

## GLoucestershire Roundheads

*By Russell Howes*

The people of Gloucestershire were divided in the civil war of the seventeenth century, some being for the king, and some for parliament. Each county and borough returned two members to parliament, and in Gloucestershire, as in some other counties, one was a royalist, and the other a parliamentarian. The parliamentarian was Nathaniel Stephens, who had houses at Eastington and Chavenage. At the first election of 1640 he was suddenly set up

themselves at vast expense. However the story goes that Cromwell and Ireton visited Chavenage, and persuaded Stephens to support the setting up of a court to try the king. Charles I was executed in 1649, though Stephens was not a member of the court. The story continues that, soon after the execution, Stephens died, and his shade departed in a carriage driven by a headless man in royal livery. However he was alive in 1660, when he was named a commissioner for the militia, and a tablet in Eastington church indicates that he died that year.

Two cousins of Nathaniel were in parliament. Edward Stephens of Little Sodbury was member for Tewkesbury. He opposed the trial of Charles I, and published *A Letter of Advice to Sir Thomas Fairfax*, imploring him to save the nation from murdering the king. He helped to bring about the restoration in 1660; as 'old Mr. Stevens' he said in parliament that the nation would never be happy until sun, moon and stars were set in their proper orbits, that is, king, lords and commons (2).

John Stephens, Edward's brother, suffered damage in the war, when royalists under Sir Jacob Astley burnt his house at Over Lypiatt. John Stephens became second member of parliament for Tewkesbury. He sat on the committee for compounding, which exacted fines from royalists; the committee awarded him lands belonging to Astley to compensate for his loss at Lypiatt.

The city of Gloucester, like the county, had two members of parliament of different views. Thomas Pury - the one who concerns us here - an alderman of the city, was a zealous parliamentarian and puritan. He wore his hat in church, as quakers did later. He supported the abolition of deans and chapters, claiming that the dean and chapter of Gloucester owned one third of the houses in the city, but did not relieve the poor, or amend highways, and actually hindered preaching (3). He gave evidence against William Laud at the archbishop's trial.

Pury's son, also Thomas, exhibited the more useful side of puritanism. Gloucester city council had requested parliament for the chapter house to be a public library (4). It was granted; and the younger Pury undertook its fitting out, and gave money and books. It is now the cathedral library. After deans and chapters were



*Chavenage, the home of Nathaniel Stephens.*

as a candidate, to the disgust of John Dutton, elected as a royalist member, who declared that he would never more trust any man who wore his hair shorter than his ears (1). Unsuccessful at his first attempt, Stephens was elected later in 1640, and sat as a member of the long parliament. During the siege of Gloucester he was instructed by the house of commons to write to the citizens, urging them to hold out.

At the end of the war parliamentarians disagreed about how to deal with the king. Nathaniel Stephens was for making terms; he implored parliament to make yet another application to the king, or it would be said that parliament kept up the army to maintain

abolished he leased the deanery (now Church House) and also 'the old school house', which contained what is now called the parliament room. After the restoration the elder Pury moved to London, and resigned as alderman before the Corporation Act purged town councils. The younger Pury retired to Taynton, where his tomb may be seen.



Colonel Massey in 1647.

The man who embodied Gloucester's resistance to the king was Colonel Edward Massey. The Earl of Stamford appointed him governor of Gloucester in 1642. Massey defied the king in the siege of 1643. The accounts kept by Massey's treasurer at war, Captain Thomas Blaney, reveal how the garrison had to make its own ammunition; there were payments to the makers of bullets and powder, and for liquor from pigeon houses for making saltpetre (5). The story that the royalists shot an arrow into the city, bearing a message urging surrender, and that the defenders shot it back with a defiant reply, receives confirmation from Blaney's accounts; he paid for a great cross bow, for arrow heads, and for the bolt shot in the siege. The house of commons showed its gratitude for Massey's defence of Gloucester by voting him a reward of £1000 (6). Massey's most notable victory was at Redmarley, when he defeated Nicholas Mynne, taking 300 prisoners for the loss of only three men (7).

There were two regiments in Gloucester's garrison, the Governor's regiment, and the Earl of Stamford's regiment. It is remarkable that the officers of the Governor's regiment included Alderman Thomas Pury, probably two more aldermen, and one or two members of the city council, besides Thomas Pury junior. There was also a regiment raised by the city, commanded by Colonel Thomas Stephens, son of Edward. He claimed not to be under Massey's authority, and caused him much vexation. Thomas Stephens attempted to relieve Rowdon House near Chippenham, which was besieged by the royalists, and then was besieged himself. Massey had to march to his assistance, though unsuccessfully, and wrote tartly that independent officers promised not advantage, but destruction.

Massey's relations with the civil authorities were stormy. The committee of Gloucester, whose task was to find money to pay parliament's soldiers, raised taxes without his consent, and favoured Colonel Stephen's regiment. Massey believed that Thomas Pury was behind the committee's obstruction. At first Massey found Pury cordial; later he complained that Pury formed a party against him, and brought chaos by his particular ways (8). When Massey left Gloucester in 1645 to command the Western Association the committee sent a petition to parliament against him. The city council petitioned that he might remain. The house of commons resolved to hear neither petition.

Denis Wise, mayor during the year of the siege, was a captain of the city trained band. He had charge of a store of arms at the Tolsley; a list of 1644 recorded its contents as including 40 halberds and 120 of musket furniture and barrels without stocks. During the protectorate, when Cromwell granted the cathedral to the mayor and burgesses, Denis Wise was appointed treasurer of the repair fund (9). It is not surprising that this active parliamentarian was removed from the council by the corporation act in 1662.

Tobias Jordan, another member of the city council, was one of those citizens with 'lean, pale, sharp and bad visages' (as described by the historian Clarendon), who brought the defiant answer to the king's summons before the siege. He was a bookseller and stationer, and supplied the soldiers with the paper they needed for cartridges (10). He was mayor during the restoration year, and his name is on the maces and sword of state still in use. He was removed from the council by the Corporation Act, but not until 1663.

### THE STAND OF SOME COUNTY GENTLEMEN

Country gentlemen were not all on the side of the king, as the Stephens family shows. William Guise of Elmore belonged to one of the oldest county families. He was accused before the committee of Gloucester of looking sorrowful at the breaking up of the siege of Gloucester, and then going into the enemy's quarters. He said that he had armed his tenants for parliament, and sent supplies and £40 to Sir William Waller. Captain William Matthews and Captain Richard West took plate and valuables worth £200, and carried him prisoner to Gloucester, but Massey released him. Because his provisions were exhausted he went to his wife's brother in Monmouthshire. There he fell downstairs. He went to Bath to be cured of his lameness, and the king demanded a loan from him. He visited Oxford, the king's headquarters, only to get the demand removed. The committee of Gloucester declared him a delinquent by one vote! His son Christopher pleaded for him before the lords and commons, and got him acquitted (11).

### EXPERIENCES OF HUMBLER FOLK

The common people have not left many records. Ralph Wallis carried warrants to sequester the estates of malignants, that is royalists. On one such mission he was captured; his wife Dorothy petitioned Massey, saying that he had been betrayed to the Sudeley scouts, and been taken first to Sudeley castle, and thence to Oxford; she asked that he might be exchanged for a prisoner held at Gloucester (12). Thomas Blaney paid her money while her husband was a prisoner. After the war a Ralph Wallis was appointed to keep an English school in Trinity Church Gloucester. Following the restoration an anonymous pamphlet, *More News from Rome*, criticised the Church of England, calling the former Bishop Goodman a papist, denouncing pluralists, and declaring that the singing men of the cathedral were drunken and incompetent. The author was discovered by Giles Webley the postmaster to be Ralph Wallis; he had opened a letter addressed to Wallis. He was subsequently described as a cobbler of scurrilous wit.

A few individual soldiers have left a record. John Barrett, corporal, was in a party that went to Painswick; his company was put to flight, and he was left for dead; the enemy stripped him stark naked to the very skin. This was no figure of speech, for he went on to say that he afterwards lay 'bedrid under the Cyrurgions hands'; he was now able to rise, but could not-for want of clothes. Massey ordered him to be paid £1 (13).

A brief life of John Freind was written by his brother Nathaniel. They came from Westerleigh. The two brothers served in parliament's army at Cirencester, and were taken prisoner and carried to Oxford in 1643. They were released, and John eventually became clerk in Colonel Thomas Stephens's regiment. He was in the disastrous attempt to raise the siege of Rowdon House, and was again made prisoner. After his release he rejoined his regiment at Woodchester, but there he died of smallpox, and was buried in the churchyard (14).

Maimed soldiers and widows of soldiers were paid a small pension by the quarter sessions, whose records sometimes said where the men were in action. John Strange lost his right eye at Highnam in 1643. At the siege of Gloucester William Preedy was maimed, and Thomas Downe was wounded in Friars' Orchard (where Brunswick Square now is). John Walker was wounded

when the parliamentarians captured Monmouth. William Jones was slain at Raglan castle. William Taylor served under Colonel Stephens, and lost the use of his right arm. Two women lost their husbands when the men went on the state's service to Ireland and died there. Captain Blaney paid the surgeon's charge for Toby Garbran, a matross who assisted with cannon and who was wounded by musket shot at the siege of Gloucester; and he paid 10s. (50p) to the widow of Houlder Addams, a soldier under Captain Pury the elder, who was shot at the time of the siege, and died. The husbands of Mary Birckett and Anne Morgan were slain at the siege.

## EXPERIENCES OF PARLIAMENTARY OFFICERS

More is known of the officers of parliament. Captain Robert Backhouse or Bacchus was employed gathering supplies from the countryside. He paid to Thomas Blaney money levied on the cattle of Sir Ralph Dutton at Standish. William Guise of Elmore complained that, although he had Massey's protection, Backhouse seized corn and hay. His men were in Gloucester at the siege, for, when gratuities were paid to the soldiers nine months later, he was paid £378 for his troop (15). Sir William Vavasour, the royalist commander in Gloucestershire, believed that Backhouse might betray the west gate of Gloucester, and Backhouse corresponded with him, but all the while disclosed the enemy's plot to Massey. When differences antagonised Massey and the committee of Gloucester, Major Backhouse (as he had now become) was sent to London to witness articles drawn up to reconcile them: among other things the city gates were to have two keys, one to be delivered each night to the mayor, the other to the governor (16). When Prince Rupert defeated Massey near Ledbury, Serjeant Major Bacchus was desperately wounded (17).

Captain, later Major, Edward Grey was in Lord Stamford's regiment. During the siege of Gloucester he led a party of musketeers against Kingsholm, and joined in a sortie from the north gate: he was later paid a gratuity of £440 for Lord Stamford's regiment (18). He and another officer petitioned the government against Massey, and were told to avoid discord. Discord however got worse: Major Grey fought a duel with Major Robert Hammond, who killed him. This happened just before the march to Redmarley. Hammond was later Charles I's gaoler at Carisbrooke.

Serjeant Major Constance Ferrer was also in Lord Stamford's regiment. Before the siege of Gloucester he was said by William Morton, royalist governor of Sudeley castle, to be desirous of peace (19); but his later career shows no sign of such a disposition. He was sent to give the house of commons news of the relief of Gloucester, and was called into the chamber to receive the thanks of the house. Gloucester was still in 'dire straits' after the siege (20): parliament organised a supply of 200 firelocks, powder, match and brimstone, as well as 1200 coats, pairs of shoes and shirts, and £2200 in money. How could these be got to Gloucester through hostile country? An army was needed to protect them. Eventually Serjeant Major Ferrer and another officer brought the supplies to Gloucester in small parties (21).

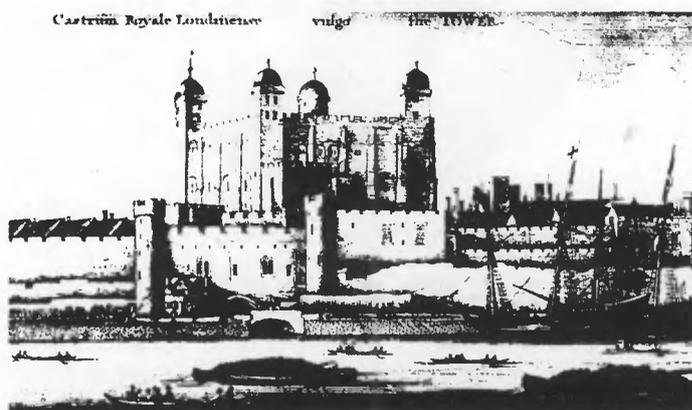
Oliver Cromwell had at one time been named for this task. He had a cousin, also called Oliver Cromwell, who was stationed in the Forest of Dean, Tewkesbury and nearby. He said that he had recruited a troop at his own charge, received no horses or arms from the state, and lost 45 horses in the service of parliament. When he petitioned for his arrears of £2138, the committee of Gloucester testified that he had behaved gallantly and honestly (22). He became major to Colonel Thomas Morgan, who succeeded Massey as governor of Gloucester. As such he attested the good service of Cornet Richard Castle at the sieges of the castles of Berkeley, Chepstow and Raglan, so he was probably in these actions himself (23). He accompanied his famous cousin to Ireland, and died at Waterford.

The successor of Colonel Morgan as governor of Gloucester was Sir William Constable, a Yorkshireman. He was a member of the court which condemned Charles I, and signed the death warrant. In contrast to this grim work his apartments in Whitehall palace were adorned with tapestries of Venus and Adonis. He had a deputy governor in Gloucester, Major John Wade. When the civil war was over Major Wade was in charge of partly dismantling the fortifications at Gloucester; he had the guard house removed from

the wheatmarket in Southgate Street. He was named as 'preservator' of the Forest of Dean. Iron works had temporarily been suppressed in the Forest of Dean, because they consumed timber; however arms were needed, and Major Wade was authorised to build a furnace and a forge. An account shows how carefully he supervised this work: he made shot; he also paid for fencing coppice, and for deer to stock the forest; and he sold iron, and made a profit (24). He showed real regard for the Forest of Dean, 'this forlorn, disowned piece of ground, so much talked of, and so little cared for' (25), so that he must have been saddened when he was dismissed at the restoration.

## MASSEY'S LATER CAREER

After fighting ceased new members were elected to parliament to fill vacancies. Edward Massey was returned for Wootton Bassett. In the dispute about what course to take with the king Massey was a leader of the party which wished to come to terms. When the opposing side prevailed Massey was one of the 48 members purged by Colonel Thomas Pride. He and some others were imprisoned in St. James's Palace. From there Massey published a pamphlet, declaring that he never intended evil against his majesty's royal person (26). Massey's talent for escaping was first displayed when he got free from St. James's Palace; he made his way to the Netherlands about the time when Charles I was executed, and presented himself to Charles II.



*The Tower of London in the seventeenth century, where Massey was imprisoned after the battle of Worcester.*

Suspected at first, Massey in time won the trust of Edward Hyde (later Earl of Clarendon), the wisest of Charles II's counsellors. He was given a command in the campaign which ended in Charles II's defeat at Worcester. He was not at the battle, having been wounded a few days before at Upton-upon-Severn. The Countess of Stamford, wife of his former commander, sheltered him only until his wounds healed. He was then delivered to parliament, and put in the Tower of London. He made a second escape, and rejoined the king's friends on the continent.

During the difficult years of exile Massey was described by Hyde: 'he is a wonderful vain, weak man, but very busy and undertaking, and really, I think, means well and faithfully to the king' (27). Massey exchanged letters with the Duke of Ormonde, in which he vigorously defended the justice of his first engagement against King Charles I (28).

After the death of Cromwell, when a rising was organised for King Charles II, Massey was sent to Gloucestershire. Hyde wrote that, if Gloucester were defended by Massey for the king, it would look like a revolution of providence. Intercepted letters enabled a party under Captain John Crofts to find Massey at Symond's Hall near Wotton-under-Edge, and capture him. He was mounted on a horse, with a stout man behind him, but during a storm made his third spectacular escape (29). After some weeks in hiding he got back to the continent.

The restoration of Charles II in the event took place peacefully. Only two months before it seemed impossible without fighting. Massey returned to England, and the king appointed him to command in Gloucestershire. However General George Monck marched on London, and a new parliament was called. Massey went to Gloucester, and was elected one of its members. At last Massey received the reward promised after his defence of

Gloucester: the house of commons voted him £3000 together with other expenses and arrears (30). The king recognised that this soldier, who had fought against his father, had nevertheless been true to the cause of monarchy itself.

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