

# Faction and Civil War in Leicestershire

by *David Fleming*

With its garrisons, sieges and skirmishes, in terms of military action Leicestershire was in the thick of the Civil War during the 1640s. This was not, though, because of the residence of large numbers of committed protagonists, but largely resulted from the county's geographical position in the heart of England.

In view of the attitudes of the Leicestershire gentry towards the war it is ironic that so much fighting took place in their county. Despite constant strife between themselves during the early seventeenth century, there is little sign of significant, widespread commitment towards King or parliament. By studying the men involved in county government during the period it should be possible to cast light on the part, if any, that pre-war rivalries played in the formation of the gentry's attitudes to the conflict.

Seventeenth century county government was almost exclusively the responsibility of the gentry, and the office through which they governed was that of justice of the peace, a venerable institution upon which powers had been heaped during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In six Commissions of the Peace issued for Leicestershire between 1621 and 1636, 32 resident families were represented: fewer than one in ten of the county's gentry.<sup>1</sup> There were other major county offices — those of sheriff and deputy-lieutenant, as well as member of parliament for the shire and the borough of Leicester. The total number of gentry families who were represented in at least one of these offices, or on a Commission of the Peace, was 43. In all, 52 men were involved in some form of official county business from 1621-1640.<sup>2</sup>

At first sight this would seem to be a small caucus when compared with the ruling elites of other counties. From 1625-1640 Somerset, for example, was governed by 108 men as sheriff, deputy-lieutenant and J.P. During the same period in Yorkshire 136 families, represented by 161 men, held the same offices.<sup>3</sup> Both these counties, however, were substantially greater in area than Leicestershire, and naturally they required more Justices: Yorkshire had 157 resident J.P.s from 1625-1640, while Leicestershire needed fewer than 40 from 1621-1640. Leicestershire was, therefore, well provided with J.P.s, although they came from a smaller proportion (11.5%) of the gentry than in Yorkshire (18%).

The quorum, the theoretically legally-trained membership of the Commission, never in the period 1621-1640 exceeded the seventeen residents of 1626 and 1632, and the average size was fewer than fifteen. In 1636 there were fourteen Leicestershire men in the quorum, of whom no more than nine are known to have been to one of the Inns of Court. Of the remaining seven J.P.s on the Commission, two are known to have had legal training, so it is apparent that the old distinction between gentleman, lawyers and the rest was disappearing. By the 1620s the quorum included the very influential J.P.s whose seats on the Commission were held by virtue of their social status, but who had also undergone a legal training, like the Earls of Huntingdon and Stamford. It included too men like William Halford of Welham, George Ashby of Quenby, and Thomas Babington of Rothley Temple,

some of whom had attended one of the Inns, some of whom had not.<sup>4</sup> Membership, except for one or two like John Bainbridge of Ashby de la Zouch, depended not upon legal qualifications but on local standing and influence, and the same is true of all the other major county offices.

It is therefore all the more significant that there was a distinct pattern of change in the composition of the caucus over a period of 73 years from 1567, when Leicestershire first had a sheriff in its own right, to 1640.

From 1567 to the death of Queen Elizabeth the county had 36 sheriffs, 24 of whom were supplied by eight families and their branches — the Ashbys, Beaumonts, Caves, Hastingses, Skeffingtons, Turpins, Turviles and Villierses. These same families supplied knights of the shire in parliament no fewer than seventeen times during the same period. During the reign of James I, out of 23 sheriffs the above eight families supplied six (three of them Caves) and seven times they supplied a knight of the shire. From 1625 to 1640 these families produced only one sheriff, and three times a knight of the shire (in each case a member of the Hastings family).

This reveals a marked, and, for some, a disastrous decline of the dominant Elizabethan families, of whom only the Hastingses retained any real semblance of power up to the Civil War. The political demise of the Skeffingtons, Turpins and the catholic Turviles was virtually complete by 1603, for none of them produced a single sheriff or knight of the shire for almost 100 years. Sir John Skeffington briefly revived his family's fortunes in the county as a J.P. and deputy-lieutenant in Charles I's reign, but by then of the Turpins and Turviles there was no trace in high office. Three branches of the Caves each produced a sheriff during the reign of James I but after 1620 there was no sign of them in parliament or in the shrievalty until 1651 when a Cave of Stanford was appointed sheriff once more. This was a far cry from the days when, between 1579 and 1596, Caves held the shrievalty no less than six times.

New families were ousting the old, although none predominated. Between 1616 and 1649 the Halfords produced three sheriffs, the Hartopps and the Robertses two each, while three times a Heselrige captured a county seat in parliament. Generally, though, there was a much broader spectrum of families represented in the major offices than there had been under Elizabeth. Only the Hastingses were outstanding, providing several knights of the shire and J.P.s and maintaining a grip, if at times a loose one, on the Lord Lieutenancy.

Of the new politically-influential families, over half were recent arrivals in the county. Between 1612 and 1640, sixteen families who had never before provided a sheriff for Leicestershire did so for the first time. Of these, nine had arrived in the county late in the sixteenth century or after, one was an early sixteenth century recruit, and six were resident in the county before 1500. All eight of the dominant Elizabethan families were indigenous, the latest arrivals being the Caves from Yorkshire, just after the fall of the Lancastrian dynasty.

There is therefore enough evidence to suggest the shattering of a tight caucus of old families by an infusion of new blood, a revolution which only the Hastings family resisted effectively.

Henry Hastings, 5th Earl of Huntingdon, was unquestionably the leading political figure in the county. On his accession to the earldom in 1604 many factors were in his favour: he owned large estates in the county and was potentially the richest man there. He inherited the prominent political standing built up for his family by the 3rd Earl and his kin during the sixteenth century, and he inherited that family network to help him maintain a wide influence. The Earl was also a staunch protestant who tended towards puritanism.

Two factors were against him, however — the large debts built up by his predecessors,

and a new atmosphere among the gentry which did not favour dominance by any family, royal or otherwise. Hastings had become Earl in the midst of a constitutional maelstrom, and it was he, as Lord Lieutenant, who was the chief officer of the party which was on the defensive in that turmoil: the crown.

Huntingdon's views on the constitutional position of the king were uncompromising: "The cap and surplice are but indifferent things in the power of the King to command or prohibit, being within his kingdom supreme governor... being commanded it is a sin not to conform."<sup>5</sup> The Earl would have rejoiced to receive this opinion of Charles I in 1625: "The young King doth already show many excellent tokens of a stout, a wise, and a frugal prince, and is like to restore the glory of our nation by his wisdom and valour."<sup>6</sup> This stance of the Earl may have been a factor in the growth of serious opposition to his leadership in the county.

Determined opposition to the Hastings hegemony in the seventeenth century began in 1601, when the family lost the borough election at Leicester, winning neither seat. In the county election of the same year, although an alliance of the Greys and the Mannerses failed to achieve the same result, the Hastingses still only captured the senior seat, William Skipwith winning the other. In 1604 the Hastingses won none of the four seats, success going to members of the Beaumont, Skipwith and Villiers families. In 1605 the death of Sir Henry Beaumont allowed in Sir William Herrick for the borough, while in 1610 a Hastings nominee gained the other seat on the death of Sir William Skipwith. In 1614 the Hastingses took the senior county seat but Sir Thomas Heselrige won the other. Sir William Herrick was the unsuccessful opposition in the borough election, one seat being won by a Hastings, the other by a nominee of the influential Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.<sup>7</sup>

In 1621 the Hastingses won both county seats, but Sir George Hastings was thereupon disqualified on the grounds of non-residency by the sheriff, Sir Alexander Cave. Sir Thomas Beaumont was declared elected in his stead but he was ejected by the House of Commons and Sir George was reinstated. In the borough election Sir William Herrick defeated one of the Hastings candidates and so denied them both seats.

Opposition to the Hastingses mounted in the elections of 1624, 1625, 1626 and 1628, and the Dixies, Hartopps, Heselriges and Stauresmores all provided candidates who won county seats. Indeed, the Hastingses were so dissatisfied by the handling of the 1626 county election that Sir Henry Hastings petitioned against the sheriff, Sir Thomas Hartopp, for misconduct. Hartopp was reprimanded by the Speaker in the Commons.

In 1640 the trend was followed to its natural conclusion and of the eight seats contested in the two elections of that year, the only success for the Hastingses was that of the Duchy of Lancaster nominee, supported by the family in the first of the elections for the borough. In the county elections the Hastingses were overwhelmed. Their monopoly, after a process of attrition lasting many years, had been broken.

It was not only in elections that Huntingdon and his family were baulked. In the 1620s the political, religious and personal animosity between the Earl and Sir Henry Shirley of Staunton Harold reached a pitch. In 1625 the Earl, under orders from the Privy Council, disarmed all catholics in Leicestershire and Rutland except Shirley, who at the time was sheriff of Leicestershire. In the light of later events, it is possible that Huntingdon had little choice in the matter.<sup>8</sup> Complaints against the Earl as Lord Lieutenant began in May 1627 at about the time when a violent quarrel broke out over Shirley's hawking on the Earl's land, an argument which ended in the House of Lords. Shirley, it was said, declared:

that he cared for never a lord in England, except the Lord of Hosts; that it was a fine thing for my lord to deny him hawking in his ground! and that he was glad my lord

had no more land to hawk in; that he had a spirit as well as my lord, and my lord should hear from him within three weeks; for, no man would deny a gentleman, for I am a gentleman ... if my hawk had flown into any lord's parlour, I would have followed my hawk.<sup>9</sup>

Soon after, at a meeting of the Commission for Loans, Shirley was heard to accuse Huntingdon of oppressing the county and levying £1,100 and more for his own use. This exasperated the Privy Council, following as it did a fight between Shirley and one of the Earl's men, an incident for which Shirley refused to be judged by the county's deputy-lieutenants. Shirley was thrown into the Fleet prison where he remained until he had apologised to Huntingdon.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, the Earl was alarmed by rumours that he was to be replaced as Lord Lieutenant by none other than Shirley, who was claiming in February 1628 that he would be a baron and lieutenant within the year. Huntingdon went so far as to write to the Privy Council stating that if he were dismissed at that point people would give credence to the recent slanders uttered against him.<sup>11</sup> Shirley tried to dislodge the Hastingses from their county seat in the 1628 election, in alliance with the Coleorton Beaumonts, but was unsuccessful.<sup>12</sup>

The Earl's troubles were far from over. In 1628 Sir William Faunt of Foston was summoned to the Court of Star Chamber to answer for a slanderous attack on Huntingdon.<sup>13</sup> Already in 1626 Faunt had written to Sir Wolstan Dixie complaining of the military impositions upon Leicestershire in general, and upon himself in particular.<sup>14</sup> In 1633 more objections and complaints were directed against the Earl and two years later Faunt again found himself in Star Chamber for writing a libellous letter concerning the Lord Lieutenant. On this occasion Faunt was fined £7,000, of which a proportion was to go to Huntingdon. The fine was later mitigated to £4,000 and the Earl was granted all of it.<sup>15</sup>

As late as 1639 the Earl of Stamford was attempting to gain a joint Lieutenancy with Huntingdon as he had been promised by the King, even though Ferdinando Hastings had already joined his father in the commission.<sup>16</sup> In 1640 Stamford complained to the Privy Council about the Lord Lieutenants.<sup>17</sup> These were sure signs that the Greys, who had obtained their second Earldom, that of Kent in 1628, were aspiring once more to the greatness which had deserted them. Their aspirations were fulfilled in 1640 when two Greys took seats in the House of Commons for the first time, and more so in 1642 when Stamford grasped the coveted Lord Lieutenancy offered him by Parliament.<sup>18</sup>

Huntingdon was not the only man touched by the taint of royal policy. On the motion of Sir Arthur Heselrige of Noseley, five deputy-lieutenants were called before a committee appointed by Parliament in 1640 to examine their 'miscarriages'.<sup>19</sup> Two of these five were Hastingses — Sir Henry of Braunstone and Henry, second son of the Earl and the future Cavalier general, Lord Loughborough. Of the three others, Sir John Bale of Carlton Curliu, Sir Thomas Hartopp of Burton Lazars and Richard Halford of Wistow, the latter was the most outspoken enemy of the opponents of royal impositions, for it was he who slandered the newly elected knight of the shire in 1640, Sir Arthur Heselrige, declaring that he had "... more will than wit".<sup>20</sup>

Heselrige's stand against the policies enforced by Huntingdon and his deputies was not stimulated by any personal antipathy he might have felt towards the Earl, but arose from his indignation at the tyrannical fiscal impositions made upon the country gentry by the government during Charles I's 'Personal Rule'. Heselrige was castigated by the Restoration historians as "an absurd, bold man" who "was used by that party, [the parliamentarians, then the Commonwealth men] like the dove out of the ark, to try what footing there was".<sup>21</sup> Heselrige's role after 1640 refutes these views, and such vehement propaganda serves to

emphasise his importance. After listing just a few of Heselrige's faults, Edmund Ludlow had to confess: "to do him justice, I must acknowledge ... he made it his business to prevent arbitrary power wheresoever he knew it to be affected, and to keep the sword subservient to the civil magistrate."<sup>22</sup>

Heselrige's crusade against the monarchy, which ended with his life in the Tower of London in 1661, began in 1625 with a lost borough election.<sup>23</sup> In 1632 he and Sir William Faunt refused to pay muster levies and they were summoned before the Privy Council. Heselrige said to Sir John Skeffington, one of the deputy-lieutenants dealing with the case: "If such gentlemen as you shall be suffered to shark the country of their money it will be a very pretty thing". On this occasion Heselrige asked pardon on his knees and undertook to pay the levy without delay.<sup>24</sup> Early in 1635 he appeared before the Court of High Commission on an unspecified charge, a case which lasted almost a year.<sup>25</sup> The same year he arrested two high constables who attempted to enforce collection of Ship Money. This action greatly inhibited collection of the levy in Heselrige's vicinity in 1637.<sup>26</sup>

In 1640 Heselrige was twice elected senior knight of the shire, proof that he was not alone in his mistrust of King Charles and his advisors.<sup>27</sup> He certainly seems to have represented feeling in the county over Ship Money. Throughout the 1630s this tax was greatly resented and in 1639 and 1640 it was proving almost impossible to collect. Resistance was led by "three knights", and led to William Halford of Welham, sheriff in 1639-40, being hauled before the Court of Star Chamber in July 1640 to explain why he had not yet collected Leicestershire's contribution.<sup>28</sup> That a tradition of non-payment of taxes was building up in Leicestershire in this period can be seen from the extreme difficulty found by Walter Ruding of Westcotes in 1627 in collecting an assessment to provide implements for the defence of the country. Ruding was £200 short of the total set for the county.<sup>29</sup>

These conflicts were certainly part of the local background to the drift towards civil war, but were they genuine manifestations of opposition to the Crown? It is more likely that most of the disputes were the result of local rivalries, if the eventual allegiances of some of the men involved are any real guide. To trace the Civil War allegiances of all the Leicestershire gentry is impossible, but it can be done for the caucus, those men who took an active part in county politics before the war. If one accepts that this group, the leaders of county society, perhaps represented opinion across the county, then a picture may emerge of Leicestershire's sympathies.

The Parliamentary party was led by the Greys. The Earl of Stamford was appointed Lord Lieutenant by Parliament in 1642. His son Thomas, Lord Grey, became Commander-in-Chief of the Midland Counties Association, and Greys dominated the County Committee well into the 1650s.<sup>30</sup> Allied with the two Grey families were the Babingtons of Rothley Temple, the Bainbridges of Lockington, the Danverses of Rothley Temple, the Hartopps of Buckminster and those of Burton Lazars, the Heselriges of Noseley, the Manners, Earls of Rutland (whose head John, 8th Earl, was a protestant, unlike Francis, 6th Earl), the Quarleses of Enderby, the St. Johns of Cold Overton and the Smiths of Edmondthorpe.<sup>31</sup> Of the rest of the families who held major county offices between 1621 and 1640 only one, represented by John Whatton of the Newarke (who sat on a single parliamentary committee in 1645) was connected with the Parliamentary cause without sooner or later changing loyalties.<sup>32</sup>

The Royalist party was led by the Hastingses. The Earl was too old to play an active part in the fighting but he was at the head of the King's Commission of Array issued in 1642, as his heir Ferdinando was at the head of the royal Commission of the Peace issued in 1644. Ferdinando's brother Henry was created Lord Loughborough in 1643 and was made General of the royal Midlands forces in direct opposition to Lord Grey.<sup>33</sup> The following

families who held major offices in the period 1621-1640 were royalist: Ashby of Quenby, Bale of Carlton Curlieu, Beaumont of Coleorton, Brokesby of Birstall, Burton of Stockerston, Cave of Pickwell, Dixie of Market Bosworth, Faunt of Foston, de la Fontaine of Kirby Bellars, Halford of Wistow, Halford of Welham, Lacy of Melton Mowbray, Pate of Sysonby, Roberts of Sutton Cheney, Robinson of Long Whatton, Shirley of Staunton Harold, Skeffington of Skeffington, Skipwith of Cotes, Staesmore of Frolesworth, Villiers of Brooksby and Wollaston of Shenton.<sup>34</sup>

Including the two Hastings families, this means that of the 35 caucus families from 1621-1640 whose Civil War allegiance can be found, 23 were royalist. Including the two Grey families, of Bradgate and Burbage, only twelve were parliamentary, which means there was a 2:1 ratio in favour of the King.

It has often been remarked that there was a tendency for old established gentry families to support the royalist cause, while newer families, those with fewer deep-rooted interests and greater economic and political dynamism, tended to attach themselves to the Parliamentary side during the war. The following calculations are based on a sample of 80 families which had branches whose allegiance in the Civil War can be traced. Of these, 55 were royalist and 28 were parliamentary.<sup>35</sup> Of the royalists, 24 (43.6%) were indigenous, twelve (21.8%) arrived in the county during the earlier part of the sixteenth century and nineteen (34.5%) were late sixteenth or seventeenth century arrivals. Of the parliamentarians, twelve (42.9%) were indigenous, nine (32.1%) arrived in the early- or mid-sixteenth century, and seven (25%) were recent arrivals. This sample is biased towards the more important seventeenth century families, but even if the caucus is excluded the proportions change only slightly for the parliamentarians, and hardly at all for the royalists. The sample is also small, especially for the parliamentary families, and too much cannot be read into the figures, but the indications are there that it was not only the royalist party whose nucleus comprised a high proportion of old families. This is confirmed by looking at the 30 caucus families of which the origins are known. Of the 20 royalists, nine were indigenous and seven were newcomers; of the 10 parliamentarians, six were indigenous and one was a newcomer. There is no question that the leaders of the Leicestershire parliamentary party, and perhaps over a third of the rest of the party, were not *nouveaux riches* from outside but were drawn from Leicestershire families of high antiquity.

This should not disguise the fact that the royalists virtually had a monopoly of important and wealthy families, whatever their origins. Out of the 27 families in 1640 which included men with greater or lesser titles only seven were parliamentarians — the two Greys, the two Hartopps, the Heselriges, the Listers of Thorpe Arnold, and the Mannerses, who in any case may not have had their primary interests in Leicestershire. The other twenty families were royalist. The Parliamentarians had to dig deep into the ranks of the minor gentry to fill the places on their committees emerging with hitherto inconsequential men like John Goodman of Blaston, Henry Smith of Withcote and Peter Temple of Temple Hall, who between them sat 60 times on parliamentary committees.<sup>36</sup>

It is interesting that all of the eight dominant Elizabethan families, whose joint control of the county's government had been broken by 1640, were royalists. This is in part a reflection of the relative strength of royalism in the county. Nevertheless it casts an interesting light upon the theory that the declining gentry were attracted by the Parliamentary cause, the one which promised a return to the old order,<sup>37</sup> especially as at least three of these eight families, the Skeffingtons, Turpins and Turviles, were in financial difficulties by the time the war arrived.<sup>38</sup> Of the families of equal antiquity who were rising to replace this redundant caucus, most were parliamentary.

An examination of the geographical distribution of royalists and parliamentarians reveals no identifiable pattern of allegiance.

Of the 108 families whose allegiance can be traced, 77 were royalist, 31 were parliamentarian, a ratio of five royalists to every two parliamentarians. This ratio was approximately maintained in the four hundreds in the south and west of the county. In the north-eastern hundred, Framland, Parliament had weighty support from the Hartopps, Listers, Mannerses and Smiths of Edmondthorpe. In East Goscote the royalists predominated, for of 23 families only five were parliamentarians.<sup>39</sup> The second concentration of royalism was in West Goscote, away from Leicester, where the Beaumonts, Harpurs, Herricks, Hastingses and Shirleys lived in close proximity to the exclusion of any parliamentarians; the Skipwiths were also very near neighbours. The norm, however, was a regular distribution of royalists with parliamentarian families interspersed among them, especially in the south and centre of the county. This, taken together with the findings above on the origins and allegiance of the gentry, and with the fact that most of the Earl of Huntingdon's antagonists before the war — such as the Beaumonts of Coleorton, the Dixies, the Faunts and the Shirleys — became royalists, emphasises the difficulties in seeking criteria for Civil War alignments. This is especially so in Leicestershire, where there was a fundamental lack of enthusiasm for the war:

Sir, since our first acquaintance, ever through  
Our friendship with the noble Loughborough,  
What tumults we have seen, and dangers past,  
Such as in graves have many thousands cast!...  
And though I am no Poet, I confess  
I am enamour'd much of quietness.<sup>40</sup>

Such sentiments were echoed all over England during the Civil War. It has been pointed out that there were few men in Leicestershire who were sufficiently moved by events to leave the county and support the royal stands at Oxford or Newark, unlike many from, for example, Yorkshire and Northamptonshire.<sup>41</sup> The county town was indecisive in its allegiance, as were many of the gentry.<sup>42</sup> Sitting on the first Leicestershire parliamentary committee in 1642 were four men who were soon to become royalists — Thomas Brudenell of Staunton Wyville, Thomas Merry of Gopsall, William Jervis of Peatling Magna and William Roberts of Sutton Cheney.<sup>43</sup> George Ashby of Quenby and Sir Wolstan Dixie of Market Bosworth joined the parliamentary committeemen after having been included in the royal commission of Array in 1642. Both became royalists, Ashby having sat on five committees before changing his allegiance.<sup>44</sup> Sir George Villiers sat on four committees from 1645 but like Ashby, Dixie and the others his sympathies were to migrate elsewhere.<sup>45</sup> Bennet, Lord Sherard sat on no committees until 1660, by which time membership certainly did not require Commonwealth ideology. He was included in the Commission of the Peace in March 1652, yet his mother Abigail was sequestered for her royalism. Sherard probably had royalist sympathies which he managed to hide and may have even overcome. Whatever his true feelings, decisiveness does not appear to have been one of them.<sup>46</sup>

Many members of professedly royalist families, like Ferdinando, 6th Earl of Huntingdon, kept a low profile, and the number of active royalists in the county was never very great. This explains the balance of power maintained between the two sides in Leicestershire until the main armies entered the county in 1645. Some, like Thomas Cave, reconciled themselves to a lost cause, and he consented to be sheriff in 1651, with Parliament's authority to reside at Stanford Hall.<sup>47</sup> When the leading royalist families showed such irresolution as Cave, Villiers and Huntingdon, it could not be expected that the lesser gentry would take their own road to a glorious resistance.

The parliamentarians also often found it difficult to present a determined or united face to the enemy. There was a great deal of friction over the composition of the committees, and between the committees and Lord Grey.<sup>48</sup> Nor was Grey in favour with Sir Edward Hartopp:

I know not how long I shall stay at Leicester, because I have received this morning letters from my Lord General to come with my troop to the army; his Excellency being capable of some neglect towards me, the reasons I dare not write; perchance my Lord Grey is pleased to think that I am too considerable to join with him, and rather desires creatures of his own making ... I am afraid he is transported with particular counsels, that aim at their own ends.<sup>49</sup>

The most ludicrous quarrel of all was that between the Earl of Stamford and Sir Arthur Heselrige, the two senior members of the party. It ended with the impeachment of the Earl and two of his servants for assaulting Heselrige in a London street with drawn swords "to the great Damage of the said Sir Arthur Haslerig".<sup>50</sup>

There were, of course, men on each side in the conflict who gave everything to their cause. Prominent royalists included Henry Hastings, the Lord Loughborough who commanded the Midlands forces. Loughborough spent much of the first civil war sallying forth from Ashby castle and thus acquired a fearsome reputation and the nickname 'Rob-carrier', although he was in command at Leicester at the surrender to Fairfax after Naseby. In 1648 he was voted one of the seven great delinquents to be banished from the country, and he escaped to Holland in 1649. He lived to reclaim the Lord Lieutenancy for his family in 1661.<sup>51</sup> Viscount Beaumont of Coleorton, Sir Robert Shirley of Staunton Harold, George Faunt of Foston, Sir Richard Halford and his three sons and a "Captain Roe", who may have been John Rooe of Normanton Turville, were all sufficiently committed to be declared high delinquents in 1650. Their estates were to be seized and inventoried for the use of the Commonwealth.<sup>52</sup> Shirley died in the Tower of London in 1656, aged 27 years.<sup>53</sup> Thomas Bale of Carlton Curliu was slain at Ashby, Sir John Beaumont, head of the Gracedieu family, fell at the siege of Gloucester in 1643, and Rowland Eyre of Eastwell was killed at Newark in 1645.<sup>54</sup> Beaumont, Eyre and Loughborough were members of a select circle of Leicestershire men who crossed the county boundaries to fight, and it is such as these who emphasise the lack of conviction found in so many of their county compatriots.

For Parliament all the Greys were active. Henry, Lord Grey, who became 9th Earl of Kent in 1643 was Speaker of the House of Lords in 1645 and 1647, Lord Lieutenant of Bedfordshire in 1646 and Chief Commissioner of the Great Seal of England in 1648.<sup>55</sup> His brother, Theophilus, was an army colonel.<sup>56</sup> Thomas, Lord Grey of Groby, commanded the parliamentary forces in the midlands, was prime mover in Pride's Purge of the Commons in 1648, and was voted onto several Councils of State after 1649.<sup>57</sup> The Danverses of Rothley Temple, William and Henry, were prominent army officers, as were John Pratt of Raunston and John Goodman of Blaston.<sup>58</sup> Henry Smith of Withcote and Peter Temple of Temple Hall were regicides, along with the inimitable Sir Arthur Heselrige.<sup>59</sup>

Heselrige presented many bills in the House of Commons, including the ones for the attainder of Strafford, and for the examination of the Leicestershire deputy-lieutenants in 1640.<sup>60</sup> He was one of the five members impeached by the King in 1642 when he claimed that "to groan under the burden of a most Pious and Wise Prince his displeasure, wounds me more", and that true protestants "upon the least command of his Majesties, will spend their dearest blood in defence of his sacred person, his Queen and Princely Issue".<sup>61</sup> As Clarendon rightly said, however, Heselrige was "irreconcilable to the monarchy, and looked upon as the chief of that republican party."<sup>62</sup> He was voted to be made a baron in

1645 and sat on many Councils of State after 1649. He was several times member of parliament for Newcastle and Leicester during the 1650s, but died a disillusioned and defeated man in the Tower of London during the Restoration.<sup>63</sup>

Despite the activity of men such as these, Leicestershire was not a centre of firm allegiance to either party during the Civil War. The royalists predominated in numbers but not in fervour, while the parliamentary cause was upheld by relatively few men. After the fall of Ashby castle in March, 1646, all was quiet. The Second Civil War by-passed Leicestershire and no more was heard from royalist sympathisers during the Commonwealth.

There can be little doubt that the governing class in Leicestershire was being transformed during the years leading up to the Civil War. New families were taking over, and the atmosphere among the gentry reeked of faction and disaffection. Local rivalries, however, tend to obscure the effects which wider political and religious divisions many have been having in the county. The fighting and sacrifices for a common cause by the catholic Shirleys and protestant Hastingses during the war, for example, was hardly a natural conclusion to their intense, pre-war feud.

Moreover, there was the changing of allegiances, the wrangles between allies, and the reluctance on the part of many gentry to assume an active role in the war. Questions must arise about the strength of the impact of national issues in Leicestershire. It may well be that local and national currents in fact flowed on entirely different planes, any identity between the two — as in the case of Sir Arthur Heselrige — being little more than coincidence. If there were local political developments which can be identified directly and conclusively with the growth of civil war allegiances, they are difficult to discern in Leicestershire.

#### Notes

- 1 I am indebted to Dr. G. Harrison for providing me with transcripts of these commissions
- 2 See the lists of sheriffs and members for parliament in John Nichols, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester*, 4 vols., in 8 parts, 1795-1815, I, pp.456, 458, 461. Hereafter referred to as *Nichols*
- 3 T.G. Barnes, *Somerset 1625-1640: a County's Government during the 'Personal Rule'*, 1961, p.18; J.T. Cliffe, *The Yorkshire Gentry: From the Reformation to the Civil War*, 1969, p.233
- 4 J. Foster, ed., *The Register of Admissions to Gray's Inn, 1521-1889*, 1889, pp.93, 197; J. and J.A. Venn, eds., *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, 4 vols., 1922-7, Part i, I, p.44; *ibid.*, II, p.284
- 5 Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Hastings MSS*, IV, p.331
- 6 *Ibid.*, II, p.67
- 7 Information contained in this and the following three paragraphs is to be found in; *Victoria County History, Leicestershire*, II, pp.106-7; *Nichols*, I, p.456; J.K. Gruenfelder, 'The Electoral Influence of the Earls of Huntingdon 1603-1640', *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*, L, 1974-5, pp.17-29
- 8 *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series*, 1625-6, p.164
- 9 *Ibid.*, 1627-8, p.193; *Nichols*, III, p.777 and n.
- 10 *C.S.P.D.*, 1627-8, pp.413-4, 424; *Acts of the Privy Council*, Sept. 1627-June 1628, pp.134, 161, 197, 201; *Journals of the House of Lords*, III, pp.817, 822, 842, 849; H.N. Bell, *The Huntingdon Peerage*, 1820, pp.112-3; *Nichols*, III, p.777
- 11 *C.S.P.D.*, 1627-8, p.215
- 12 *Nichols*, III, p.777

- 13 *Ibid.*, pp.600-1
- 14 *C.S.P.D.*, 1625-6, p.476
- 15 *Ibid.*, 1631-3, p.521; *ibid.*, 1635-6, p.22; *ibid.*, 1637-8, pp.54, 126; H.M.C., *MSS of Earl Cowper*, II, p.255
- 16 H.M.C., *MSS of Earl Cowper*, II, p.217; *C.S.P.D.*, 1637-8, p.188
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- 20 John Rushworth, *Historical Collections of Private Passages of State, Weighty Matters in Law, Remarkable Proceedings in Five Parliaments*, 8 vols., 1721-2, IV, pp.38, 72
- 21 Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, *The History of the Rebellion, 1721-2*, I, pp.397, 486
- 22 Edmund Ludlow, *Memoirs*, 3rd edn., 1751, II, pp.243-4
- 23 M.F. Keeler, *The Long Parliament*, 1954, p.213
- 24 *C.S.P.D.*, 1631-3, pp.445-6; H.M.C., *Hastings MSS*, IV, pp.215-6
- 25 *C.S.P.D.*, 1634-5, pp.494, 532, 534, 542; *ibid.*, 1635, *passim*; *ibid.*, 1635-6, pp.83 92
- 26 *Ibid.*, 1636-7, p.543
- 27 *Nichols*, I, p.456
- 28 *C.S.P.D.*, 1639, pp.81-2, 224-5, 462; *ibid.*, 1639-40, p.376; *ibid.*, 1640, pp.255-6, 538
- 29 *A.P.C.*, May 1629-May 1630, pp.15-16
- 30 *Dictionary of National Biography*, XXIII, pp.206-7; *Nichols*, III, pp.676-7; see the lists of parliamentary committeemen in C.H. Firth and R.S. Rait, eds., *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642-1660*, 1911, *passim*.
- 31 *D.N.B.*, XXXVI, pp.50-1; *Nichols*, II, p.51-8
- 32 J.F. Hollings, *The History of Leicester During the Great Civil War*, 1840, p.70
- 33 *D.N.B.*, XXV, pp.128-9; *Nichols*, III, p.603; *ibid.*, Appendix IV, pp.21, 40
- 34 This list is based upon M.A. Green, ed., *Calendar of the Proceedings of the Committee for Compounding, 1643-1660*, 5 vols., 1889, hereafter referred to as *C.C.C.*; the list of Commissioners of Array in *Nichols*, III, Appendix IV, p.21; the list of Commissioners of the Peace in *ibid.*, p.40; the list of allegiances in *ibid.*, p.45; and miscellaneous information contained in *Nichols* and various genealogical and biographical works
- 35 The Bainbridges, Beaumonts and Danverses had branches on each side during the war
- 36 Firth and Rait, *op.cit.*, *passim*.
- 37 See H.R. Trevor-Roper, 'Social Causes of the Great Rebellion', *Historical Essays*, 1957, pp.200-5
- 38 Skeffington: *C.S.P.D.*, 1638-9, p.366; Turpin: *C.C.C.*, II, pp.1515-6; Turvile: *ibid.*, IV, pp.2433-4, 2756
- 39 Two detached portions of Gartree Hundred and a detached portion of Framland Hundred have been included in these figures with East Goscote Hundred, with which they form a geographical unit
- 40 Extract from a poem addressed by Sir Aston Cockayne to Sir Henry Hastings of Braunstone, printed in *Nichols*, IV, p.619
- 41 A.M. Everitt, *The Local Community and the Great Rebellion*, 1969, Historical Association Pamphlet G.70, pp.17-8; *C.C.C.*, Yorkshire cases
- 42 J.F. Hollings, *The History of Leicester During the Great Civil War*, 1840
- 43 Firth and Rait, *op.cit.*, I, pp.49-50, 92, 114, 149, 546; *C.C.C.*, I, p.110; *I am indebted to Professor A.M. Everitt for information on Merry*
- 44 Firth and Rait, *op.cit.*, I, pp.92, 114, 149, 232, 546; *C.C.C.*, I, p.110; *Nichols*, III, Appendix IV, p.32
- 45 Firth and Rait, *op.cit.*, I, pp.622, 968, 1085; Hollings, *op.cit.*, p.70; *Nichols*, III, Appendix IV, p.45; G.E. Cokayne, ed., *Complete Baronetage*, 6 vols., 1900-9, I, p.124
- 46 Firth and Rait, *op.cit.*, II, p.1434; *Nichols*, III, Appendix IV, p.68; *C.C.C.*, I, p.111
- 47 *Nichols*, III, Appendix IV, p.68
- 48 *Journals of the House of Commons*, III, p.618; *V.C.H. Leicestershire*, II, p.114; *Nichols*, III, Appendix IV, p.65
- 49 H.M.C., *MSS of Earl Cowper*, II, p.331, letter to Sir J. Coke, March 6th, 1643
- 50 *C.F.*, IV, p.188; *Nichols*, III, Appendix IV, p.46-51
- 51 *D.N.B.*, XXV, pp.128-9
- 52 *Nichols*, III, p.738
- 53 *Ibid.*, p.714
- 54 *Nichols*, II, p.540; *ibid.*, III, p.661\*; *ibid.*, IV, p.398

- 55 *D.N.B.*, XXIII, pp.186-7; Bulstrode Whitelock, *Memorials of the English Affairs*, 2nd edn., 1853, II, pp.45, 277
- 56 *Nichols*, IV, p.245
- 57 Whitelock, *op.cit.*, II, pp.468-73, 532, *ibid.*, III, p.150
- 58 *C.S.P.D.*, 1650, p.505; *Nichols*, III, Appendix IV, p.32
- 59 Mark Noble, *Lives of the English Regicides*, 1798, I, pp.346-7; *ibid.*, II, pp.236-9, 268-70
- 60 *D.N.B.*, XXVI, pp.292-6; H.M.C., *MSS of Earl Cowper*, II, p.269
- 61 Leicestershire Record Office, Hazelrigg MSS, DG.21/278, Sir Arthur Haselrigg His Speech in Parliament, January 1642
- 62 Clarendon, *op.cit.*, VII, p.444
- 63 *D.N.B.*, XXVI, pp.292-6; Whitelock, *op.cit.*, II, pp.532, 541; *ibid.*, III, pp.149, 289.