France with its supplies of weapons and money and its means of escape. Otherwise the military action in the county saw none of the heavy casualties elsewhere in England, Scotland and Ireland, the nearest battle to Battle being at Haywards Heath. The Parliamentarians quickly established committees to run local affairs in Sussex and other counties, backed up by the military when necessary, and in that respect the enforcing role of Col Herbert Morley was crucial. In general, allegiance to Parliament or the King was mixed in west Sussex, but in east Sussex it was more for Parliament, although there is plenty of evidence that as the conflict and the Protectorate wore on there was a growing sense of sullen indifference or resistance in east Sussex. Rye, perhaps influenced in earlier times by a Protestant influx from France, was in a category of its own in being strongly Puritan.

THE GREAT FAMILIES DIVIDED

The two aristocratic Royalist households of Battle – the Ashburnhams and the Montagus – were disabled for a variety of reasons and so unable to resist Parliamentary control of this part of Sussex. Many other leading families in the area were split between Parliament and King, as happened all over the country, so their net impact against Parliament was neutral. Two examples in passing: Col Anthony Stapley MP was Parliamentarian; he was married to the sister of Lord Goring, a leading Sussex Royalist. Sir Edward Ford, another leading Royalist, was brother-in-law to Ireton, Cromwell's son in law.

Most commentators think Sussex was largely Parliamentarian in sympathy but in any event the Ashburnhams and Montagus were not in a position to encourage the Royalist cause locally in Battle. They had interests away from Battle; and their influence was further weakened by the process of "composition" in which crippling fines were levied on their

[1] The formal division into West and East Sussex postdates this period by over two centuries but the terms have been used in this article- in lower case- for convenience.

estates by Parliament for their adherence to Charles I. So there seems to have been a power vacuum in Battle.

The **Montagus** were literally away from Battle: by 1642 they were based at Cowdray Park by Midhurst; and in any event their attentions were elsewhere. Inherited in 1592 by Anthony-Maria Browne, Battle Abbey was part of the Cowdray estate. In the years preceding the English Civil War until his death in 1629 the second Viscount, a leading Catholic, had been concentrating on the debate about whether English Catholics should be led by a bishop, with the courtesy title, the Bishop of Chalcedon. Battle Abbey was probably not occupied or of military significance, maybe partially ruined at this time. Two thirds of the Cowdray estate was sequestered in 1643 by the Parliamentarians from Francis Browne – Cowdray was garrisoned by Parliamentary forces. According to the Cowdray Heritage Trust there are marks in the Cowdray walls from musket shot fired by soldiers at this time. Even so it seems the focus for the Montagus during the English Civil War was Cowdray. Short of funds, Francis Browne accordingly divided and let out some of the Battle Abbey estate and in 1661 had to "dispark" the deer park at Battle Abbey. A survey at the time for Francis Browne of the family estates by Nicholas Lane does not mention Battle. We cannot find portraits of Francis – maybe due to the later Cowdray fire or perhaps he was just not that significant.

John **Ashburnham** (above) was absent from east Sussex for most of the English Civil War, in the service of Charles I as his personal secretary and attended him at his execution. One of Charles' shirts is in the London Museum. [2]He spent much of the period 1649-60 in prison or banished to the Channel Islands. His father had lost much of the family money around 1619, but John subsequently married the wealthy Frances Holland, and in 1639 a warrant under the Privy Seal enabled him to regain his ancestral seat at Ashburnham. Like Montagu he suffered financially in the Civil War period, in his case from composition of 50% of his estates. John Ashburnham got little help from the fact that his relative Laurence Ashburnham was a Deputy Lieutenant for Sussex on the Parliamentary side. But his fortunes were restored yet again because his second wife, the Dowager Lady Poulett, was also rich and paid his fines. In 1660 he was reappointed as Groom of the Bedchamber. Other families such as the Sackvilles, were ruined by fines.

Lord Dacre of Hurstmonceux, although a Royalist to begin with, distanced himself from Charles I as the conflict wore on. He and his family just tried to carry on as though everything was normal. Eggs and fish were, for him, in plentiful supply at Eastbourne market, and breeding of partridges on his estate continued as normal. He even sailed his pleasure yacht at Pevensey!

The Whistlers were divided between King and Parliament. Ralph Whistler was a Captain of Horse with the Parliamentarians and eventually accumulated 22000 acres of land in Ireland. John Whistler his brother, on the other hand, joined the King in 1642 when he set up base at Oxford and was impoverished by fines and subsequent imprisonment. He even had his horse confiscated and to quote his petition to the Sussex Committee " a woman [*was*] put in *[to his house*] who kept a tavern and a house of worse fame, who tore his house, burnt great parte of the materials and spoiled and embezzled almost all his goods."

Inept intervention by Charles in family quarrels did not help the Royalist cause either. Thomas Lunsford of East Hoathly was notorious, as we shall see later, so Charles' decision to make him a Colonel in the Royalist army, damaged support for the Royalists in Sussex.

The difficulty of deciding between the sides is illustrated by the diary of Sir William Campion of Sussex. He eventually favoured the Royalists but only after a struggle: "I did not rashly or unadvisedly put myself upon this service for it was daily in my prayers for two or three months together to God to direct me in the right way and besides I had conference with diverse able and honest men for advice, who confirmed me in my judgement". Sir Thomas Roe says that "No neutrality is admitted, both parts resolve that those who are not with them are against them." The divisions would have been exacerbated because if you elected to be a Royalist, you would have to pay fines based on your property and might even have that property sequestered; if you were a Parliamentarian then while Charles I was in power, you could be found guilty of treason.

More generally even before the Civil War, landowners in east Sussex were notably reluctant to contribute to Charles I's money-raising precept and composition schemes. In 1627 all the

[2] The church of St Charles the Martyr in Tunbridge Wells owes its name not to Royalist sympathies in the Civil War- the town hardly existed then- but to a visit by Queen Henrietta to take the spa waters.

loan refusers in England lived in east Sussex and in 1639 there no offers at all in Battle for the King's knighthood composition scheme. On the other hand, given the frequency of Parliamentary levies being a cause of unrest – a widespread problem – it is interesting to note that in 1642 east Sussex was generous in contributions to the relief of Irish Protestants, Mayfield, Halland, Burwash, Etchingham, Sedlescombe and Brightling taking the lead. Unsurprisingly, Col Herbert Morley did not take Sussex for granted: "the wider conflict may raise a storm in Sussex which county is full of neuters and malignants; and I have ever observed neuters to turn malignants on such occasions"[3].

This chart shows how opinions were widely spread among leading families in Sussex (**bold** indicates a split in the same family)

ROYALIST	PARLIAMENTARY	NEUTRAL
Bishops of Chichester	William Cawley	Those listed in this column took the 10 August 1642 oath to support the Earl of Essex for Parliament but there is no evidence they did anything more for either side
Thomas 14th Earl of Arundel	John Busbridge	Sir Thomas Boyer
Sir Edward Ford	Sir Thomas Pelham	Thomas May
John Ashburnham	**Laurence Ashburnham**	John Alford
Sir Thomas Gage[4]	Algernon Percy, 9th Earl of Northumberland[5]	Thomas Leedes
George Goring John Goring	Peregrine Pelham	Sir Thomas Eversfield
Lady Campion	Sir Anthony Stapley	Hall Ravenscroft
Sir Robert Foster	Viscount Montague	
Sir Selwyn Parker Sir Thomas' daughter	**Sir Thomas Parker**	
Christopher Lewkenor	Herbert Hay	
Peter Farnden	Swingate family	
John Whistler	**Ralph Whistler**	
Sir Nicholas Selwyn	Sir Thomas Jefferay	
Burrells		
Shelleys		
Sir Ralph Horton		
John Tufton, Lord Thanet		

[3] House of Commons 16 September 1643 Frewen MSS 4223 No 56

[4] Remained on good social terms with Col Herbert Morley, very active Parliamentarian

[5] Percy sought peace until the execution of Charles I and was on good terms with Royalists. He withdrew from public life in 1649

THE PARLIAMENTARIANS WERE THOROUGH

The calibre of Parliamentary officers in Sussex seems to have been much greater than that of the somewhat mercurial Royalists and they were quicker off the mark in 1642 when it became clear that armed conflict was inevitable. Sussex was soon under the control of Parliament which began raising a militia in April 1642, months before Charles. Algernon Percy of Petworth, the Earl of Northumberland (pictured below) , took military control of East Sussex for Parliament on 26 May 1642 and matters for Parliament were administered efficiently in Sussex from then on. The Parliamentarians (John Pym) set up a Grand Committee for Organising Sussex, as for other counties. Its role was to raise and spend money; raise armed forces; defend the County; and oversee sequestration and composition. It spawned sub groups, one for each Rape. The active members for the Hastings Rape met at Battle and Robertsbridge and were: Peter Farnden; John Busbridge, Anthony Cruttenden and John Everenden[6]. Everenden was a successful livestock farmer based at Sedlescombe. This activity was backed up by Secretary Thurloe and his huge range of secret service agents and informers: Oliver Cromwell's equivalent of Cecil in effect. John Browne for example was one of many local Royalist sympathisers who were closely monitored.

Parliament's early start ensured them control of iron making in east Sussex. Local historian Beryl Lucey and others say that there were 27 furnaces in Sussex and 42 forges or iron mills. She claims there were over 30 forges within a 5 mile radius of Sedlescombe Green. In all some 50,000 workers in Sussex were employed in the iron industry at this time. Brede was particularly productive, especially Sir Thomas Sackville's furnace off Brede Lane - he was a Royalist and Parliament seized his furnace.

Four local and effective Parliamentarian leaders ensured that Sussex remained Parliamentarian: Morley, Springate, Goffe, and Waller.

Col Herbert Morley of Glynde (1615-1667) was, as Charles Thomas-Stanford describes it, in this period "the man of greatest influence in the county. His vigilance and activity on behalf

[6] PRO SP 28/246, 179/191; ESRO Rye MS 82

of the Parliamentary cause were unceasing throughout the war". Morley came from a family of ironmasters who had a furnace at Mayfield. He was 26 when in 1641 he was chosen as MP for Lewes. W H Blauuw, SAC 1850, says that "there are no traces of any efforts in eastern part of the county to check Col Morley's influence". The *Mercurius Rusticus* - the Royalist newsheets[7] - describe Morley as "the crooked rebel of Sussex", but acknowledge his thoroughness when describing a raid by Col Morley on Hastings in July 1643 arising from some disturbances: "The Colonel being entered the town, scattered the body of his horse into severall parts, to intercept all passages out of the town, and having secured the ports, he summons the Mayor and Jurats , and demands the arms of the town, to which he found ready obedience." Similar raids on Rye took place. Interestingly the collected arms in this instance were taken to Battle, but we are not told where. We have evidence of some meetings with Morley taking place in Battle, but not enough to say he had a base there. He's in Hastings again in August 1648, checking ship passages, Parliament "having information that dangerous persons passed that way into foreign parts".

Col Morley's home Glynde Place. We can find no portraits of him

But as the more extreme elements of the Army established a grip on power in the 1650's, Morley, although a Commissioner of the Army and a member of the Council of State, became less active for a while and was particularly against the rule of the Major Generals, warning about the way things were going in a speech to Parliament in 1654. He was against the arbitrary behaviour of Charles and later against the dictatorial tendencies of the Cromwell regime. Hence we find him speaking in Parliament in 1659 against the admission of Cavaliers. He was strongly for the authority of Parliament, so it was not surprising that – by this time Lieutenant of the Tower – Col Morley clashed with Major General John Lambert on 27 October 1659 outside the Palace of Westminster, when Lambert was trying to evict all MPs who did not support his element of the Army.

[7] We are indebted to Neil Clephane Cameron for sight of his personal copy of these Royalist newsheets.

Lambert had superior forces; Morley aimed a musket at him (above) but Lambert politely explained he would find another way into the building. Two months later the MPs were restored, as opinion swung Morley's way against the divided Army. Blauuw thinks that Morley could at this point have played the role later played by General Monck, of paving the way for the Restoration, but this overlooks two facts. At the time, Monck had the largest army in England, of something like 10-15,000 men. Morley had very few men. Monck also had a style of gnomic diplomacy – not it would appear a strong feature of Morley.

The complexity of relationships at this time is illustrated by the fact that although a Puritan, Morley remained throughout on friendly terms with the Gage family of Firle, and with Sir William Campion of Danny, both leading Royalist and Catholic families in Sussex. Perhaps these connections enabled Morley – advised in the process by John Evelyn – to get a pardon from Charles II in return for a fine of £1000.

Morley was often present at Battle, we think, so this must have had a quieting influence. John Everenden's account book [8] reports expenses for a visit to Battle **"**when Colonel Morley sent for me". We have other evidence of Morley using Battle for business: the Rev Sharpe's misfortunes – arising from daring to doubt the national actions against the King – began at a meeting with Morley in Battle, of which more later. It was to Battle that Morley took the ammunition confiscated in his raid on Hastings. Fletcher says that Battle was a centre of tax collection, another factor: Laurence Ashburnham and John Busbridge were there, for example, in 1643 for a tax meeting. A further calming influence may have been that the Committee for Hastings Rape – a sub group of the Sussex County Committee – sometimes met at Battle; its role was to keep the area under control.

Sir William Springate (1621-1644) was from a Kent family but was based at Ringmer . He was a close associate of Herbert Morley. He supported the Parliamentarian Earl of Essex at the siege of Gloucester and at the first battle of Newbury, where he was wounded. Springate recovered to join Waller for the storming of Alton and the siege of Arundel. Springate's potential was cut short when he caught "spotted fever" (now known as typhus) in the outbreak which affected Arundel after the siege. He died in his mid - twenties. His

[8] Frewen MS 520 fol 48v

wife Mary, who tended him on his deathbed, remarried in the 1650's: she and her second husband Isaac Pennington, became prominent Quakers.

Sir William Goffe (1605-1679) was , during Cromwell's last illness, talked of as a possible successor. The source of this claim is not substantiated so we are cautious about it. He was Major General for Sussex (as well as Berkshire and Hampshire) 1655-57. His particular interests were closing down unlicensed alehouses and controlling the evangelising activities of itinerant Quaker preachers. He's pictured below:

In 1660 he and a regicide Edward Whalley, fled to New England, eventually settling in New Haven having been protected by the settlers from the enquiries of Charles II's agents. There they used their military skills to help the settlers ward off an attack by the native Americans. They are thought to have died in New Haven in 1679.

Sir William Waller was a Major General on the Parliamentary side. He had seen armed service in Europe in the 1620s. He was in charge of the Southern Association Army. On several occasions he attacked down a north-south channel to the west of Sussex, to disrupt Royalist attacks in Hampshire and west Sussex which, if unchecked, might have spread into other parts of Sussex: for example taking Portsmouth and Southsea, (which acquired him the nickname "William the Conqueror"), Farnham and Winchester. A story about him has come down to illustrate that sometimes, among the brutality, there were civilised, almost ritual elements of the War. While in the last stages of besieging the Royalists at Arundel in 1643, starving them out, Waller (pictured below) invited the Royalist ladies (Lady Bishop and her two daughters, one of them Diana Goring) to dinner, with safe conduct out and back.

Waller's subsequent story illustrates the speed and extent to which the beliefs running the Army changed as the "Independent" faction tightened their grip. In 1645 Waller

surrendered his command arising from Cromwell's Self Denying Ordinance when commanders who were also MPs or Lords had to resign their commissions. Two years later when the Army ("Independents") took control of London, Waller and others fled to the continent for a while. In late 1648 he was arrested outside Parliament as part of Pride's Purge and imprisoned for the next three years: he and 140 other MPs were thought to be against Ireton's "Remonstrance of the Army" and hence guilty by implication of Royalist sympathies. But even if Waller was guilty of that, he found no sympathy from Charles II in 1660 and died in obscurity in 1668.

THE ROYALISTS WERE RATHER QUIXOTIC

In contrast, Royalist leaders like Goring and Ford seem to have been not only somewhat mercurial and inefficient militarily but also had financial problems due to composition, as we have seen affected John Ashburnham. Sir Edward Ford, for example, was a courageous but stupid Royalist: he briefly seized Chichester and Arundel, but on both occasions neglected to plan ahead to lay in enough provisions to withstand the inevitable siege. Militarily the Royalists focused on trying to occupy Chichester and Arundel and they made one attempt on Lewes. Battle was probably not attempted because militarily its access to the coast was less easy. In any event the Royalists did not have the infrastructure to challenge Parliament's grip seriously.

Sir Thomas Lunsford (1611-1656) from East Hoathly is a good, if rather extreme, example of a mercurial Royalist.

His notoriety pre dates the Civil War, from his shooting at neighbour Sir Thomas Pelham in 1633. The Lunsfords claimed[9] that one of Lunsford's servants shot a Pelham dog which had strayed on to their land and was causing a nuisance; the Lunsford family story was that the Pelhams had subsequently harassed them with trumped up charges of deer stealing and poaching, thus provoking Thomas Lunsford to take a pot shot outside the church in East Hoathly. There is still a hole in the wall of the church, said in local tradition to have been caused by Lunsford's shot.

[9] The claim is still maintained on the Lunsford family website.

The Pelhams referred their grievances to the Star Chamber which handed down heavy fines against the Lunsfords. Thomas Lunsford left the country to command a regiment of foot in the French army. But his career was not over.

Pardoned by Charles I in 1639, Lunsford became a favourite of the King for his courageous actions at the Battle of Newburn in August 1640. This is probably why Charles tried to make him Lieutenant of the Tower of London in December 1641. Lunsford dealt harshly with rioting apprentices and had a reputation for wild behaviour, as our poster shows.

So Lieutenancy of the Tower was an appointment which had to be rescinded in the light of outcry on all sides. Lunsford and his men then accompanied Charles in his infamous attempt to seize five MPs in January 1642. Following a series of unsuccessful military engagements and a period of imprisonment, in 1648 Lunsford emigrated to Virginia, where he became lieutenant general of the Virginia militia. He died in 1656.

SUSSEX MPs: EASY TO BE ON THE WRONG SIDE

Looking at Sussex MPs at this time statistically, there was a mixed picture in terms of political allegiance. In the 1640 Long Parliament, 17 of the Sussex MPs were Parliamentarians; 11 Royalist. Another analysis of MPs by Sussex borough, suggests the following mix: 3 where both MPs were Royalist; 5 where both MPs were for Parliament; and 5 boroughs where the MPs were divided.

In 1649 Sussex spoke loudly : a disproportionately high seven of the Sussex MPs were among the 49 Regicides: William Cawley (Midhurst); John Downes (Arundel); Sir Gregory Norton (Midhurst) ; Sir Anthony Stapley (County); James Temple (Bramber); Peregrine Pelham, and Sir William Goffe .

Three examples of Sussex MPs – Foster,Gott and Fagg – reflect the likelihood that many Sussex MPs understandably spent time trying to be on the right side as political developments changed direction, so it is unlikely they exerted strong influence on Sussex one way or another. By 1647 the revolution was entering a new phase. The struggle was no longer between King and Parliament but between two sections of the victorious party: the New Model Army and Independents on the one hand; and the Presbyterians and Parliament on the other.

Sir Robert Foster's memorial at Runnymede

Sir Robert Foster (1589-1663) was a Royalist. He was a lawyer and a JP for Battle in the 1620s and married Elizabeth Burton of Eastbourne who died in 1630 and was buried at Battle. He left the Sussex area for Egham in 1639 because he found his Puritan neighbours difficult to live with, as he said in one of his letters. But he refused to provide information about them to Archbishop Laud. He "bowed to every wind that blew" according to Mr Justice Mallett and the Kentish Petitions, but 1644 was a turning point for him. He was one of the judges who tried and condemned the Puritan Captain Turpin In 1644. Subsequently he and other judges were disabled "as though they were dead" and he had to pay a fine on his estate. He practised in the Temple on a semi-retired basis but at the Restoration was appointed Lord Chief Justice.

Sir Samuel Gott (1613-71), was a Parliamentarian who acquired property – Langton House (pictured above) – in Battle in 1654, and survived beyond the Restoration with a bit of ducking and diving. In 1643 he married Joan Farnden, daughter of Peter Farnden of Sedlescombe. In 1650 he wrote a Puritan essay on "The True Happiness of Man", the writing of which he regarded as an "antidote to idleness". He avoided being one of the 131 MPs nominated to try Charles I, but was a Commissioner for ejecting scandalous and insufficient ministers in Sussex in 1654. It was in this year that he acquired and lived in what was later known as Langton House in Battle. He sat as MP for Sussex in 1656 and for Hastings in 1659. He avoided prosecution in 1660 but was absent from public life thereafter. In 1663 he was beaten up by John Machell and Isaac Tully, both of Horsham. Machell would have been a member of the Order of the Royal Oak, if Charles had ever started it, so some element of revenge may have been present in this attack. Gott was buried in Battle in 1671; in this century we know him as the true author of *Nova Solyma*, a Latin romance which for several centuries was wrongly attributed to John Milton.

Sir John Fagg (1627-1701), a County of Sussex MP, weaved his way through the complexities expertly. Having spent three days as a judge at Charles I's trial, he withdrew and in subsequent dealings in the 1650's adopted a pro-Parliament, anti-Army stance, so much so that he was imprisoned for a while in 1659. But when the tide turned in Parliament's favour, he was put on the Council of State and from that position worked in 1660 for the return of Charles II.

Ducking and diving happened at the lower civic levels too. During the Civil War years, Hastings Town Clerk Thomas Norrington entered his records in easily disposable "waste books"; they were never found. The Hastings experience shows some continuity despite the turbulence: the Painfold family provided the Town Clerk 1647-49 and again 1662-83.

RELIGION

From the extant evidence, it seems likely that in religious matters nothing much happened in Battle, which held a middle course among the conflicting and rapidly emerging religious interpretations characterising this period. This would have contrasted with Rye, which was a Puritan commonwealth with religious conflict, according to contemporaries, being endemic. Rye was probably influenced, well before the Civil War, by Huguenots, Flemish weavers and Protestant refugees from the continent. Lowerson says that Rye, led by Joseph Beeton and his successor John Allen, became for a while a Puritan "commonwealth". Even there though, there was a mixed picture: Col Morley in 1643 turned up at All Saints Church in Rye with an armed escort to arrest the Rev Car and Rev Hinson for reading out the King's Declaration, a Royalist statement confirming the King's position as Head of the Church . A contemporary of Morley's says that "he was especially harsh and rough with loyal Royalist clergy."

Even if not as extreme as Rye, Battle was Protestant at least: Professor Fletcher describes Battle in the 1640's as a "Puritan town". While Battle had been a centre of Catholicism and recusancy in the early seventeenth century, this changed after the death of Lady Magdalen, who had been the centre of it all. In Battle in 1626 there were only 6 recusants. We know from our separate work on Lady Magdalen of the Montagu family that some 20 years earlier the figure would probably have been over 100. In comparison, in 1625 in Easebourne and Midhurst, to which the Montagus had by this time moved, there were 123 recusants, and still 81 even in 1657. So the Catholic influence in Battle had waned substantially with the Montagus' departure. So much so that in the 1640s and 1650s Battle was the meeting place for one of the local sub committees of the Committee for Plundered Ministers. They took evidence (the accused need not be present) about clerics failing to conform to Puritan standards of preaching and personal behaviour, for example frequenting of alehouses.

Some authors detect a long term benefit to Puritanism in East Sussex arising from the Marian martyrdoms. Between 1553 and 1558, 33 East Sussex Puritans were burned at the stake, mainly at Lewes, an eighth of the English total. Five of the 33 were burned at Mayfield; and two of those burned at Lewes were from Heathfield, a mother and son.

Reading Professor Chris Hill's 1974 book "The World Turned Upside Down", it is clear that terms such as Puritan and Presbyterian changed their relative meanings in the period 1642-60 as new beliefs and groups sprang up, continually "moving the goalposts" and outflanking even Oliver Cromwell on occasion. Hill – a Marxist historian – thought that in the minds of many, the Anglican church was associated with landowners, the resentment from which may have played a part in the growth of puritanism in the religious arena, as well as the development of radical ideas in the political sphere.

Groups such as the Levellers and the Quakers presented a profound political threat to the established order since an individual, and individually equal, approach to God easily translated into the view that everyone was equal in the political sphere as well. The Quakers (founded by George Fox, above, some say at Horsham in 1655) in Sussex were sufficiently active for Sir William Goffe, while Major General for Sussex, to have made suppression of itinerant Quaker preachers a priority. Oliver Cromwell had some leading Levellers executed, among other reasons because he thought that their ideas about sharing goods would undermine property ownership. Some sects were even more radical than the Levellers, believing that no property should be privately owned.

In the end the Quakers survived because of their beliefs in objective truth and public witness as determinants of individual conscience. A possible factor in the growth of extreme sects was that the young saw no future career for themselves either in the declining Royalist cause or in the restrictive Parliamentary one.

A further reason for Battle being relatively stable in religious terms at this time is that the successive Deans of Battle, broadly followed national trends[10]. Dean John Wythines (1572-1615) had been part of Lady Magdalen's circle. His successor Thomas Bainbridge (1615-28) was largely absent, so exhibited one of the characteristics of which the Puritans complained. Then Christopher Dowe[11] (1629-43) came: he was an "Arminian", so pursued the Laud reforms. These reforms included: correction of errors in church maintenance, especially stained glass; position of the altar; use of the Prayer Book; confession; and handling of sermons. Dowe's friend Edward Burton, who had the Sedlescombe living, was, according to his memorial stone, "always a smiter and hater of Presbyterians". Arminians like Dowe tried to prevent farmers profaning the Sabbath by doing essential agricultural jobs on that day, which may have alienated many in the Battle area. Under the Major Generals a decade later, the Puritans tried to impose the same restriction. Hearing the same from both sides, may have caused locals to develop an indifference to both sets of teaching. Dowe was removed in 1643 and just over a year later Henry Fisher (1645-1664) was installed. He was a Puritan: having to be approved by the Committee for the Approval of Public Preachers, he

[10] We are indebted to the 1998 BDHS Research group for much of this section.

[11] With the help of the current Dean and Tracy Dixon we have established Christopher Dowe as Dean from 1629 to at least 1636 and probably 1643. Robert Acre, who appears as Dean for this period in the 1840 "Gleanings respecting Battel and its Abbey" and in the St Mary's list of Deans before the Civil War, appears not to have existed at all because his name was misread, almost 180 years ago, on a brass in St Mary's dedicated to Robert Clere, (not Acre) , who was Dean in the mid fifteenth century.

could hardly have been otherwise. In the parish records he is described, in a marginal note, as "Oliver Cromwell's chaplain", probably a sarcasm as there is no evidence that he held such a position. But Fisher was not a rigid Puritan: he did Battle a service by describing the St Mary's Church gold communion chalice[12] as a "silver bowl" so that it would not be melted down. The 1998 BDHS Research Group concluded that, encouraged by landowners and a "diplomatic" Puritan Dean in the form of Fisher, Battle people "sought to play down the religious and political divergences of the time." Nonetheless aberrations in the Church records may suggest turbulence behind the scenes. Dowe was sacked in 1643 as we have seen; and Henry Fisher's appointment as Dean is not in Church of England records: his appointment was not sanctioned by the Bishop of Chichester or the King .

Not all Puritan ministers in the Battle area were diplomatic or respected, however: at Wadhurst the imposed Puritan Minister James Wilcocke was left on his death with a memorial notifying later centuries of what his parishioners thought of him: "indignissimus huius loci minister", reads the memorial: "unworthy minister of this place"!

UNREST IN EAST SUSSEX

It would be wrong to portray east Sussex as completely quiet in the English Civil War. Royalist attempts to gain and maintain control of Lewes, Chichester and Arundel are fairly well documented. But there were other incidents in east Sussex, none involving Battle:

August 1642 Guns removed from Camber Castle to Rye
November 1642 Battle of Muster Green, Haywards Heath: Royalists defeated, 200 dead
March 1643 Refusal at Petworth to pay levy for the Parliamentary Army – town garrisoned
April 1643 Refusal at Pulborough: same treatment
July 1643 Hastings occupied by Parliamentary army for unsurrendered arms
1643 Rye occupied- disturbances over levies for the Army
1643 Riot at East Hoathly fair against Parliamentary recruiting sergeant. Col Herbert Morley sentences the ring leader to a public flogging
1643 Arundel Castle dismantled by Sir William Waller
1643 Amberley Castle dismantled by Sir William Waller
December 1643 Cowdray Castle abandoned by the Brownes
1644 Bodiam Castle sold by John Tufton, Lord Thanet, to a Parliamentarian, to clear his fines. No local evidence of a bombardment but there may have been some demolition or slighting by the new Parliamentarian owner
1645 Disturbance at Walberton near Arundel, anti – Parliamentary government. Put down by William Morley
1645 Protests at Horsham about the oppressiveness of the County Committee and billeting of troops
1648 Disturbances at Horsham (about excise duties on food) are put down
1648 Sussex men were among those (mainly from Kent and Essex) who marched to London in support of Charles I. Among their grievances were: arrears of soldiers' pay; and repression

[12] Now at Chichester Cathedral

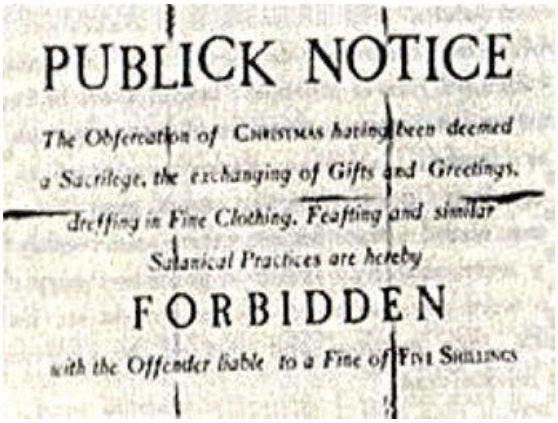
of Christmas - at the time soldiers patrolled the streets in some areas and were permitted to enter a house if they suspected celebratory food was being cooked.
1648 Uprising at Rye led by Major Anthony Norton in favour of an independent commonwealth
1649 Uprising in Rye over taxes and increased price of wheat, almost doubled in three years. Put down by Col Morley.
1656 Riot at Lewes about the decimation tax

SO WHAT WAS LIFE IN BATTLE LIKE IN THE CIVIL WAR AND INTERREGNUM?

Battle was isolated, with poor communications John Speed the map maker, comments about the awful roads in east Sussex: “ill in winter”. Even 100 years later, Horace Walpole told a friend that “The Sussex road is an almost insuperable evil”. Carts used for the iron industry ploughed up the clay tracks, making them almost impassable, and legislation as early as 1585, to make ironmasters contribute to the cost of repairing public roads, failed. Scheduled coaches at this time stopped at Tonbridge; beyond that was personal charter at your own risk. 1654 legislation about coaching excluded east Sussex roads, ”being the worst and the hardest for journeying”.

The market place The fairs at Battle continued so too much should not be made about the communications issues. But prices rose steeply: of wheat for example, by 100% between 1647 and 1649. Agricultural wages were held down from 1642 and from 1646 onwards there were five successive poor harvests.

Christmas: during the time of the Major Generals 1655-7, and before, celebration of Christmas was frowned upon. John Evelyn records that in 1654 he had to celebrate Christmas at home because there were “no public offices in churches, but penalties on observers”.


PUBLICK NOTICE

The Observation of Christmas having been deemed a Sacrilege, the exchanging of Gifts and Greetings, dreffing in Fine Clothing, Feafting and similar Salanical Practices are hereby

FORBIDDEN

with the Offender liable to a Fine of Five Shillings

Freedom of speech You probably had to be careful what you said, in Battle, about Parliament. Proceedings might start against you if you were “thought by words or actions to adhere to the interests of the late King or of Charles Stuart his son.” The consequences might be one or more of the following: imprisonment, banishment, sequestration of property, fines and compounding of property in settlement, removal from office, or decimation (a fine equivalent to 10% of your rental income).

An example was Thomas Sharpe, vicar of Beckley, who went in 1642 to a meeting in Battle (as he later complained to his friend William Newton), organised by Col Morley. He says that "there were certaine propositions sent down from the Parliament concerning the paying and maintayning of certain forces for the defence of the countrye, with directions to summon in the freeholders of Battel before the commissioners therein nominated, to show their opinions thereof." Sharpe glosses over a little what he said at this meeting, but reports to his friend that whatever he said, some kind of criticism presumably, "gained me the repute of the greatest Anti-Parliament man in those parts…" A fortnight later, Morley's men, Sharpe says, ransacked his house, abused his wife, nicked him with a sword, and intimidated him into parting with £140.

Holding public office in Battle: in 1649 an Act was passed requiring those in public office to sign a solemn engagement to support the government "without a King and House of Lords". There is a signature list[13] for the Engagement which has survived from Rye. We do not know whether Battle organised such a document. In any event this idea must have kept the lid on people getting out of line.

Sabbatarianism: you would have become used to being told not to work on a Sunday by the pro-Laud Arminians in the 1630's and by the Puritans in the 1650's. This was particularly resented in an agricultural community.

Marriages: from 1653 marriage in church was forbidden; this was lifted in 1657.

Lectures The Hastings Rape sub- committee of the Parliamentarian Sussex Grand Committee, used to hear lecturers when they met in Battle[14]. We do not know if suitable persons from Battle were invited. It appears the lecturer was sometimes entertained in a local tavern, always assuming there was one left.

Name calling: Use of the words Roundhead and Cavalier was probably common in the streets of Battle: the origin of these terms is uncertain but probably "Roundheads" came from the shaven hair of some apprentices in the Parliamentary forces; while "Cavaliers" probably came from caballeros, referring to the Court's alleged allegiance to Continental Catholic ways. From Morley's and other accounts, one suspects that there was a scepticism of both sides, as illustrated by the cartoon on the next page (Prince Rupert had a large poodle called Boy) , usually supposed to be anti-Royalist. The dog – given to Prince Rupert by the Earl of Arundel - was a highly unusual breed in England in the seventeenth century and was used for hunting but would be recognisable as a poodle today, although very large.

The propaganda value of "Boy" is interesting. Parliamentarians put out stories about the dog's devilish powers as part of a smear campaign against Prince Rupert but the perverse result was that many Parliamentarian soldiers came to believe the stories! The Royalists

[13] Drawn to our attention by Keith Foord, Chairman of the BDHS Research Group
[14] BM AddMS 33145,fol 184v; ESRO MS 520,fols 49v,50v

"Boy" meets some Roundheads

took advantage of this with their own "fake news", circulating a pamphlet purporting to be from a Parliamentary spy who had witnessed Boy's shape shifting and immense supernatural powers. Sadly for the dog, he was assassinated by a Parliamentary marksman at the Battle of Marston Moor in 1644.

Morals: the Major Generals tried to suppress what they saw as immoral behaviour in the form of taverns, public drunkenness, gaming houses, brothels, adultery, poaching, Sabbath breaking, dancing, fairs and swearing. "Loose wenches" were transported to Jamaica as slaves. The thoroughness of this approach varied a lot according to region and the energy of the Major General. Life in Battle at this time might be summed up by Col Morley himself**,** when speaking in Parliament in 1659 – perhaps trying to save his neck: "the rule of Cromwell manifested itself in the form of numberless and miserable petty tyrannies and thus became hated as no government has ever been hated in England before or since."

Life much the same? But Battle seemed to move on. In their analysis of the architecture of the High Street, David and Barbara Martin comment that building activity in the 100 years after the Civil War showed no slowing.

Adrian and Sarah Hall

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We are most grateful to The Rev Dr John Edmondson, Dean of Battle, and to Tracy Dixon his assistant, for unearthing documents which have helped us resolve who the Deans of Battle were in the English Civil War period.

The staff of Glynde Place tried hard to find a portrait of onetime owner, Sir Herbert Morley.

Credits for photographs:

Page 7	Glynde Place in the eighteenth century	Glynde Place website
Page 7	Morley and Lambert confrontation	Getty Images
Page 11	East Hoathly Church	Terry Lunsford "Southern Roots"
Page12	Sir Robert Foster's memorial	Find a Grave.com
Page 13	Langton House	Battle Museum of Local History

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