

# Days of Shaking

Rutland families in times of conflict, 1600-1660

by

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## About the material (and author)

Since completing an MA dissertation entitled '*Conscience, Kinship and Community: Allegiance in Rutland 1630-1660*' (University of Leicester, 1991), I had always hoped to compile a book using and expanding this research. I even had a title: '*Days of Shaking: Rutland families in times of conflict, 1600-1660*' - the quotation coming from a notorious, published sermon preached to the House of Commons in 1643 by Jeremiah Whitaker, formerly Rector of Stretton in Rutland.

Although work on the 'book' began over ten years ago, other projects intervened, such as the Local Heritage Initiative research and publication, 'The Heritage of Rutland Water'. For six years I was Secretary of the Rutland Local History and Record Society, and also wrote occasional articles for the Society's journal, 'Rutland Record'. The last of these, in Rutland Record 30, uses material taken directly from the first chapter of my proposed book, since having moved away from Rutland to Essex in 2006, I had finally given up hope that it would ever be completed! However, four chapters and an introduction to the aborted 'Days of Shaking' do exist in draft form, and paper copies of these exist somewhere in the archives of RLHRS. The wonders of the internet now tempt me to make this work more easily accessible via the 'Digital Publications' section of the excellent RLHRS website.

The completed chapters deal with the Harington families of Exton and Ridlington, the Horsmans of Stretton and the Villiers (Dukes of Buckingham) of Burley. But there are other Rutland families who played an active role on opposing sides in the civil war, and whose correspondence and interconnections certainly repay research, and could yield some new and exciting insights into the conflicts of allegiance which divided families, friends and communities. It is not widely known that Rutland produced two regicides, Thomas Waite and Sir James Harington, the latter closely related to the daring and flamboyant Royalist commander, Baptist Noel, Viscount Campden.

Families whose activities during the civil war would be well worth studying include: the Noels of Exton; Bodenhams of Ryhall; Heaths of Cottesmore; Browns of Tolethorpe; Barkers of Hambleton and Digbys of Stoke Dry and North Luffenham. It would be wonderful if anyone wanted to continue researching these families and add further chapters to this intriguing story. If so I would be delighted to hear from you!

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## Days of Shaking: Rutland families in times of conflict, 1600-1660

### Preface

'I will shake all nations, and the desired of all Nations shall come (*Haggai 2:7*)' In January 1643, Jeremiah Whittaker thunderously announced his sermon to the assembled House of Commons with what he rightly called 'a shaking text.' As he preached of the 'universal shaking', which would bring political conflict across England and Europe, the prospect before him must have seemed a world away from his seven-year career as Master of Oakham School, and his thirteen-year ministry in the quiet Rutland backwater of Stretton.

Yet the landed families and farming villages of Rutland were not immune to the rumbling tensions, national crises and disastrous civil war which troubled much of England during the turbulent first half of the 17th century. Two local landowners played key, opposing roles in the audacious Gunpowder Plot, while in the next two decades the owner of Burley on the Hill, royal favourite and focus of a nation's hatred, lavishly entertained two kings before his own brutal assassination.

When civil war erupted in 1642, families and friends were divided. Surviving letters carry desperate appeals for protection or redress in the face of terrifying raids from opposing strongholds in and around Rutland. Rutland gentlemen led cavalry troops, commanded garrisons, suffered capture, imprisonment or death. Ministers left their parishes, some moving in high circles, while villagers paid the heavy cost of war in billeting, confiscation and taxation. Wandering preachers and Anabaptists stirred up parishioners to question authority. Not without cause did local magistrates and pamphleteers speak despairingly of 'a world turned upside down'.

The Protectorate and Restoration brought the inevitable settling of accounts. Colonel Thomas Waite, grown rich from land confiscation and enclosure, paid the inevitable penalty for signing the death warrant of King Charles I. Leading Royalists like Viscount Campden, heavily fined in the aftermath of defeat, gained rich rewards in the golden reign of Charles II. The young Duke of Buckingham regained his great house by an astute marriage with his enemy's daughter, yet gambled it away in a dissolute future. The eccentric Sir Kenelm Digby, Cromwellian spy and amateur chemist, was accused of poisoning the beautiful wife whom Van Dyck painted on her deathbed.

The more modest gentry, who avoided notoriety, often gained from the social upheaval and economic possibilities of war. A sheep-farmer from Hambleton became a baronet and builder of Lyndon Hall. Parliamentarian majors and major-generals lived their last days quietly in Rutland. For the first time, the county had its own Lord Lieutenant, while the social hierarchy and structures of deference were re-established. But the world had moved on, and establishment complacency, even in Rutland, would always be tempered by fear of rebellious voices. The new facade of elegant mansions and tranquil villages, so vividly portrayed in Wright's 1684 *History and Antiquities of the County of Rutland*, was built on memories of political upheaval. In its dedication 'To the Nobility and Gentry' of the county, Wright expressed the national and local mood: never again should the floodgates be allowed to open and the 'days of shaking' return.

## Introduction

On Easter Saturday 1603, in the first spring of the new Stuart dynasty, the rolling heathland of Rutland was the setting for a strange encounter. James I was enjoying a stately progress from the harsher climate of Scotland through the welcoming regions of his new kingdom. The previous night had been spent as guest of Sir John Harington at Burley on the Hill, where the new king was greeted by a lengthy, if tedious, congratulatory poem by Elizabeth I's court poet, Samuel Daniel. Staying long enough to hunt in Exton Park, the king was able to indulge his passion for the sport even while continuing his journey. All was arranged for the royal convenience as the party progressed towards Stamford. Sir John Harington's best hounds accompanied the king, following scent trails laid in advance, and pursuing live hares which had been carried to the heath in baskets. The king was reported to take 'great leisure and pleasure in the same'. Suddenly the royal party was confronted by a bewildering sight:

Upon this Heath, not far from Stamford, there appeared to the number of an hundred high men, that seemed like the Patgon[ian]s, huge long fellows, of twelve and fourteen foot high, that are reported to live on the Main of Brazil, near to the Straits of Magellan. The King at the first sight wondered what they were, for that they overlooked horse and man. But when all came to all, they proved a company of poor honest suitors, all going upon high stilts, preferring a petition against the Lady Hatton.<sup>1</sup>

The countrymen, probably petitioning against enclosures or high rents, were graciously advised to defer their demands until the king reached London. He entered Stamford in stately procession to accept yet another lavish civic gift, and spent Easter Day at the Cecils' grand palace of Burghley. The next day, lured by the prospect of further hunting with Sir John Harington, the king returned into Rutland. The royal adventures in Rutland, however, were not ended. The king's horse fell, 'and very dangerously bruised his arm, to the great amazement and grief of all them that were about his Majesty at that time'. Although he mounted to return to Sir John's for the night, the king's pain the following morning was such that he abandoned all hope of hunting and continued his journey by coach.<sup>2</sup>

While London completed its obsequies for Queen Elizabeth, and eagerly awaited the dawn of a new age, James enjoyed the leisurely, month-long progress to his new capital. The 'days of shaking' seemed remote, if not impossible. Everywhere, the king was greeted with smiles, gifts and vows of allegiance. Hopeful gentry shared in the lavish bestowal of honours, conferred in every county through which the king passed. At Belvoir Castle, the day before the King arrived in Rutland, Sir Wingfield Bodenham of Ryhall was one of the new-made knights. When Coronation Day arrived on 11 July, Sir John Harington was rewarded for past and future service by the title of Baron Harington of Exton, the first of eight baronies created that day.<sup>3</sup> His family's fortunes were at their zenith. In the first decade of the 17th century the Harington estates encompassed a third of Rutland, and four members of the family were dearest friends of James's queen, Anna of Denmark; her daughter, Princess Elizabeth; and Henry, Prince of Wales. The wealth and status of the first family of Rutland seemed secure.

If the Haringtons and other landowners looked forward to years of peace and prosperity under a new dynasty with a secure succession, other sections of the population were less contented. Roman Catholics regarded the new monarchy, and the ennoblement of the puritan Lord Harington, with anxious eyes. How far would James favour toleration, or would the harsh persecutions seen under Elizabeth continue to threaten papists? The puritan wing of the Church of England looked for greater acceptance from a king brought up in Presbyterian Scotland. Small tenants and labourers, whose common rights were threatened by piecemeal enclosure, hoped for greater protection against landowners. The poor, their existence finally acknowledged by Elizabeth's new Poor Law of 1601, hoped for increased relief against the ravages of poor harvests and ever-threatening destitution. Even the king's triumphant arrival in London was accompanied by anxieties. The royal party was mobbed by many thousands who had crowded into the city to greet their new monarch. A terrible plague in the overcrowded tenements led to the king's hasty diversion to Winchester until the danger had receded.

Barely two years after the coronation, the newly established Stuart throne was shaken for the first but not the last time, by the audacious Gunpowder Plot. Two Rutland landowners were closely involved. Amongst the conspirators was Sir Everard Digby of Stoke Dry, whose courageous death passed into Catholic mythology. Although the plot to blow up the Houses of Parliament was betrayed, Digby led the Midland rebels in a desperate attempt to kidnap the young Princess Elizabeth. This was only thwarted by the prompt action of her guardian, Lord Harington of Exton. However, Lord Harington's service to James and his family would within a decade destroy his dynasty, ending its dominant presence on the Rutland stage. Ironically, when the county was divided a generation later by the bitter civil wars between Parliament and James's son Charles, it was Lord Harington's nephew, Sir Edward of Ridlington, who led the Parliamentary opposition in Rutland.

James I's early encounter with Rutland's hospitality was not to be his last. Always preferring the joys of the hunt and courtly indulgence to the tedium of government, he visited Burley on the Hill a further six times, normally in August, enjoying the lavish entertainment arranged by its new owner, the Duke of Buckingham. There as elsewhere, the king, queen and entourage were feasted, and flattered by a succession of masques. These aristocratic entertainments, performed by members of the court, told allegorical tales of pagan divinities and personified virtues, to the accompaniment of music, dancing and much elaborate scenery. The greatest partnership in devising masques was that of the poet Ben Jonson and the architect Inigo Jones. Their Masque of the Metamorphosed Gipsies was presented three times to King James: at Burley, on 3 August 1621; at Belvoir Castle two days later and in September the same year at Windsor. The text would be amended to suit the location, so that at Burley the Porter's poetic speech paid tribute to the king, as he entered 'The house your bounty built, and still doth rear'.<sup>4</sup>

As royal favourite to both James and his son, Buckingham's entertainments became increasingly extravagant. A visit by Charles I and Queen Henrietta Maria to Burley is famously associated with the gift of the Rutland dwarf, Jeffrey Hudson. However, the huge costs involved in providing for even the briefest royal visit not only drained the fortune of the host but placed a heavy burden on surrounding parishes. Between 1622 and 1636 numerous orders were issued to local chief constables to provide items such as hay, oats, straw, poultry and butter for the royal household. As Charles I returned through Rutland from his first visit to Scotland in 1633, the hundred of Martinsley was instructed to provide a hundred horses for the royal party.<sup>5</sup> One agent involved in procuring such provisions was John Barker of Hambleton. On the outbreak of Civil War it was not supplies for the king, but provisions for the parliamentary garrisons at Burley and Rockingham Castle, which contributed to the fortune built up by his surviving brother, Abel Barker.

When the Duke of Buckingham acquired Burley on the Hill, it was only one of the thirteen Harington manors in Rutland to be sold after 1614. Exton was the first to go, bought by a flourishing London merchant, Sir Baptist Hicks. His daughter and sole heir, Juliana, was married to a nephew of Lord Harington, Sir Edward Noel of Ridlington. With a great estate in Chipping Campden, Sir Baptist Hicks entered the ranks of the nobility as Viscount Campden, so that on his death in 1629 the fortunate Sir Edward Noel inherited great wealth and the title which continues in his family to this day. On the outbreak of war in 1642, the second and third Viscounts Campden were staunch royalists, as was the second Duke of Buckingham, who inherited the title as a baby after his father's assassination in 1628. Another influential royalist family, brought into Rutland by the sale of the Harington manors, was that of Sir Robert Heath, Attorney General to Charles I. His son Edward was married to Lucy Croke, receiving as dowry the manor of Cottesmore purchased by her father. Lucy's bitter experiences during the Civil War are the subject of moving letters to Elizabeth Horsman, her neighbour and mother of two leading Parliamentarians.

The accession of Charles I in 1625 had seemed to promise more sober, ordered and conscientious rule than the final indulgent years of his father. However, Charles's personality and policies, both rigid and unshakeable, were a major cause of the unprecedented downfall of the monarchy. Following the breakdown of a working relationship with parliament, the thirteen years of Charles I's personal rule seemed, on the surface, tranquil. The court continued to be diverted by feasting, flattery and masques, while the king's ministers set about raising finance and implementing the royal programme of church reform. Across the country the pressures of poverty, deprivation and dissent were becoming more evident. As early as 1631 the Privy Council ordered Justices of the Peace to take precautions against public disorder, not least in Rutland, where there were mutterings of revolt.

The minister of Tinwell, John Wildbore, wrote to a friend of the sufferings of the poor in Rutland, through 'dearth of cloth and the want of work'. He reported an overheard conversation which seemed to threaten mutiny and insurrection:

'Hearest thou?' saith a shoemaker of Uppingham to a poor man of Lyddington; 'If thou wilt be secret I will make a motion to thee.' 'What is your motion?' saith the other. Then said the shoemaker, 'The poor men of Oakham have sent to us poor men of Uppingham, and if you poor men of Lyddington will join with us, we will rise, and the poor of Oakham say they can have all the armour of the county in their power within half an hour; and in faith,' saith he, 'we will rifle the churls'.<sup>6</sup>

On this occasion, the tension was diffused by a strict imposition of authority. Justices, ministers and gentry saw a quiescent population as the only means of preserving a stable, secure society and maintaining the prosperity of the land.. It was only when the gentry and clergy themselves took issue with government that the smouldering resentment of all sections of society would be fanned into open rebellion.

Two crucial factors contributing to civil war were the issues of taxation and church 'innovation'. Both left their mark on Rutland. The most notorious tax was Ship Money, especially hated in the inland counties of the midlands. In 1634-5 the tax, previously levied on coastal counties for the defence of the realm, was applied to the whole of England. The Sheriff of Rutland, Sir Francis Bodenham, sent orders to the chief constables of each hundred, who were to arrange the assessment and collection of the tax by constables in each parish. Rutland was required to raise £1000 for the provision of a ship of war of 100 tons together with the necessary men and arms. In 1636-7 the sheriff was Sir Edward Harington, whose letters record the stressful experience of assessing and raising the required £800 for that year. His early optimism was marred by the obstinate refusal of a few individuals, 'as they pretend as a matter of conscience'. When the target was finally met and the last of the money safely dispatched to London, the sheriff's verdict was heartfelt: 'The trouble he has been put to has been such that were it not His Majesty's command, no profit or reward could draw him to adventure upon the like business again.'<sup>7</sup>

As opposition mounted across the country, and collection of the tax became increasingly difficult, the king was persuaded to reduce the demand by two thirds in 1638-9, in recognition of a disastrous harvest and plague. Rutland's contribution was reduced to £350; interestingly the assessment of eight shillings made on the village of Braunston was higher than the seven shillings demanded from the county town of Oakham, showing the relative wealth of the farming and trading communities.<sup>8</sup> Although the reduced demand had been collected by July 1639, it proved virtually impossible for the next sheriff, Robert Horsman of Stretton, to collect the higher sum assessed for 1640. Other factors were causing increased anxiety and opposition. King Charles's attempts to impose the English Prayer Book upon Scotland had led to the so-called 'Bishops Wars', which also had to be financed by the counties, despite much sympathy for Presbyterian Scots among English Protestants. Rutland was required to provide, from limited resources, 60 pikemen, 40 musketeers and 50 horses to join the forces being gathered in the Midlands.<sup>9</sup>

The religious tensions which had built up steadily since Charles's accession in 1625 came to a head when, with his Archbishop of Canterbury William Laud, Charles imposed a programme of 'innovations' on the Church of England.

The perceived effect of these was to bring the English church, which had formerly tolerated a broad spectrum of protestant opinion, considerably closer to the Church of Rome. Only licensed preachers were now allowed, effectively ending many of the public lectures so beloved of puritans. The altar was to be railed against the east end of each church, rather than serving as a communion table accessible to the congregation. Services became more prescriptive and rituals more elaborate. Roman Catholics were given more freedom at court, where the French queen openly heard Mass. Devout protestants were also offended by the *Book of Sports* which allowed sport, drinking and dancing on the Sabbath. While Uppingham's rector, Jeremy Taylor, was amongst the king's most ardent supporters, there were many Rutland ministers who opposed royal policy. Richard Rudd of Lyddington imaginatively railed his altar on four sides, thus obeying orders while keeping it apart from the east wall. Jeremiah Whitaker refused to read the *Book of Sports* from his pulpit at Stretton and was only released from prison on payment of a fine. At Cottesmore John Barry refused to wear the surplice and allowed unlicensed preachers in his church.

As well as its high proportion of puritan parishes, Rutland was home to several Roman Catholic families. Foremost among these were the Digbys of Stoke Dry and North Luffenham. In January 1641 Sir Kenelm Digby, son of the unfortunate conspirator Sir Everard Digby and friend of the Catholic queen, was brought kneeling before the House of Commons, accused of 'gathering of moneys amongst the Papists' to support the king in his Scottish wars. In contrast, when a benevolence was collected among the parishioners of North Luffenham for relief of Protestants massacred by rebellious Irish Catholics, James Digby refused to contribute, 'being a convicted Recusant'. Fear of Catholicism was widespread in Rutland as elsewhere. Freely or reluctantly, villagers across the country lined up to sign the 'Protestation' ordered by parliament in 1641. Although expressing loyal allegiance to the king, the document recorded a vow to defend the reformed protestant Church of England, 'against all Popery and Popish Innovations' and to uphold the privileges of parliament. Ironically the men of Hambleton and other Rutland parishes made their oath before Justice of the Peace Edward Heath, who was soon to become one of the staunchest supporters of the king.<sup>10</sup>

The causes of the English Civil Wars, fought between 1642 and 1651, are complex and controversial. The 'Long Parliament', which Charles was forced to summon in November 1640, provided a platform for the expression of bitter grievances which had built up over more than a decade. Voices of dissent, which the king's ministers were helpless to silence, were loud within the House of Commons. While Rutland's two Knights of the Shire, Guy Palmes and Baptist Noel, remained loyal to the king, other members of the Rutland gentry were busily rallying support for parliament. In many counties, leading activists organised petitions which might be presented as the king journeyed to York in the hope of gathering support, or carried to London and placed before parliament. Rutland was active in both respects. In January 1642 Thomas Waite, with 'hundreds of gentlemen and freeholders' of Rutland, petitioned Charles to return to parliament and put an end to discord. Two months later Sir James Harington of Ridlington and others presented to both houses of parliament the 'Humble Petition of the High Sheriff, Knights, Esquires, Gentlemen, Ministers, and others of good rank within the County of Rutland'. This called for stronger measures against Catholics; removal of their votes in the House of Lords; reform of the Universities stricter observance of the Lord's Day and 'the utter quelling the pride, insolency and tyranny of the Prelates'<sup>11</sup>

Reluctant concessions made by the king were, in the over-used phrase, too little and too late. In January 1642, having tried and failed to arrest five members of the House of Commons, he was driven out of London by the hostility of the mob. When the city of Hull refused to admit the king or surrender its store of arms, the die was cast and Charles raised his royal standard at Nottingham on 22 August 1642. As well as the regiments recruited by leading supporters, both sides attempted to raise the 'trained bands', each county's defence force. The king issued 'Commissions of Array' while parliament used the Militia Ordinance to instruct the Lord Lieutenant, in Rutland's case the Earl of Exeter, to levy troops and supplies.

Rutland's royal Commissioners of Array included Sir Guy and Bryan Palmes of Ashwell, Baptist Noel and Sir Francis Bodenham. Unfortunately for the king, parliament's supporters in Rutland were quicker off the mark. Sir Edward Harington and others seized the county magazine at Oakham Castle with its store of arms and ammunition. Captain Stephen Tory was later accused of betraying the Oakham magazine and resisting Viscount Campden's attempts to raise 300 horse for the king.<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile Lord Grey of Groby, parliament's commander of the Midland Association, assisted Thomas Waite and others to seize Burley on the Hill from its absent, youthful heir the second Duke of Buckingham. Lord Grey justified his military action in the county, describing the volatility of Rutland and its readiness to rise up for the king:

I found the coals kindle so fast in that Country that had I not suddenly quenched them the whole Country would have been on a Flame. The Malignants flocked so fast, that had I not entered Rutlandshire at that Nick of Time, I am confident in One Week the whole County would have been drawn into a Body against the Parliament.<sup>13</sup>

Burley was garrisoned for parliament and became the headquarters of the Rutland County Committee through which parliament controlled the county for the next decade.

Although no major battle was fought in the smallest county, Rutland was subject to frequent raids, skirmishes and looting by troops from the opposing strongholds just over its borders. To the south, Rockingham Castle had been easily captured from Sir Lewis Watson and retained a parliamentary garrison commanded for a time by Robert Horsman of Stretton. To the north, Belvoir Castle had been yielded to the royalists by the Earl of Rutland. It became a base for cavalry raids into surrounding territories, often led by Viscount Campden with his cavalry troop of daring 'Campdeners'. Further north, the key royalist stronghold at Newark commanded the route to the north and provided a focus for prolonged and bitter conflict. Many Rutland families and individuals were caught up in military action and its aftermath. Some of their stories are told in the chapters which follow.

With Rutland under the grip of parliamentary forces, royalist supporters hastened to join the king at Oxford or to campaign with his armies. Their fortunes suffered greatly. Estates were confiscated, only to be regained by 'compounding' with a substantial fine. Family wealth was no safer: the coin hoard buried at Ryhall, probably by the Bodenham family, remained lost until its discovery in the 1980s. In 1643 Sir Wingfield Bodenham was taken prisoner by Oliver Cromwell at the siege of Burghley House, while Edward Heath left a vulnerable household at Cottesmore to join the king in Oxford. The 2nd Viscount Campden, Sir Edward Noel, also left Rutland for Oxford where he died in 1643. His two sons had very different fortunes. The 3rd Viscount, Baptist Noel, achieved fame and honour fighting for the king, for which he was fined by parliament but lavishly rewarded by the restored Charles II. In contrast his younger brother Henry, seeking a quieter life with his new bride at North Luffenham Hall, suffered siege, capture, imprisonment and an early death.

The king's defeat and captivity in 1646 brought the end of hostilities; grief and retribution for his supporters. Royalists who renounced arms and paid their fines were allowed to live quietly under the new administration. Only those who defied this injunction were punished, including the second Duke of Buckingham, banished for his abortive campaign in the Second Civil War. He became one of many exiled royalists awaiting better times abroad, such as Sir Kenelm Digby, who adapted to new circumstances by working secretly for Cromwell. Confiscated royalist properties were redistributed, with the great parliamentary general, Sir Thomas Fairfax, receiving Burley on the Hill. After two years it was sold to Cromwell, but in 1660 was restored to the Duke of Buckingham, who had romantically if conveniently married Lord Fairfax's daughter Mary.

In the short term Rutland's parliamentarians proved victorious. The most brutal of these, Thomas Waite, gained the infamy of regicide by signing the king's death warrant and the resentment of Rutland tenants by enclosures at Hambleton. During Cromwell's Protectorate, counties lost any measure of autonomy under the centralised control of parliamentary committees and, from 1655, the repressive efficiency of the Major-Generals. Rutland was governed with Northamptonshire, Bedfordshire and Huntingdonshire by William Boteler, later impeached for his arbitrary conduct.

The end of civil war did not bring peace or democracy. The Great Rebellion had proved a dangerous precedent, and discontent was in the air. Cromwell lost patience with an elected parliament, experimenting in 1653 with a parliament of nominees. Rutland's only representative was Edward Horsman of Stretton, cousin to a member of Cromwell's Council of State. Disbanded armies demanded arrears of pay, which required heavy taxation. Attempts were made to restructure the Church of England on the presbyterian model. The celebration of Christmas and other 'superstitious' festivals was banned, and although there was greater relief for poverty, for many communities life seemed harsh and joyless. Religious toleration, which excluded Catholics, brought a multiplicity of sects into Rutland as elsewhere the Anabaptist Samuel Oates, father of the notorious Titus, was imprisoned in Oakham as a dangerous schismatic and disturber of the peace. Political radicals argued the case of Levellers, Diggers or Fifth Monarchists.

Confusingly, two republican works were published by cousins both named James Harrington, grandsons of the first Baron Harrington of Ridlington. Both sought to discover the ideal form of holy and harmonious government. *Noah's Dove*, by James Harrington of Ridlington, attempted to promote agreement between contending religious parties, the Presbyterians and Congregationalists. The more significant work was the book by James Harrington of Upton, Northamptonshire, who had attended on Charles I in his captivity. Published at a time of political ferment in 1656, his *Commonwealth of Oceana* portrays an ideal, democratic republic where property and power are vested in the people, far removed from the frustrating realities of the English Commonwealth.

While ardent radicals offered blueprints for the realisation of God's kingdom on earth, conservatives and monarchists looked overseas. In the Hague, Prince Charles awaited the call to return to his kingdom. Cromwell's death and the inadequacy of his heir provided the opportunity. General Monk, the army's commander-in-chief, marched south from Scotland to occupy London and facilitate the re-assembly of parliament, despite being warned by Sir James Harrington of Ridlington of the threat posed by Charles Stuart.<sup>14</sup> Parliament accepted the conciliatory terms offered by Charles, and hasty plans were made for his glorious return.

Across the country loyal nobles and gentry were restored to their estates, bishops to their palaces, ministers to their parishes. Within Rutland, pragmatism was the order of the day. A former parliamentarian captain, Colonel Henry Markham of Ketton, was described on his tombstone as being 'very instrumental in the happy restoration of King Charles II'.<sup>15</sup> The ever-astute Abel Barker, grown rich by sheep dealing and services to parliament, organised a loyal petition signed with the names and marks of ordinary people, expressing 'faith and true allegiance' to his majesty, Charles II.<sup>16</sup> The Honorable Philip Sherard presented the new king with a congratulatory address, signed by the forty nobles and gentry, headed by the Duke of Buckingham, the Earl of Exeter and Viscount Campden. Even Rutland's clergy subscribed to a gift of money to the king.

The Act of Oblivion passed in 1660 meant that only those responsible for shedding the royal martyr's blood would pay the ultimate penalty. The estates of three Rutland parliamentarians were seized and Thomas Waite, whose signature was on the king's death warrant, was condemned to death. His desperate and unconvincing pleas for mitigation survive in his petition to the House of Lords, 'being altogether ignorant of their proceedings and intentions, whereto he had a very great horror and aversion. But being here a young man and ignorant of the Laws... he with others was forced by Cromwell to sign a writing, not knowing what was contained therein...'<sup>17</sup> Waite was never executed and died a prisoner on Jersey. Not all regicides suffered the ultimate penalty, and of those whose heads were publicly displayed, several had been dead for a number of years.

Shaken to its core by the years of exile, the Stuart monarchy embarked on a new phase of realism. Since the hopeful new dawn of the 17th century, the world had been turned upside down. The king now knew the boundaries of his authority, while parliament had tested its own power to the limits and drawn back in horror. Ordinary men in the Army had discovered that they had a political voice. Although Levellers were crushed, the 'good old cause' was never to be entirely suppressed. Women had found themselves resisting the enemy, managing estates or, in extreme cases, preaching. After 1660, magistrates, ministers and owners of land were once again respected, but they knew that such respect could be withdrawn. The Church of England turned its back on Puritanism, so that those who sought to practise a simpler, more devout faith were forced to look outside the parish church.

In Rutland, too, it seemed that the old order had returned. Noble families returned to Exton, Burley and the country houses which were being built or renovated across the county. But dynasties had died out, and new men had been made. Gentry trod on the coat-tails of aristocrats, and married their daughters. The great Harington domination of Jacobean Rutland had dissolved in debt. A lesser branch, the Noels of Ridlington, through a strategic marriage had inherited the titles and property of a London merchant. The Dukes of Buckingham, ennobled through the infatuation of the first Stuart king, lost their grand house at Burley, through debt and dissipation, to a family whose fortune had come from the law. Lyndon Hall was built, not out of inherited wealth but from profits earned by an astute eye for opportunity.

As England entered the modern age, establishment complacency, even in Rutland, would always be tempered by fear of rebellious voices. The new facade of elegant mansions and tranquil villages, so vividly portrayed in Wright's 1684 *History and Antiquities of the county of Rutland*, was built on memories of political upheaval. In its dedication 'to the Nobility and Gentry' of the county, Wright expressed the national and local mood: never again should the floodgates be allowed to open and the 'days of shaking' return.

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17. Petition of Thomas Waite, House of Lords Library

## The Haringtons of Exton: In the service of the Crown

Even before James I made his triumphant progress through Rutland in 1603, the Harington dynasty had enjoyed a century of dominance in the county community. Originating in Cumberland, members of the family had served several monarchs including Richard III, whose defeat at Bosworth led to the loss of Harington property. As branches of the family rose and fell, fortunes were rebuilt when one of many John Haringtons married the heiress of Exton, Rutland. She was Katherine Colepeper, who claimed the added distinction of descent from Robert Bruce, King of Scotland. Their grandson, John Harington, served King Henry VIII in several posts including Esquire of the Royal Body, becoming High Sheriff of Rutland in 1552, the year before his death. The family's acquisition of Exton was followed by the purchase of Horn and other Rutland estates, including the great manor of Burley on the Hill. Land was becoming more lucrative, at the expense of dispossessed labourers, as the midland rural economy was transformed by sheep farming. By the end of Elizabeth's reign, the Haringtons had accumulated one of the largest landed fortunes in England, yielding an income of between £5000 and £7000 per year.<sup>1</sup>

The wealth of the Haringtons of Exton was achieved through astute land purchases, strategic marriages and the rewards of public service. Under Elizabeth, Rutland saw a Harington serve as sheriff nine times, the family name appearing far more than any other. Of Elizabeth's ten parliaments, only two did not include one of the Exton Haringtons representing Rutland as one of the two Knights of the Shire.<sup>2</sup> By 1600 the extensive Harington estates in Rutland included Oakham Lordshold, Burley, Exton, Ridlington, Cottesmore, Stretton, Clipsham, Greetham, North Luffenham and Leighfield Forest, as well as valuable lands elsewhere in the midlands. The family stood poised to seize the opportunities for advancement offered when their remote relative, James Stuart, succeeded to the throne of England.

The great marriages of the Haringtons of Exton are told in the marble monuments of Exton Church. Kneeling devoutly against the north wall of the chancel, the figures of Sir James Harington (1523-91) and his wife, Lucy Sidney, testify to a fifty-year marriage which produced three sons and eight daughters. According to the Rutland historian James Wright, writing in the 1680s, from that marriage were descended eight dukes, three marquises, seventy earls, nine counts, seven viscounts and thirty-six barons.<sup>3</sup> Sir James and Lady Lucy worked hard to arrange advantageous alliances for their children. The marriage of one daughter, Mabella, to Sir Andrew Noel of Brooke, gave rise to the great Noel dynasty which was to supplant the Haringtons and dominate Rutland for over three centuries.

By 1570 a glittering match had taken place between the heir of Exton, John Harington (1540-1613) and Anne, daughter of Sir Robert Kelway, Surveyor of the Court of Wards. This brought the significant dowry of Combe Abbey, Warwickshire. Sir James Harington's wedding gift to his eldest son was the wealthy manor of Burley on the Hill, while at the same time he gave the lesser manor of Ridlington, Rutland, to his third son, James. The second son, Henry, strangely received no property from his father, gaining only the manor of Elmsthorpe, Leicestershire, by his own marriage. It is likely that some falling out in the family led to Henry's exile to join the military campaign to colonise and pacify Ireland. Serving in Ireland at the same time under the Earl of Essex was a cousin of the Rutland Haringtons, Sir John Harington of Kelston, described by Queen Elizabeth as her 'saucy poet, my godson'.<sup>4</sup> The poet's account of the campaign describes how following a defeat by the colourfully named Philim McPheogh, 'my cousin Sir Henry Harington, in a treacherous parley with Rorie Ogie, a notable rebel, was taken and conveyed to his habitation a prisoner'.<sup>5</sup>

While Henry Harington campaigned in Ireland, his younger brother James settled at Ridlington with his wife Frances Sapcote; eight sisters made convenient marriages and their parents lived on at Exton where they both died in the same year, 1591. Meanwhile the eldest brother, heir to the great estates, John Harington (1540-1613), lived magnificently with his wife Anne, at Burley, Coombe Abbey, or the Harington property in London. Their first son, Kelway Harington, died as a baby in December 1570. Eleven years later their first daughter was born in Stepney, possibly at the now vanished Prebend House, acquired from a Harington ancestor who had been Dean of York. At some stage the growing family was joined by Anne's father, who lived with them until his death in 1580, aged 84. One of the magnificent monuments in Exton Church shows the dead Sir Robert Kelway and his grandson the infant Kelway Harington, mourned by the kneeling figures of Sir John and Lady Anne Harington and their daughter Lucy. A second daughter, Frances, was followed in 1592 by the long awaited heir, a younger John Harington, also baptised in Stepney. Two years later, on 12 December 1594, Lucy Harington, aged 13, was married at Stepney to the 21 year old Earl of Bedford

In 1591, following the death of his parents, Sir John Harington inherited his father's great estates. Adding to his existing homes at Burley on the Hill and Coombe Abbey, he now possessed the recently rebuilt Exton Hall and other Rutland properties such as Clipsham Hall, where a surviving part of the older house bears the arms of Harington, on a panel dated 1582.<sup>6</sup> In keeping with his prominent status, Sir John Harington lived ostentatiously but generously: 'a bountiful housekeeper, dividing his hospitality between Rutland and Warwickshire, where he had a fair habitation'.<sup>7</sup> He had rebuilt his wife's dowry of Coombe Abbey, incorporating three sides of the monastic cloister into a magnificent house. However, Sir John's most magnificent home was at Burley on the Hill, purchased by his father from the Sapcote family between 1550 and 1562.<sup>8</sup>



*Ruins of the Old Hall, Exton,  
built by Sir James Harington before 1590*

In the last decade of Queen Elizabeth, Sir John had valuable friends and family connections at court. He was related through his mother to the Sidneys of Penshurst, while his cousin, Sir John Harington of Kelston, was a favourite of the Queen. The all-powerful Lord Burghley, whose house outside Stamford far exceeded the grand Harington homes in Rutland, was related by marriage. Shortly before his death in 1598, the septuagenarian Lord Burghley was found taking the waters at Bath with his kinsman, Sir John Harington.

The poet from Kelston wrote to Sir Hugh Portman:

I have been to visit the house which my Lord Treasurer doth occupy at the Bath, and found him and another cripple together, my cousin Sir John Harington of Exton; when it grieved me to see so much discretion, wisdom, and learning in peril of death.<sup>9</sup>



John, 1st Lord Harington of Exton and Lady Anne Harington: two figures from the monument to Robert Kelway in Exton

The bountiful hospitality, for which Sir John Harington was renowned, is described in some detail in an eyewitness account that survives among the Antony Bacon papers in Lambeth Palace Library.<sup>10</sup> A Huguenot refugee, Jacques Petit, had left the service of Antony Bacon in order to join the Harington household as French tutor to the three-year-old heir, also named John Harington. Just before Christmas 1595, Petit travelled to Rutland with the Haringtons' fourteen year old daughter and her new husband, the Earl of Bedford, to attend a great family party at Burley on the Hill. The Frenchman sent his former master a vivid account of the activities of the young couple, which included hunting in a four-horse carriage. He reported Sir John Harington's problems in meeting the costs of the massive dowry paid on his daughter's marriage, as well as lavish feasting and entertainment for his family and neighbours. Church services were held every morning and afternoon, with a different preacher each day. But the event which gives this Christmas

celebration at Burley wider significance is a recorded performance by the visiting Lord Chamberlain's Men, possibly including Shakespeare, of *Titus Andronicus*.

Petit compared the scale of Harington hospitality, over the twelve days of Christmas, with the royal court. Two hundred private guests dined in the refectory, while daily banquets were provided in the hall for eight or nine hundred country men and women. These were joined by Sir John, who regaled them, with excessive good cheer of all sorts of dishes and wines. His steward saw to it that the others lacked for nothing, having four or five long tables decked with food-stuffs for eighty or a hundred persons at a time. When these had finished, they made room for as many further persons and left. When everything was over, the poor were given bread and food in abundance so much so that when all were satisfied, there was still much food left.<sup>11</sup>

If this was a family celebration, how much more lavish must have been the entertainment provided for the first of many royal visits, in April 1603. Such overwhelming providence says much for Sir John's generosity, but is perhaps an early indication of the financial over-extension which contributed to the family's demise.

The end of the Tudor dynasty in 1603 did not bring an end to Harington fortunes. Even before the death of Elizabeth, Sir John Harington, no less than his poetic cousin, was keeping a weather eye open to the prospects for succession. As the Queen's life ebbed to its close, Christmas 1602 saw another noble gathering of Harington friends and family at Burley on the Hill.<sup>12</sup> The Earls of Rutland, Bedford and Pembroke were among the influential guests, no doubt discussing with wives and fellow-courtiers the best means of making an impression on the future king. The instant the expected news was announced, on 24 March 1603, Sir Robert Carey galloped to Scotland at break-neck speed to report the death of Queen Elizabeth and the fulfilment of Stuart expectations. At slightly slower speeds, others of importance or ambition headed north to greet the new dawn. Sir John Harington of Exton travelled with his younger brother James of Ridlington, who was knighted by the new king, James I, at Grimstone in Yorkshire.<sup>13</sup>

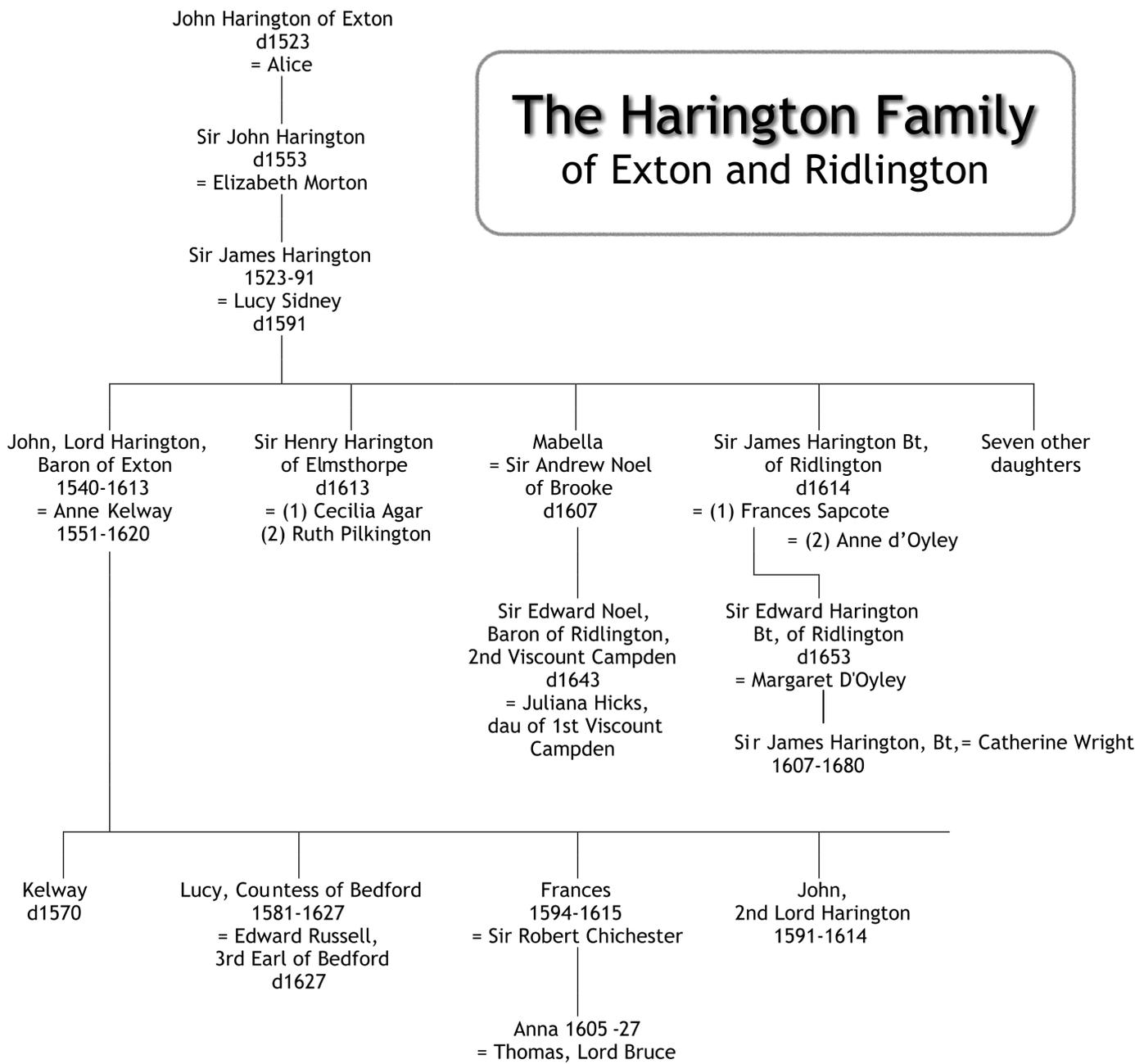
The Privy Council appointed a group of noble ladies to greet and attend on the new queen, Anna of Denmark. These plans were pre-empted by a more determined group of women who hastened to Scotland, intending to be first to present their services. Foremost among them were Lady Anne Harington and her daughter, Lucy, Countess of Bedford. The Harington ladies' warm protestations of service and allegiance were promptly rewarded, as they accompanied the queen on her journey into England. With the queen were the two eldest royal children, Henry, shortly to become Prince of Wales, born in 1594, and Princess Elizabeth, later Queen of Bohemia, born in 1597. The younger, sickly Prince Charles was left for a short time in Scotland. To the great interest of the English, this was the first royal family to be seen for fifty years. Among the select entourage, Lucy and her mother were quick to establish themselves as invaluable attendants. Dudley Carleton wrote to Lord Thomas Parry on 28 June:

Her court is very great of ladies and gentlewomen; but I hear of none she hath admitted to her Privy Chamber save the Lady Bedford, who was sworn of the Privy Chamber in Scotland, and Lady Kildare, to whom she hath given the government of the Princess.<sup>14</sup>

However, Lady Kildare did not for long retain the guardianship of Princess Elizabeth. Her husband, Lord Cobham, was implicated in Catholic plots against the new king and the unfortunate lady was replaced by two more trusted guardians, Lucy's parents, Sir John and Lady Harington.

The Haringtons of Exton were both made and unmade by the first Stuart king. On the way to his new capital, King James was their guest: within weeks of his accession the family from Rutland had become inextricably linked to the house of Stuart. On Coronation Day, 11 July 1603, Sir John Harington was created Baron, with the title Lord Harington of Exton. The new Lord and Lady Harington remained guardians of Princess Elizabeth for the next decade until her marriage. Their daughter Lucy, Countess of Bedford, was bosom friend and chief attendant of the queen: their son an intimate friend of the Prince of Wales. Yet only ten years later, England was to lose her golden prince and the Haringtons would lose in one year a father, son and two uncles. The vast fortune, expended so readily in royal service and hospitality, would turn to debt; the great estates would be broken up and sold. In the civil wars of the mid-century, another offshoot of the house of Harington would survive to fight against the Stuart monarchy to which members of the Exton branch devoted their lives.

# The Harington Family of Exton and Ridlington



However, in the new dawn of 1603 both Stuart and Harington dynasties appeared unshakeable. On 19 October 1603, an order under the privy seal gave Lord Harington charge of Princess Elizabeth, with an annual pension of £1500 to cover the costs, plus additional approved expenses:

And further, where by the said agreement, it appeareth that there be other charges requisite for our said daughter, namely her remove now to his house, and hereafter, if there shall be occasion, to remove her to any other house other than his houses - for her apparel, for wages of teachers and servants, rewards, alms, and for a coach and horses for her use...<sup>15</sup>

For the following years, State papers record spasmodic settling of additional accounts, such as the warrant of 9 December 1603 to pay the wages due to the Lady Elizabeth's servants, as well as the increase of the annual payment to £2500, on 28 May 1608. Lord and Lady Harington now made their main home at Coombe Abbey, largely turning aside from public life to devote themselves to the care of the young princess. In February 1604/5 Lord Harington was granted a licence to be absent from parliament on account of his charge of the princess.<sup>16</sup>

Separation from parents and siblings was an occupational hazard for royal children. The new Prince of Wales had been brought up away from the Scottish court under the guardianship of the Earl of Mar, until, when he was nine years old, his father succeeded to the throne of England. This separation had caused great distress to his mother and discord within the royal marriage. Now, after a few months of sharing a household with her brother Prince Henry at Oatlands, it was the six-year-old Princess Elizabeth's turn to leave her family. Lord Harington was ordered:

not to attempt to make the princess a Latin or Greek scholar (as had been usual for women, especially those of high birth, in the preceding age), but to endeavour to make her truly wise by instructing her thoroughly in religion, and by giving her a general idea of history.<sup>17</sup>

In placing his daughter under the tutelage of Lord Harington, King James was ensuring that she would be strictly brought up in the reformed protestant religion. James took a deep interest in the religious affairs of his new kingdom, and in the first months of his reign had encouraged hopes of a new toleration for Roman Catholics. His mother had been the Catholic Queen of Scots and his wife, Anna of Denmark, was a recent convert to Catholicism. However, James's aversion to religious persecution was tempered by real and perceived threats to his authority. In the first year of his reign Catholic-led schemes later named 'the treason of the bye' and 'the treason of the main' involved demands for greater toleration and a wildly audacious plan to remove King James and his family in favour of Lady Arbella Stuart. Within a year Catholic priests were once again banished and fines for recusancy re-imposed. Protestant bishops, regarded by James as a bulwark of his throne, were urged to apply more care and diligence in winning souls for God. Public sermons were encouraged, while the king not only selected preachers and texts for the regular court sermons but also invited preachers to attend him at dinner. It was remarked that, in debating points of religion with these clerics, the king 'was as pleasant and fellow-like in all those discourses as with his huntsmen in the field'.<sup>18</sup>

The learned King James had many ambitions for wise government of his new British realm. Seeing himself as peacemaker both at home and abroad, he initiated the Hampton Court Conference, held early in 1604. His grand aim was to settle disagreements in the Church of England by allowing puritan ministers to raise issues of concern with Anglican bishops and Privy Councillors. Puritan discontent had increased under Elizabeth, with many believing that the English Reformation had not been fully completed as long as symbols and rituals of the Catholic church were retained. Many puritans subscribed to the Calvinist doctrine of predestination and wished for simpler forms of church service with stricter observance of the Sabbath. By hearing their grievances, James intended to limit dissent and strengthen royal and episcopal authority. Despite the far-reaching decision of this conference to commission a new translation of the Bible, the king found himself increasingly provoked by the uncompromising intensity of the puritans. Royal debate degenerated into unseemly 'upbraidings' described by Sir John Harington of Kelston: the King 'bid them away with their snivelling. Moreover he wished those who would take away the surplice might want linen for their own breeches'.<sup>19</sup> But while puritans were prepared to conform to the canons of the Church of England, they could be offered limited tolerance as an energetic and godly, if occasionally inconvenient, vanguard of the Church. Many remained in positions of influence: it was only in the reign of James's son, Charles I, that such tremors of religious discord increased dramatically, to shake and ultimately destroy the stability of Church and Crown.

Despite their aristocratic lifestyle, Lord Harington and his family, loyal servants of the Crown, were among those regularly identified as puritans. In 1587 the puritan minister, Robert Johnson, had founded in Rutland the Free Grammar Schools of Oakham and Uppingham. Among the 24 governors of these schools were Sir James Harington, who died in 1591, with his son, Sir (Later Lord) John Harington, and his son-in-law Andrew Noel. A fellow-governor was Thomas Cecil, son of Lord Burghley and brother of the king's chief minister, Robert Cecil.<sup>20</sup> Both the Cecils and Haringtons had been responsible for placing Puritan clergy in their areas of influence, such as Henry Hargreaves, former chaplain of Sir John Harington, who held several Rutland livings. In 1603 Lord Harington appointed a new chaplain, who would serve as tutor to Princess Elizabeth: a Puritan schoolmaster from Coventry, John Tovey.

To the devoted care of the new Lord and Lady Harington, the six-year-old Princess Elizabeth was now committed. The change of surroundings must have proved painful at first. Letters written soon afterwards express the close bond with her adored brother, Prince Henry: 'esteeming that time happiest when I enjoyed your company, and desiring nothing more than the fruition of it again...'<sup>21</sup>

Her father was addressed with a more respectful affection:

Most gracious sovereign and dear father, this gentleman, Mr Harington's return to the court gave me a well pleasing opportunity to present your majesty with this paper, the messenger of my most humble duty to your highness, thinking it, I confess, infinitely long since I was so happy as to enjoy your presence, which, though I dare not presume to desire, I know nothing I would so gladly obtain. And so, humbly craving your majesty's blessing, I will ever continue, Your majesty's most obedient daughter, Elizabeth.<sup>22</sup>

The tranquil life of Princess Elizabeth in her first two years at Coombe Abbey is recorded in '*Memoirs Relating to the Queen of Bohemia by One of her Ladies*', which survives in a printed fragment ending in 1605, now in the Bodleian Library. Her upbringing was shared with five daughters of noble families including Lady Anne Dudley, Lord Harington's niece; Lady Lucy Percy; and the writer of the *Memoirs*, probably a member of the Erskine family. They attended daily morning and evening prayers, with instruction in religion, writing, dancing, French Italian and music. Lord Harington introduced history and geography through games with picture cards, and allowed the children to gaze at insects through a new microscope or the stars through his own telescope. He personally demonstrated how, as Copernicus had proved, the earth moved around the sun, in apparent contradiction to Biblical references to the movement of the sun around the earth. Harington's wise approach to a literal reading of the Old Testament is recorded in the words of the princess's companion: 'Nothing contrary to Scriptural truth need be inferred from these modes of expression, which were merely used as accommodated to people's perception'.<sup>23</sup>

In rooms which overlooked the parterre, cascade, canal and river, with woods on the right hand, the princess lived in state, served by her own retinue of servants. These included her nurse, Mistress Alison Hay, as well as footmen, bed-chamber women, a French lady's maid, grooms and other attendants. Elizabeth kept many pets, birds and rare animals, on the miniature estate and farm where she played as Queen. Just as her father, she passionately enjoyed hunting, having ample opportunity on her guardian's estates. She was allowed to visit all the young ladies of the neighbouring nobility and gentry, while they were admitted to her court twice every week. Always eager to dispense gifts and purchase curiosities, Elizabeth regularly exceeded her allowance. The *Memoirs* record several examples of her youthful extravagance, which the writer blames on the influence of Lord Harington's daughter Lucy:

one of the most accomplished and learned young women in England, but fantastic, affected and extravagantly profuse in expenditure. It is to be feared that she imbued the Princess with no little of the latter ill quality, notwithstanding the earnest manner in which it will be found Lord Harington laboured to eradicate this dangerous tendency from the mind of his royal charge.<sup>24</sup>

Highlights of this secluded life must have included the local excursions which allowed Princess Elizabeth to rehearse her future regal role. Nichols records a visit to Coventry on 3 April 1604, when the young Princess arrived in a carriage escorted by Lord and Lady Harington and her entourage. They were met by the Mayor and aldermen in scarlet gowns; the mayor kissed the royal hand and the party was escorted to St Michael's Church to hear a sermon. The Princess dined in state in St Mary's Hall, after which:

Lord Harington, the mayor, with the rest of the ladies and gentlemen then dined. The mayor afterwards presented to the princess a silver cup, double gilt, which cost the city £29.16s.8d.<sup>25</sup>

Although living away from London, Lord Harington was not forgotten by the king. Meeting the poet Sir John Harington of Kelston at court in January 1605, James, in much good humour asked "if I was cousin to Lord Harington of Exton". I humbly replied "His Majesty did me much honour in enquiring my kin to one whom he had so late honoured and made a Baron... We were both branches of the same tree".<sup>26</sup>

This younger John Harington is now remembered as the translator of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, as well as miscellaneous writings ranging *The Metamorphosis of Ajax or A-jakes*, a satirical work announcing the invention of a flushing water closet, to an entertaining account of his dog Bungy.<sup>27</sup> He provides eye-witness accounts of over-indulgence at court, encouraged by the visit in 1606 of the Queen's brother, King Christian of Denmark:

I think the Dane hath strangely wrought on our good English Nobles, for those, whom I never could get to taste good liquor, now follow the fashion and wallow in beastly delights. The Ladies abandon their sobriety and are seen to roll about in intoxication...<sup>28</sup>

In total contrast to this disreputable scene, the courtly poet describes the more serious concerns of his country cousin: Lord Harington of Exton doth much fatigue himself with the royal charge of the Princess Elizabeth, and midst all the foolery of these times, hath much labour to preserve his own wisdom and sobriety.<sup>29</sup>

After two years of relatively quiet responsibility, Lord John's royal guardianship was severely tested, in the most threatening episode of the new king's reign. Etched in the English folk memory, the Gunpowder Plot of November 1605 conjures up immediate and ominous images of barrels secreted under the old Houses of Parliament. A less well-known part of the scheme was the conspirators' plan to kidnap the young Princess Elizabeth and proclaim her Queen, having blown up the king and his heir at the opening of Parliament. While another Rutland landowner, the Catholic Sir Everard Digby, was scheming to overthrow the protestant government, its staunchest defender, Lord Harington of Exton, was anxiously protecting his precious charge. The plot was foiled by a mysterious letter of warning to Lord Monteagle, followed by the discovery and arrest of Guy Fawkes. Meanwhile Digby, spearheading the operation in the midlands, continued to rally supporters at Dunchurch in a desperate and foolhardy attempt to seize a royal hostage by capturing the princess from Coombe Abbey. Hearing of the unexplained seizure of horses in the neighbourhood and fearing some threat to his charge, Lord Harington wrote anxiously on 6 November, seeking instructions from the King's chief minister, Salisbury:

'It cannot be but some great rebellion is at hand'.<sup>30</sup> The next day, two hours before the rebels arrived, he left Combe Abbey with Princess Elizabeth, placing her in safe-keeping in Coventry while he and Sir Fulke Greville besieged the conspirators at Holbeach.

The crushing of the conspiracy, though successful, took its toll on Lord Harington. Two months later, on 6 January 1606, he wrote to his cousin Sir John Harington:

I am not yet recovered of the fever occasioned by these disturbances. I went with Sir Fulk Grevile to alarm the neighbourhood and surprize the villains, who came to Holbach; was out five days in peril of death, in fear for the great charge I left at home. Wynter hath confessed their design to surprize the Princess at my house, if their wickedness had taken place at London. Some of them say, she would have been proclaimed Queen. Her Highness doth often say, "What a Queen should I have been by this means? I had rather been with my Royal father in the Parliament-house, than wear his Crown on such condition." This poor Lady hath not yet recovered the surprize, and is very ill and troubled.

... My son is now with Prince Henry, from whom I hope he will gain great advantage, from such towardly genius as he hath even at these years. May Heaven guard this Realm from all such future designs, and keep us in peace and safety!<sup>31</sup>

The frivolous atmosphere of court was temporarily shaken. Yet, despite confirmation of his worst fears of conspiracy, King James saw no need to impose a more serious tone. Sir John Harington of Kelston wrote to Mr Secretary Barlow in 1606:

I will now, in good sooth, declare to you, who will not blab, that the gunpowder fright is got out of all our heads, and we are going on, hereabouts, as if the devil was contriving every man should blow himself up, by wild riot, excess, and devastation of time and temperance.<sup>32</sup>

Princess Elizabeth remained under the sober and secluded protection of Lord and Lady Harington until around the Christmas of 1608, when she was twelve years old. Most of the preceding five years had been spent at Coombe Abbey, but there must also have been periods at Exton, and perhaps Burley. The avenue in Exton Park known as 'The Queen of Bohemia's Drive' is a surviving witness to this tradition. In 1904 *The Rutland Magazine* published a charming article describing the 'many relics' of the Princess which then remained in the Noel family at Exton.<sup>33</sup> As well as portraits, these included two large state bedsteads, a pair of her gloves, a carved ivory stay-bone and the celebrated Flemish cabinet given to her on her marriage, which sadly is no longer at Exton. Meanwhile at Coombe Abbey, then owned by the Earl of Craven, Mrs Green observed in the late 19th century: 'the pictures and statues which fill every niche of what may almost be termed the temple of the Queen of Bohemia'.<sup>34</sup>

But the throne of Bohemia was still a distant prospect for Elizabeth, who returned to her father's court with rooms of her own at Whitehall and Kew. She continued to benefit from the care and guidance of Lord Harington, while enjoying once more the pleasures of court life and the company of her siblings. Before her permanent return to her family, Elizabeth had been summoned to London for the occasional excitement of a royal public appearance. In July 1606, with her younger brother Prince Charles, she greeted her uncle King Christian of Denmark on the steps of Greenwich Palace, before escorting him and her father to visit Queen Anne, mourning the death of her infant daughter. Three years later:

The King, Queen, Prince, the Lady Elizabeth and the Duke of York, with divers great lords, and many others, came to the Tower to see a trial of the lion's single valour against a great fierce bear which had killed a child that was negligently left in the bear house.<sup>35</sup>

A less disturbing public appearance must have been the attendance of the King, Queen, Prince Henry and Princess Elizabeth at the launch of a new ship, the *Prince Royal* on 24 September 1610.<sup>36</sup>

Following her return to London, Elizabeth's more frequent excursions with her brother Prince Henry added to the pressures on her guardian's time and energy. In October 1609 Lord Harington wrote to Salisbury from Kew, apologising for not bringing personally his book of accounts for the Princess Elizabeth: 'the Prince often calling for her to ride with him necessitates his own constant attendance'. In addition, Harington could not avoid the occasional, necessary attention to his Rutland estates.: in 1610 he sent a request to Salisbury for twenty oaks to build a new lodge in Leighfield Forest; he would 'bear the rest of the expense himself out of care for the King's deer'.<sup>37</sup>

Among the retinue of Elizabeth's adored brother Henry must often have been her guardian's son, the young John Harington, created Knight of the Bath in January 1604. While Lord and Lady Harington were given the care of Princess Elizabeth, their son, born in 1592 and two years older than the prince, was included in the household of Henry, Prince of Wales. A small academy of aristocratic youths was established by the king to study with Prince Henry under the tutelage of Adam Newton: not all proved to be an ideal influence on the heir to the throne. One was the son of Sir Robert Sidney, a relation of the Haringtons, created Viscount Lisle in June 1605. In August 1605:

Master Sidney, son of Lord Lisle, that was with the Prince, hath stabbed his schoolmaster with a knife, for offering to whip him, so dangerously that as it is thought he cannot live. The king, when he was told of it, was very much displeased and gave commandment presently that he should be discharged from attending on the prince any longer.<sup>38</sup>

In 1607 the young John Harington attended Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, founded by his father's aunt and renowned for puritan associations. There he became proficient in logic, philosophy, mathematics and four languages.<sup>39</sup> As others of the prince's academy also left for the universities, Prince Henry retained three close friends:

Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, later commander of parliament's forces against Charles I; William Cecil, Lord Cranborne, later second Earl of Salisbury; and John Harington, later for less than a year the second Lord Harington of Exton.<sup>40</sup> This long-lasting companionship is shown in a portrait of Prince Henry in 1603, by Robert Peake, with John Harington accompanying the prince in a carefully posed hunting scene. A similar painting now at Hampton Court Palace shows the young Earl of Essex in an identical supporting pose, the figures identified by coats of arms strategically placed. In addition to this painting, Harington is shown in three engravings: 'the only young aristocrat of his generation to enter this popular medium, which is a fair index of how important he was regarded'.<sup>41</sup> He was described by Sir James Whitelock as 'the most complete young gentleman of his age this kingdom could afford for religion, learning and courteous behaviour'.<sup>42</sup> The quality most noticed by all observers of the young John Harington was his piety, rigidly exercised in his private habits:

At the close of every week he examined himself, what progress he had made in virtue and goodness, and what fault he had committed during the course of it; and kept an exact diary of his life. His liberality to the distressed was no less remarkable than his humanity and affability to all.<sup>43</sup>

One courtly delight John Harington probably avoided was the temptation of female enticement. His cousin and namesake, the witty poet, left a sobering description of a youth who:

...kept himself undefiled as Lot in the midst of Sodom... He spent not his time in courting of Ladies, and amorously contemplating the beauty of women, which are bellows of lust and baits of uncleanness.<sup>44</sup>

It is possible that his master, the Prince of Wales, was less successful in resisting female charms. A mysterious letter to Henry's tutor sent from Kew on 3 August 1608 and signed 'Haryngton', hints at a liaison with an unnamed lady whom the Prince 'may meet in the days and part at night ... and shame many tongues that might depend on the other course'. The writer recognises 'the comforts they conceive in each others company, and will be readier to further all occasions may draw them together...'<sup>45</sup> Speculation may suggest the lady to be Frances, Countess of Essex. The breakdown of her arranged marriage three years later was said to be due in part to her flirtation with her husband's friend, the Prince of Wales.<sup>46</sup>

Among the wide-ranging interests of Prince Henry was an interest in foreign countries, but fears for the heir's safety prevented him joining any of his court companions on their youthful travels. The 'Grand Tour' was an opportunity for young aristocrats to complete and broaden their education, frequently expanding their families' art collections in the process. Following their arranged marriages, the Prince's friends Essex and Cranborne were each sent with tutors and entourage to travel in Europe. Both communicated with the Prince in lengthy letters which must only have emphasised his isolated position. Late in 1608 it was the turn of the as yet unmarried Sir John Harington. He promised the Prince:

...to keep an exact journal of his travels for the amusement of his Highness; concluding, that he carried about him day and night in his bosom, and should for ever do so, and often kissed, that ring, which the Prince had presented to him, and which he esteemed as a mark of His Highness's singular favour, in which he placed the height of all his fortunes.<sup>47</sup>

With his father's chaplain, Master Tovey, as his tutor and guide, John Harington travelled through Basle and Heidelberg, where he attended lectures of the universities, to Florence. He wrote to the Prince in Latin, as was his habit, 'under the greatest anxiety imaginable, by reason that he had not, for eleven weeks past, received, as he used, any letters from his father and mother, nor heard of His Highness's health.' Doubtful whether the posts and messengers would deliver it safely, he enclosed a book for the Prince which reported the recent Medici wedding celebrations.<sup>48</sup>

As he approached Venice, Harington's reputation went before him. Preparing the ground for sixteen-year-old's presentation at the Venetian court, the English Ambassador, Sir Henry Wotton, described Harington to the Doge in the most glowing terms:

The sister of this young gentleman, the Countess of Bedford, is the Queen's favourite maid-of-honour; and the Princess, her Majesty's only daughter, is brought up at the house of Lord Harington, father of the youth, whose mother is governess to the Princess. Add to this that it is thought certain that the young man will marry Lord Salisbury's only daughter, and being the right eye of the Prince of Wales, the world holds that he will one day govern the Kingdom. I wish to say that his personal merits fall not short of all the rest that I have enumerated; he is learned in philosophy, has Latin and Greek to perfection, is handsome, well made as any man could be, at least among us. The better to serve his Sovereign, he desires some knowledge of the world, and at great pains he has obtained leave to be abroad a year...

I must add this story to show your Serenity how prudent he is. When the Prince, with tears in his eyes, took him to the King to ask leave of absence, his Majesty said to him "What hast thou done, John," - that is his name, - "that thou art so master of the Prince's favour - tell me what art hast thou used? Not flattery, that belongeth not to thy age," to which he replied "Holy Majesty, not with flattery, which I know not how to use, have I won his Highness's love, but by truth, of which, as your Majesty's true son, his Highness is the lover."<sup>49</sup>

In response to John Harington's frequent and often erudite letters, the prince sent a reply carried by his servant Sir Robert Douglas, who was travelling abroad. To his older friend Henry wrote on 4 March 1609 a gracious acknowledgement in French:

My little Knight, these lines may assure you of my acceptance of your letters, and the testimonies of your zeal for my service, and of the satisfaction, which I have in hearing from all parts of your care and diligence to furnish yourself with all the qualifications proper for deserving my favour; of which you will never have reason to doubt, if you continue in the course of virtue and good learning, which you have so happily begun; and which I recommend to you for the future, as the means of preserving you always in my esteem, and making me your good friend and master.<sup>50</sup>

Letters to the prince at home became a matter of competition between the former fellow-students. In June 1609 the Earl of Salisbury wrote to his son, the less conscientious Viscount Cranborne, reporting that every week he was shown by the prince the latest detailed and informative letter from Sir John Harington. However, it is possible that even Prince Henry found lengthy Latin missives somewhat exhausting, writing more informally to Harington in English:

My Good Fellow, I have here sent you certain matters of ancient sort, which I gained by search in a musty vellum book in my fathers closet, and as it hath great mention of your ancestry, I hope it will not meet your displeasure. It gave me some pains to read, and some to write also; but I have a pleasure in over-reaching difficult matters. When I see you, and let that be shortly, you will find me your better at Tennis and Pike.

Good fellow, I rest your friend, Henry.

Note - Your Latin epistle I much esteem, and will at leisure give answer to.<sup>51</sup>

The appearance in Catholic countries of such a devout protestant Englishman clearly attracted attention. His relation Sir John Harington of Kelston, reflecting anti-Catholic paranoia of the time, ominously observed:

How dangerous a thing it is for religious gentlemen to travel into these Popish countries may appear by the example of this Nobleman and his Tutor whose sound religion and heavenly zeal for the truth, being taken notice of by the Jesuits, they took their opportunity to administer a slow-working poison to them, that, seeing they had no hopes of corrupting their minds, they might destroy their bodies, and bring them to their graves. Of this poison Mr Tovey, being aged, and so less able to encounter with the strength of it, died presently after his return to England, but the Lord Harington, being of a strong and able body, and in the prime of his age, bore it better, and conflicted with it longer; yet the violence of it appeared in his face presently after his return, and not long after, hastened his death.<sup>52</sup>

Whatever caused the death of Mr Tovey, John Harington and his master Prince Henry appeared to have their lives ahead of them. Harington's puritan zeal was strengthened by his experiences:

After his return from his travels, by way of thankfulness to God, he gave yearly, by the hand of a private friend, twenty pounds to the poor... Yea, such were he his bowels of tender mercy that he gave a tenth part of his yearly allowance, which was a thousand pounds, to pious and charitable uses...<sup>53</sup>

For the remaining four years of his life, John Harington combined attendance at court and aristocratic recreation such as 'riding the great horse', perhaps in the new Riding School built by Prince Henry at St James's Palace, with private devotions and attendance at public sermons twice a day. 'If his occasions cast him into a place where the Word was not preached, he would ride to some other place, many miles, rather than want it'.<sup>54</sup>

To a nation who saw Jesuits in every corner, Henry, Prince of Wales, was perceived as the ideal protestant Renaissance prince. Religion was a crucial factor in every projected marriage. In 1612 Henry wrote to his father regarding a proposed marriage to a French princess: 'By bringing her over sooner there will be greater likelihood of converting her to our religion'.<sup>55</sup> However, the first royal marriage of the new dynasty was to be that of Princess Elizabeth, as she attained independence of her Harington guardians.

In the years up to 1612, while Lord and Lady Harington maintained a watchful, continuing care over the lively Princess Elizabeth, and their son was in constant attendance on her brother Prince Henry, their daughter, Lucy Countess of Bedford was a shining star of the Stuart court. Married in 1594 at the age of thirteen, to the twenty-one year old Earl of Bedford, Lucy had already attracted literary attention. Growing up in Warwickshire she had met, and possibly been tutored by, the poet Michael Drayton, who dedicated several of his works to the young Lucy before achieving wider prominence. His early devotion to her virtue and beauty, however, became more muted as the Countess of Bedford was moved by greater poets and failed to respond to Drayton's appeals as generously as expected. Works of every literary genre were dedicated to her, including a treatise on predestination and a translation of Montaigne's *Essays* by John Florio, who praised her knowledge of Italian, French and Spanish, and her encouragement of this work, competed while he resided with the Haringtons.<sup>56</sup> Ben Jonson addressed epigrams to 'Lucy the bright', while George Chapman sent her his translation of the *Iliad* in 1598 with a sonnet 'to the right noble patroness and grace of virtue, the Countess of Bedford'.<sup>57</sup>

The Earl of Bedford's debilitating debts and banishment from court, following his foolhardy association with Essex's rebellion of 1601, were no barrier to Lucy's success. Declining to share her husband's rural seclusion, Lucy with her mother Lady Harington assiduously cultivated the Scottish court-in-waiting and presented themselves to the new Queen Anna as soon as the transfer of power was confirmed. Lucy's beauty, wit and charismatic charm made her an instant success and she soon overcame aristocratic female rivalry to become Anna's favourite lady-in-waiting. As such she became, apart from the Queen, 'the most important patroness of the Jacobean court ... a power to be reckoned with in the disposition of offices, the arrangement of marriages, and the shaping of Jacobean cultural life'.<sup>58</sup> One of the major Elizabethan poets, probably known to the Haringtons as the brother-in-law of John Florio, was Samuel Daniel. In 1603 he composed a lengthy *Panegyric Congratulatory* to celebrate the new King's stay at Burley on the Hill. Published with this royal accolade was a verse letter addressed to Lucy, in which he praised in fulsome terms her beauty, virtue, and especially learning:

... And therefore in a course that best became  
The clearness of your heart, and best commends  
Your worthy pow'rs, you run the rightest way  
That is on earth, that can true glory give;  
By which when all consumes, your fame shall live.<sup>59</sup>

His influential new patroness was able to recommend Samuel Daniel to Queen Anna, as creator of the Royal Masque for Christmas, 1604: *The Vision of Twelve Goddesses*, dedicated to the Countess of Bedford. In this extravagant entertainment, performed by members of the court, the Queen appeared as Pallas Athene, flanked by Juno and Venus. The Countess of Bedford appeared as Vesta, Goddess of Religion, robed in white and gold, carrying a book and burning lamp. Many of the costumes had been obtained with the King's consent from the great store of 500 jewelled dresses of Queen Elizabeth I, stored in the Tower of London.<sup>60</sup> However, Daniel's plodding masque did not bring further employment in this field. For the next eight years Countess Lucy was a regular performer in court masques, now fantastically devised in collaboration by Ben Jonson and Inigo Jones. These included *The Masque of Blackness* and its sequel *The Masque of Beauty*, in which Lucy's sister Frances also performed, as well as the wedding masque for the Earl of Essex in 1606. Lucy was painted by John De Critz in her costume for this masque, described by Jonson as 'full of glory; as having in it the most true impression of a celestial figure'.<sup>61</sup> Inigo Jones's sketch of her more revealing, martial costume for the role of the Amazon Queen, Penthesileia, in the 1609 performance of *Masque of Queenes*, survives in the Devonshire Collection at Chatsworth House.

As active in her family's interests as she was at court, Lucy sought to promote the marriage of her brother John with the daughter of Robert Cecil, a match which was still confidently expected by the Ambassador to Venice in 1609. However, in 1605 Cecil was proving resistant, as he reported to Lord Harington:

Your noble daughter ... is made of a better mould to discern truth and report it than many others in this place, but yet I have not hid it from herself, that I have found her so absolutely fixed upon a resolution to allow of no reason which she finds not justly concurrent with your satisfaction.<sup>62</sup>

Lucy's continuing interest in matchmaking was regularly thwarted, for example in September 1614 by the death of her young relative, Frances Markham, shortly before the marriage carefully planned for her. Never daunted, in 1621 Lucy complained of the 'scurvy dealing' of her brother-in-law, Sir Robert Chichester, who 'hath broken up the match betwixt his daughter, and my Lord of Arran, which drives me to play my game another way than I had laid my cards, and will hold me a Londoner to the end of the next term'.<sup>63</sup> Lucy's niece, Anne Chichester, married instead Lord Thomas Bruce, dying in the same year as her aunt, aged 22, following the birth of her son. With the Harington family she too has her monument in Exton Church.

While Lucy, Countess of Bedford, attended the queen at court, most of her time must have been spent at the London home of her husband's family, Bedford House. This was one of several aristocratic houses, such as Arundel House and Somerset House, built along the Strand and close to the great river highway. Her own family home in London was Harington House, where in her later years she spent increasing amounts of time. This house may have been near Bishopsgate although knowledge of its precise location has been lost. Lucy also made regular visits to her family home in Rutland, writing to her close friend Jane, Lady Cornwallis, in September 1614, of her hopes:

... to have entreated you to have made a journey to Exton to have been my guest; but, because I could not set a certain day for my going with you, I deferred my writing to you till I came into the country, where within 8 days the King overtook me; against whose coming, and during his stay at my house, all my time and little wit was so taken up about the business of housekeeping as it made me lay all else aside.<sup>64</sup>

However, some time around 1608, as Princess Elizabeth returned to court and the youthful John Harington departed on his European travels, Lucy took up residence at Twickenham. Formerly the site of Syon Abbey, Twickenham Park had previously been leased to Francis Bacon, author of *The Advancement of Learning* (1605) and newly appointed Solicitor General to James I. The 16th century house was reported to have very small rooms, although an 18th century visitor observed, shortly before its demolition in 1805, that it contained 'several handsome apartments and a noble staircase'. Always a figure of fashion and influence, by moving to a more rural, riverside location west of London, Lucy began a trend which saw many upper class families building elegant homes in this area as the Stuart period progressed.<sup>65</sup> Lucy's assistant in acquiring the Twickenham estate was Sir Henry Goodere of Polesworth Abbey, MP for Coventry and former employer of the poet Michael Drayton. Goodere was one of the circle of courtiers, artists and writers whom the countess gathered around her, emulating the salon of her illustrious Sidney kinswoman, the Countess of Pembroke.

By a fortunate coincidence, a close friend of Goodere, then living close by at Mitcham, was John Donne - wit, poet and later preacher of audacious brilliance. Donne was in desperate need of patrons, since his marriage to Ann More had brought disgrace, penury and a growing family. Probably introduced by Goodere, Donne was soon a frequent visitor at Twickenham where he found the intellectual encouragement and practical assistance of an influential patron. Among Donne's letters of eloquent, flattering appeal to public figures and private friends, several are addressed to the Countess of Bedford, such as the following, written in 'a sudden raging sickness':

... Since this letter hath my name, and hand, and words, and thoughts, be content to think it me, and to give it leave thus to speak to you, though you vouchsafe not to speak to it again. It shall tell you truly (for from me it sucked no levin [lightning] of flattery) with what height or rather lowness of devotion I reverence you: who besides the commandment of a noble birth, and your persuasive eloquence of beauty, have the advantage of the furniture of arts and languages, and such other virtues as might serve to justify a reprobate fortune and the lowest condition: so that if these things whereby some few others are named are made worthy, are to you but ornaments, such might be left without leaving you unperfect. To that treasure of your virtues whereof your fair eyes' courtesy is not the least jewel I present this paper: and if it be not too much boldness in it my excuse of not visiting you. and so kindly kissing your fair hand that vouchsafes the receipt of these lines I take leave.<sup>66</sup>

Donne's second daughter was named for her godmother, Countess Lucy, to whom frequent allusions are made in Donne's poetry. The lover's lament of 'Twickenham Garden' is set in the 'true Paradise' of her estate, while the title of 'A Nocturnal upon S. Lucies Day' pays the Countess a graceful compliment. At times hyperbole verges on idolatry, as in this example from several verse letters 'To the Countess of Bedford':

Madame,  
Reason is our Soul's left hand, Faith her right,  
By these we reach divinity, that's you;  
Their loves, who have the blessings of your light,  
Grew from their reason, mine from fair faith grew...  
But soon, the reasons why you're lov'd by all,  
Grow infinite, and so pass reason's reach,  
Then back again to'implicit faith I fall,  
And rest on what the Catholic voice doth teach;  
That you are good: and not one Heretic  
Denies it: if he did, yet you are so.  
For rocks, which high top'd and deep rooted stick,  
Waves wash, not undermine, nor overthrow...  
Since you are then God's masterpiece, and so  
His factor for our loves; do as you do,  
Make your return home gracious; and bestow  
This life on that; so make one life of two.  
For so God help me, I would not miss you there  
For all the good which you can do me here.<sup>67</sup>

Donne clearly admired Lucy's intellectual abilities as well as her piety, and his letters provide evidence that she had written poems which do not survive. Only one exists, from 1609, which was later regarded as good enough to be attributed to Donne himself. It answers Donne's elegy to Cecilia Bulstrode, alluding to his well-known Holy Sonnet X, which she would have seen in manuscript:

Death be not proud, thy hand gave not this blow,  
Sin was her captive, whence thy power doth flow  
... Weep not, nor grudge then, to have lost her sight,  
Taught thus, our after stay's but a short night:  
But by all souls not by corruption choked  
Let in high rais'd notes that power be invoked.  
Calm the rough seas, by which she sails to rest,  
From sorrows here, to a kingdom ever blest;  
And teach this hymn of her with joy, and sing,  
*The grave no conquest gets, Death hath no sting.*<sup>68</sup>

The confident faith expressed in this poem was to be a necessary comfort to Lucy in a life of constant sickness and bereavement. The Earl and Countess of Bedford had no children, having lost a son at one month in 1602 and a daughter after two hours in 1610. The couple lived virtually separate lives, and Lucy's letters make little mention of her husband. The warm, informal and very human letters written to her friend Jane, Lady Cornwallis, provide a vivid account of the life and daily concerns of the Countess of Bedford, but have fuelled the controversy which surrounds her reputation. Blamed in an early memoir for her allegedly extravagant influence on Princess Elizabeth, Lucy has been condemned by a more recent historian of the Harington family:

Her comments reflect the mind of an observer almost wholly concerned with scandal and petty intrigue; utterly incapable of embracing anything that was noble or creative in the life that surrounded her... She shone without lustre... she possessed only riches.<sup>69</sup>

Yet Lucy encouraged the sermons of John Donne as well as his poetry, sharing in the deeper spiritual concerns of her age as well as the glittering superficiality of the Jacobean court. Married at thirteen, and burdened with her husband's debts in addition to those she would inherit, Lucy was a faithful friend and loving daughter who has been seen as the 'Idea' of a Jacobean female courtier and patron, reflecting in her various images 'the same distinctive qualities: glamour, power, strength of mind, learning, with and earnest Calvinism'.<sup>70</sup>

In November, 1612 serious illness struck the Countess of Bedford. Lord Dorset wrote to Sir Thomas Edmonds: 'My Lady Bedford last night, about 1 of the clock, was suddenly, and hath continued ever since, speechless, and is past all hope, though yet alive...'<sup>71</sup> Despite all expectations, Lucy gradually recovered her speech and health. But by the time she returned to court, in the summer of 1613, everything had changed utterly.

Private concerns were as nothing to the catastrophe which shook England in November 1612, with the death of the Prince of Wales. Since Christmas 1610, Henry Prince of Wales had ruled over his own household at St James's Palace. His new freedom from the jealous constraint of an uncongenial father was celebrated with an appropriate New Year Masque by Ben Jonson: *Oberon, or the Fairy Prince*. Performing with the Prince were twelve young aristocrats, who must have included John Harington. The noble friends shared not only courtly entertainments, but regularly attended earnest, anti-Catholic sermons. The preacher at nearby Lincoln's Inn was at that time Thomas Gataker, who recorded forty years later:

Much about the same time that hopeful Prince Henry, whose life in likelihood the sins of this land and of these times shortened, keeping his court at St James, where abode with him that mirror of Nobility, the young Lord Harington, and attended on him that religious Knight, Sir Robert Darcie, these two, with some others of his grace's court, frequented my ministry in the afternoons especially; which for some space of time I then spent handling of some points of controversy between us and the Papists, being informed that divers popish priests, or sprites, if you please, haunted the house, and were very busy in labouring to pervert the young gentlemen.<sup>72</sup>

In stark contrast to its close, the year 1612 began with hope and rejoicing across the realm. Although he intended a Catholic bride for his ardently protestant heir, seeing himself as peacemaker of a divided Europe, King James had decided that Princess Elizabeth, now fifteen years old, should be married to a protestant prince. The choice fell on Frederick, Elector Palatine, leader of protestant states of Europe. To her Harington guardians, devoted brother and the protestant English, this seemed an ideal match for the popular princess. The marriage treaty was agreed in May 1612, and Prince Henry set about arranging a series of spectacular festivals to celebrate the prospective bridegroom's arrival in England.

Frederick arrived to meet his bride in late October, but Henry was already showing signs of the typhoid fever which rapidly progressed to kill him on 6 November, to the utter desolation of his family, friends and adoring subjects. Poets rallied to lament the loss of the eighteen-year-old on whom so many hopes had been placed: Donne's *Elegie on the Untimely Death of the Incomparable Prince Henry* was only one of an outpouring of poetic grief. The funeral procession was over a mile long, with two thousand mourners 'including all the members of his household and his friends'.<sup>73</sup> The Prince's household at St James's Palace remained together until the end of December, 'when it was dissolved; and upon the day of their dissolution, Mr Joseph Hall, his Chaplain, preached to them a most pathetic farewell sermon on Revelations xxi 3: the most loving and entire fellowship that ever met in the court of any prince'. John Harington wrote a few days afterwards to Sir Thomas Puckering in Italy, of the 'great Prince Henry, with whose loss his own senses had been wholly captivated'.<sup>74</sup>

While his friend, John Harington, and a whole nation mourned, Lord and Lady Harington had no respite from their weighty responsibilities. Princess Elizabeth's marriage was delayed only for a short while, until 14 February 1613. Lord Harington's accounts for this period offer poignant testimony to her activities. In addition to her regular gifts to the poor and needy, Lord Harington records the following:

	£	s	d
Given by her grace's command to Mr. Joshua Sylvester that presented verses to her grace upon the death of the late prince	5	0	0
Given by her grace to Mr. Hart that brought a night gown to her grace that was Prince Henry's	5	0	0
Paid for the hire of a barge that did carry the Palatine and her highness by water, when they went to see the monuments at Westminster	2	0	0
Given by her highness's command to the keeper of the monuments at Westminster	2	0	0
...			
To a northern boy that whistled to her grace	5	0	
To a Scotchwoman that offered to sing to her grace at Kew	10	0	<sup>75</sup>

As New Year gifts the prospective bridegroom, Frederick, gave to Lord and Lady Harington 'golden and gilt plate to the value of £2000, and to their servants £400'. On Valentine's Day 1613, the marriage took place in the Chapel Royal at Whitehall. The Haringtons enjoyed a prominence second only those of royal blood. Entering the chapel, the groom was attended by sixteen young bachelor courtiers, probably including John Harington, while the 'Lady Elizabeth, in her virgin robes', was preceded by 'Lord Harington of Exton, her Tutor' The royal family watched from a raised dais, the Queen wearing jewels valued at £400,000. 'Near unto her sat the Bride on a stool; the Lady Harington her governess stood by her, bearing up her train, and no others ascended that place'.<sup>76</sup>

Even her marriage did not relieve Lord and Lady Harington of their exhausting burden of care for Princess Elizabeth. When she departed for the Palatinate, they accompanied her into Germany, not as official commissioners or attendants paid by the king, but at their own expense 'to stay with the lady a good while to see her settled in that country before they leave her'.<sup>77</sup> The elderly couple had little opportunity to enjoy a restful change of scene. Financial problems, exacerbated by the heavy expenses incurred directly and indirectly in the service of Elizabeth, which were only spasmodically reimbursed by the King, led to increasing debt and an attempt at creative solutions. On 10 April 1613, Lord Harington was granted a licence by Letters Patent from the King, for the making of farthing tokens for issue in England, Ireland and Wales for the next three years.<sup>78</sup> These brass farthings were often known as 'Haringtons' - sad mementoes of the once vast fortune of the Exton dynasty. Somewhat sceptically, the indefatigable letter-writer, John Chamberlain, reported to Sir Ralph Winwood:

Here be a great store of coins apprehended in various ports, which no doubt will multiply daily, now that the Lord Harington, in recompense of £30,000 (he saith) he hath spent in attending the Lady Elizabeth, hath his suit granted of coining brass farthings: which is doubted to be but a shoeing horn to draw on more of that metal to our mint.<sup>79</sup>

In July 1613, three months after her arrival in the Palatinate, the Haringtons accompanied Elizabeth to see the new fortress being built at Mannheim. On the return journey the Princess, with Lady Harington in her coach, was accosted by her Master of Horse, Sir Andrew Keith, complaining that Lord Harington's servant, Bushell, had made an unfair exchange of horses. Lord and Lady Harington were drawn into the quarrel. Bitter words, and even blows, were exchanged by Keith and Bushell in front of the Princess and more than fifty gaping spectators. Although matters were initially calmed down, the following day Keith lay in wait for Bushell and in a scuffle between the opposing groups, Bushell was seriously wounded. Sir Andrew Keith was imprisoned 'for his disrespectful conduct to Lord Harington', but the affair must have taken its toll and a few days later Lord and Lady Harington said farewell to the Princess and set out on the long journey home.<sup>80</sup>

At 73 years of age, Lord Harington must have longed for a peaceful retirement on his English estates. Sadly, he had only reached the German town of Worms when he fell ill and died of fever on 24 August, 1613. Within a year, having born her first child, Princess Elizabeth earnestly requested that her former governess return to attend her in Heidelberg. When financial pressures combined with the king's commandment, the widowed Lady Harington had no choice but to obey. Her daughter could only express her great anxiety at her mother's undertaking 'so cruel a journey', although Lucy subsequently took the opportunity to combine a visit to her mother with treatment at the German Spa, probably Baden, not far from the Palatinate court.<sup>81</sup>

A few weeks before her father's death, Lucy, Countess of Bedford, returned to court after her sickness, minor stroke and temporary loss of speech, which had been followed by a serious accident to her husband. John Chamberlain reported the event on 1 August 1613, observing the great mental and physical change which had come over the Countess:

The Earl of Bedford, hunting in a park of his own, by the fall of his horse was thrown against a tree and so bruised that the report went that he was dead, and it is to be doubted yet that he is in danger, for that his skull is said to be cracked. His lady, who should have gone to the Spa [Bath] but for lack of money, shows herself again in Court, though in her sickness she had in a manner vowed never to come there... Marry, she is somewhat reformed in her attire, and forbears painting, which they say makes her look somewhat strangely among so many visards, which together with their frizzled, powdered hair, makes them look all alike, so that you can scant know one from another at first view. Dr Burges (who is turned physician) was much about her in her sickness, and did her more good with his spiritual counsel, than with natural physic...<sup>82</sup>

John Burges was a Puritan minister, banished from court by King James in 1604, who had studied medicine at Leyden and built up practice at Isleworth, near Twickenham. John Donne records evidence of his influence over the Countess, who encouraged Burges's career at a time when she was growing more critical of Donne for his apparent early lack of true spiritual commitment.<sup>83</sup>

The death of the first Lord Harington of Exton left his son, John, now 21, to succeed to the title. The entail had been cancelled so that, if necessary, estates could be sold to redeem the family's debts. According to the rumours of Jesuit poison, circulated by his cousin and namesake, the second Lord Harington had suffered from declining health since his return from foreign travel three years previously. Still grieving for the loss of his master and friend Prince Henry, John drew up his own will. In this he gave power to his heirs to sell land as necessary to discharge the many creditors inherited from his father: 'And being asked, when the writing was drawn up, Whether he assented to it? he answered, Yea, with all my heart, for my honour and my honesty are my nearest heirs'.<sup>84</sup>

On the same day that the will was signed, 18 February 1614, the inevitable disposal of the Rutland estates began when John agreed to sell the lordship of Exton to Sir Baptist Hicks, afterwards first Viscount Campden. Nine days later he died of smallpox, at Kew. His relation Sir John Harington records how:

When death itself approached, he breathed forth these longing expressions; O Thou my joy! O my God! When shall I be with thee! and, in the midst of such desires, sweetly and quietly resigned up his spirit unto God'.<sup>85</sup>

The funeral of the younger Lord Harington, so soon after that of his father, took place at Exton on 31 March, 1614. Several poetic elegies were printed with the funeral sermon, and the second Lord Harington was also lamented publicly and protractedly by the greatest poet of the age, John Donne. The funeral sermon, entitled *The Churches Lamentation for the losse of the godly*, was delivered by Richard Stock, Pastor of All Hallows, Bread Street, London. The loss of the young nobleman was perceived as overwhelming, especially to devout protestants:

The commonwealth, and specially this little Shire, whereof he was Lord Lieutenant, hath lost so hopeful a Nehemiah, who would have set himself for the public good and given example and encouragement to keep the Sabbath, and have charged them so far as his power had extended, to have carefully observed it, and so governed them that he would not only not oppress them himself, but have to his utmost power provided that they should be free from the oppression of others...<sup>86</sup>

There is a hint here that, had John Harington lived to administer his estates in Rutland, his concern for strict observance of the Sabbath would have led him into opposition to the religious policy of Charles I. One cause of increasing puritan hostility to King Charles was his reissue in 1633 of the *Book of Sports*, enforcing its strictures that dancing, archery and even 'Church Ales' be allowed after the Sunday service. It is interesting to speculate whether the second Lord Harington would have continued his family's loyal service to the Crown, or joined fellow puritans in challenging what they saw as dangerous undermining of the reformed protestant Church of England.

Lady Anne Harington was left to mourn her husband and son, taken within six months, one at the beginning and one at the end of illustrious public careers. Her daughters Lucy, Countess of Bedford, and Frances, wife of Sir Robert Chichester, inherited great estates encumbered by debts amounting to £40,000. Lucy, with two thirds of the total inheritance, succeeded to the Rutland estates. Lord Harington's will appears to have been challenged by Lucy's cousin Sir John Harington of Elmesthorpe, Leicestershire, who in October 1614:

...hath begun a course in Chancery against my mother, but indeed most concerning me, whereby he will get nothing but lost labour, nor will it cost me more than some few lawyers' fees, and a little trouble, which I am born to and therefore embrace as part of my portion.<sup>87</sup>

The Harington women were probably present at Burley when King James visited on 4-5 August 1614 and heard a sermon by Bishop Lancelot Andrewes.<sup>88</sup> For the bereaved Haringtons it would have been a mournful echo of happier times when the king had been entertained at Burley in the halcyon spring of 1603. For the king, however, the summer progress of 1614 was also momentous, since the previous day at Apethorpe, Northamptonshire, he had first set eyes on the young George Villiers. Within six years this handsome royal favourite, later to be Duke of Buckingham, would himself be owner of Burley and host of the doting King James.

In October 1614, a year after the Earl of Bedford's accident, which had left him suffering from fever and paralysis, Lucy wrote to her friend Jane, Lady Cornwallis. She reported that there was no longer any fear for her husband's life, and that his speech had improved although lameness remained. To her husband's financial problems were now added the crippling debts which Lucy had inherited with her share of the extensive Harington estates:

His present state sets me at liberty to follow my term businesses, which daily are multiplied upon me, and make me heavily feel the burden of a broken estate; yet do I not doubt but by the assistance of Almighty God I shall ere long overcome all those difficulties which at the present contest with me.<sup>89</sup>

In the short term, Lucy was placed in the embarrassing position of relying on loans from her friend Lady Cornwallis, and having to limit her own generosity. John Donne, whose entire debts she had previously paid, now complained that she had only sent £30 as he prepared for a new career in the Church of England.<sup>90</sup> Others were equally unsympathetic in viewing her return to public life. Lady Anne Clifford reported to her mother in December 1615:

My Lady Bedford is become a new courtier again, and as it is thought, will quite leave her house and poor husband, and be a continual abider there. He is still weak and sick, yet the physicians say he may live this many years...<sup>91</sup>

Life had further harsh blows to inflict on 'Lucy the bright' who had been such a radiant presence in the early years of the Stuart court. March 1619 brought the loss of an influential friendship, with the death of Queen Anna after a long illness. Lucy walked in the royal funeral procession as assistant mourner, but three months later suffered further serious illness herself. John Chamberlain reported: 'The smallpox hath seized on the Lady of Bedford and so seasoned her all over that they say she is more full and foul than could be expected in so thin and lean a body'.<sup>92</sup> A further detail was added by Lady Anne Clifford, who reported that the smallpox had caused Lady Bedford the loss of one of her eyes. Since her earlier illness, many observers had noted the Countess of Bedford's sober attire and increasing puritan piety. Her Calvinist tendencies were already well known. Now, as a comfort in her time of trial, Clement Cotton followed his earlier gift of a treatise on martyrs with the presentation of a translation of Calvin's lectures on Jeremiah.<sup>93</sup> In stark and poignant contrast to her earlier manifestation as a goddess of the masque, a reflective Lucy was painted in 1620 by Cornelius Jansen, wearing black dress and jewellery, against a black background. This was the year in which Lucy lost her mother, the widowed Lady Harington.

While Lucy, Countess of Bedford, was assailed by sickness and the problems of an indebted estate, Lady Harington was settling her own affairs. In 1616 she purchased a rental of £100 per annum in the manor of Cottesmore, to be distributed to the poor of Exton, Oakham, Hambleton, Cottesmore and Market Overton, as well as £2 per year to maintain the tomb of her father, Robert Kelway, in Exton Church. She also provided a small library for Oakham Church. This consisted of:

... about two hundred Latin and Greek Folios, consisting chiefly of Fathers, Councils, School-men, and Divines, for the use of the Vicar of that Church, and accommodation of the Neighbouring Clergy; most of which Books have been curiously bound, the Covers adorned with several gilded Frets (commonly called the Harringtons Knots) and *Ex Dono Dominae Annae Harringtonae Baronessae*  
Printed and pasted in the Title Pages'<sup>94</sup>

Lady Anne Harington's library, now consisting of about 115 volumes, was transferred in 1980 to Nottingham University Library. This gift to Oakham Church, unusual in a woman, testifies to her personal piety. A signature provides evidence that the library was used by William Peachy, the Haringtons' Puritan appointee as vicar, first of Exton and then of Oakham from 1596 to 1643. This gift to the clergy of Rutland was exceeded by a larger collection given in the same year of 1616, by Lady Anne and her daughter Lucy to Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge.

They presented 218 volumes, the largest bequest recorded by the college, which also received: 'a polyglot Bible given by the 1st Lord Harington and a copy of the Eton Chrysostom donated by the 2nd Lord Harington'. Anne Herbert, writing on the Oakham Parish Library, convincingly suggests that the libraries presented by the Harington ladies to both Oakham Church and Sidney Sussex College may have been left to them by their son and brother, the second Lord Harington, a former student of the college founded by his great aunt, Lady Frances Sidney, Countess of Sussex. Interestingly, while Oakham Church received mainly theological works, Sidney Sussex donors' register lists books on history, mathematics, grammar, poetry, rhetoric, politics, law and medicine.<sup>95</sup> Thus the Harington family of Exton, renowned in their day for piety, learning and benevolence, have left their legacy not in worldly estates but as a continuing benefit to scholars.

On her final retirement from attendance on Princess Elizabeth, Lady Harington's last months were spent mainly in London, where her daughter Lucy was a frequent visitor and anxious observer of her progressive illness. She died in the parish of St Botolph's, Bishopsgate, London, probably at Harington House where in the same year John Donne preached before her daughter, the Countess of Bedford. From there her body was taken for burial at Exton in June 1620. Her daughter paid tribute to her qualities in a letter to Lady Cornwallis: 'What a mother I have lost I need not tell you, that know what she was in herself, and to me'.<sup>96</sup>

Following in her father's footsteps, Lucy attempted practical means to solve her financial problems. She was granted patents to produce copper farthings as well as an annual grant and other commercial benefits from the king. By 1621, Twickenham Park and Coombe Abbey were sold, as well as the Rutland estates which had given the Haringtons such a controlling influence in the region for nearly two centuries. Lucy and her husband now lived mainly at Moor Park, Hertfordshire, granted to them by the king in 1617.<sup>97</sup> Here she laid out the grounds, exploiting the generosity of her friends in obtaining roots or cuttings: 'for I am now very busy furnishing my gardens. Thus you see it is not good being too free an offerer to a free taker; but be not discouraged, for I shall be as free a requiter whensoever you shall make it known it is in my power'.<sup>98</sup> Her reputation as a landscape gardener survived her death. In 1686 Sir William Temple renamed his newly purchased estate in Surrey after the countess's home at Moor Park, Hertfordshire, which he had visited on honeymoon. He wrote of the Countess of Bedford that she had 'projected the most perfect figure of a garden that ever he saw'.<sup>99</sup>

The Countess of Bedford continued to interest herself in the cultural and courtly life, as well as the affairs of the family to which her parents had dedicated their lives. When Princess Elizabeth and the Elector Palatine were driven out of their new kingdom of Bohemia in 1619, Lucy argued their cause and made a sea voyage to visit Elizabeth in the Hague. She collected paintings by Holbein and others, seeking them out 'in obscure places, and gentleman's houses, that, because they were old, made no reckoning of them... and though I be but a late beginner, I have pretty store of choice pieces'.<sup>100</sup> When Charles I succeeded his father in 1625, Lucy was at first impressed, believing that 'God hath set him over this kingdom for a blessing'. A few weeks earlier she had written to Princess Elizabeth of her brother that, despite the impediment in his speech: 'I think never Prince was more powerful in a house of Parliament... [he] will as patiently bear contradictions and as calmly forgo his own opinion, if he has been mistaken'.<sup>101</sup>

Writing to her friend Jane, now Lady Bacon, Lucy described the new king's piety and the increased regulation of his court. She also expressed a new insight into his character: 'for aught anybody can yet discover, he makes his own determinations, and is very stiff in them'.<sup>102</sup> This rigidity of the king's character and his dependence on the late king's favourite, Buckingham, were to cause problems with parliament from the start. In 1626, Nathaniel Bacon wrote to his wife that the Countess of Bedford lay at home, 'very ill of the gout', while: 'little is yet done in Parliament but snarling on both sides and much muttering against the Duke [of Buckingham]'.<sup>103</sup> Lucy's final letter to Lady Bacon reported her continued suffering from gout, for which she was being treated by the celebrated physician, Sir Theodore Mayerne. However, physical pain did not blind her to the growing tensions in the kingdom:

God will, I trust, give me thankfulness to Him and patience till His appointed time of releasing me from all misery, of which we are yet like to have in general more and more, if this Parliament and the king part not upon better terms than yet they stand, the king having declared himself stiff one way, and they growing stronger and stronger'.<sup>104</sup>

Lucy did not live to see the shaking times which Charles's stiffness was to inflict on his country. On 3 May, 1627, Edward, third Earl of Bedford died and was buried at Chenies, not far from Moor Park. His countess, the former Lucy Harington, died there 24 days later. She lies with her own family in Exton Church. Her dust has returned to the Rutland she saw only rarely, after a glittering career spent close to the royal court in which she, her brother and parents had been honoured, admired and loved.

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## The Haringtons of Ridlington: Servants to the State

In 1614, the youthful 2nd Lord Harington of Exton died, widely mourned but unmarried. Thus the direct male line of the family which had dominated Rutland for over a hundred years came to an end. Encumbered by debt, the vast Harington estates were divided and sold. While other manors were purchased by affluent members of the rising gentry class, the larger manor of Ridlington was acquired by a cousin of Lord Harington, Sir Edward Noel. He had made a fortunate marriage to the wealthy heiress Juliana, daughter of Sir Baptist Hicks, first Viscount Campden and purchaser of Exton. Sir Edward quickly advanced to great honours, becoming on his father-in-law's death in 1629 the second Viscount Campden and founder of the Noel dynasty which came to dominate Rutland for the next three centuries. On the outbreak of civil war the Noel family became loyal supporters of King Charles.

Meanwhile, a poorer branch of the once great Harington dynasty, who were to become ardent parliamentarians, remained modest landowners in Ridlington. The lesser of Ridlington's two manors had been granted by Sir James Harington of Exton (1523-91) to his third son, James, who lived in Ridlington until his death in 1614. James and his first wife Frances Sapcote, whose family had sold Burley on the Hill to the Haringtons, produced sixteen children of whom four survived: the couple are commemorated on the north wall of the chancel of Ridlington Church. Their manor house may have been in the meadow to the north of Ridlington Church, where surviving high buttressed walls were observed in 1905.<sup>1</sup> Following his wife's death in 1599, and his remarriage to Anne D'Oyley, James Harington continued the family tradition of county government, serving as Sheriff of Rutland in 1601. With his elder brother Sir John Harington of Exton, James travelled north to greet the new king, James 1, in 1603, to be rewarded with a knighthood. He was created baronet in 1611, three years before his death.

The terrible year of 1613-14, which saw the deaths of the first Lord Harington of Exton and his only son, saw also the deaths of the first Lord's two younger brothers, Sir Henry Harington of Elmsthorpe and Sir James Harington of Ridlington.

The heir to the Ridlington estate and to the title of baronet was Sir James's eldest son Edward Harington. He had probably studied at Oakham School where members of his family were governors, progressing to the new Puritan college founded by his great aunt, Sidney Sussex, Cambridge. He was married to Margery (or Margaret) D'Oyley, a relation of his father's second wife. Sir James's second son, Sir Sapcote Harington, settled in Upton, Northamptonshire, where his son, yet another James Harington, grew up to become groom of the bedchamber to Charles I and author of the influential republican Utopia, *Oceana*.

Following the family tradition, Sir Edward Harington of Ridlington emulated his father by serving as Sheriff of Rutland in 1621 and 1636-7. Having been obliged to contribute to Charles I's 'forced loan' in 1626, Sir Edward found his second tenure as sheriff a stressful experience. As the king extended the unpopular Ship Money tax to inland counties, the task of organising collection fell on the county sheriffs, beginning in 1635 with Rutland's sheriff for that year, Sir Francis Bodenham of Ryhall. Orders were sent to the chief constables of each hundred to:

call unto you some discreet neighbours of your hundred, and to confer together of the most equal and indifferent way for the assessing of the said sum [£1000] upon this county and to bring me the bills of assessments for the poor for his Majesty's provision for musters and all other assessments within your several towns... fair written in paper at the sign of the crown in Oakham... herein fail not at your peril.<sup>2</sup>

In the face of widespread grumblings of discontent, Rutland's Ship Money charge for the following year was reduced to £800. In February 1637, Sir Edward Harington, now sheriff, reported optimistically that this would be collected in a short time, despite complaints of various villages which he listened to daily. Rather than base the assessment solely on ownership of land, he:

informs himself of the able men who pay little for land and yet have personal estate to a good value or gainful trades from whom he draws what he can to ease the poor. This gives great content to the people and very much advances the service.<sup>3</sup>

Half of the due amount had been collected by 1 March, and Sir Edward arranged for a carrier named Sicill, based at the Bell Inn, Smithfield. However, the problems involved in transporting such sums to the Treasurer of the Navy, Sir William Russell in London, were causing concern. In April the carrier could not find Sir William in town and, at great hazard, returned the money to Rutland. To the great relief of the sheriff, his cousin and future enemy, Viscount Campden, offered to carry the money personally on the first day of the next term. The £800 was finally paid over by Edward Phillips on behalf of Sir Edward Harington, and a receipt given on 5 May 1637.<sup>4</sup> In true Christian spirit, Sir Edward Harington was pleased to report that he had collected a surplus and was able to return money to every village to give relief to those least able to contribute. Despite this, he recorded: 'The trouble he has been put to has been such that were it not His Majesty's command, no profit or reward could draw him to adventure upon the like business again'.<sup>5</sup>

Having discharged his burden as sheriff, Sir Edward Harington was able to observe the increasing difficulties faced by subsequent sheriffs in collecting the hated tax - in June 1640 the treasurers of the Navy complained that they had not received any of the money due from Rutland, and that a hundred men in the county were proving 'most obstinate'.<sup>6</sup>



Memorial in Ridlington Church to James and Frances Harington

Sir Edward continued to oversee his estates, dealing with tenants such as Abel Barker of Hambleton, and serving as Justice of the Peace for the county. King Charles I continued to rule without parliament, issuing a Book of Orders and regular proclamations to be read from pulpits or posted in market squares. Gentry and nobility were ordered to stay on their estates, administering local government, dispensing justice and maintaining social order in the king's name. Levels of poverty and unrest were increasing, especially during the years of poor harvest following the dearth of 1630. Rutland's Quarter Sessions Records for this period do not survive, so we can only surmise the level of disorder prevalent among the poorer sections of society.

While the growing numbers of unemployed and voiceless poor were kept in their place by the ruling gentry, landowners themselves and the growing merchant classes were becoming more openly critical of the king's policy. Charles's religious innovations, implemented by the unpopular Archbishop Laud, seemed to be taking the Church of England closer to Catholicism and further from the reformed protestant church with its tolerance of puritan values. In 1638 Charles resolved to impose the English Prayer Book by force upon his northern kingdom, in the first of his three Scottish Wars. Letters were dispatched to the Lords Lieutenant of each county, demanding the mobilisation of Trained Bands. For the Scottish campaign of 1640, Rutland was expected to provide 60 pikemen, 40 musketeers and 30 cavalry, as well as 20 additional horses to transport artillery. Although the required forces were sent to join the king's army at Newcastle, this campaign against their Presbyterian, British neighbours must have been anathema to many Rutland puritans.

As a senior member of the Rutland county community, Sir Edward Harington of Ridlington was probably ready, if reluctant, to comply with the king's order. However his eldest son, James, became a more radical opponent of royal policy. From youth, James Harington of Ridlington imposed on himself the strictest religious disciplines, writing of his early illnesses:

By this correction, Heavenly Father, thou didst most wisely bridle, order and allay the strong and indomitable lusts of my youth; that beholding daily death, thy Sergeant, at the door, I might fear to act wickedness.<sup>7</sup>

Even a visit to London at the age of 17 could not lessen the young man's rigid commitment to his faith. Although he found himself 'unsettled through the multitude of temptations and incitements to sin and vanity', James Harington also made contact with many of similar beliefs, joining one of the many puritan congregations in the capital city and only occasionally returning to Rutland. In 1628, at the age of 21, he was knighted, and in 1632 married Catherine Wright, daughter and co-heir of the Lord Mayor of London. He did not lose contact with his parents in Ridlington, presenting them with his *Meditations*, as 'testimonial of my thankfulness for those your numberless merits, which are as far beyond requital as expression'.<sup>8</sup> In 1639, Sir Edward Harington was helping to raise the troops required by the king for war against his Scottish subjects, his son was one of many who refused to serve. A warrant was issued to take 'Sir James Harington of Swakeleys, (heir of Sir Edward Harington of Ridlington) and others into custody as defaulters at musters, unless they should submit, and conform in future'.<sup>9</sup>

The Scottish wars went badly from the start. Humiliated and financially drained in his attempts to force an alien religious policy on his Presbyterian subjects, Charles was forced to recall parliament in 1640 after eleven years of personal rule. But the Short Parliament saw nothing to be gained in granting the king unconditional funds to continue what was widely seen as an unjust war. Newly elected members, who had waited eleven years to express their grievances, were dismissed after less than a month. After attempting to bypass parliament with a Council of Peers at York, Charles was forced in November 1640 to summon what became the Long Parliament. It proved even less prepared to grant the required subsidies before its own complaints had been addressed. While John Pym steered the parliamentary campaign to limit the arbitrary power of the king, all over England the floodgates of opposition had been opened. A growing stream of petitions poured out of many counties to be presented to the king in person or to the houses of parliament.

The disaffected gentry of Rutland were not slow to seize the opportunity. Led by the High Sheriff Thomas Waite, 'many hundreds of Gentlemen and Freeholders of the county of Rutland' presented a petition to the king during his journey to York, beseeching him in the most flattering terms to allay the fears of his subjects by returning to parliament.<sup>10</sup> This was followed by two further petitions presented to the House of Commons and House of Lords. Joining his father, friends and former neighbours from Rutland, Sir James Harington led the deputation of 'High Sheriff, Knights, Esquires, Gentlemen, Ministers and others of good rank within the County of Rutland' in presenting their demands on 29 March 1642. These included parliamentary control of the Militia; disarming of Catholics and their removal from the House of Lords; relief for protestant victims of the Irish rebellion; stricter observance of the Lord's Day and 'the utter quelling [of] the pride, insolency and tyranny of the Prelates'.<sup>11</sup> The Rutland petitioners were allowed into the House of Commons to present their petition; they withdrew while it was read and were called in again to be informed by the Speaker:

That this House had read their Petition, directed to this House, and was very sensible of the expressions therein, of their Care of the Commonwealth, and of their Respects to this House in Particular; And therefore was commanded to return them Thanks...<sup>12</sup>

By the Spring of 1642 relationships between the king and his parliament had totally broken down. Lacking the fundamental skills of persuasion and diplomacy, Charles made a desperate, abortive attempt to control parliament by force when on 4 January he led armed troops into the House of Commons to arrest its five ringleaders. Their escape and the outraged threats of the protesting London mob led Charles to abandon the city in haste, taking his Catholic queen and young family to the security of Windsor Castle. The next time he was to enter his capital would be as a prisoner six years later. Attempts to negotiate on both sides broke down.

Preparing for war against his own kingdom, Charles sent the queen to Holland on a mission to pawn the crown jewels and purchase arms. Progressing north, he demanded entrance to the city of Hull and possession of the great arsenal of weapons and ammunition stored within its walls. When this was refused by the stubborn governor, Sir John Hotham, Charles knew that the time had come to muster his loyal supporters. On 12 August, he issued a proclamation 'charging all subjects, good and true, to meet him at Nottingham for the formal declaration of war'.<sup>13</sup>

When the unthinkable civil war erupted in 1642, Rutland's two members of parliament were both active royalists: Sir Guy Palmes of Ashwell and Baptist Noel, heir to Viscount Campden. In the previous year, Sir Edward Harington had served together with Sir Guy on a committee for disarming local Catholics, and they had both been named by parliament as deputy lieutenants of Rutland. Now allegiances had to be declared, and the two deputy lieutenants chose different sides. While Sir Guy Palmes and his son Brian supported the king, Sir Edward Harington and his son James supported parliament, probably influenced by the strong puritan traditions of their family. In place of the royalist Lord Lieutenant of Leicestershire and Rutland, parliament appointed a new Lord Lieutenant for Rutland: David Cecil, Earl of Exeter, an aristocrat of puritan sympathies who died in the following year.

In direct challenge to the king's Commissioners of Array, charged with raising royalist troops in each county, parliament named county committees, ordered to raise 'money, men, horse and arms' and to provide the wartime administration.<sup>14</sup> The names of those identified by king and parliament to promote their cause within Rutland offer an interesting contrast. The king's commissioners included Viscount Campden and his two sons, Sir Guy and his son Brian Palmes, Sir Francis Bodenham of Ryhall and Edward Heath of Cottesmore. Half of the fourteen named were knights or members of the nobility. Parliament's Rutland County Committee, on the other hand, while varying its membership during the years of war, only ever contained one titled family. This was that of Sir Edward Harington, second baronet, of Ridlington, and his son, Sir James Harington.

To both sides in the conflict, the first priority would be possession of the county magazine, the storehouse of arms and ammunition. On 14 July 1642, a few weeks before the king's standard was raised at Nottingham, Sir Edward Harington and others wrote to the speaker of the House of Commons, William Lenthall:

We have received instruction of the House concerning the Militia &c, and have taken measures for securing the magazine. The Commissions of Array being directed to men of great power in the county, and the innovating clergy being very forward to publish the books that come from his Majesty and not those from the Parliament, we fear the business may receive great prejudice.<sup>15</sup>

The seizure of Rutland's magazine, stored in Oakham Castle, gave effective control of the county to parliament. This was followed by the capture of Burley on the Hill and the nearby fortress of Rockingham Castle by parliamentary forces led by the 21 year old Lord Grey of Groby. Leading royalists found it politic to leave the county. The absent owner of Burley, the young second Duke of Buckingham, and Viscount Campden of Exton followed the king to his new headquarters at Oxford. Of the Viscount's sons, Henry Noel unwisely remained in his home at North Luffenham, while his hot-headed brother Baptist Noel raised a cavalry regiment for the king. This troop, campaigning out of its secure base at Belvoir Castle, became a powerful weapon in the royalist cause.

Now the elderly Sir Edward Harington, rather than leading armies, found himself once again at the forefront of local administration. From December 1642 Rutland formed part of the Midland Association, commanded by Lord Grey of Groby. While Sir Edward's son, Sir James Harington, led troops of the London Trained Bands on campaign, the Ridlington baronet was the senior member of various committees established to raise finance through regular assessments and from the confiscated estates of 'delinquent' royalists in Rutland. These included the estate of Sir Guy Palmes, Harington's former colleague.

A major problem for Sir Edward Harington, as for many others, must have been the changing relationships with former friends and neighbours. In the winter of 1642-3 he received an appeal from Edward Heath, a royalist who had accompanied the king to Oxford and whose manor house at Cottesmore was frequently raided by parliamentary forces from Burley or Rockingham. Explaining his inability to secure the return of Heath's confiscated horses, or to exert any influence on Lord Grey, Sir Edward continued:

...it will be thought a very indiscrete thing in me to move my Lord in such a business, and I fear he would take it ill at my hands, otherwise I should be very ready to satisfy your desire in this or in any other way wherein I might do you service; but in truth I am now altogether unable to do you any further good, neither do I know what to advise you; for were it in my power either in this or any thing else to pleasure you, I hope you are assured, you may command your ready friend to serve you.

Ridlington this 15 of Febr: 1642[3]

Ed: Harington.<sup>16</sup>

In a postscript to the letter Harington adds: 'I have herein included Captain Wray's letter which when you have seen I desire that you would be pleased to send it me back again.' It is interesting to note that the writer implies a closer bond with his political opponent than with his commander, and even goes so far as to enclose a letter which may have provided information about the enemy's movements. New political allegiances could not entirely eradicate the old community ties. Further examples from the correspondence of the Heath family poignantly express the bitterness of this civil war, fought between former neighbours and friends.

Constant raids by both parliamentary and royalist troops, seeking to replenish supplies of food, horses and money, caused particular problems in Rutland. From Belvoir Castle to the north, Baptist Noel, who became third Viscount Campden on his father's death in 1643, galloped his regiment of 'Camdeners' across what must have been very familiar territory. Every opportunity was taken to engage the parliamentary troops from Burley or from Rockingham Castle to the south. These were frequently led by Colonel Thomas Waite, whose social origins would have been much despised by the arrogant viscount. While military depredations were a constant threat, the normal agricultural and economic life of the county had to continue.

One of Sir Edward Harington's tenants was Abel Barker of Hambleton, the rising sheep-dealer and entrepreneur, shortly to be appointed to the Rutland County Committee. Since the royalist forces regarded Sir Edward's rents as liable for confiscation, they had compelled Abel Barker to pay the sum of £160 to them rather than to his landlord, who no doubt still expected to be paid. Abel Barker complained bitterly of Sir Edward's unfair treatment of his tenant, demanding arbitration: 'but if he be not pleased to do this he must excuse me withdrawing from that landlord for whom I have suffered so much.' In his next letter, dated 15 January 1644[5], Abel Barker reported that the royalists had forcibly taken him to Belvoir Castle, demanding further payment of the rents due to Sir Edward Harington. Claiming that he had paid Sir Edward 'more rents since these late distractions than all his other tenants in these parts', Barker gave notice that he could no longer continue tenant to Sir Edward unless some remedy was speedily applied.<sup>17</sup>

The letters of Abel Barker provide evidence that Sir Edward Harington did not remain in Ridlington throughout the civil wars. Although appointed one of the Deputy Lieutenants for Rutland in September 1644, in January 1645 and on several other occasions, Sir Edward was at his house in Seething Lane, London. He may have taken the opportunity to see something of his only son, Sir James, or his grandsons Edmund and Edward, both later to succeed to the baronetcy. Sir James Harington, known as Sir James of Swakeleys from his wife's estate near Uxbridge, was frequently on campaign with his city regiment. Some of his property had been confiscated by royal forces, but a large legacy from his wife's father enabled him to live well until his estates were restored when the first civil war ended in 1646.

Sir James Harington's military command took him to the west of London, from where his soldiers constantly expected to be granted leave and arrears of pay. However, the payment of soldiers was an unremitting problem for parliamentary as well as royal armies. Sir James received a stream of letters from parliament's Committee of Both Kingdoms, such as the following in the autumn of 1644:

We desire you, with your forces, to tarry there [Abingdon] for 20 days, until your absence shall be supplied with some of the new levied forces... we know your willingness to serve the public, notwithstanding the many difficulties your forces are under, which we shall endeavour to have supplied...

Hardly surprisingly, the next letter reported that 'we have found it necessary to desire you to stay for a fortnight longer'. On 11 October 1644 Harington's regiment was ordered to march to Colnbrook, under the Earl of Manchester, and take up winter quarters at Reading.<sup>18</sup>

As well as the payment of soldiers' wages, the soaring costs of transport and military supplies dominated much parliamentary business. On 15 March 1645, *The Journal of the House of Commons* recorded the resolution:

That the Committee of the Militia do forthwith pay unto the Waggoners employed upon the Expedition of the City Brigade under Sir James Harington, Knight. Major General of that Brigade, the arrears due, according to the contract made with the said Waggoners by Mr Thomas Richardson, Waggonmaster General.<sup>19</sup>

That autumn, Parliament ordered Sir James Harington to hold and fortify Henley on Thames, in case the king should advance on London. However his troops were never sufficient. On 25 November Sir James reported: 'this town is untenable by reason of the hills near about it, even for a winter quarter, unless manned with numbers of men, the line being large and the old work scarcely visible.' Nine days later his complaints became more urgent:

It is my duty to represent to your Lordships, that these city forces think they are much neglected in that after many solicitations, though placed in a frontier garrison as yet unfortified, they have not assigned to them the 200 horse promised.<sup>20</sup>

While his son engaged in a frustrating campaign on behalf of parliament, Sir Edward Harington must have found his responsibilities on the Rutland County Committee equally stressful, having to take orders from the Midland commander, Lord Grey of Groby, a Leicestershire nobleman younger than Sir Edward's son. The committee received orders from London to strengthen the defences of Burley, without causing unnecessary damage to the house and stables. They were to impose regular assessments on the county to support parliament's campaign, while also raising contributions for the Scottish army and the forces besieging Newark. Constant disputes arose between members of the Rutland County Committee. These frequently involved Colonel Thomas Waite, who as governor of Burley was also re-appointed sheriff of Rutland for 1643. In July 1644 complaints against Waite led to his temporary suspension and investigation by the House of Commons, with all the garrison forces of Burley on the Hill placed under the command of Major Layfield. However, by June 1645 Waite was reinstated and the Rutland committee was expanded, under the presidency of Lord Grey of Groby, to include once again Sir Edward's son, Sir James Harington.

Rutland's elected Knights of the Shire, aligned against parliament since 1642, had ceased to represent their county in the House of Commons. Following the formal disqualification of the royalist members, a new election was proposed in 1645 with Sir James Harington and Thomas Waite among the candidates.

Now that the King's forces had been decisively defeated, a lull in campaigning revived bitter disputes among old established and newly promoted administrators on the Rutland County Committee. Once again, angry recriminations broke out and the parliamentary election was postponed. In November 1645, the House of Commons was informed:

That divers gentlemen of the county of Rutland were at the door; they were called in: and Sir James Harington did present a petition to the House. The which (the petitioners being withdrawn) was read. Ordered, that this petition be committed to the former Committee, where Mr Knightley hath the chair, to whom a former business concerning Colonel Waite was referred: and that Committee is hereby revived; and are to examine the whole matter of the difference between Colonel Waite and the petitioners; and to consider of some course, how the service may go on for the safety and peace of the Country and to report the state of the whole to the House, with their opinion.<sup>21</sup>

Mr Knightley's committee had not resolved the long-standing dispute, when six months later it was ordered to be revived and to continue deliberating 'the business concerning Colonel Waite'.<sup>22</sup> Around the same time, in May 1646, the Committee of Both Kingdoms sent orders from London regarding the fortifications of Burley on the Hill:

The garrison of Burley should be slighted [removal of fortifications] as you desire.

You can cause this to be done according to the fortifications without making any further spoil of the house or stables. We have desired Sir James Harington, who is to make his repair thither, to see this business effected...<sup>23</sup>

Despite these instructions, five years later Burley on the Hill was described as having been 'in the late wars utterly consumed by fire'.<sup>24</sup> No account survives to describe or date the event, or indicate whether the conflagration took place by accident or design. But it is hardly conceivable that Sir James Harington, trusted by Parliament to oversee the removal of defences, would have colluded in destroying the great house of his ancestors. It is much more likely that his bitter rival, the future regicide Thomas Waite, took advantage of military confusion and social upheaval to encourage or allow the destruction of one of the region's grandest houses.

Long standing disputes on the Rutland County Committee probably mirrored tensions in the House of Commons, where the end of the first civil war left the Presbyterian and Independent wings more sharply divided. Whatever the fate of Burley House, Colonel Thomas Waite found enough supporters among the radical Army faction to persuade Parliament's investigating committee of his loyal service. In June 1646, five candidates were nominated as Knights of the Shire to represent Rutland. These were: Thomas Waite, Christopher Brown of Toleshope, Evers Armyn of Ketton, Richard Halford of Edith Weston and Sir James Harington of Ridlington. The election, by 40 shilling freeholders (excluding disqualified royalists), took place at Oakham Castle on 2 July 1646 before the High Sheriff, John Osborne. It was far from a secret ballot. Although there was a dispute regarding the second place, a list of voters for each candidate, probably copied out by Abel Barker, gives the number of votes for James Harington as 241 with 174 for Thomas Waite in second place, out of a total of 576.<sup>25</sup>

Now representing Rutland in the House of Commons, with his uncongenial colleague Thomas Waite, Sir James Harington was at the centre of the controversy which caused serious divisions in parliament. Even before the first civil war ended, disagreement had arisen regarding the religious settlement which should follow the abolition of bishops and removal of the Book of Common Prayer. Presbyterian members, supporting parliament's vociferous Scottish allies, wished for an organised, hierarchical church ruled by an assembly of elders. The more radical Independents, however, demanded freedom and autonomy for the local congregations such as Quakers and Baptists, springing up in London and around the country. In 1645 these divisions, argued out on the Westminster Assembly which had been set up to reshape the English church, caused heartfelt grief to Sir James Harington from Ridlington. His contribution to the debate was the publication of a pamphlet entitled *Noah's Dove*, aimed at reconciling those who had incompatible visions of the true reformed protestant church. He appealed for an end to unchristian wranglings, proposing a democratic solution which could point the way forward:

... Now dear Brethren, give me your pardon and leave with Moses, to step in betwixt your Combatings with his Abraham's words, Why do ye contend, being ye are Brethren? it may be God giving a blessing, and each of you in his hand, I shall in my Preposition be a Medium to unite you, (only despise not my endeavours) since the Lord hides many things from the wise and prudent, and reveals them to Babes...

Wherefore I ask the Presbyterians, Why do ye extol and lift up a general Assembly above the rest of the Flock of Christ? To the Independents, I say, Why do ye prefer the Judgement of one particular Congregation, before the joint Votes of all refined Christian Churches of the Kingdom?

... I shall with humblest submission offer this following preposition, as a right and fit Medium of reconciliation. That in all great Schisms and Heresies, over-spreading whole Churches, if the breach cannot be made up by advice, argument, and subordinate Discipline; either Congregational or Presbyterian, an Appeal be made to a general Assembly, who after the stating, disputing, and voting such Points in difference, together with the merit of the offence ... that then the Assembly adjourn that Sessions for Three Months; in which time, the Assembly, Members of each Congregation to be ordered after Fasting and Prayer, to state the Question, and declare their Arguments, and Judgement of the General assembly to their particular Churches... and concluded by the major Vote, both of Churches and Members, ... which Scripture-way will not only by a Religious Policy from time to time discover the temper, pulse, and inclination of the whole Kingdome, and consequently administer a great help and direction to Government, but will give full satisfaction to all, (unless to obstinate Heretics) as being the Judgement and Vote... of all the visible and individual Christians of the Kingdom politically united, as in one Congregation; yea the disobedient will be left without excuse, and justly liable to their Sentence of excommunication.

...Thus fervently beseeching the blessing of the All-wise God, upon my poor endeavours, trusting that in the Bowels of love and charity, I have in sincerity and plainness declared unto you the mind of Christ in all humility, I conclude,

The unworthiest of all the Servants of the Lord Jesus, J.H.<sup>26</sup>

Sadly Harington's fervent if wordy appeal had little effect, and with the end of the war the gulf within parliament widened, as the urgent question arose of what should be done with the king. Moderate Presbyterians, shocked by the implications of their victory, sought a negotiated settlement which would allow Charles to retain the throne. Leaders of the parliamentarian army, largely Independent by persuasion, demanded he be brought to trial. For two years, all parties manoeuvred and prevaricated. Settlements were proposed, such as the Heads of the Proposals and the Treaty of Newport, but all came to nothing. In the end Charles found it impossible to modify his insistence on the divine right of kings, sufficiently to save his own life.

During those two years, from 1646 to 1648, the king was the prisoner, first of the Scots, then of parliament, then of the army. Initially, he was kept for a time in dignity and comfort at Holdenby House, Northamptonshire. One of those guarding him was Sir James Harington of Ridlington and Swakeleys. By a quirk of coincidence, Sir James's cousin and near-namesake, James Harrington, son of Sir Sapcote Harington of Upton, Northamptonshire, was attending on the king in his imprisonment. James Harrington had spent time in Europe, becoming the friend and agent of the exiled Elector Palatine and his wife Princess Elizabeth, the 'Winter Queen' and former ward of Harington's great-uncle, Lord John Harington. His whereabouts during the war are unclear and he may have remained in Northamptonshire. Although republican by conviction - Harrington was later to write *Oceana* in support of his political philosophy - Harrington was a friend of King Charles who 'loved his company, only he would not endure to hear of a Commonwealth; and Mr Harrington passionately loved his Majesty'.<sup>27</sup> Partly for this reason Harrington was chosen by the parliamentary commissioners to attend on the king, and as 'Groom of the Bedchamber' at Holdenby he helped Charles while away the loneliness and frustrations of his imprisonment.

James Harrington was with his royal master at Hampton Court, Hurst Castle and Carisbrooke, but was finally dismissed by parliament because he was seen as too sympathetic to the king. Although the evidence is disputed, he is reputed to have been with Charles on the scaffold, and certainly suffered deep melancholy, withdrawing from public life to write his great political treatise, *Oceana*, published in 1656. This Utopian vision of an ideal commonwealth was dedicated to Cromwell but not greatly appreciated by the founder and bedrock of England's far from ideal republic. Harrington was a complex man, torn between personal loyalty to Charles I and his belief in democratic government and a fairer distribution of wealth. He found himself abused by those who remembered the Harington family's close connection with the crown. A royalist signing himself J Lesley wrote in 1657, in a letter described as 'A Slap on the Snout of the Republican swine that rooteth up Monarchy':

Our blessed King James did ennoble your great uncle the Lord Harington of Exton and entrusted to his care and wisdom the renowned princess Elizabeth for tuition. Yourself was caressed by the blessed martyr Charles, and honoured with his words, and even his princely favours from his own hands on the scaffold. And shall then any one branch of such noble stock, endowed with such rare gifts and graces, as all have been for the most part, and so many of you countenanced by kings, shall any espouse such evil principles as you have now set forth in your book?<sup>28</sup>

Shortly before the Restoration brought an end to republican hopes, James Harrington founded the republican Rota Club, the final meeting of which, three months later, was attended by Samuel Pepys.<sup>29</sup> Harrington was imprisoned for some years in the Tower of London, charged 'with being eminent in principles contrary to the king's government and the laws of this nation'. He defended himself wittily:

After Oliver the parliament said they were a commonwealth: I said they were not, and proved it; insomuch that the parliament accounted me a cavalier, and one that had no other design in my writing than to bring in the king; and now the king first of any man makes me a Roundhead'.<sup>30</sup>

Harrington was eventually released and died in 1677, a broken man. But his book lived on, inspiring the founders of the United States of America, so that the legacy of Harrington's *Oceana* survives in some aspects of the American constitution.

The trial and execution of Charles I in 1649, which shocked the nation and grieved James Harrington of Upton, brought a dreadful dilemma to his cousin Sir James Harington of Ridlington. His earlier attempts to reconcile the incompatible puritan factions of Presbyterians and Independents had come to nothing. Sir James could see merit in both, earning the coined description of 'Presbyterian Independent' described by David Underdown as: 'no better description of men like Sir James Harington, upholders of non-separating Independency, with each congregation organised on distinctly Presbyterian lines'.<sup>31</sup> But the religious fault-lines which divided parliament were as nothing to the abyss which opened up when negotiations with the defeated king, which had dragged on for two years, finally broke down. Army leaders, especially Cromwell's son-in-law Henry Ireton, urged the bringing of treason charges against God's anointed. Presbyterian moderates drew back in horror.

When the House of Commons voted yet again to attempt further negotiations with the king, the army acted against the moderates. On 6 December 1648 the Long Parliament was brutally 'purged' by the radical leaders Cromwell and Ireton, supported by the musketeers of Colonel Pride. Members to be excluded were identified to the troops by Lord Grey of Groby, former commander of Rutland's parliamentary forces.

'Pride's Purge' removed over a hundred moderate members, leaving a 'Rump' parliament to bring the king to trial. Even so, many of those who remained had serious doubts. Sir James Harington was politically a radical, but regicide was a step too far. Although named as a member of the court set up to try the king, he could not bring himself to attend. In contrast, his fellow Rutland representative, Thomas Waite, attended throughout the trial and signed the king's death warrant, although with the monarchy restored in 1660 he was desperate to prove that this signature had been forced from him by Cromwell and Ireton.

The unprecedented royal trial took its inevitable course, and the king redeemed himself through courageous martyrdom. During those dreadful final weeks of January 1649 Sir James Harington lay low, either in Rutland or his wife's home at Swakeleys. As Cromwell sought to establish a republican administration, Harington's failure to sign the king's death warrant was not held against him. Cromwell appointed Sir James to the Council of State which replaced the king's Privy Council. The new council had poignant matters of immediate concern. Although Queen Henrietta Maria and four of her children were safely abroad, two remained in parliament's hands: Prince Henry, Duke of Gloucester, aged nine, and Princess Elizabeth, aged thirteen. The king had been allowed to bid them a moving farewell. Now, traumatised and bereft, they needed kindness and secure custody. Perhaps remembering Lord Harington's guardianship forty years before of an earlier Princess Elizabeth, in April 1649 the council settled £3000 a year on the children for their maintenance and education; proposing that Sir Edward Harington of Ridlington take responsibility for their care. Sir James Harington was ordered to report his father's answer to the council.<sup>32</sup> Sir Edward's answer does not survive. But the royal children never came to Rutland, and the following year Princess Elizabeth died in Carisbrooke Castle, where her father had earlier been imprisoned.

In an attempt to strengthen the shaky legitimacy of the king's execution, one of Cromwell's first proposals was for the new Council of State retrospectively to approve the actions of the court which had condemned Charles to death. However, even outspoken republicans, including Sir Arthur Haselrig from Leicestershire and Sir James Harington of Ridlington, vehemently opposed this. Cromwell was forced to concede a compromise motion, that the council would approve and confirm only future actions of 'the Commons in Parliament, the supreme Authority of this nation'.<sup>33</sup> The Council of State operated through various committees, several of which included Sir James Harington. As well as continuing to represent Rutland in the Rump Parliament which sat until 1653, Sir James Harington was sent with other negotiators to Scotland, where the disillusioned Presbyterian Covenanters were about to declare their support for the new king, Charles II.

Harington's attendance in parliament and on the council was interrupted at the end of May 1649 by problems at home. As with many householders, he was obliged to provide accommodation, or quarter, for soldiers who were often short of pay, provisions and active occupation. At their home at Swakeleys, Harington's wife Catherine had recently given birth when the Council of State wrote to Colonel Stubber:

We heard of the miscarriages of your soldiers while in Kent, and since their going thence, we have had complaints of them from many places where they passed. How people of meaner condition were oppressed by the common sort of them will easily be judged by the carriage of some of their officers to Sir James Harington MP, at whose house near Uxbridge four soldiers quartered last Saturday night; the behaviour of two of them named Monday and Hack, sergeants in Captain Sydenham's company was most insufferable, threatening to press into his lady's chamber, now lying in, because they could not be satisfied in what they pleased to ask, and would not take quarter money under 1s 4d a day. Sir James is forced to continue at home to preserve his house from their spoil, and can neither attend the House nor this Council....

You are to send Monday and Hack up hither, in custody, to be proceeded against as such disorderly people deserve.<sup>34</sup>

On 1 June 1649 Sir James Harington's complaint against some of Colonel Stubber's regiment was referred to the Lord General and the Council of War. At this date the Lord General was still Sir Thomas Fairfax who, dismayed and disillusioned by the execution of the king, resigned his post in 1650: Cromwell's succession to the post meant that authority over government and army were again united in a single individual.

The onerous duties of government included, for Sir James Harington, drafting a letter to the Emperor of Russia, ensuring a sufficient supply of wood for new ships of the Commonwealth navy and serving on the Mint Committee where he conducted an inquiry into the depletion of currency stocks. In 1652 he was appointed president of the Council of State. The conduct of the council was described by a foreign observer as:

economical in private affairs and prodigal in their devotion to public affairs, for which each man toils as if for his private interest. They handle large sums of money, which they administer honestly observing a strict discipline.<sup>35</sup>

While his son served on Cromwell's council, Sir Edward Harington of Ridlington spent his final years in London. He was a lay member of the ninth 'classis' or Presbyterian council of St Olave's, Hart Street,<sup>36</sup> living in Aldersgate Street to where his tenant Abel Barker addressed correspondence. Sir Edward's death in 1653 bestowed the baronetcy and the tenanted Rutland estates on his son, Sir James Harington. Abel Barker immediately announced, in a letter addressed to Sir James Harington 'at his lodgings in Whitehall', that he would not 'remain tenant of certain lands on the terms proposed by Sir James'. However, new terms were obviously agreed and further letters between the tenant and his landlord, living at the heart of government at Whitehall, deal with such issues as the felling of trees at Gunthorpe and the confirmation of new leases.<sup>37</sup>

The tenants of Harington's parliamentary colleague Thomas Waite were less contented, petitioning the Council of State against the forced enclosure of Hambleton and a doubling of their rents.<sup>38</sup>

Sir James Harington's connection with Rutland was further severed when, in the same year as his father's death, Cromwell abruptly dismissed the discredited Rump Parliament, all that remained of the 1641 Long Parliament whose resistance to the king had precipitated the civil wars. Cromwell had become frustrated by the delays and obstacles in implementing radical reforms in the organisation of the English Church, tithes and taxation. In desperation Cromwell decided to abandon the elective system and appoint a new, godly assembly of 140 chosen delegates from England, Scotland and Ireland.

This gathering became known as the Nominated, Little, or 'Barebones' Parliament, from the London leather-seller and Independent member, Praise-God Barebone. Rutland's nominated member was Edward Horsman of Stretton, while Sir James Harington found himself appointed as member of parliament for Middlesex, where he now lived. The unelected parliament proved even less effective than its predecessors, and, abandoning the experiment, an impatient Cromwell accepted royal authority in all but name as Lord Protector. In 1655 the rule of the Major-Generals was imposed on the regions of England. Rutland with other midland counties came under the control of William Boteler, who attempted to raise taxes and impose social order with a zeal that included the threat of transportation for 'idle vile rogues'.<sup>39</sup>

On 19 May 1658, Sir James Harington was again appointed president of Cromwell's Council of State, but the days of power were short lived. Cromwell's death later that year brought months of confusion and increasing panic, as republicans attempted to form alternative governments and pragmatists looked to a restoration of the monarchy. The army's council of officers nominated ten most trusted members of the Council of State, including Sir James Harington, to form a Committee of Safety and consider fit ways to carry on the affairs of government'.<sup>40</sup> They attempted to ensure that General Monck in Scotland took firm measures against royalist supporters of Charles II, but the tide had turned and Monck swam strongly with it. Leading his army south, he masterminded elections for a representative parliament, at which Sir James Harington was defeated, and negotiated terms for the king's return. On 29 May 1660 King Charles II entered London in triumph and the Stuart monarchy was restored. The brief hour of England's republic was over.

The Restoration brought relief and reward to faithful royalists including in the Noels, Heaths, Mackworths and Bodenhams of Rutland. Some had recently changed sides, such as Colonel Henry Markham of North Luffenham who had fought for parliament but changed his colours by 1660. To others who had served parliament but avoided bearing arms, such as Abel Barker, the Restoration brought new opportunities. Active parliamentarians such as Edward Horsman were conditionally pardoned and allowed to live quietly on their estates. But for those identified as regicides, retribution was not slow to come. Excluded from the king's pardon by his signature on the Charles I's death warrant, Thomas Waite was tried and condemned in October 1660. His petition for mercy claims that Waite was 'without his consent made one of the pretended Court for trial of the late King' and later 'forced by Cromwell to sign a writing, not knowing what was contained therein'.<sup>41</sup> Royal mercy, or procrastination, seems to have prevailed, and Thomas Waite lived until 1668, a prisoner on Jersey. The lenient treatment of the king's enemies is confirmed by the fate of Waite's 'poor wife and eight small children', who retained their far from modest home at Market Overton, taxed in 1665 for 18 hearths.<sup>42</sup>

And what of the Haringtons? The family which in 1603 had been closest to the first Stuart royal family was now dispersed and impoverished. The political theorist James Harrington, cousin of the Rutland Haringtons and author of *Oceana*, was arrested in 1661 and committed to the Tower and other places of custody. Broken by sickness and mental disorder, he died in London in 1677. His cousin, Sir James Harington, baronet of Ridlington, fared little better. Identified as a regicide for his attendance at the king's trial, although he did not sign the death warrant, Harington initially lay low in London while his wife petitioned the king. Although Catherine, Lady Harington, saved her own property of Swakeleys, Harington was arrested, stripped of his titles and imprisoned for life. His humiliating punishment was observed, coincidentally, by the former Princess Elizabeth, exiled Queen of Bohemia, whose guardian half a century before had been Lord Harington of Exton. In the last year of her life, writing to her son the Elector Palatine on 15 July 1661, Elizabeth recorded:

Every week I march to one place or other with the king; the next week we go to my Lady Herbert's at a house she has taken by Hampton Court. All goes still well here, Mildmay, Mounson, Wallop and Harrington [Sir James Harrington of Ridlington] are to be drawn upon hurdles with ropes about their necks to Tyburn and there to see their coats of arms torn and so departed, return in the same manner to perpetual prison.<sup>43</sup>

Harington's 'perpetual prison' was commuted to exile and he lived on in Antwerp to reflect on the strangeness of God's purposes and to write *Horae Consecratae or Spiritual Pastime*, published in London two years after his death in 1680. Despite the stripping of his titles, both Harington's sons succeeded in turn as fourth and fifth baronets of Ridlington. But the family remained on the fringes of the nobility, never recovering the closeness to government which, in the first half of the 17th century, saw Lord Harington of Exton as guardian of a king's daughter and Sir James Harington of Ridlington in the councils of the Lord Protector.

Even while they faithfully served the first Stuart king, members of the Harington family were renowned for devout puritanism. For the family's younger generation, witnessing a world turned upside down by perceived threats to England's reformed protestant church, puritanism turned to protest and to idealistic republicanism. In the Northamptonshire branch this found expression in a new political theory. For the Rutland branch it brought military action against the king and participation in England's commonwealth government.

Thus, when the restored monarchy came to reward its faithful adherents, the family was marked out as of dubious loyalty. The ‘days of shaking’ of 1600 to 1660 contributed to the decline of the once great Harrington dynasty. While the Exton line was destroyed by death and indebtedness, radical convictions left the Ridlington line on the wrong side of the establishment fence. In the brave new world of Restoration England, success and advancement were to be purchased by unquestioning, traditional loyalties and flexible pragmatism, rather than by devout religious commitment and the quest for just government.

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18. CSPD 1644, quoted in Grimble, 199-200
19. JHC iv, 15 March 1644[5]
20. Grimble, 201-2
21. JHC iv 27 November 1645
22. JHC 5 June 1646
23. CSPD vol 21, 436
24. ROLLR DG7/1/70
25. ROLLR DE 730/3
26. BL E?
27. Aubrey, *Brief Lives*, quoted in Blitzer (ed) *The Political Writings of James Harrington* (1935), xix
28. *Nugae Antiquae*, ii 244-5
29. *Pepys Diary* 20 February 1660
30. ‘The Examination of James Harrington’ in Pocock (ed) *The Political Works of James Harrington* (1977), 859
31. Underdown, *Pride’s Purge* (1971), 18
32. CSPD 1649-50, 107, 109
33. Underdown 206
34. CSPD 1649-50, 162
35. Quoted in Grimble 213
36. *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum*, ed Firth and Rait, 3 vols. 1911, i 796
37. HMC *Appendix to Fifth Report*, 393
38. *VCH Rutland* i, 198
39. *VCH* i 199
40. *Diary of Bulstrode Whitelocke* ed. Spalding 1990, 536
41. House of Lords Library, petition of Thomas Waite
42. *The Rutland Hearth Tax* 33
43. Letters of Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia, ed. LM Baker, 1953, 346

## Kings' Favourites: the Dukes of Buckingham of Burley

When King James I arrived at Burley on the Hill on Thursday 4 August, 1614, his mind must have been full of the handsome youth he had just left behind at Apethorpe. George Villiers, then aged 21, was the second son by the second wife of a country gentleman, Sir George Villiers of Brooksby, Leicestershire. Until the age of 13, when he lost his father, Villiers had attended the school established by Anthony Cade in the nearby vicarage of Billesdon. Although not a natural scholar, Villiers retained a deep affection for his former schoolmaster and later introduced him to the king. The death of his father left the young man to be brought up at Goadby Marwood by his mother, the beautiful former Mary Beaumont, who recognised that her son's future prospects lay in his personal charms rather than devotion to study. Following a short-lived second marriage, Mary's third and most advantageous marriage was to Sir Thomas Compton, brother of the future Earl of Northampton. It was the wealth and influence of their new stepfather which ensured that George and his elder brother John Villiers were able to complete their education, in the manner of young noblemen, by European travel. This was to be the first step on the ladder which raised George Villiers to the highest position in the kingdom, as favourite of two Stuart kings.

In that momentous August of 1614, Apethorpe House in Northamptonshire was owned by Sir Anthony Mildmay, heir of Queen Elizabeth's Chancellor who had purchased the estate. It was a favourite stopping place of King James, who enjoyed hunting red deer in the grounds and later ordered its owner to extend both the house and parkland for his better entertainment. Wherever the king stopped on his summer progresses, local noblemen and gentry descended with gifts and salutations, hopeful of royal favour. His stepfather's courtly connections gained George Villiers a place among the eager entourage which greeted the king at Apethorpe and accompanied the royal hunting party. The handsome youth caught the eye of all who beheld him. The future parliamentarian, Simonds D'Ewes, whose diary shows him to be well aware of the king's preferences, recorded his first impression of Villiers. The young man had 'everything in him full of delicacy and handsome features; yea his hands and face seemed to me especially effeminate and curious'.<sup>1</sup>

Since his accession, it had been well known that King James was highly susceptible to the charms of young men, despite fathering seven children by his queen, Anna of Denmark. Before the death in 1612 of the chief minister, Robert Cecil, Earl of Salisbury, no royal favourite had gained total dominance over the king. But with the death of Salisbury the court became a cockpit of competing factions, which the king often appeared too idle to control. In 1614 the current royal favourite was Robert Carr, who during the seven years of his ascendancy had been promoted to the House of Lords and Privy Council. A scandalous liaison with Frances Howard, the beautiful, married Countess of Essex, had not harmed his position. By Christmas 1613 Carr had been created Earl of Somerset, and the king approved and paid for his marriage to the now divorced Countess. Somerset's position seemed secure, with his appointment as Lord Chamberlain and that of his father-in-law as Lord Treasurer. But while George Villiers was taking the first tentative steps on what was to become a meteoric rise, and the king was becoming increasingly aware of a more appealing candidate for his affection, the storm clouds were gathering over the new Earl and Countess of Somerset. The mysterious death in the Tower of London of Somerset's former friend, Sir Thomas Overbury, was about to cause a far more terrible scandal which would lead them both to imprisonment in the Tower.

At first, realising that he had a rival for the king's attention, Somerset achieved a temporary success. In November 1614 he was able to block Villiers' path to promotion by opposing his nomination as a Gentleman of the Bedchamber. However Somerset was unable to control his own volatile nature and brooding jealousy of Villiers. He became openly sullen and resentful towards the king, leading James to make one final appeal for a resumption of his favourite's former loving behaviour and nocturnal company. Meanwhile the anti-Somerset faction at court, led by Sir James Graham, were busily promoting the interests of George Villiers, buying new clothes and securing for him a court appointment as royal Cupbearer. This gave the young man sufficient access to the king for James to become totally enthralled. Unconcerned by court gossip or financial pressures, the king ordered a lavish Twelfth Night masque to be prepared. The eagerly observant letter-writer, John Chamberlain, reported with some disapproval on 1 December 1614:

... and yet for all this penurious world, we speak of a masque this Christmas, towards which the king gives £1500, the prime motive whereof is thought to be the gracing of young Villiers and to bring him on the stage.<sup>2</sup>

Supported by an ambitious mother, hopeful friends and the opponents of Somerset, George Villiers ascended rapidly to the heights of influence and power. In Spring 1615, Mary Villiers contrived that her promising son should appear in a student play at Cambridge, just as the king happened to visit the University. The greatest coup for Villiers' supporters occurred when the Archbishop of Canterbury persuaded Queen Anna to propose George Villiers as a Gentleman of the King's Bedchamber. Anna was as eager as anyone to challenge the influence of Somerset on her husband, although she was aware that a new royal favourite might become even more powerful and arrogant. James was happy to oblige his wife, since her request undermined any subsequent objections she might raise to his interest in this delightful young man.

On St George's Day 1615, George Villiers was appointed to serve in the royal bedchamber and was knighted by the king with the rapier of his son, Prince Charles. The following day Villiers received the Order of the Garter, along with his future father-in-law, the Earl of Rutland. John Chamberlain regarded the two knights as less than suitable candidates:

... in regard that the wife [of the Earl of Rutland] is an open and known recusant, and he is said to have many dangerous people about him, and [Villiers] is so lately come into the light of the world and withal it was doubted that he had not sufficient likelihood to maintain the dignity of the place according to the express articles of the Order.<sup>3</sup>

However, the Countess of Rutland's Catholicism and Villiers' poverty presented no problem to the king. The young man's lack of means was immediately remedied by a pension of one thousand pounds to maintain the dignity of his new status.

On his summer progress of that year, James included a visit to Goadby Marwood, the Leicestershire home of Villiers' mother. In August 1615 the king and his new favourite were at Farnham Castle, Hampshire. According to Villiers' own later recollection, it was here that his physical relationship with the king began.<sup>4</sup> Somerset's days were numbered. The time was ripe for opponents of Somerset to reveal shocking new evidence which implicated the Earl and Countess in the death of Sir Thomas Overbury. In May 1616, they were tried by their peers in Westminster Hall and found guilty of murder, although after six years in the Tower they were formally pardoned by the king. By the time of the verdict Villiers had been appointed the king's Master of Horse, a position which allowed him to indulge his love of horses and to steadily improve the English bloodstock. As yet he had no openly political role, but King James was becoming more and more dependent on the company, wit and intelligent opinion of this rising star. Leading government figures such as the philosophical Attorney General Sir Francis Bacon, who had led the prosecution of Somerset, were quick to cultivate Villiers, now the king's constant companion.

Villiers' advancement to the peerage came in August 1616, with the titles of Baron Whaddon and Viscount Villiers. Grants of royal lands, reputedly valued at £80,000, allowed him to live in splendour. In the same month, Villiers was probably with the king at Burley on the Hill, the great Rutland house which within a few years would become his own. Even while enjoying his rapid rise, Villiers did not neglect to pay grateful attention to the queen for her support in the early days of his advancement. During the second half of 1616, Queen Anna wrote to Viscount Villiers in revealingly familiar terms:

My kind dog, I have received your letter which is very welcome to me. You do very well in lugging the sow's ear, and I thank you for it, and would have you do so still upon condition that you continue a watchful dog to him and be always true to him. So wishing you all happiness, Anna R.<sup>5</sup>

Anna's caring loyalty to her husband, and her appreciation of Villiers' influence on 'the sow', confirms the favourite's intimate position within the royal family, which was to extend his supremacy beyond the lifetime of King James.

In January 1617 George Villiers achieved the title by which he would henceforward be known, as he accepted the Earldom of Buckingham. A more intimate name bestowed on him by the king was that of 'Steenie', reputedly because he had the physical beauty of Saint Stephen. Renowned for his scholarship, James frequently enjoyed biblical parallels. As the young man became a sworn member of the Privy Council, the king justified his affection to fellow councillors in no uncertain terms:

I, James, am neither a god nor an angel, but a man like any other. Therefore I act like a man, and confess to loving those dear to me more than other men. You may be sure that I love the Earl of Buckingham more than any one else, and more than you who are here assembled. I wish to speak in my own behalf and not to have it thought a defect, for Jesus Christ did the same and therefore I cannot be blamed. Christ had his John and I have my George'.<sup>6</sup>

As Master of the Horse, the new Earl of Buckingham had official lodgings in the royal palace of Whitehall. However, the time had come for him to acquire property where he might set up home and consider marriage. His negotiations involved two noble landowners with Rutland connections. By 1617 Buckingham had bought the Harington family home of Coombe Abbey, Warwickshire, from the impoverished heiress, Lucy, Countess of Bedford. Then in March 1617 he raised loans of £29,000 to purchase the manor of Dalby, near Melton Mowbray. The sale of this estate by Sir Edward Noel, Baron of Ridlington, was part of Noel's unsuccessful campaign to purchase from the Haringtons the great mansion of Burley on the Hill, which later became Buckingham's. Buckingham's country home at this time was Wanstead in Essex, where he entertained the king in June 1618. In January 1618 The Earl became Marquis of Buckingham: a year later he gained his highest political promotion as Lord Admiral of England. Buckingham's increasing wealth was enhanced following the death of Queen Anna in 1619, by the bequest of some of her jewels and land worth £1200 a year.

Now in the highest ranks of nobility, George Villiers ensured that his family acquired titles and marriages in keeping with his own dignity. In 1618 his mother became Countess of Buckingham in her own right, and other relations were given lucrative posts. Although many aspiring nobleman muttered disapprovingly, concern for the welfare of one's family was praised by John Chamberlain who wrote of Buckingham's 'good disposition in doing good to his kindred and friends'.<sup>7</sup> Buckingham had travelled abroad with his elder brother John in their youth, and now hoped that his much-loved brother would continue the Villiers line should Buckingham himself not produce an heir. A suitable candidate for John Villiers' hand was found in the fifteen-year-old Frances Coke, daughter of the Lady Hatton whose tenants had confronted King James on Empingham Heath in 1603. The girl's father, Sir Edward Coke, hoped that such a match would restore his own judicial career, but her mother was of a different mind. Lady Hatton hid the young heiress away, only for her to be forcibly carried off and whipped into submission by her father's orders.<sup>8</sup> King James and Buckingham supported the marriage, the girl gave her consent and Lady Hatton was placed under house arrest until the marriage took place. John was raised to the nobility as Viscount Purbeck, but his increasingly frequent bouts of mental illness put a severe strain on the marriage and the couple soon lived apart.

The insecure Prince Charles, thrust into the role of heir to the throne by the death in 1612 of his adored elder brother, Henry, watched the new favourite's rise with anxious resentment.

When Charles summoned courage to challenge Buckingham, the king sided with his favourite rather than his son. But Buckingham's charm and sensitivity allowed him to win the prince's affection while keeping the king's, replacing the lost elder brother in an intimate relationship between the 'Dear Dad' and his two boys, 'Baby Charles' and 'Steenie'. Even the possibility of a marriage for Buckingham could not break such bonds. Taking a fatherly interest in his favourite's well-being, King James encouraged him to seek a bride.

Having aimed unsuccessfully for the wealthy Ann Aston in 1613, Buckingham could now take his pick of aristocratic heiresses. Lady Hatton hoped that an alliance might be made with her family, the Cecils of Burghley, but Buckingham's choice fell on Katherine Manners, daughter of the sixth Earl of Rutland. The couple may have encountered each other during Villiers' youth in Leicestershire, and certainly on one of the king's several visits to Belvoir Castle, her family home. Following the death of her infant half-brothers, according to the inscription in Bottesford Church: 'by wicked practice and sorcery', Katherine was the heir to vast estates. Unfortunately for her marriage prospects, she was also a Roman Catholic. But Buckingham appeared determined on his choice. For most of 1619 marriage negotiations dragged on. Although Buckingham was broadminded, the king would not allow his favourite to marry a Catholic and Katherine would not abandon her faith.

Finally, in the spring of 1620, Katherine agreed to conform to the Church of England, persuaded by the king's chaplain John Williams, who thus gained the friendship of Buckingham and advancement leading eventually to the Bishopric of Lincoln. Williams was also instrumental in persuading the Earl of Rutland to accept Buckingham's demand for a generous dowry, finally agreed at £10,000 in cash as well as land worth £4,000 a year. Although reluctant to approve the marriage, The Earl of Rutland's hand was forced by Buckingham's mother, who enticed Katherine to spend a night under the same roof as her suitor and thus compromise her reputation.



The marriage took place on 16 May 1620 and proved unusually happy. The king expressed his hopes for a fruitful union in the fondest terms:

My only sweet and dear child,

Thy dear dad sends thee his blessing this morning and also to his daughter. The Lord of Heaven send you a sweet and blithe wakening, all kind of comfort in your sanctified bed, and bless the fruits thereof that I may have sweet bedchamber boys to play me with, and this is my daily prayer, sweet heart. When thou rises, keep thee from importunity of people that may trouble thy mind, that at meeting I may see thy white teeth shine upon me, and so bear me comfortable company in my journey. And so God bless thee, hoping thou will not forget to read over again my former letter, James R.

When Katherine's first pregnancy was confirmed, the king sent instructions that she should not eat too much fruit, 'never go in a coach upon the street, nor never go fast in it', and should be preserved from 'all hasty news' by her mother-in-law.<sup>9</sup>

Katherine herself wrote, three years after her marriage:

I am sure God will bless us both for your sake, and I cannot express the infinite affection I bear you; but for God's sake believe me that there was never woman loved man as I do you.<sup>10</sup>

A grand home was now required in which to begin married life. Buckingham and his bride must have been very familiar with Burley on the Hill in Rutland, the great house built by Sir John Harington only a short ride from Belvoir Castle, and frequently visited by King James. Now Lucy, Countess of Bedford, £50,000 in debt, was forced to sell the last remaining Harington properties, and in Buckingham she found an eager purchaser. Burley's asking price of £28,000, in cash and property, was raised partly from Katherine's dowry and from Buckingham's receipt of the proceeds of a tax on coal exports. As Buckingham moved into his great Rutland mansion in the summer of 1621, a housewarming was planned with the king as guest of honour. No expense was spared. £200 was paid to Nicholas Lanier for directing the music, and £100 to Ben Jonson for providing a new courtly entertainment, *The Masque of the Gypsies*.

And so, on 3 August 1621, the king travelled once again into Rutland, to stay at the grand house of Burley on the Hill, now owned by his favourite, Buckingham. A lavish feast concluded with Ben Jonson's spectacular masque, which opened with the words of the Porter addressing the king:

Welcome, O welcome! then, and enter here  
The house your bounty built, and still doth rear,  
With those high favours, and those heaped increases,  
Which shows a hand not grieved but when it ceases.  
The Master is your creature, as the place,  
And every good about him is your grace...<sup>11</sup>

Buckingham participated in the masque as Captain of the Gypsies, accompanied by his brother John, Lord Purbeck, and his brother-in-law William, Lord Feilding. Buckingham's lines included grateful allusions to his royal benefactor:

Myself a gipsy here do shine  
Yet you are maker sir, of mine...

And may your goodness ever find  
In me, whom you have made, a mind  
As thankful as your own is large...<sup>12</sup>

Although the same masque was to be performed two days later at Belvoir, and the following month at Windsor, the author incorporated topical references which could be amended to suit the location. In punning doggerel which hints at Jonson's discomfort with his subject, a gypsy reassures the courtly audience before telling their fortunes:

Draw but then your gloves, we pray you,  
And sit still, we will not fray [frighten] you;  
For though we be here at Burley,  
We'd be loth to make a hurly.

The fortune of the king was first told, flattering his learning and desired role as peacemaker. Then Prince Charles, future king and royal martyr, was reminded of the controversy surrounding his search for a bride:

See what states are here at strife,  
Who shall tender you a wife...

In turn, each member of the noble audience was subject to the gypsies' prophecy. Buckingham's mother in law was told:

Both your bravery and your bounty  
Style you mistress of the county...

The young Countess of Exeter, newly married to the 79 year-old Earl, was told:

An old man's wife  
Is the light of his life...

Among other notable spectators were Lady Hatton of Kirby Hall; John Williams, newly appointed Lord Chancellor; the Earl of Manchester, Lord Treasurer; the Earl of Worcester, Lord Privy Seal; the Earl of Arundel, Earl Marshall; and Lord Marquis Hamilton, High Commissioner to the Scottish parliament. The long-winded fortune-telling was followed by country dances and songs, some light-hearted pick-pocketing by the gypsies and their final transformation into the courtiers who had performed the roles. Once again, Ben Jonson's dire poetic commentary paid tribute to its setting:

I can (for I will)  
Here at Burley o' the Hill  
Give you all your fill,  
Each Jack with his Gill,  
And show you the king,  
The prince too, and bring  
The gypsies [who] were here  
Like lords to appear.

The masque culminated in a medley of adulatory songs in praise of the 'fresh and fragrant' King James. No doubt the ageing king was suitably flattered, and Buckingham satisfied that his money had been well spent. However this masque, devoid of literary merit, serves mainly to demonstrate the Jacobean court's descent into self-absorbed decadence, and the willingness of a gifted poet to prostitute his talents for royal favour.<sup>13</sup>

Poetry, however hackneyed, was the order of the day. Buckingham, the obsequious host, expressed extravagant devotion to the king in the words of a poem probably written by Sir John Beaumont, his mother's relation:

Sir, you have ever shined upon me bright,  
But now you strike and dazzle me with light;  
You, England's radiant Sun, vouchsafe to grace  
My house, a sphere too little and too base.  
My Burley, as a cabinet, contains  
The gem of Europe, which from golden veins  
Of glorious Princes to this height is grown,  
And joins their precious virtues all in one...<sup>14</sup>

King James responded in due form, as described by the letter-writer John Chamberlain:

The King was so pleased and taken with his entertainment at the Lord Marquess's, that he could not forbear to express his contentment in certain verses he made to this effect, that 'the air, the weather (though it were not so here), and everything else, even the stags and bucks in their fall did seem to smile; so that there was hopes of a smiling boy within a while', to which end he concluded with a wish, or votum, for the felicity and fruitfulness of that virtuous and blessed couple, and in a way of Amen, caused the bishop of London in his presence to give them a blessing.<sup>15</sup>

As proud of his poetry as of his protege, James ordered his royal verses to be 'engraved in marble and set up at Burley as a perpetual remembrance of his visit'.<sup>16</sup>

The family and friends gathered around Buckingham in his grand new house provided a network built on supportive kinship and political influence. Buckingham and his mother promoted the careers and favourable marriages of loyal clients as well as members of both the immediate and extended Villiers family. King James often yielded to his

favourite's persuasive advice where honours and promotions were concerned, and was ready to advance those closest to his favourite, if he was persuaded that their abilities were sufficient. The concern for and advancement of his family, though praised by Buckingham's admirers, provided increasing cause for complaint in the growing number of murmuring opponents.

Buckingham's elder brother, John Villiers, had married against her mother's will Frances Coke, heiress of the Hatton estates. In 1619 John was created Viscount Purbeck, but by 1622 his increasing fits of manic depression caused widespread concern. His wife sought a separation, and from then on both she and John were financially supported by Buckingham. Lady Purbeck was allowed to live in Buckingham's London home of York House, but her indecorous behaviour caused increasing embarrassment. In 1625 scandalous tongues could no longer be silenced, when Lady Purbeck gave birth to a son by her lover, Sir Robert Howard. Since Buckingham had no son at this date, he was horrified at the prospect of this child inheriting his estates. His sister-in-law and her lover were charged with adultery. Lady Purbeck was condemned to prison and public penance, saving herself only by a daring, disguised escape. The third Villiers brother, Christopher later Earl of Anglesey, was described even by Buckingham as 'little-deserving', and has made little mark on history.<sup>17</sup>

Susan Villiers, Buckingham's much loved sister, had married Sir William Feilding whose family held the Rutland manor of Martinthorpe. Described by Gardiner as 'the plain country gentleman who had the good luck to marry Buckingham's sister in the days of her poverty',<sup>18</sup> Feilding was created Baron and Viscount in 1620 and Earl of Denbigh in 1622. It was probably Buckingham's purchase of nearby Burley which encouraged his sister and her husband to build the impressive but long vanished Martinthorpe House. His fortunate marriage brought William Feilding into the highest circles in the land. In the so-called Spanish adventure, which Buckingham and Prince Charles were soon to undertake, the Earl of Denbigh was in close attendance. A few years later, while Buckingham as Lord Admiral prepared the English navy for foreign wars, Denbigh was appointed an admiral of the fleet. Promoted beyond his abilities, his incompetent leadership contributed to the naval disasters of Buckingham's final months. However, in that golden August of 1621, while Buckingham basked in the king's favour surrounded by aristocratic neighbours and newly elevated relations, all seemed peaceful and prosperous. Few could have conceived that, twenty years later, the deceptive calm of Stuart England would be irrevocably shattered.

The acquisition of Burley on the Hill provided a temporary refuge from the pressures of court attendance. However it was not his only country property. In 1622, with London homes at Wallingford House and York House, where he kept his valuable art collection, Buckingham bought a second country house nearer to London at New Hall, near Chelmsford, Essex. As he informed the king, 'I hope New Hall Park shall be nothing inferior to Burley. My stags are all lusty and my calf bold, and others are so too. My Spanish colts are fat, and so is my jovial filly.'<sup>19</sup> In improving the grounds of both New Hall and Burley, Buckingham employed one of the greatest gardeners of the age, John Tradescant the elder. No expense was spared in planting new woodlands and imposing avenues. Beginning in the autumn of 1621 Burley was supplied with 'so much fir seed as you can and with all speed that can be', while the king took a personal interest in the delivery of four or five thousand fir saplings to Burley, 'with the like instructions of time, place and manner of setting and preserving them'.<sup>20</sup>

Only one of Buckingham's houses survives in its original form, New Hall in Essex, but there is some physical evidence of his improvements to the Burley estate. New park walls were built, nine feet high and three feet wide, enclosing about 1166 acres. These were not completed until 1634, long after the first Duke of Buckingham's death: to mark their completion King Charles sent a gift of forty red deer to the five-year-old second duke. At entry points into the park, five imposing stone gates were built, of which two survive, matching the stone gate with pediment built at the same time at Oakham Castle, where Buckingham was Lord of the Manor. Much new land, mainly former glebelands, was brought into Burley's Upper Park to accommodate additional deer. This was acquired by means of complicated land exchanges and tithe arrangements, especially with the vicar of Burley.<sup>21</sup> Careful measures were taken to ensure that the Duke and his guests enjoyed good hunting. On 30 December 1624, £100 was paid 'for bringing forty red deer alive from Hatfield Chase, Yorkshire, to Burley House, Rutlandshire', while warrants were also issued to Lord Noel [Baron of Ridlington] 'to preserve the game within six miles of Burley on the Hill'.<sup>22</sup>

Buckingham's grand house was approached by wide, newly planted avenues, which can still be observed in the approach from the south. His bowling green survives to the west of the house, and must have provided healthy exercise for royal visitors. For his collection of fine horses the king's proud Master of Horse ordered the construction of magnificent stables, still standing today. These stables caused Thomas Fuller, in his *Worthies of England* to extol Burley two centuries later in extravagant terms:

... so beautified with buildings by the duke of Buckingham, that it was inferior to few for the *house*, superior to all for the *stable*; where horses (if their *pabulum*[diet] so plenty as their *stabulum* stately) were the best accommodated in England... this Burley being since demolished in our civil war...<sup>23</sup>

Three of the horses which inhabited these famous stables have passed into history, mares named after Buckingham's favourite residence: 'Bay Burley with the Saddle Spots', 'White-Gray Burley' and 'Burley with the Cloud'.<sup>24</sup>

The precise form of the buildings 'beautified' by Buckingham and burnt down by retreating Parliamentarians in 1645 has been the subject of debate. Any evidence on the ground was buried under the grand new house built in the 1690s by the new owner of Burley on the Hill, Daniel Finch, 2nd Earl of Nottingham. Most early writers described the house which Buckingham bought from the Haringtons as 'improved' by its new owner. However, in the 20th century, Hoskins and Pevsner among others picked up a suggestion raised in a later edition of Wright's *History of Rutland* that

Buckingham completely rebuilt the house during the 1620s.

Confusion arises from two conflicting pieces of evidence, two undated plans of Buckingham's house at Burley. The first is a design by the surveyor John Thorpe, now in Sir John Soane's Museum, showing an elegant square building surrounding a courtyard.

The second plan, now lost, was copied by Pearl Finch in her 1901 *History of Burley on the Hill* and shows a very different ground plan. The two plans, and the likely form of Buckingham's house at Burley, have been extensively discussed by Anne Blandamer in *Rutland Record 18*. She concludes that the Thorpe plan was probably speculative and never actually built: instead Buckingham extended the earlier Harington house by adding a west wing to the Elizabethan mansion, renovating the gardens and investing heavily in the deer park.<sup>25</sup>

Despite the pleasures of country life, Buckingham had few opportunities to enjoy his new homes in Rutland and Essex. His attendance was constantly required in London where his first child, Mary, known to her family as 'Moll', was born in 1622. Maintaining his prominent position proved immensely costly, and Buckingham borrowed extensively to buy additional land at Burley; to increase allowances for his mother and other family members and to fund his household, stables, wardrobe, travelling, gambling and lavish entertainments. Detailed accounts of Buckingham's 'private purse' between 1622 and 1626 include the following typical items, offering an intimate glimpse into daily life of the chief man in the kingdom:

Given to a poor woman of Leicestershire Alice Arden by his Lordship's command	£5	10s
For a coach for the Gentlewomen when the Prince [Charles] and his Lordship supped at my Lady Bridgewater's		10s
To Mr Turpin money borrowed by his Lordship at the Tennis Courts	£16	10s
Delivered to My Lady for her Honour's use at play the 13 Jan [1622]	£6	12s
Paid for his Lordship's and my Lady's dinner sent thither from the Mitre Tavern the 16 January [1622]	£3	10s
Paid in charges for his Lordship's journey from Hinchinbrooke to Burley and back again the 2nd November 1623	£16	2s 3d
Paid to John Tradescant by his Lordship's order for his journey into the Low Countries, for his charges and Trees bought for his Lordship there	£124	14s
Paid to the Tennis Court Keeper's man for his Lordship's play 31 March [1624] with the Earl of Denbigh against my Lord Compton and Mr Montague ... at St James	£4	3s
Given to Lord Noel's man for two brace of bucks and a brace of does the 27 July [1624]	£5	
Paid to Mr Thomas Hipplesley ... for the workmen on the wall at Burley the 30 July [1624]	£100	
Paid to Mr Hopton ... the 2nd of August [1624] for the feast at Burley	£100	
Given to the Earl of Northumberland's man for 100 walnut trees presented from his Lord the 13 November [1624]	£20	
Paid for the carriage of these to Burley on the Hill	£25	
Paid to Sir K[enelm] Digby that his Lordship lost at play at Cambridge	£200	
Paid for Babies [dolls] for my little lady bought by his Lordship at Ludgate	£3	5s 6d
Given to Archy the Fool when his Lordship sent him back	£5	
Given to Mr Rubens for drawing his Lordship's picture on horseback	£500	
Given to Johnny the footman to go with letters to the Earl of Rutland	£1 <sup>26</sup>	

Totally dependent on the continuing favour of King James, Buckingham's position was by no means secure. As well as rumours that a new royal favourite might threaten his supremacy, Buckingham faced criticism within parliament. James's parliament of 1621 seized the opportunity to attack the increasing abuse of monopolies, sole rights to trade in goods such as gold and silver thread, in which Buckingham and his relatives were heavily involved. Buckingham addressed his critics in parliament, employing all his charm and diplomacy to diffuse the crisis. The favourite's widespread patronage and influence had extended to the Lord Chancellor, Sir Francis Bacon, and their dealings were not always above suspicion. When Bacon was charged with taking bribes, fined, imprisoned and barred from holding office, Buckingham was unable to protect his former protege.

Once again, the king was attempting to bring peace to a war-torn Europe by a strategic marriage, this time between his Protestant heir, Prince Charles, and the Catholic Infanta Maria of Spain. He hoped that as part of these negotiations, his daughter Princess Elizabeth, former ward of Lord Harington, might be restored to her husband's homeland, the Rhineland Palatinate. The exile of Elizabeth and Frederick, once King and Queen of Bohemia, was a constant source of grief to her father, brother and faithful friend, the Marquis of Buckingham. Buckingham served as go-between, urging the king to make better financial provision for his daughter and to take action to restore her with her husband to the Palatinate, while keeping up her spirits with practical gifts. In July 1622 Elizabeth wrote to Buckingham:

I am exceedingly beholding to you for the care you take in fitting me so well with horses, by which you continue to tie [me] to you, as you do by other many obligations.<sup>27</sup>

By February 1623 it appeared that political terms for the Spanish marriage were all but agreed. James had agreed concessions to English Catholics, yet the young Philip IV of Spain, reluctant to offend the Holy Roman Emperor by

restoring the Palatinate, refused to confirm his encouraging words by decisive action. The English ambassador in Madrid, John Digby, Earl of Bristol, proved out of his depth in dealing with the devious diplomatic manoeuvres of Philip and his ministers. Frustrated by the delays, and without waiting for official approval, Prince Charles and his dear friend Buckingham resolved on an impetuous, romantic plan to travel to Madrid incognito and bring home the new Princess of Wales. Their 'Spanish Adventure' proved as incredible as it was impractical. Disguised as Thomas and John Smith, Charles and Buckingham rode through Kent accompanied by only one servant. They soon aroused suspicion and King James was informed. While councillors and diplomats frowned at the foolhardiness of the journey, James secretly approved and sent anxious advice:

My sweet boys and dear venturous knights, worthy to be put in a new romance. I thank you for your comfortable letters. But, alas, think it not possible that ye can be many hours undiscovered, for your parting was so blown abroad that day ye came to Dover, as the French ambassador sent a man presently thither, who found the ports stopped. But yet I durst not trust to the bare stopping of the ports, there being so many blind creeks to pass at; and therefore I sent Doncaster to the French king with a short letter of my own hand to show him that respect that I may acquaint him with my son's passing unknown through his country. And this have I done for fear that, upon the first rumour of your passing, he should take a pretext to stop you; and therefore, Baby Charles, ye shall do well how soon ye come to Irun in Spain to write a courteous excuse of your hasty passage to the French king...

Noblemen would be hastily sent out to accompany the vulnerable 'venturous knights', including Buckingham's brother-in-law, Denbigh. James reported that he had written 'consolatory' letters to Kate, Duchess of Buckingham and Sue, Countess of Denbigh, concluding:

God Almighty bless you both, my sweet boys, and send you a safe, joyful, and happy return. But I must command my baby to hasten Steenie home how soon ye can be assured of the time of your homecoming with your mistress, for without his presence things cannot be prepared here. And so God bless you both again and again, James R.<sup>28</sup>

Two weeks after setting off, the pair reached Madrid, to be welcomed by the Spanish king and provided with rooms in the royal palace. The warmth of their reception cooled as Prince Charles made clear that he did not intend, nor would English public opinion allow him, to convert to Catholicism. The weeks dragged into months as politicians and prelates pressed the Spanish case, while Buckingham wrote anxious, regular missives to keep King James informed of the situation, and resisted the pressure to make unacceptable concessions. James was eager to confirm his support of Buckingham, and to hasten his return home, sending out to Spain in May 1623 a royal patent bestowing the title of Duke of Buckingham on the former Marquis. This rare honour, bestowed on a commoner, helped to deter criticism of Buckingham's part in what was rapidly becoming the abortive Spanish adventure.

Only allowed initially to view his intended bride heavily veiled at a safe distance, Prince Charles became increasingly aware of the embarrassing position he had placed himself in. Unsurprisingly, King Philip proved unwilling to give permission for such a valuable royal pawn to leave his court. Anxious to resolve the impasse, Charles and Buckingham gained King James's permission for further concessions, and by July Charles was allowed to sit publicly with the Infanta at court entertainments, expecting that the marriage would take place within a few days. The prince believed himself in love, ardent enough to leap a garden wall for a closer sight of his beloved. However further Spanish prevarication followed, including a refusal to guarantee help in restoring Elizabeth and Frederick to the Palatinate. Finally King James, recognising the futility of further negotiations and desperate to have the young men safely home, ordered his son and Buckingham to return to England on 29 August. To the last, diplomatic niceties were maintained with ostentatious gifts and declared intentions for the marriage to take place by proxy within the next few months. In early October 1623, Charles and Buckingham were reunited with the king. Though their mission had failed, the outpouring of public joy and celebrations showed just how unpopular the Spanish marriage would have been.

Their long companionship in Spain confirmed the close friendship of Buckingham and the Prince of Wales. Charles had gained in confidence from the experience, and he and Buckingham played an active role in advising and steering royal policy. The end of the 1623 failed to deliver the promised proxy marriage between Charles and his Spanish bride, and relations between the two states rapidly deteriorated. It now became clear to Charles and Buckingham that war against Spain and the Empire offered the only hope of restoring the Palatinate as well as English pride. Public opinion preferred to see England as defender of Protestantism rather than lackey of Spain, and the Dutch needed allies to resist Imperial oppression. Although a council committee meeting in January 1624 voted against war, the new Parliament, incited by Buckingham, ended negotiations with Spain and prepared for war. They were less eager to grant the necessary subsidies to pay for it, granting half the sum demanded by the king.

Opponents to the new foreign policy raised uncomfortable questions and protests. For a time it appeared that the king would take heed of anti-Buckingham rumours, but, winning the king's sympathy during a serious illness, Buckingham's influence prevailed and legal action was taken against his opponents, the Earls of Bristol and Middlesex. In Europe, allies were sought to join the crusade against Hapsburg domination. A second, more apparently malleable Catholic bride was found for Prince Charles in the tiny person of Henrietta Maria, sister of Louis XIII of France. Buckingham promoted the marriage and, celebrating his return to health, planned a great feast at Burley on the Hill, with the King James as guest of honour. No expense was spared and the steward at Burley, Mr Hopton, organised teams of servants to procure 'great store of venison, game and fish and ... delicacies such as musk melons and Colchester oysters'. On 2 August 1624, Secretary Calvert wrote from Apethorpe, 'this is removing day to Burley, and business proclaimed treason there.'<sup>29</sup>

Negotiations for the French marriage were not without impediments. Once again, King James had to promise to end the persecution of English Catholics, and at a crucial moment a change of French minister threw the outcome into doubt. As the new crisis developed, the Duke and Duchess of Buckingham were seeking relief for sickness at the newly discovered spa waters of Wellingborough. Returning to the fray, Buckingham soothed troubled waters and by the end of 1624 Prince Charles's marriage to Henrietta Maria was agreed in a ceremony attended only by the King, Prince, Buckingham and the Secretary of State, Sir Edward Conway.

As the marriage settlement between England and France was concluded, England had taken the first steps in its European campaign against the Hapsburg Empire. Twelve thousand English foot soldiers, led by English colonels, would be sent to the Palatinate under the command of Count Mansfeld, a German mercenary leader. Buckingham now had the responsibility of raising a fleet, as well as ensuring that sufficient troops remained ready on the English coast to protect against any Spanish invasion. Shortly after the great feast at Burley, in August 1624, Buckingham wrote from there to report to Conway that the king had agreed that selected members of each county's militia, the Trained Bands, should comprise a special defence force ready to go wherever needed within a few hours' warning. Parliament would not be recalled to grant further subsidies, since it was likely to oppose the prince's marriage to a Catholic princess. Short of funds to prepare ships, Buckingham advanced money of his own, exacerbating the personal debts which already stood at £25000 by the end of 1623.

In January 1625 Count Mansfeld and his English troops finally set sail on their mission to regain the Palatinate, while Buckingham laboured to raise funds at home and support in Europe. However, delays, confusion and changed plans meant that they progressed no further than Holland, where hundreds died of infection and starvation. The army crumbled away and Buckingham was held responsible. Critics on the Council, excluded from deliberations, muttered against the all-powerful favourite while Prince Charles supported his cause with the increasingly sick King James. By March, negotiations for the hand of Henrietta Maria approached their conclusion and Buckingham prepared to set off for Paris, to escort her to England. At this moment, James fell dangerously ill. Buckingham rushed to his bedside at Theobalds, proffering medicines which had helped his own family. The inevitable death of the king was accompanied by whispered rumours against the Duke, himself laid low by the painful loss of the master who had loved him so obsessively.

Contrary to public expectation, the new King Charles did not abandon his father's favourite. Personally comforting his grieving friend, he arranged rooms for Buckingham next to his own royal chamber at St James's Palace. The former Lucy Harington, familiar with the court, wrote to Lady Bacon that the new king was 'very stiff' in his opinions, adding:

Of his bedchamber he hath sworn none more than he had before but the Duke of Buckingham, whom he uses very well; but, it is hoped, will be governed by no man ... there is all good signs that God hath set him over this kingdom for a blessing.

However, by February 1626 Nathaniel Bacon reported to his wife:

For news, little is yet done in parliament but snarling on both sides and much muttering against the Duke, unto whom there happened, in his going to parliament, an accident, by many reputed ominous; for betwixt the court and Westminster his bridle would not hold upon his horse's head, but being twice mended, at the last it fell quite off, with the plume of feathers, to the ground.<sup>30</sup>

Ironically, the Speaker of the House of Commons was Heneage Finch, whose grandson Daniel, 2nd Earl of Nottingham, was many years later to purchase Burley on the Hill from Buckingham's son. Finch was informed by the Lord Keeper in December 1625:

I received from His Majesty a very confident expression of his gracious and good opinion of your faithfulness, worth and abilities, which was effectually and affectionately confirmed by my Lord Duke of Buckingham.<sup>31</sup>

Buckingham must have felt very differently three months later when it was Speaker Finch who read out to the king the House of Commons' address calling for his removal.

The 'snarling' apparent in parliament so early in Charles I's reign was a precursor of darker days to come. The king's French marriage proved unpopular, and there were no glories of war to compensate for its rising costs. As well as his post as Lord Admiral, Buckingham was also Warden of the Cinque Ports with sole responsibility for the navy and the nation's defence. He also continued to dominate foreign policy and lead demands for war against Spain. The most popular aspect of Charles's foreign policy was active support of his sister Elizabeth and her husband, exiled protestant rulers of the Palatinate and short-lived monarchs of Bohemia. This involved challenging the dominance of the Hapsburg rulers of Spain and the Holy Roman Empire. Without a concerted, efficient and well-funded campaign, or the whole-hearted support of France, England's half-hearted efforts proved worse than useless.

On 6 August 1625 George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, was appointed 'Admiral and Captain general and Governor of the Royal Fleet and Army to go the assistance of the Elector Palatine and his wife and children'.<sup>32</sup> That autumn he sent a fleet led by Sir Edward Cecil, seconded by his brother in law Lord Denbigh, to blockade the Spanish coast. Incompetence, sickness, lack of supplies and missed opportunities led the fleet to limp home in disgrace after an abortive attack on Cadiz. Unpaid, mutinous sailors haunted the ports and threatened their officers. Nearly a year later,

the situation was little better. In October 1626 an Oxford correspondent reported:

It is affirmed from London that the Duke was so hotly encountered by the sailors about this day se'nnight that he was since fain to set a guard about his house. They demanded their pay with very high words, and that if they were not satisfied they would et cetera. I know not what you take the cause to be of the king's not coming to Newmarket, as was expected and he purposed; but I hear some of opinion that the Duke likes not so unguarded a place.<sup>33</sup>

French support for England's anti-Habsburg league failed to materialise, due partly to Richelieu's machinations and partly to Buckingham's rash flirtation with the French queen. Neither of Charles's first two parliaments proved willing to grant further supplies without a voice in foreign policy, and Sir John Eliot led opposition personally directed against the duke. In March 1626 Buckingham was charged with neglect of England's naval interests, abuse of power and financial corruption. Even the Catholicism of his mother, wife and her father the Earl of Rutland was hurled against the beleaguered duke. The king launched a counter-charge against the Earl of Bristol and both peers were formally impeached by the House of Commons. Utterly refusing to countenance the demanded dismissal of his chief minister, on 14 June 1626, Charles once again dismissed parliament. The only way to raise funds was to turn to non-parliamentary sources of revenue. To nationwide hostility, Charles resorted to the illegal policy of forced loans. This income was intended to fit out a new fleet, under the governorship of the Duke of Buckingham, charged once again in May 1627 'to go to the help of the Elector Palatine'.<sup>34</sup>

Unloved by his parliaments and unsuccessful abroad, King Charles also faced dissent on the domestic front. The marriage agreement had allowed Henrietta Maria to bring French servants and priests into England. Their number had swollen to 450, of whom sixty were Catholic priests who advised the young queen to boycott her husband's Anglican coronation, and encouraged her opposition to Charles's authority. In August 1626 the king had had enough, and angrily expelled them. The distraught Henrietta Maria was bitterly jealous of the Duke of Buckingham's friendship with and influence over her husband, but as she was forced to adapt to the new situation, the Duke made efforts to heal the breach. As part of this campaign he presented her with a memorable gift: the Rutland dwarf, Jeffrey Hudson.

Jeffrey Hudson had been brought to the attention of the Duke of Buckingham by his father John Hudson, butcher of Oakham. According to James Wright, the Rutland historian who claimed to have met Jeffrey Hudson later in his life:

Being about seven years old, and scarce eighteen inches in height, he was taken into the family of the late Duke of Buckingham at Burley on the Hill, in this county, as a rarity of nature: and the court being about that time in progress there, he was served up top the table in a cold pie.

Wright then proceeds to tell an amazing story of Hudson's experiences at court; his voyage to France to fetch the queen's midwife; his capture by Flemish pirates and imprisonment in Dunkirk; Royalist service as cavalry captain in the Civil War; exile with the queen in France; killing his opponent in a duel; a second capture by pirates and sale into slavery; imprisonment as a Roman Catholic in London and finally his death in 1682, having grown to the height of three feet six inches.<sup>35</sup>

Buckingham must have been well pleased with the timely appearance of the handsome, diminutive child. Although his own wife would have delighted in such a charming attendant, this was clearly a gift fit for a king, and no less for a homesick, childlike queen. When elaborate dishes and fantastic shows were expected at a royal feast, serving up a living child in a pie presented a golden opportunity to impress and secure royal favour. Sadly, only the location of this story lacks credible evidence, since it must have taken place around 1626 when there was no royal visit to Rutland. The feast in question more probably took place at York House, where a similar occasion was described by a correspondent, when 'the duke's grace entertained their majesties and the French ambassador at York House with great feasting and show, where all things came down in clouds'.<sup>36</sup>

Jeffrey Hudson joined the young queen's household at Denmark House, becoming her page and plaything, with a personal servant of his own. There he must have presented a comical contrast to the porter, William Evans, who was seven foot six inches tall. The favourite entertainment of early Stuart queens and their courtiers was the masque, always an opportunity to posture, perform and dance in fantastic costumes, seeing themselves flattered and idealised in mythical roles. On 23 November 1626 such a masque was held for the queen at Denmark House. William Evans played the giant Gargantua, with the Duke of Buckingham as his fencing master. In a comic interlude, the giant drew from his pocket the tiny dwarf, Jeffrey Hudson, wearing a new suit and cloak which cost twenty shillings.<sup>37</sup> Both the king and queen had other dwarfs, but it was Jeffrey Hudson who was painted with the queen, first by Daniel Mytens, in a portrait to be sent to the Queen of Bohemia, and later by the artist whose work defines the age, Sir Anthony Van Dyck. Queen Henrietta's devotion to her delightful companion was witnessed by a letter-writer on 18 June 1627:

Little Geffrey, the Queen's dwarf, feel last day out of the window at Denmark House; the Queen took it so heavily that she attired not herself that day ... My Lady [the Duchess of Buckingham] pukes a little, which makes us hope she is with child.<sup>38</sup>

The extravagant, inward-looking life of the royal court could not entirely blot out growing problems at home and a more urgent crisis abroad. Protestant interests in Europe were now in dire straits. There seemed no hope of regaining the Palatinate and now Louis XIII of France launched a campaign against his Huguenot subjects in the enclave of La Rochelle. It was essential for England to be seen to defend her co-religionists. During the early months of 1627, Buckingham's priority was to raise and equip a navy to relieve the Huguenots now besieged in La Rochelle. He attempted to reform naval administration, guarantee edible provisions and improve shipyard facilities with the construction of a new dry dock at Portsmouth. The papers of his naval secretary, Edward Nicholas, demonstrate the meticulous attention to detail

Buckingham brought to his seemingly endless task. Essential funds were raised by the proposed sale of Wallingford House, the letting of Dalby Park in Leicestershire and selling the greater part of the Duke's jewels, as well as by the capture and sale of French ships and their goods. However the months of frantic preparation were clouded by the death of Buckingham's first son and heir, Charles, who had been born at Burley 16 months previously. He turned for spiritual comfort and practical support to his chaplain William Laud, who was later to become Archbishop of Canterbury and a significant contributor to the downfall of King Charles.

Rather than trust the expedition to a deputy, Buckingham resolved to lead the fleet to La Rochelle himself, and by June 1627 he was ready to depart. Debt had not cured the Duke's personal extravagance, and over £10,000 was spent on equipping himself and his servants for the voyage. Surgeons and chaplains were employed, the latter group including the poet Robert Herrick. One hundred cavalymen and seven infantry regiments, each of about a thousand men, embarked on the ships. The command of one regiment had been offered to the Earl of Essex, later Parliament's commander-in-chief against the king, but he refused to serve under Buckingham. While the king and the Duke's family grieved for his departure, ballad-mongers celebrated the event with scurrilous verses, such as one which ended:

Most graceless Duke, we thank thy charity,  
Wishing the fleet such speed as to lose thee,  
And we shall think't a happy victory.<sup>39</sup>

Buckingham's mission was to capture the Ile de Ré, from where he could offer protection and reinforcements to the besieged Huguenots of La Rochelle. Landing there on 12 July he set siege to the island's fortress of St Martin, but the English troops fell victim to infection and reinforcements had to be called for. A prolonged blockade depleted English forces and the promised reinforcements never materialised. Just as St Martin was about to capitulate, a French relief force landed on the island and the English were driven off with heavy casualties. On the very day that English reinforcements finally left Plymouth, Buckingham reluctantly ordered his depleted navy to abandon the campaign and set sail for home. Total casualties were somewhere near 5,000 men.

Buckingham's reputation never recovered from the humiliation of this defeat. Exonerated by the king and faithful supporters, he was held personally responsible by public opinion. While critics and balladeers trumpeted his failure, Buckingham spent wretched days in Portsmouth and Plymouth attempting to relieve the suffering of his sick, demoralised and depleted forces. Soon recovering his essential optimism, however, he set about rebuilding the navy and pressed the Privy Council to procure necessary funds. Meanwhile his personal spending continued. His chief London home of York House was enhanced by an art collection which rivalled the king's, while its riverside entrance was dignified by an impressive water-gate, which still stands as reminder of the Duke's power and wealth. He was painted by Rubens, and bought the artist's own collection of pictures and statues. Buckingham's accounts show sums ranging from £200 lost at tennis in January 1627, to £4 for the hire of coach to Burley, with several shillings paid to bell-ringers greeting his journey through various towns en route. Occasional attempts to reduce debts included raising £4500 on the security of one of Buckingham's Rutland properties and £6200 by pledging the castle, manor and lordship of Oakham to Edward Wymark.<sup>40</sup>

Family ties remained all-important to Buckingham. Many relatives depended on him for financial support, but this was often repaid with deep affection. The Duchess, Kate, wrote yearning letters, lovingly berating her husband for his frequent absences, while his young nephew, Lord Basil Feilding, offered to wear the Duke's coat and blue ribbon of the garter, disguising his own identity to protect his uncle from threatened assassination. 'At which sweet proposition', recorded Sir Henry Wotton:

The Duke caught him in his arms and kissed him, yet would not, as he said, accept of such an offer in that case from a nephew whose life he tendered as much as himself.<sup>41</sup>

The pregnancy which Kate had undergone, while Buckingham was on the Ile de Ré campaign, led to the birth of a son, George, in January 1628. However, while the Duke celebrated the birth of his heir, a new expedition was being planned for the relief of La Rochelle, still besieged by the French king. Once again, Buckingham's brother-in-law, the Earl of Denbigh, was placed in command. Once again, the fleet was constantly delayed by lack of supplies. Buckingham travelled to and from the ports, attempting to procure provisions and placate mutinous, unpaid sailors.

Desperate for finance to equip the navy, the king recalled parliament in March 1628. At the formal opening, the Earl of Rutland carried the sword of state and Buckingham followed close behind the king. Refraining from a direct attack on Buckingham, the Commons agreed in principle to grant five subsidies, totalling £275,000. However both Houses also wished to obtain guarantees regarding the liberty of the subject, finally presenting their demands to the king in the form of a Petition of Right. This would outlaw forced loans, arbitrary arrest and the billeting of soldiers. Rejecting the Lords' recommendation for a compromise, the House of Commons demanded the king's assent to the petition. The failure and abject return of Denbigh's fleet lessened Buckingham's prestige, and Charles was forced to accept the Petition of Right in order to secure finances to continue the Rochelle campaign.

Grudging royal acceptance of the petition was not sufficient to placate parliament and diffuse criticism of the Duke's influence. Spurred on by fierce debate, the Commons passed a resolution: 'that the excessive power of the Duke of Buckingham, and the abuse of that power, are the chief cause of these evils and dangers to the King and kingdom'.<sup>42</sup> Having made their point, the Commons granted the subsidies, and then began to consider the legality of duties such as Tunnage and Poundage. Anxious not to lose further powers, and asserting his support of the Duke of Buckingham, Charles prorogued parliament at the end of June. He ordered Buckingham to return to Portsmouth to prepare a further fleet for La Rochelle, while the Privy Council authorised the construction of fireships, or floating mines.

Awaiting arrears of pay, desperate sailors who had served with Denbigh thronged the ports, lacking even the clothing for the new expedition. Buckingham attempted to placate them, declaring that he had done far more than his predecessors, raising their wages and spending much of his own money to pay them. He obtained a promise of £20,000 from London in immediate settlement, but the funds were not forthcoming and the mood became more ugly. Rumours, prophecies and anonymous verses foretold the downfall of the Duke, but Buckingham was used to brushing these aside and focusing on the matter in hand.

He set up headquarters at the Greyhound Inn at Portsmouth, meeting delegates from La Rochelle and making final arrangements for the departure of the fleet. The Duchess, Kate, once again pregnant, shared the simple lodgings of her husband. Leaving his wife in bed upstairs, the Duke took a hasty breakfast and passed through a crowded entrance hall on the way to his coach. What followed was described by Dudley, Lord Carlton in a letter to Queen Henrietta Maria:

Madam, I am to trouble your Grace, with a most lamentable relation; this day betwixt nine and ten of the clock in the morning, the Duke of Buckingham then coming out of a parlour, into a hall, to go to his coach and so to the king (who was four miles off), having about him diverse lords, colonels and captains, and many of his own servants, was by one Felton (once a lieutenant of this our army) slain at one blow, with a dagger knife. In his staggering he turned about, uttering only this word, 'Villain!' and never spake a word more, but presently plucking out the knife from himself, before he fell to the ground, he made towards the traitor, two or three paces, and then fell against a table although he were upheld by diverse that were near him, that (through the villain's close carriage in the act) could not perceive him hurt at all, but guessed him to be suddenly overswayed with some apoplexy, till they saw the blood come gushing from his mouth and the wound, so fast, that life, and breath, at once left his begored body...

Although he might well have escaped in the chaos, Felton surrendered himself. He told examiners that he was a Protestant lieutenant, passed over for promotion and owed twenty pounds in pay, who thought by this deed 'he should do his country great good service'. Expecting to be killed in the act, Felton had sewed in his hat a paper expressing his belief: 'it is for our sins that our hearts are hardened, and become senseless, or else he had not gone so long unpunished'. The king and the Duke's bereaved family were distraught; but the nation celebrated. According to another correspondent:

His Majesty since his death has been used to call him his Martyr, and to say the world was much mistaken in him; for whereas it was commonly thought he ruled his Majesty, it was clean otherwise, having been his Majesty's most faithful and obedient servant in all things; as his Majesty hereafter would make sensibly to appear unto the world.<sup>43</sup>

Buckingham was buried in Westminster Abbey, following a torchlit procession at which Trained Bands guarded the route to prevent any disturbance. Six years later, his grieving Duchess erected a monument there with effigies of the Buckingham and his family, including the first born Charles, buried in the same place before him. His sister Susan, Countess of Denbigh, erected a memorial tablet to Buckingham in the church of Portsmouth. John Felton was hanged at Tyburn, but his popular memory was to be in marked contrast to that of his victim. His deed was celebrated in verse:

Live ever, Felton: thou hast turned to dust  
Treason, ambition, murder, pride and lust.<sup>44</sup>

The assassination of the Admiral did not prevent his fleet sailing for La Rochelle. Under the command of the Earl of Lindsey it failed to assist the Huguenots, who surrendered to King Louis. The following year peace was signed between England and France. The urgent efforts of the Lord Admiral Buckingham to uphold the Protestant cause in Europe ended in total failure. Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia, never returned to the Palatinate and the French crown maintained its rule over subjects of all persuasions. Charles continued Buckingham's attempts to rebuild the English navy, but the imposition of Ship Money proved a catalyst leading to civil war, in which the navy offered its services to parliament. Finally Charles failed to learn from the dangerous lesson that, however much people hated the king's chief minister, once he had been removed the king must finally face up to the causes of bitterness himself.

The Duke of Buckingham's will, dated 25 June 1627, left all his 'chattels' to his wife, £5,000 to his sister the Countess of Denbigh and £7,000 to the Earl of Northampton, now related by marriage to Buckingham's mother.<sup>45</sup> Burley on the Hill, with the other estates, houses and treasures, fell to the inheritance of a seven-month-old baby. The debts, approaching £70,000, were settled by the king. The widowed Duchess, having given birth to a posthumous son, Francis continued to live with her children in York House, staying at Chelsea when she needed a change of air. Burley was left to the management of Buckingham's stewards, but the ambitious plan for its gardens and deer park fell into abeyance. As the infant Duke and his brother grew out of babyhood, they were removed to court, to be companions of the Prince of Wales, two years younger than George, and the growing family of princes and princesses. The king adopted the Villiers boys, partly to fulfil his promise to maintain Buckingham's family, but also because the widowed Duchess of Buckingham reverted to her Catholic faith and in 1635 defied royal disapproval to marry Randall Macdonnell, second Earl and Marquis of Antrim.

The eleven years of Charles I's personal rule, without the distraction of a critical parliament, seemed like halcyon days for the insular world of the royal court. When allowed outside the nursery, the royal children and their Villiers companions must have enjoyed the antics of the Rutland dwarf, glimpses of great feasts and masques, and perhaps even their lessons with the royal tutor, Bishop Brian Duppa. As well as many portraits of the royal children, the court painter Van Dyck also painted their two playmates, Francis and George Villiers, now second Duke of Buckingham.

Their elder sister, Mary, had been married while still a child to Charles, Lord Herbert, son of the Earl of Pembroke. By 1633 she was an 11-year-old widow, appearing at court to carry the train of the Queen of Bohemia's deputy at the christening of the Duke of York. Two years later Mary Villiers married James Stuart, Duke of Richmond and Lennox, in a magnificent wedding attended by the King and Queen. She was painted by Van Dyck in the guise of Venus, attended by her young relation, Lord Arran, appearing as Cupid. While Mary entered upon the second of her three marriages, her brothers remained at court until it was judged time for them to continue their education elsewhere.

Outside the court, clamorous dissenting voices, deprived of representation in parliament, rose to a crescendo of opposition which culminated in parliament's recall and the inexorable slide into civil war. By 1641, as events began to move for ever beyond the king's control, George and Francis Villiers, aged thirteen and twelve, had become students at Trinity College, Cambridge. There they studied rhetoric, mathematics, elementary logic, higher logic and metaphysics. Their tutor supplied regular reports to their trustees, one of whom was their grandfather, the Earl of Rutland. At Cambridge the young duke met the poet Abraham Cowley, ten years older than himself, who was to become a close friend. Another Cambridge poet was John Cleveland, fellow of St John's - both of these were to be influential in the development of Buckingham's poetic talent and satiric wit. Visiting Cambridge on 21 March 1641, the eleven-year-old Charles, Prince of Wales was awarded an honorary degree and saw his former playmates, George and Francis Villiers, receive their degrees. Two days later the king passed through Cambridge returning from Newmarket, to be accosted by protestors beseeching him to put an end to political divisions by returning to parliament.

For a further year the Villiers youths were expected to continue their studies, distracted no less by the temptations of wine, women and tobacco than by the news of dire upheavals in the world beyond. King Charles had failed to impose his English Prayer Book on the Presbyterian Scots, despite three unsuccessful wars; the Irish Catholics were in revolt and English Puritans were loud in their denunciation of religious innovations. Two reluctantly recalled parliaments demanded redress of grievances before granting subsidies, and Charles was forced to sacrifice his chief minister the Earl of Strafford to protect his family from the London mob. In August 1642 the king formally raised his standard against rebellious subjects and issued the call to arms. Unable to return to his capital, Charles established his royal court at Oxford, accompanied by the young princes Charles and James and his nephews, the sons of Elizabeth of Bohemia, Princes Rupert and Maurice of the Rhine.

Civil war came to Cambridge with the quartering of parliamentarian soldiers in the town and the destruction of 'idolatrous' images in the college chapels. In the ensuing chaos, it was easy for George and Francis Villiers to abandon their studies and join the king at Oxford. By 10 April 1643, aged fifteen and fourteen, they were both fighting with Prince Rupert and Lord Gerard at the storming of Lichfield. Their mother protested in vain at her sons' exposure to danger, to be told 'that it was their own inclination, and the more danger the more honour'.<sup>46</sup> Meanwhile their uncle, the Earl of Denbigh, who had volunteered to serve in Prince Rupert's cavalry regiment, was mortally wounded in the royalist attack on Birmingham, dying on 3 April 1643.

The sequel to his death was described by Eliot Warburton:

Lord Feilding [Denbigh's son] had been sent for, under a flag of truce, to see his dying father; he came too late, but he gave the 'stout old Earl' as Dugdale calls him, an honourable burial.<sup>47</sup>

Lord Denbigh's son had only been able to come to his dying Royalist father under a flag of truce, because he was fighting on the enemy side. As in so many tragic examples, the family of Buckingham's sister Susan was torn apart by the civil war, in which her son literally fought against his father. The eldest son of the Earl and Countess of Denbigh, Basil Feilding had been created Baron Feilding in 1628, rising to prominence in the service of his uncle Buckingham. His career included military and diplomatic service in Europe: for five years he was 'ambassador extraordinary' to the republic of Venice. His family's proximity to the royal family meant that the Earl and Countess had little hesitation in supporting the king when allegiances had to be declared in 1642, but they were heartbroken when their son and heir declared for Parliament. Both father and son fought at the battle of Edgehill on opposing sides, and following his father's death, Basil, now Earl of Denbigh, was appointed Commander in Chief of the parliamentary forces in the west midland counties.

Shocked by her son's betrayal of the Royalist cause, Susan Villiers, now Countess of Denbigh, wrote frantic letters attempting to persuade him to repent and return to his true allegiance. These intensified after her husband's death:

My dear Son,

I am much comforted with the receiving of your kind letter in this time of my great sorrow for the loss of my dear husband, your dear father ... God make me able to overcome this my affliction. I beg of you my first born to give me the comfort of that son I do so dearly love, that satisfaction which you owe me now, which is to leave those that murdered your dear father, for what can it be called but so? which when he received his death wound, but with the saying he was for the King, there was no mercy to his grey hairs but wounds and shots, a horror to me to think of.

O my dear Jesus, put it into my dear son's heart to leave that merciless company that was the death of his father, for now I think of it with horror, before with sorrow. Now is the time that God and nature claims it from you. Before you were carried away with error, but now it is hideous and monstrous. The last words your dear father spoke of you was to desire God to forgive you and to touch your heart. Let your dying father and unfortunate mother make your heart relent; let my great sorrow receive some comfort...

So with my blessing I take my leave. Your loving mother, Su: Denbigh.<sup>48</sup>

Although he did not yield to her emotional pleading, Basil, Lord Denbigh, continued to communicate with his mother while leading parliamentary armies against the king. The difficulty of his situation must have been painfully clear. His belief in parliament's cause did not remove all sympathy with his opponents. Even when this brought him into conflict with more militant regional committees, Lord Denbigh struggled to alleviate the miseries of war and to promote a negotiated settlement.

His connections with both sides of the conflict led to his employment by parliament as head of the commissioners sent to negotiate with the king in November 1644, and as one of the commissioners for the treaty of Uxbridge two months later.

The issue of Denbigh's loyalties may have continued to raise doubts, however, since in September 1645 the House of Commons resolved:

That this House doth concur with the Lords in clearing the Earl of Denbigh, so far as concerning his fidelity and affection to the public; Resolved et cetera that the Earl of Denbigh shall have the pay and entertainment of £10 per day as Sergeant Major General.<sup>49</sup>

Denbigh presented Parliament's new proposals to the king at Hampton Court and Carisbrooke at the end of 1647. When the second civil war made the king's death inevitable, Denbigh was named as a member of the court appointed to try King Charles. For him as for so many sincere supporters of parliament, this was a line he could not cross, declaring that 'he would be torn in pieces rather than have any share in so infamous a business'.<sup>50</sup>

While their cousin the new Earl of Denbigh led armies against the king for whom they and his father had fought, George and Francis Villiers were hustled by their mother away from the horrors of a country at war to the safety of European exile. This may have preserved their lives but did not protect their property, the vast estates bequeathed by the first Duke of Buckingham. The penalty for the young second Duke's active support of the royalist cause was the sequestration, or confiscation, of his estates. These included Burley on the Hill, which was easily occupied by parliamentary forces, to become the headquarters of the Rutland County Committee. They dug temporary fortifications, felled many trees, commandeered the horses for military use and occupied both the house and the stables. Many military reports, civil edicts or financial demands were regularly issued by the parliamentary committee at Burley. Supplies had to be brought in to feed and equip the troops, by agents such as Abel Barker, as well as confiscated goods which were generally sold to swell the committee's funds. Rutland parishes had to meet heavy demands for money, labour and produce to aid the parliamentary war effort, as testified by the records and receipts preserved by the churchwardens of Preston.

For much of the war, Burley's garrison commander was Thomas Waite, who led frequent brutal raids on surrounding royalists strongholds. One of his most bitter opponents was Baptist Noel, 3rd Viscount Campden, whose Exton estate had also been commandeered by parliament, but who led his royalist cavalry in bold sorties from their bases at Belvoir or Newark Castle. Waite seems to have been aggressive and ambitious, compensating for his humble background which contrasted with other members of the Rutland Committee. Reports to the Committee of Both Kingdoms in London often complained of disputes which split the committee and destroyed its efficiency. Attempts to restore an effective administration included summoning committee members to parliament and bringing in a senior officer, Major Layfield, to take command. Despite these internal divisions, the royalists never mustered sufficient strength to attack or besiege Burley, and though there was skirmishing around Rutland, no major battles took place in the county.

In May 1645, royalists in the east midlands were enjoying temporary success with the capture of Leicester. The parliamentary garrison of Burley now felt itself to be under serious threat. Rumours of Prince Rupert's brutality, which might now be turned against Rutland, caused panic at Burley. The committee rushed to improve defences, only to be reprimanded by the Committee of Both Kingdoms:

We are informed that in fortifying Burley House there has been more spoil and waste made of that house than is necessary. We desire you will consider what is necessary to be done for the fortifying thereof, and that as little damage be done to the building as may be.

A year later, with the king's defeat and the end of the first civil war, it appeared that Burley no longer needed to be maintained as a fortified garrison. The Rutland Committee was ordered to 'slight' the defences and dismantle the fortifications 'without making any further spoil of the house or stables'. Sir James Harington, whose great-grandfather had once owned Burley, was ordered to oversee operations.<sup>51</sup>

At some stage during 1645-6, in defiance of the orders of the central parliamentary committee, Buckingham's beautiful house of Burley on the Hill was burnt down. Strangely, when John Evelyn visited the site in August 1654 he made no mention of the destruction, describing only a house 'worthily reckoned among the noblest seats in England, situate on the brow of an hill, built *a la moderne*'.<sup>52</sup> Perhaps, impressed more by Burley's former reputation, or by the Duke of Buckingham's grand stable block which remained as evidence to former glories, he missed the stark evidence seen by surveyors sent by parliament three years earlier. Their survey of the manor of Burley upon the Hill, ordered as part of an 'Act of Sale of several estates forfeited to the Common Wealth for treason', and dated February 1652, reported that:

The mansion House usually called the Hall standing within the walls of the park was in the late wars utterly consumed by fire so that at present there remains nothing but certain ruinous parts and pieces of the walls.<sup>53</sup> Little knowing the fate of their father's fine house at Burley, the seventeen-year-old second Duke of Buckingham and his brother Lord Francis Villiers had been sent by their mother to seek safety on the continent. Under the guardianship of the Earl of Northumberland, they lived for some time in Florence and Rome 'in as great state

as some of those sovereign princes'.<sup>54</sup> However, as the year 1646 brought an end to the first civil war, George and Francis Villiers left Venice to return to England. Stopping in Paris, they were able to renew their former close companionship with the exiled Prince of Wales, later Charles II. There, according to the disapproving Bishop Burnet, Buckingham contributed significantly to the 'corruption' of Prince Charles, two years younger than himself, 'so that the main blame of the King's [Charles II's] ill principles and bad morals was owing to the Duke of Buckingham'.<sup>55</sup>

The Villiers brothers arrived in London in early 1647 to be greeted with good news. Their cousin Basil Feilding, Earl of Denbigh, active in the cause of parliament, probably influenced the decision to restore the Buckingham estates to the young Duke, 'taking into consideration his youth at the time of his delinquency'.<sup>56</sup> Despite this leniency, Buckingham had no intention of settling to a quiet life under the new regime, even in the still opulent surroundings of York House. Indeed, the kingdom had little opportunity to enjoy the temporary peace before Royalist conspiracies in different parts of the country led to the outbreak of a second civil war. In London, George and Francis Villiers came under the influence of Henry Rich, Lord Holland, friend of their late father. He encouraged them to believe that the imprisoned king, Charles I, might easily be restored to power. Together with Lord Peterborough, the three raised six hundred troops. George relished the opportunity to embrace glamour and glory as General of the Horse: in contrast his brother, nineteen-year-old Francis, put his affairs in order, paid his debts and said a sad farewell to his mistress, Mary Kirke.<sup>57</sup>

While King Charles languished in prison, attempting to play off against each other the opposing interests of parliament, army and Scots, the Second Civil War of 1648 proved short-lived and futile. It hastened his end by confirming the impossibility of achieving settled government while a dissenting king still lived. Regional rebellions and uncoordinated campaigns had little hope of combining to achieve their only hope, a concerted advance on London. While Cromwell defeated the royalists of Pembroke and then moved northward to deal with the Scots, Fairfax and Ireton showed ruthless efficiency in crushing the heroic defenders of Colchester. In the midlands, Rutland's Colonel Thomas Waite enhanced a reputation for brutality by the merciless killing of the king's courageous chaplain, Michael Hudson, at the capture of Woodcroft House.

The second Duke of Buckingham and his brother Francis Villiers played a small but significant part in the second civil war, which was to cost Francis his life. Their first intention was to raise support among Londoners and capture Lambeth House, 'and to plant ordinance against the Parliament, and to surprise the Committee at Derby House, and to raise the siege or relieve Colchester with two thousand horse and foot'.<sup>58</sup> These ambitious plans having come to nothing, the Villiers brothers, accompanied by Lord Holland, Lord Peterborough and six hundred followers, marched into the town of Kingston on Thames on 4 July 1648. Calling on the townsfolk for support, the royalist lords issued a proclamation, declaring the motives which justified their cause:

To that storm of blood that is now falling upon this kingdom and all those fears and confusions that petitions daily show to be in the thoughts and apprehensions, both of the city and the whole kingdom, we might add such circumstances that are of late discovered and broken out concerning His Majesty's person, and likewise a confused and levelling undertaking to overthrow monarchy, and to turn order, that preserves all our lives and fortunes, into a wild and unlimited confusion.<sup>59</sup>

However, parliamentary troops under Sir Miles Kingston were on their way to confront the royalists. A short but decisive engagement took place on 7 July on Surbiton Common. Although the Duke of Buckingham and the two earls escaped, among the royalists killed was Buckingham's brother, Lord Francis Villiers.

The death of the young Lord Francis Villiers led to an outpouring of grief among royalist supporters, and a flurry of elegies. Such poetic tributes, a feature of the time, marked the death of other royalist nobles who suffered in the short but brutal second civil war: Bishop Henry King composed a passionate elegy on the execution of Sir Charles Lucas and Sir George Lisle following the siege of Colchester. The 'Untimely Death of the Incomparably Valiant and Noble Francis Lord Villiers' was lamented in anonymous lines which began:

Reader! who here lies dead may give  
Thee cause to weep for all that live,  
Since in him Courage, Beauty, Blood  
All that is Great, and Sweet, and Good,  
all youth's contracted Glories have -  
(Weep, pitying Reader, weep) - their Grave.

A few days after their defeat at Kingston, the Duke of Buckingham and his noble allies were declared 'Traitors and Rebels' by the two Houses of Parliament, and their estates once again confiscated. Undaunted, Buckingham and Lord Holland rallied their remaining cavalry, numbering between four and five hundred, and marched north. Finding other options cut off by the encircling parliamentary forces of Lord Grey and Colonel Rossiter, they took up overnight quarters in the town of St Neots on the Great North Road. What happened to the royalist forces there was reported in a letter entitled 'A Great Victory obtained by Colonel Scrope against the Duke of Buckingham at Saint Needs in Huntingdonshire on Monday July 10th 1648 ... Printed for the general satisfaction of moderate men':

Quarter Master General Dolbier (who was an old officer of the late Lord General the Earl of Essex) hath joined with them, and was esteemed an eminent officer among them, to whose advice they much adhered, and he engaged to make good this town of St Needs against any party that should pursue them, and that he would engage his life, which he would rather lose than see them surprised there that night.

Dolbier watched (and drank Sack stiffly) that night and all was quiet. But a little before sun-rising, this morning there came an alarm to this town which made the Cavaliers all say 'All to horse, horse!' the Lords and chief officers being most of them in bed...

Dolbier made some opposition, but in the charge was slain with some twelve more, and then they all began to retreat, and fled, some one way, some another, the Duke went with nigh two hundred towards Huntingon.<sup>60</sup>

While Buckingham made his escape from this debacle, Lord Holland 'who was got out of his bed but had not quite dressed him' found himself taken prisoner. He was taken to the Tower of London and kept prisoner until the king's death, after which he was put on trial, and beheaded before the gates of Westminster Hall on 9 March 1649.

After two personal defeats and the total collapse of the king's cause, the Duke of Buckingham had no option but to seek refuge abroad, joining the exiled Prince Charles, his childhood companion. The 'shaking times' which had caused such national suffering and upheaval that the world seemed to have been turned upside down, culminated in the execution of King Charles in January 1649. A few months later Buckingham was in contact with his cousin Lord Denbigh, now a member of the Commonwealth's Council of State. He sought Denbigh's help in 'making his composition' - paying an acceptable fine for his 'delinquency' so that he might recover his sequestered estates and return to England. No doubt Denbigh did his best, but was forced to report to this mother that 'the stream runs so high against him [Buckingham] that if the Parliament will incline at all to receive him, his composition will be raised to a great sum'.<sup>61</sup>

Following Parliament's victory, most of Buckingham's estates had been granted to the Lord General Fairfax, who allowed Denbigh to live in his cousin's confiscated London mansion, York House. Its former resident, Buckingham's mother, had died by 1650, but the large house contained smaller tenements whose occupiers were given new leases after payment of arrears. Other London properties sequestered from Buckingham were also let out to tenants including the Earl of Rutland, who paid £120 per annum for Wallingford House, while the smaller adjoining house was let to the Northamptonshire parliamentarian, Sir Gilbert Pickering, for £20 a year.<sup>62</sup> Such arrangements caused endless contention, with the Middlesex and Westminster County Committees vainly attempting to control and account for all rents.

Buckingham's ruined mansion of Burley on the Hill, with its deer-park, woods and palatial stables, had been granted by Parliament to Lord Fairfax. The trustees he appointed to receive the rents protested in 1650 that the Rutland County Committee had already let it out at £1000 a year 'above all taxes'. The dispute was taken to the Committee for Compounding in London, who resolved at a series of meetings that substantial sums be repaid Fairfax's trustees and to his agent and tenant, William Ward. At the same time the adjacent manor of Hambleton was leased to Colonel Thomas Waite for £320 per annum, for seven years. Waite rapidly began alienating his tenants by ruthless enclosure of the common land, leading them to petition Parliament for redress. Another Buckingham property which Waite was allowed to purchase was part of Leighfield Forest, which he had previously leased as tenant. The purchase price of £401 9s 6d was deducted from the sum owed to Waite in settlement of his wartime accounts.

The complications of these widespread changes in ownership caused perennial headaches for the committees. In August 1650 the County Committee for Rutland reported in frustration to the Committee for Compounding in London:

We have nor received any rents from the Duke of Buckingham's estate, the most considerable part of our sequestration; the present tenant, William Andrewes, who had a lease of the whole from the late committee, has paid most of this Ladyday rent, on an Act of Parliament of 21 September 1649, to Lawrence Maidwell, receiver to Lord Fairfax, and the rest on other Parliament orders, but contrary to his engagement to us. They ought to have been paid into the Treasury, and thence to have been issued out. We have sent Mr Bowles, our clerk, with a copy of the Act and orders, to attend your directions.<sup>63</sup>

Partly in an attempt to resolve such problems, in 1651 the Rump Parliament tried to consolidate the Confiscation Acts and ordered a detailed survey of former royalist estates. The surveyors reached Burley in February 1652, observing that the mansion had been 'utterly consumed' by fire. They noted that the substantial living accommodation within the stone-built stable building was occupied by William Horton and Thomas Wing, and listed other tenants and assets of the estate.<sup>64</sup> That year Fairfax gave up Burley, and the Trustees for Forfeited Estates then sold some of its assets to Oliver Cromwell, Fairfax's successor as Lord General and soon to become Lord Protector. In addition to Burley on the Hill, Cromwell purchased New Hall in Essex and other manors in Rutland and Lincolnshire, out of the £4,000 a year granted to him by Parliament.<sup>65</sup> Disputes over ownership, however, could never be entirely suppressed. An Inquisition of August 1656 recorded that Oliver Cromwell was possessed of 45 loads of timber to the value of £45 at Burley, while his colleague Francis Hackett held 'four acres of oats and two acres of barley growing in a certain close called Petts Close in Burley aforesaid of the value of £16, and also of 80 loads of hay to the value of £40... which remain in the possession of the said Duke of Buckingham being by his servants distrained for rent'.<sup>66</sup>

Unable to return to his estates, Buckingham remained with the new but uncrowned king, Charles II, at his court in exile at The Hague. Frustrated by limitations on his income and freedom of action, Buckingham must have leapt at the opportunity in 1651 to accompany Charles in an attempt to claim his father's throne, in what came to be called the third civil war. He had been designated general of a new Eastern Association of English royalists but hoped in vain to become the royalists' Commander in Chief. When Charles threw in his lot with the Scottish Presbyterians, once his father's bitter opponents, Buckingham was the only English royalist allowed to remain with him. Despite frequent disputes with his new king arising from the Duke's ambitious, volatile nature, Buckingham fought courageously with Charles and his Scots army at the battle of Worcester on 3 September 1651. This final battle of the English civil wars was a decisive victory for Cromwell and his armies under General Monk.

There was no hope of rallying royalist forces. For Charles and Buckingham escape was now the priority. While Charles, in his woodland refuge, created a new royalist mythology, Buckingham sought temporary shelter with his sister Mary, now Duchess of Richmond, before taking ship to arrive in Holland during October.

Among the exiled royalists, grief for their martyred king soon gave way to bitter rivalries and resentment. Brooding over the new king's failure to promote him to the highest office, Buckingham found himself frequently at odds with, and openly criticised by, Charles's close advisor, Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon. Bored and inactive in The Hague, Buckingham wrote letters of appeasement to Cromwell seeking terms on which he might return to England. At the same time he flattered and charmed Charles's widowed sister, Princess Mary of Orange, easily winning her heart. Clarendon protested angrily at the 'folly and madness' of the Duke's apparent plan to marry into the royal family, predicting with unconscious irony, that Buckingham 'will no doubt marry Cromwell's daughter or be Cromwell's groom to save his estate'.<sup>67</sup> Mary was persuaded to write to Buckingham breaking off further contact while he, rejected, moved on to Amsterdam to pursue what royalists saw as an even more objectionable friendship. Here he met the notorious Republican and Leveller, John Lilburne. Lilburne's radical manifesto had proved too much even for Cromwell and now, banished and disillusioned, Lilburne found an unlikely friendship and common cause with the disgruntled duke. It seemed clear to Buckingham's enemies that he was willing to sacrifice any principle to gain immediate advantage.

By 1654 Buckingham's former close friendship with the exiled Charles II had totally broken down. His erratic moods and contradictory actions provided grounds for those such as Clarendon who accused Buckingham of betraying the royalist cause, although at the same time Buckingham was in contact with the Sealed Knot, the secret society plotting to restore the monarchy. While still refusing to pay the demanded 'composition' for his sequestered estates, Buckingham continued his attempts to reach an agreement with Cromwell whereby he might return to England. Seeing the advantage to be gained by winning over a leading royalist, in 1657 Cromwell granted Buckingham a permit to travel into England. But Buckingham's plan was not, as Clarendon facetiously remarked, to marry Cromwell's daughter in order to recover his estates. However, it was nearly as audacious. His sights were set on Mary, sole daughter and heiress of parliament's former Lord General, Sir Thomas, now Lord Fairfax, although Fairfax had by now surrendered his temporary ownership of Buckingham's Rutland estates.

Mary Fairfax had been born in 1638 and brought up at Nun Appleton House in Yorkshire, where her tutor was for two years the metaphysical poet, Andrew Marvell. In 1657 Mary was betrothed to Lord Chesterfield and the banns had been twice called, when a slight acquaintance with the persuasive Duke developed rapidly into an ardent attachment and secret engagement. Lord Fairfax, devoted to his daughter, wanted only her happiness; his wife may have been tempted by the prospect of Mary becoming a Duchess. Brian Fairfax, her father's cousin, reported:

The young lady could not resist his charms, being the most graceful and beautiful person that any Court in Europe ever saw ... all his trouble in wooing was, he came, saw and conquered.<sup>68</sup>

Although an unswerving architect of Parliament's victory in the Civil Wars, Lord Fairfax had been opposed to the king's execution and had little sympathy for Cromwell's harsh rule as Lord Protector. Having shared with Cromwell in the re-allocation of Buckingham's estates, he now saw the return of a reformed monarchy as the best hope for England. He may have regarded a royalist son-in-law as a step in the right direction. Whatever his private thoughts, Fairfax agreed to the marriage, which took place secretly at Bolton Percy on 15 September 1657, with the poet Abraham Cowley as best man.

While Lord and Lady Fairfax and the new Duchess of Buckingham enjoyed the delightful company of George Villiers, Oliver Cromwell was not amused. Blaming the marriage on a Presbyterian plot, he ordered Buckingham to be arrested, despite the intercession of Lord Fairfax. Gossip was rife, and William Dugdale reported events in his correspondence:

17 October 1657

The Duke of Buckingham will have but a short enjoyment of his fair lady in England, I doubt, unless his and my Lord Fairfax his friends, who labour hard to get the sentence pronounced against him to be recalled can prevail; for a troop of horse is gone down into Yorkshire to seize upon him, and wherever he is taken, he is to be confined to a sad restraint, as I hear...

24 October 1657

The troop of horse which went into the North for the Duke of Buckingham were answered by my Lord Fairfax, upon his honour, that he was not there, so that it seems he is slipped aside for the present. I am certainly told that my Lord Fairfax is coming up to mediate for him, and to endeavour to redeem him from this confinement to the Isle of Jersey; what the issue thereof will be, we shall shortly see. The young lady is transcendently pensive at this sad news in reference to her husband, and so is her mother...<sup>69</sup>

While the Fairfax family continued to plead the cause of their new family member, Buckingham was restricted to his former home at York House. When he rashly left London to visit his sister he was arrested on the Protector's orders and confined, first at Windsor and then in the Tower of London. Buckingham himself believed that only Cromwell's death in September 1658 saved him from execution.

Cromwell's death and the succession of his inept son Richard threw the Commonwealth government into turmoil. While idealists such as Sir James Harrington worked to preserve England's republic, pragmatic moderates looked across the English Channel to where Charles II awaited the call to return. Lord Fairfax, former architect of Parliament's victory but now disillusioned with the betrayal of its ideals, returned briefly to action by joining with Buckingham to raise troops to counter those with which General Lambert sought to stem the royalist tide. Public support for the

Protectorate, never enthusiastic, now melted away as General Monck led his forces south from Scotland and declared a free parliament. Having played his final public role, Fairfax returned to Yorkshire but Buckingham remained in London, working with Monck and others for the king's return. On 25 May 1660, as Charles made his momentous landing at Dover, he greeted his childhood friend coldly. But by the time the royal party had reached London, Buckingham had won his way back into the king's favour.

The life of George Villiers, second Duke of Buckingham, in the years following the Restoration, presents a colourful, complex and at times lurid picture. The critical pen of diarists recorded some public appearances. In October 1671 John Evelyn observed the royal party at Newmarket:

... where I found the jolly blades racing, dancing, feasting and revelling, more resembling a luxurious and abandoned rout, than a Christian court: the Duke of Buckingham was now in mighty favour, and had with him there that impudent woman the Countess of Shrewsbury, with his band of fiddlers et cetera.<sup>70</sup>

Highlights of Buckingham's spectacular career are well documented: his charismatic influence and frequent disagreements with the king; his scandalous love-life and duel fought over Lady Shrewsbury; his victory in the long feud with Clarendon followed by loss of power to Arlington; his period of political dominance and key role in domestic and foreign policy; his dismissal, imprisonment, and leadership of the 'Country' opposition party; his interest in chemistry and setting up glass works at Lambeth; his writings including the satirical drama, 'The Rehearsal'; the neglect of his wife; affection for his father-in-law; occasional reforms; mockery of religion and final ignominious death in 1687, after hunting, at Kirby Moorside. The contradictions of his character were perhaps best summed up by his contemporary Richard Baxter:

The man was of no religion, but notoriously and professedly lustful, and yet of greater wit and parts, and sounder principles as to the interest of humanity and the common good, than most lords in the court.<sup>71</sup>

More wittily but less fairly, Buckingham was immortalised as 'Zimri' by the poet John Dryden in his political allegory *Absalom and Achitophel*, published in 1681:

A man so various he seemed to be  
Not one, but all mankind's epitome.  
Stiff in opinions, always in the wrong,  
Was everything by starts and nothing long;  
But, in the course of one revolving moon,  
Was chemist, fiddler, statesman, and buffoon.  
Then all for women, painting, rhyming, drinking,  
Besides ten thousand freaks that died in thinking ...  
In squandering wealth was his peculiar art,  
Nothing went unrewarded but desert.  
Beggared by fools, whom still he found too late,  
He had his jest, and they had his estate.<sup>72</sup>

The estate lost by Buckingham had once been one of the greatest in England. Restoration of the monarchy had brought restitution of Buckingham's confiscated property. With an income from land and rentals of £26,000 a year, he was considered the richest man in England. Yet despite his wealth and influence at court, his only high office was the Mastership of the Horse, once held by his father. With his extravagant tastes and love of gambling, it was not long before Buckingham's great estates were once again, as in his father's time, encumbered with debt. The palatial stables, all that remained of his ruined house at Burley on the Hill, were little used, except as accommodation for tenants or estate officials. A brief visit to Rutland was recorded in 1674-5, when Buckingham was in disgrace, but when out of London he preferred the opportunities for hunting on his Yorkshire estate at Helmsley Castle, or the proximity to London of the new mansion which he built at Clivedon.

By 1684 it was clear that a large proportion of the Duke's estates should be sold to cover the crippling debts. Buckingham agreed in principle, but it was to take ten years before the sale of Burley was completed. After the Duke's death his aunt, Lady Purbeck, received an account of Burley on the Hill. Her informant reported: 'The house was a very fair building of stone but burnt down in the Civil Wars, nothing left but walls. The stables very large and fair standing but out of repair.' Much of the timber had been marked by the Duke to be sold, and the 'Several rentals of Burley and its members viz Egleton, Greetham, Oakham, Leighfield and Hambleton amounted unto £3770 3s 11d', plus the income from sales of wood. From this various charges had to be deducted, including 'Militia horses', taxes, fencing and repairs. Staff left to run the estate were owed their salaries, the chief of these being Captain Coles at £92 per year plus several keepers, reeves and 'the Cryer and Collector of the Quit Rents'.<sup>73</sup>

In 1689 details of the Burley estate came into the hands of Daniel Finch, second Earl of Nottingham, who was searching for a country seat in the midlands. His father, Heneage Finch, had risen to become Solicitor General and Lord Chancellor, before being created first Earl of Nottingham in 1681, a year before his death. Succeeding to the title, Daniel married as his second wife Anne Hatton, of Kirby Hall, who brought a dowry of £10,000. He sold his London home, Kensington House, to King William III, planning to move his household of 60 people to live near his wife's family.

The tradition which tells of Nottingham's first view of Burley on the Hill while riding to view the Helmsley estate is probably inaccurate: four years after he first determined to buy it, he was able to begin negotiations which were completed in 1694. The price was £50,000 for the estates, park and stables; all that was required was to build a suitable house. Nottingham resigned his post as Secretary of State in 1693, resolving 'to go into the country, though I

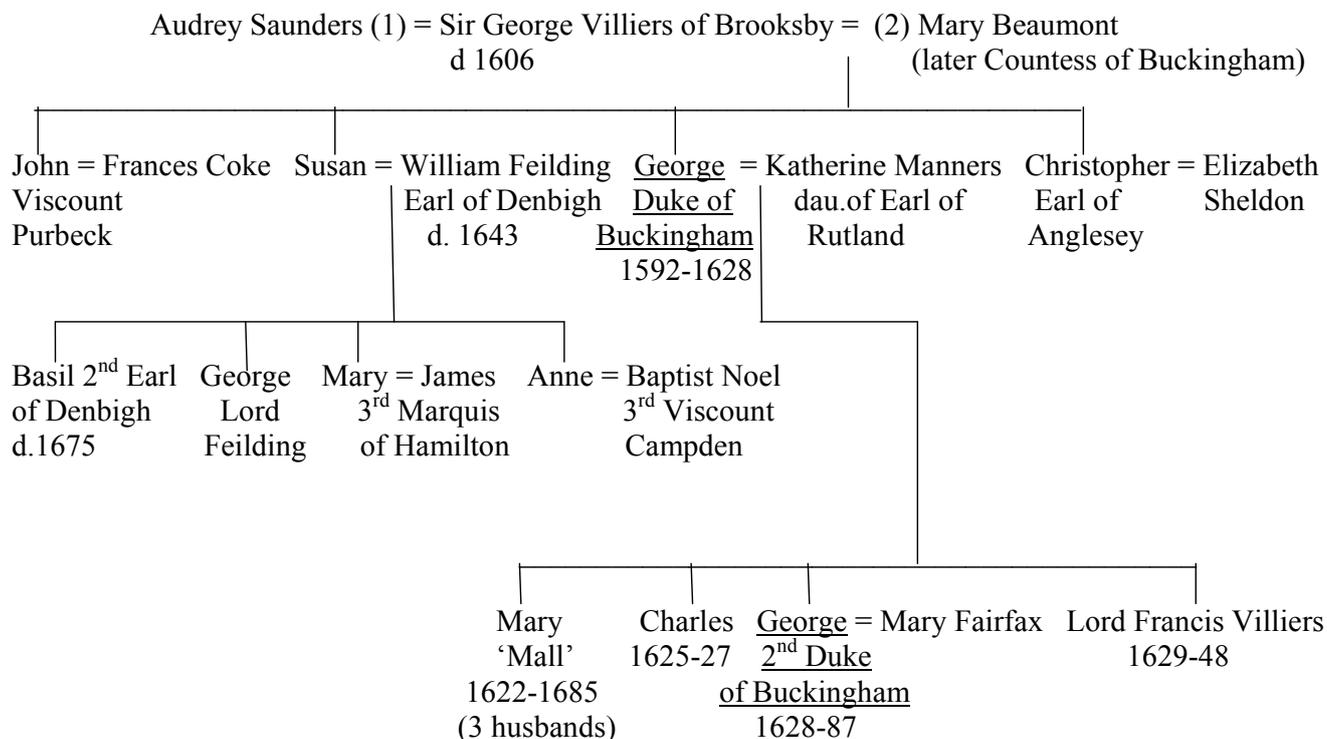
live in the stables at Burley'. He was able to obtain a lease on the Earl of Gainsborough's house at Exton, where the family lived until the new mansion at Burley was completed. Both the time-scale and cost were greatly underestimated: the £15,000 estimated building cost probably doubled, and the house was not finally completed until after 1710.<sup>74</sup>

In the closing years of the 17th century, James Wright, Rutland's historian, extolled the newly completed mansion in fulsome poetic lines, reminding his readers of its former royal connections:

Triumphant Structure! while you thus aspire  
 From the dead Ruins of a Rebel fire;  
 Methinks I see the genius of the Place  
 Advance his Head, and with a smiling Face,  
 Say, Kings have on this Spot made their Abodes;  
 'Tis fitted now to entertain the Gods!<sup>75</sup>

Under the ownership of the Haringtons of Exton and the first Duke of Buckingham, Burley on the Hill had indeed provided a royal welcome for both James I and his son, the ill fated Charles I. It had been the scene of banquets and masques, elaborate shows designed to over-awe all who witnessed them with the God-given authority of the monarch and nobility. In the 'shaking times' that followed, it had then provided headquarters for one of Parliament's County Committees, a new civil administration working tirelessly towards the defeat of absolute monarchy. Perhaps fittingly, it was to be a completely new house which rose from the ashes of decades of conflict to celebrate the Glorious Revolution and welcome in a new age of enlightenment.

## THE VILLIERS FAMILY



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## Captains and Committee-Men: The Horsmans of Stretton

During the bitter years of civil war, Rutland was harshly if efficiently ruled by Parliament's County Committee, newly ensconced in its grand headquarters, the Duke of Buckingham's mansion of Burley on the Hill. These leading Parliamentarians represented a lower social group than the noble Commissioners of Array that the king had appointed to raise royalist troops. While all came from the ranks of landed gentry, Rutland's parliamentarians tended to be landlords of single manors rather than great estates. Initially, the only titled County Committee members were Puritan cousins of the once great Harington dynasty, Sir Edward and his son Sir James Harington of Ridlington.<sup>1</sup> At the other end of the social scale, and source of many conflicts on the committee, was the notorious Thomas Waite. Scorned by his enemies as the son of an innkeeper, Waite had studied law at Gray's Inn and was quick to seize the opportunities of turbulent times to make his ruthless mark on the county community in the roles of Colonel, Military Governor, High Sheriff, Member of Parliament and ultimately a condemned regicide.

The list of Parliament's remaining committee-men reads like a roll call of the gentleman-landowners of Rutland. Since most were not active participants in the war, they retained their properties during both Commonwealth and Restoration. The 'fair and ancient estate' of Tolethorpe Hall had been inherited in by 1634 by Christopher Brown, whose family, related to the Brownes of Stamford, were known for their Puritan tendencies: in the previous century Robert Browne of Tolethorpe had founded the sect known to Shakespeare as Brownists. Christopher Brown married into another Puritan family, with his choice in 1640 of Elizabeth, daughter of Sir Edward Harington of Ridlington. Despite his commitment to the cause of Parliament, he proved sufficiently adaptable to serve a second term as county sheriff under the restored monarchy, finally dying in 1692 at the age of 73.<sup>2</sup>

Family networks were instrumental in gaining power and influence. Two cousins serving on the Rutland Committee during civil war were Samuel and Abel Barker, who owned land and houses in South Luffenham and Hambleton. With the restoration of the monarchy, Abel's services to Parliament would be overlooked as he rose to become Baronet, MP and builder of a fine new house at Lyndon. The Hearth Tax accounts of 1665 show that most of those who served on Parliament's committees were allowed to retain substantial properties. Two decades after the war, John Osborne possessed a house of nine hearths in the hamlet of Thorpe by Water, while William Busby had a house of six hearths in Barleythorpe.<sup>3</sup> Despite the absence of retribution, however, those who had served Parliament in its local administration during the 1640s and 1650s were not obvious candidates for advancement. For most, a quiet life in a Rutland backwater was the best they could hope for, offering a welcome respite after the 'shaking days' of the civil wars.

Two of the most active members of Parliament's Rutland County Committee were a father and son, originally from outside the county. During the peaceful days of the 1630s, Stretton, on the Great North Road, gained a new lord of the Manor. It had formerly been owned by the Haringtons but was eventually acquired by Robert Horsman, whose father's former manor of Abbots Kensington in London was coincidentally sold in 1616 to Sir Baptist Hicks, first Viscount Campden.<sup>4</sup> Following a Cambridge education, Robert Horsman married Elizabeth Pickering, daughter of a leading Puritan family of Northamptonshire. His new brother-in-law, John Pickering, was a determined opponent of the policies of King Charles I, suffering imprisonment in 1626 for refusing to pay the king's forced loan. For the first ten years of his marriage Robert Horsman lived in his wife's home village of Titchmarsh, where the couple's five children were born. There he must have been strongly influenced by the political leanings of his new relations.

By 1627 Robert and Elizabeth Horsman had moved across the border into Rutland, taking possession of the newly rebuilt manor house of Stretton which forty years later was recorded as having an impressive fifteen hearths. With their two sons, two daughters and several servants, the couple were joined by Elizabeth's sister, Mary Pickering, and Robert's sister, Ann Horsman, each with a personal maid. Some tantalising glimpses of the way of life in the household are provided by the wills drawn up soon afterwards by the two unmarried sisters-in-law, Mary and Ann. Both emphasise their devout Protestantism in seeking the remission of their sins 'through the only merit of Jesus Christ'. Both leave sums of money to the Puritan Rector of Stretton, Jeremiah Whitaker, as well as money, land and jewels to family members. In addition, Ann Horsman bequeathed to Mary Pickering her best gown and embroidered slippers, and to her maid Elizabeth Gray, a bed and its coverings. Her brothers' servants, named as John Christian, Thomas Farthing and James Gubbin, were to receive half a crown (12½p) apiece. Ann also remembered the Rector's wife, bequeathing to Mrs Whitaker 'a damask cupboard cloth and a pair of fine holland pillowberes [pillowcases]'.<sup>5</sup>



*The Manor House - Stretton*

The Puritan minister, Jeremiah Whitaker was appointed to the living of Stretton on 13 April 1627 by Robert Horsman, holder of the advowson, or right to appoint the parish priest. Born in Yorkshire, Whitaker had studied at the Cambridge college of Sidney Sussex, regarded by Archbishop Laud as 'a hotbed of Puritanism'. Here he probably met Oliver Cromwell, with whom he would have many dealings in the last years of his life. In the 1620's Whitaker served as Master of the Free Grammar School at Oakham, where he married Chephtzibah, daughter of Oakham's Puritan minister, William Peachey. On taking up his incumbency at Stretton, Whitaker opened the parish register in 1631 with the baptism of his first son Jeremy, born in April and sadly buried four months later.

Even before Jeremiah Whitaker or the Horsman family arrived in Stretton, the parish had been noted for Puritan sympathies. Members of two families emigrated to New England during the 1630s. Mistrustful of 'Popish' rituals, women at Stretton and neighbouring Clipsham were reported to have 'snatched their children out of the priest's arms at baptism before they could be signed with the cross'. The arrival of Whitaker led to further complaints by ecclesiastical authorities, primarily that the communion table had been placed in the body of the church for easy access by parishioners, rather than being railed in as an altar against the east wall.<sup>6</sup>

This was a provocative action at the time of the 'altar controversy', when the king and Archbishop Laud were attempting to restore the mystery and ritualism of church services, particularly Holy Communion.

Supported and loved by his patron's family, tireless and uncompromising in parish affairs, Whitaker was also developing a formidable reputation as a Puritan preacher. As well as his duties in Stretton and twice daily family prayers, he preached weekly at Oakham and assisted in Rutland and surrounding counties at public sermons, or 'Lectures', and 'Days of Humiliation', when Puritans would implore God's intervention to restore godliness and good government to the kingdom. In defiance of the King's orders, Whitaker refused to read from his pulpit the 'Book of Sports', which offended devout Puritans by encouraging sport and relaxation on the Sabbath. And when King Charles called on parishes to contribute to his military attempt to impose the English Prayer Book on Presbyterian Scotland, Whitaker 'openly told the Bishop and Chancellor that his Conscience could not yield thereto'.<sup>7</sup> He was threatened with imprisonment and only saved by a contribution secretly paid on Whitaker's behalf by one of his neighbours, probably Robert Horsman.

In common with other Puritan ministers in Rutland and elsewhere, Jeremiah Whitaker was quick to comply with Parliament's provocative instruction in 1641 that individuals in every parish should sign up to the 'Protestation' - an oath to defend,

as far as lawfully I may, with my life, power and estate, the true reformed religion, expressed in the doctrine of the Church of England, against all Popery and Popish innovations within this realm...

The list of signatories for Stretton was headed by the eager Robert Horsman Junior, then aged 26, who then added the name of his father, also Robert, who served as Rutland's High Sheriff in 1640. Forty other names, excluding women who may have felt as strongly as their menfolk, were neatly copied below that of their minister. However, it is tempting to wonder how willingly most illiterate labourers lined up to be counted, in the growing conflict in matters of religion between king and parliament. They would have had little information from the outside world beyond the fiery words of their minister, whose words and guidance they had been conditioned to obey by long generations of deference.

It was not religion alone which brought Charles I and his government to the last resort of armed conflict, although defence of the reformed Church of England proved a potent rallying cry. The House of Commons quickly named committees in every county, 'for raising money, men, horse and arms' to defend the rights of Parliament against an autocratic king. The two Robert Horsmans, father and son, joined six fellow Rutland landowners on the County Committee which would be amended and expanded during the years of civil war.

It soon proved impractical for each county to operate independently, and at the end of 1642 the Rutland committee was linked with those of seven neighbouring counties in the Midland Association, under the control of the 21 year old heir of Bradgate, Leicestershire, Lord Grey of Groby. For older men like Robert Horsman Senior, appointed Deputy Lieutenant of Rutland in September 1642, and Sir Edward Harington, the aggressive radicalism of their young commander must have proved difficult to stomach. In a letter quoted in Chapter 3, Sir Edward revealed the problems he obviously found in dealing with Lord Grey: '...it will be thought a very indiscrete thing in me to move my Lord in such a business, and I fear he would take it ill at my hands...'<sup>8</sup>

As the nation moved unwillingly to a state of open warfare, those quick to raise and lead troops established Parliament's control over Rutland. Sir Edward Harington seized the county magazine with the arms and ammunition stored in Oakham Castle, Lord Grey captured nearby Rockingham Castle from its Royalist owner Sir Lewis Watson, and a parliamentary garrison was established at Burley-on-the-Hill where the County Committee took up its headquarters. Active Royalist supporters left the county to follow the king to Oxford, like Edward Heath of Cottesmore, or to wage war beyond its boundaries, like the dashing third Viscount Campden.

Meanwhile the Rutland County Committee's most onerous and unending task was to levy and collect taxes from a bitterly divided community. In December 1642 individual members were named on an Ordinance of Parliament 'for raising money, men, horse and arms'; similar orders were regularly passed throughout the war, including that of August 1643: 'for the speedy raising and levying of money for the maintenance of the army raised by parliament and other great affairs of the Commonwealth'. In March 1643 the committee was ordered to sequester, or confiscate, Royalist estates, including those of Sir Guy Palmes of Ashwell. who in September 1643 was 'forthwith discharged from being or sitting as a Member of this House, for his long and wilful neglecting and deserting the Service of the Commonwealth in not attending, as he ought, in the House'.<sup>9</sup>

While his father served Parliament as a senior member of the County Committee, Robert Horsman Junior volunteered to fight for Parliament. In February 1643 he received a commission from Lord Grey of Groby as 'Captain of the Trained bands within the County of Rutland and of such Volunteers as you can raise within that County or any of the other Counties in Association; to serve for the defence of the king, Parliament and Kingdom...'<sup>10</sup> Some time afterwards he was appointed Governor of Rockingham Castle. As such he was in regular contact with his parliamentary masters,

whose 'Committee of Both Kingdoms' maintained an effective postal system to issue its orders to the counties. Robert Horsman was notified in February 1644 that a courier would arrive at 'Mr Danby's house at Northampton every Wednesday weekly' who would expect to be met by a messenger from Rockingham Castle in order to deliver and receive letters.<sup>11</sup>

As well as carrying out orders, patrolling the surrounding area and controlling his often unruly troops, the governor's duties included commandeering supplies from neighbouring Royalist households such as Sir Christopher Hatton's home at Kirby Hall. Parish Constables of nearby villages were ordered to carry repeated loads of hay, boards, planks and sea-coal into the castle, while in January 1644 Lieutenant Coleman was ordered by Robert Horsman and his fellow committee-member John Osborne, 'to bring away all such books in the library or study or any other place of Kirby House to Rockingham for the public [use].'<sup>12</sup> A year later Abel Barker, shortly to join the committee, brought into the castle 25 quarters of oats, together with: 'five horses, with more employed for the service of king and Parliament, In testimony whereof I have subscribed my name at the said Castle this 26 of January 1644[5], Robert Horsman'. Barker's own accounts valued the oats at £12 10s., and the five horses at £40.<sup>13</sup>

It is easy to imagine the effect of these confiscations and military raids by the troops of Rockingham Castle. Every parish had to pay regular assessments to fund the war, as well as providing a constant supply of horses and provisions. The churchwardens of Preston in Rutland, anxious to keep an account of their losses and in hopes of claiming future reimbursement, preserved every receipt and list of the goods which they were forced to deliver to the parliamentary forces. Individuals and households with Royalist sympathies often suffered a more heart-rending experience. Lucy Heath of Cottesmore, who had accompanied her husband to join the king in Oxford, heard from a servant that their house had been raided by soldiers from Rockingham Castle. She wrote desperately to the mother of the Castle's governor, a former friend who was now on the opposing side in the Civil War:

Sweet Mrs Horsman,

The many afflictions these miserable times load me with enforces me to trouble all my friends, in which number the true love I have ever borne to you and your family makes me confident I may esteem you . . . I know you cannot but hear of the rigour is used against me and my husband in the sequestration of all the estate, not leaving anything for me and my children but denying so much as might bury my deare babe I have now newly lost. And to this is added in this time when I most need them, being big with child, the taking away of all my linen even to my very baby clouts and mantels...

In a poignant postscript to this story, this 'childbed linen', which Lucy Heath had inherited from her mother, is recorded in the accounts presented by Thomas Waite at the end of the war: 'Rec[ieve]d for Mrs Heaths childbed linen, her husband being sequestered: £10. 0s. 0d.'<sup>14</sup> Lucy herself did not survive the war. The child she was expecting, John, was born in Oxford in October 1644 and died in November. Lucy died the following Spring. It was not until the Civil War was over that her husband, Edward Heath, was able to bring his wife's body back to Cottesmore for burial.

Meanwhile Robert Horsman's position, as governor of Rockingham Castle, was under attack. On 23 December 1643 the *Journal of the House of Commons* noted:

A letter from Captain Wayte [Waite], to my Lord Grey, about the Government of Rockingham Castle was read. Ordered, That a Letter be written to my Lord Grey, to continue Mr Horseman in the Command of Rockingham Castle, till this House take further Order, this House being well informed of the Fidelity of the said Mr Horseman, And that my Lord Grey do take care, that the usual and necessary Contribution and Supplies be not withdrawn from the relief of the said Castle.<sup>15</sup>

Despite Parliament's expressed confidence in Robert Horsman, his relentless rival Thomas Waite, who had been his fellow student at Grays Inn in 1634, pursued his campaign against the governor. With another member of the Rutland Committee, he presented twelve detailed articles of complaint against Robert Horsman and his father, which included misappropriation of funds and hindering Waite in carrying out Lord Grey's orders. These accusations were sufficient for Robert Horsman to be arrested in March 1644 by Lord Grey's Marshall and summoned to face a Council of War at St Albans. He wrote desperately to his cousin, Sir Gilbert Pickering, MP for Northamptonshire:

Sir, I must acknowledge myself very much beholding to my friends, for that Good Testimony they were pleased to give of me, and I should be heartily sorry, if any carriages of mine either before or since should be any contradiction to what they were pleased to say of me. Truly I am not conscious to myself of anything that I have done that may deserve an accusation, much less a censure...<sup>16</sup>

On 16 March Horsman's letter was read out to the House of Commons, who ordered, no doubt in exasperation:

That the whole Business concerning the Governor and Government of Rockingham Castle, Colonel Waite, the County of Rutland and the Lord Grey be referred to the Consideration of the Committee for Leicestershire Business ... and that the Lord General [The Earl of Essex] desired, that all Proceedings by the council of War against the Governor of Rockingham Castle, in the meantime, be stayed.<sup>17</sup>

The matter appears to have been dropped, and Robert Horsman continued as Governor of Rockingham Castle for a further year. However, in March 1645, the castle's Deputy Governor, Brian Davies, wrote to Sir Samuel Luke at Newport Pagnell, 'The Governor of Rockingham is dangerously sick, and his troop at Peterborough'.<sup>18</sup>

Robert Horsman was temporarily replaced as Governor by Sir John Norwich, but by July 1645 Thomas Waite had succeeded in gaining the post for himself. Although Robert Horsman survived his illness until at least September 1645, signing an warrant from the Rutland County Committee to the Constables of Preston to raise £15 a month 'for the furnishing of arms and ammunition',<sup>19</sup> he was certainly dead by the summer of 1646. He took no part in the 'Recruiter Election' of 2 July and was replaced on the County Committee by his brother Edward.

The career of Edward Horsman, son and brother of two Robert Horsmans, has caused some confusion in the historical record. According to Sir Charles Firth, Captain [Robert] Horsman commanded the seventh troop of Oliver Cromwell's 'Ironsides' Regiment in February 1645, at the same time that he was signing orders as Governor of Rockingham.<sup>20</sup> It was not until 1991 that documents in the private collection of Mr David Robertshaw, a descendant of the Horsman family, confirmed the separate military careers of the two brothers. In June 1647 the Earl of Manchester signed a certificate, 'that Captain Edward Horsman was captain of a Troop of Horse under my command ...from the 12<sup>th</sup> of March 1643 to the first of April 1645'. A further certificate for payment gives more precise additional details:

Due unto Captain Edward Horsman as Captain of a Troop of Horse in Lt. Gen. Cromwells Regiment of horse and under the Earl of Manchesters Command the sum of fifty four pounds and twelve shillings for half pay at twelve shillings per diem respited upon the public faith, for ninety one days commencing from the first of January 1644[5] Incl. to the second of April 1645 inclusive.<sup>21</sup>

The perennial shortage of funds to pay Parliament's armies meant that all officers due more than ten shillings per day were to receive half pay, the outstanding amounts to be delayed until after the war. By the end of the war, even ordinary soldiers awaited payment of substantial arrears of pay before they could be disbanded, the cause of widespread mutterings and serious mutiny during 1646-7.

As one of Oliver Cromwell's honest, 'russet-coated captains', it is likely that Edward Horsman took part in the battles of Marston Moor and Second Newbury, although no record of his participation survives. However he retained his command until at least 6 October 1644, when Cromwell wrote to Sir Samuel Luke, highlighting the problems in communication:

Sir, I expect two of my troops, Captain Horsman's and Captain Porter's, to come up to me. If you hear of them, I pray you send them up towards Banbury. I fear lest they should be marching towards Aylesbury.<sup>22</sup>

Little other evidence survives of the military activities of Edward Horsman, or the reasons why he left Cromwell's regiment in April 1645, around the time of the creation of the New Model Army. As a moderate Presbyterian, very likely concerned about the increasing influence of Independents in the army, he returned to Rutland and temporarily joined his father on the local County Committee. However, four years later, during the difficult months following the king's execution, Edward Horsman received a new commission as Major in the regiment of Colonel Thomas Brooke.<sup>23</sup>

While his two sons saw active service in the Parliamentary cause, Robert Horsman Senior served the Parliamentary local government from his manor house in Stretton. Even this quiet backwater was not immune from the unsettling influences of these 'days of shaking'. In October 1647, he felt compelled to write a series of letters to the Sheriff of Rutland, Abel Barker. These raised the problem of an unwelcome intruder, Samuel Oates, father of the later, notorious, Titus Oates. The years of war had given rise to widespread religious fanaticism, with wandering preachers showing little respect for spiritual or secular authority. Probably the most colourful to arrive in Rutland was Samuel Oates, fresh from distributing Leveller pamphlets in Stamford. He had recently been driven out of Essex, where he had offended respectable citizens by offering baptism by total immersion ('dipping') in the local river, to all who would pay for the privilege, and particularly to susceptible young women! When one unfortunate girl died of the ensuing chill, in March 1646, he was accused of causing her death but acquitted and released from jail. Vengeful locals imposed their own justice by dipping Oates himself in the mud of the River Chelmer, before he was able to make a hasty escape northwards.<sup>24</sup>

As lord of the manor, Robert Horsman was outraged to find that Samuel Oates had found shelter in Stretton, and was now spreading dissent and discontent among the tenants. Horsman wrote vehemently to Sheriff Barker:

Sir,

Having been long grieved in my soul to see our poor country become so obnoxious to men of extravagant opinions and unbridled spirits and tongues, to vent them to the seducing of others; and too long forborne (as my conscience upraids me) in performing that duty that every sound Christian professor (in this Kingdom) ought to look unto (by virtue of his solemn Covenant) for the discovering and bringing to just censure, such as take liberty (against lawful authority) to disperse heterodox doctrines unto the people...<sup>25</sup>

The upshot of this rambling missive was that Robert Horsman issued a warrant for the constables of Stretton to 'take into your custody the body of Samuel Oates and to deliver him into the hands of Abell Barker Esq the High Sheriff of the County of Rutland'. He immediately followed this with a second letter advising secure imprisonment and strict treatment, since, 'Persons of his spirit cannot be suffered without bringing much Guilt and Divine Wrath upon a Church of State.' In the eyes of Robert Horsman, Samuel Oates was a 'Dangerous Schismatic', 'Disturber of the Peace' and 'Adversary to Magisterial Government'.<sup>26</sup> As a member of the rapidly growing Baptist church, Oates found his preaching career constantly disrupted by arrest, public debate, petitions, court-martial and imprisonment. However, he survived all opposition for the next forty years, ending his days in quieter conformity to the Church of England.<sup>27</sup>

Among his many duties as member of the Rutland County Committee, Robert Horsman probably relished his appointment in 1653 as one of the local commissioners for the 'Ejection of Scandalous, Ignorant and Insufficient Ministers and Schoolmasters.' Although his targets would have included non-conformists such as Samuel Oates, any minister known

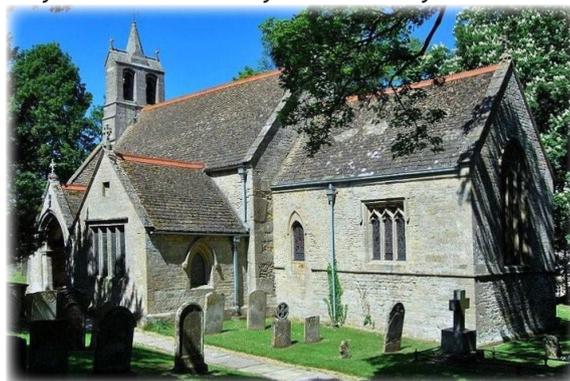
to support the Royalist cause was promptly expelled from his living. Those ejected from Rutland parishes included Jeremy Taylor of Uppingham, John Allington of Wardley, Peter Gunning of Cottesmore, William Halles of Glaston and Richard Hull of Lyndon.<sup>28</sup> But the death of Cromwell, shortly after Robert Horsman's own death, brought an end to the brave experiment of a republican state. In 1660 an eager Charles II was recalled to his father's throne, and England reverted to the secure familiarities in church and state government.

With the death of his father and older brother, Edward Horsman was left to represent his family and the Puritan values they had all upheld. His fifth and youngest son, Oliver, born in 1656, bore the name of the admired Lord Protector. Edward Horsman's own worth was recognised by Cromwell's Council in 1653, when he was nominated (rather than elected) to the short lived 'Barebones Parliament', Cromwell's abortive attempt to procure a devout, more compliant House of Commons. Edward Horsman was appointed to several committees, including the Committee for the Army and Navy, where he was listed eighth on a list of eleven commissioners, alongside the more illustrious names of Blake and Monck.

The Restoration was an anxious time for former Parliamentary officers such as Major Edward Horsman. Wisely, the new king recognised the high risk and near impossibility of punishing all who had rebelled against his father. While rewards were bestowed upon loyal Royalists - the Noels in Rutland regaining their former prominent prosperity - Parliamentarians who submitted to the new regime were in most cases left in peace. Only those 'regicides', who had colluded in the trial and execution of King Charles I were tried, imprisoned and in many cases executed, even if posthumously. Rutland's solitary regicide was Thomas Waite, whose signature appears on the king's death warrant. In a desperate petition against his conviction, Waite insisted that he was forced to sign a paper 'not knowing what was conteyned therein!'<sup>29</sup> Waite was highly fortunate to avoid a traitor's death, dying in prison on the island of Jersey some time in the 1660s.

Despite his active service under Oliver Cromwell, Edward Horsman's role in public service did not end with the Restoration. In 1669 he served his year as Sheriff of Rutland, working closely with former enemies among the county gentry and nobility. Nor did he compromise his Puritan beliefs, taking advantage of the king's Declaration of Indulgence to apply for Stretton Manor House to be licensed as a Congregational chapel in 1672.<sup>30</sup> His eldest son, Robert, predeceased him, although it was Robert's son, also Edward, who continued the family line into the early 18th century.

St Nicholas' Church, Stretton contains many memorials to members of the Horsman family. It also displays a wooden tablet recording the 'Horsman Charity', established by the will of Edward Horsman senior in 1693. He bequeathed a sum of £20 (sadly in money, not land) to be distributed among the poor and to pay for the teaching of seven poor children. The residue of this legacy survived into the early years of the 21st century, when it was used to buy bibles for children baptised in the parish church. As a devout country gentleman, who fought for his beliefs throughout the 'days of shaking' of the English Civil War, Edward Horsman would surely have approved.



*The Church of St Nicholas - Stretton*

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