

HENRY MARTEN AND THE HIGH SHOON OF BERKSHIRE THE LEVELLERS IN BERKSHIRE IN 1648

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During the months which preceded the outbreak of the English Civil War in 1642, the representatives of the English land-owners sitting as M.P.s at Westminster became increasingly alarmed at the growing evidence of violence and disorder throughout the country.¹ Parliament was clearly very worried about how the lower orders, the 'many-headed monster', would react to the knowledge that the King and his more substantial subjects were at odds. In December 1641 the Earl of Pembroke reported to his fellow peers:

"We hear every base fellow say in the streets as we pass by in our coaches 'that they hope to see us afoot shortly and to be as good men as the lords' and I think they will be as good as their words if we take this course (war)"²

Lord Savile would later write:

"I would not have the king trample on Parliament nor the Parliament lessen him so much as to make a way for the people to rule us all."³

¹ John Morrill in *The Revolt of the Provinces: Conservatives and Radicals in the English Civil War* (1976) p.34, claims that these disturbances were 'widespread' and had an 'overt class basis'

² Quoted by Morrill p.36

³ *Calendar State Papers Domestic 1641-3* p.445 Lord Savile to Lady Temple 23rd February, 1642/3. Quoted by Christopher Hill in "The Many Headed Monster in late Tudor and Early Stuart Political Thinking" in *From the Renaissance to the Reformation* ed. C.H. Carter (1966) p.310, and by Morrill p.36

and in June 1642 Charles I's reply to peace proposals from Parliament warned against the involvement of the common people in the dispute between them, claiming that otherwise they would quickly come to realise:

"that all this was done by them but not for them and they would grow weary of journey work and set up for themselves, call parity and independence liberty, devour that estate which had devoured the rest; destroy all rights and proprieties, all distinctions of families and merit, and by this means this splendid and excellently distinguished form of government end in a dark, equal chaos of confusion and the long line of our many noble ancestors in a Jack Cade or Wat Tyler."⁴

Despite these warnings, the civil war which so many nobles and gentlemen had desperately hoped to avoid, did of course become a reality. Large numbers of the common people were actively engaged in the fighting between 1642 and 1646, and many more could hardly have failed to notice the breakdown of order and the widespread contempt for authority which resulted. Two years after the end of the first civil war, during the period of renewed fighting and great political uncertainty in the summer of 1648, Henry Marten, a staunch republican and one of the king's fiercest opponents,

⁴ British library Thomason Tracts E.151 25th June 1642. Quoted by Morrill p.34

made a dramatic attempt to politicize the lower orders in his native shire of Berkshire, by raising a military force which would fight:

“on behalf of the people of England for the recovery of their freedom and for common justice against tyranny and oppression whatsoever.”⁵

For several months Marten and his followers caused some considerable alarm amongst both the landowners in Berkshire and the king’s more conservative opponents at Westminster. Their minor radical threat was eventually contained and the incident has subsequently been accorded only brief notice by historians.⁶ It may, however, be worthy of closer attention as it would seem to indicate that there existed in Berkshire some considerable grassroots support for ideas about society well beyond the pale of contemporary political philosophy.

On the eve of the civil war the Martens were one of the most powerful landed families in Berkshire. They had settled in the county at the beginning of the seventeenth century when Marten’s father, Sir Henry Marten, began to invest the profits of a promising legal career in the purchase of landed property in the north-west of the shire.⁷ Sir Henry Marten whose own background is somewhat obscure, rose from low social rank to become one of the richest and most

powerful civil lawyers in England and during the 1630s was active as a judge of several of Charles I’s hated prerogative courts.⁸ His son Henry was born in 1602 and educated at Oxford University and Gray’s Inn.⁹ After travelling on the continent in the early 1620s he took up residence in Berkshire and was appointed a justice of the peace for the county in February 1628.¹⁰ During the 1630s both father and son were prominent members of the small elite of county magnates responsible for the implementation of government policy in Berkshire.

In 1640 when Parliament was recalled after a hiatus of eleven years Marten was elected one of the two M.P.s for Berkshire. His success was no doubt partly due to the operation of the electoral patronage system in the county,¹¹ but Henry clearly enjoyed great personal popularity and, according to John Aubrey, was the unanimous choice of the Berkshire freeholders.¹² While there is no

⁵ *The Clarke Papers* Vol II, p.56 Camden Soc. Publs. New Series Vol. 54 (1894-5) Henry Marten to Simon Rice, 25th November 1648

⁶ The fullest previous account is given in H.N. Brailsford *The Levellers and the English Revolution* (1961) pp 340-3

⁷ For the Marten family estates in Berkshire see William Page and P.H. Ditchfield (eds) *The Victoria County History of Berkshire* (1923-4) Vol III, pp. 107, 212, Vol IV pp. 457, 464-7, 530, 533-5, 538. See also the writer’s unpublished Ph.D thesis ‘Berkshire and its County Gentry 1625-1649’ Univ. of Reading 1977 Vol II, pp.100-9 and J.C. Cole ‘Some Notes on Henry Marten the Regicide and his family’ *Berkshire Archaeological Journal* Vol 49 (1946) pp.26-7

⁸ *Dictionary of National Biography* Sir Henry Martin (1559-1641) and B. Levack *The Civil Lawyers in England 1603-1641: A Political Study* Oxford (1973) p.252

⁹ J. Foster (ed) *Alumni Oxonienses 1500-1714* Oxford (1891) Vol III p.97. For a full treatment of Marten’s political career see C.M. Williams ‘The Political Career of Henry Marten’ Unpublished D.Phil thesis Univ. of Oxford 1954 *Passim*.

¹⁰ Public Records Office Crown Office, Docquet Books C231/4. f240

¹¹ The elections were held at Abingdon close to the Marten estates. Writing to the secretary of state in December 1639, Sir Edmund Sawyer, a Berkshire justice and landowner in East Berkshire remarked: “The election is usually at Abingdon and the men who dwell near there and who come in the morning and go home at night are those who usually carry the business. Our Forest men are but a handful in respect of them and many will make excuses in respect of the long journey and charge” *C.S.P.D. 1639-1640* pp. 161-2, 13th December 1639

¹² A. Clark (ed) *Brief Lives Chiefly of Contemporaries set down by John Aubrey between 1669-1696* Oxford (1898) Vol II pp. 44-7. Aubrey stated that Marten was ‘exceedingly popular in Berks, the whole County’ and that in 1640 he was elected ‘*namine contradicente*’

evidence that this popularity was a result of Marten's radical views, it was clearly not abrogated by contact with the extremist opinions he subscribed to and was making no secret of. In 1642 at his house at Longworth, Marten publically tore up the commission of array from the king ordering him to raise troops for a royalist army¹³ and in his *Life of Clarendon* Edward Hyde relates a disturbing conversation he had with Marten at Westminster in 1641.

'Mr. Hyde walking between the Parliament house and Westminster in the churchyard met with Harry Marten with whom he lived very familiarly and speaking together about the proceedings of the houses Marten told him he (Hyde) would undo himself by adhering to the Court. The other pressed him to say what was desired to which after a little pause he roundly answered "I do not think one man wise enough to govern us all" which was the first word he had ever heard any man speak to that purpose and would without doubt if it had been then communicated or attempted been the most abhorred by the whole nation of any design that could be mentioned: and yet it appears it had even so early entered into the hearts of some desperate persons that gentleman being at that time possessed of a very great fortune and having great credit in his country.'¹⁴

On the outbreak of civil war, Marten returned to Berkshire to assist in the raising of troops for Parliament. By the autumn of 1642 he had established a parliamentary garrison at Reading with the county trained bands, but in October he was forced to withdraw as the main royalist army advanced across Berkshire.¹⁵ In August 1643 he was expelled from the Commons and imprisoned

for some days for defending a radical clergyman who called for the king's deposition. He regained his seat in January 1646¹⁶ and in the months which followed the end of the civil war was vociferous in his opposition to any negotiations with the defeated king. By the summer of 1648 he had become completely disillusioned at the continuing attempts of both Parliament and the New Model Army officers to reach a compromise constitutional settlement with Charles I. By this time too he was associated with the Levellers and during the early months of 1648 had almost certainly written the tract *England's Troubler's Troubled or the just Resolutions of the Plain Men of England against the Rich and Mighty by whose Pride, Treachery and Wilfulness they are brought into extreme Necessity and Misery* in which he revealed 'a confederacy amongst all the rich and mighty to impoverish and so to enslave all the plain and mean people throughout the land.'¹⁷

Henry Marten travelled down to Berkshire at the beginning of June 1648 and set about improving the county defences in case the royalist uprisings in Kent and Essex should spread to the Shire. His arrival coincided with the holding of new levies and the re-garrisoning of Reading. Parliament, suspicious of Marten's motives and alarmed by those soldiers already under arms, ordered the Berkshire Committee 'to forbear any such proceedings',¹⁸ but, according to the newsbook *Mercurius Pragmaticus*, Marten took little notice. A report in the issue for 6th-13th June read:

¹⁶ Dict. Nat. Biog. Henry Marten (1602-1680)

¹⁷ Brit. Lib. E.459.11 17th August 1648 see also Brailsford *loc. cit.*

¹⁸ *Lords Journal* Vol 10, p.302 3rd June 1648, See also *Commons Journal*, Vol 5, p.587 7th June 1648 and John Rushworth (ed) *Historical Collections of Private Passages of State* (1659-1701) Vol 4, Pt II, p.1134 7th June 1648

¹³ Stated by Edmund Gayton in his introduction to *Col Henry Martens Familiar letters to his Lady of Delight* (London 1685)

¹⁴ Edward Hyde Earl of Clarendon *The Life of Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon* Oxford (1843 edit) p.937 (printed with Clarendon's *History of the Rebellion*)

¹⁵ Durston thesis Vol I, pp. 135-8

“Henry Marten hath drawn himself from the city into Berkshire and bids defiance to the House and all their messages and preaches to the holy tribe of levellers there and in the army.¹⁹”

The company of foot soldiers raised at this time was disbanded for want of pay several weeks later.²⁰ Marten meanwhile with the help of the radical army officer William Eyres, who the previous year had been arrested for his part in the leveller mutiny at Ware in Hertfordshire,²¹ set about raising his own regiment of cavalry in Berkshire. Recruits appear to have been plentiful, *Mercurius Pragmaticus* remarking later that ‘some thousands are become his proselytes’²² and evidence from earlier in the decade about the attitudes of the Berkshire common people is consistent with this favourable response to Marten. In January 1643 the justices of Berkshire and Oxfordshire stated in reply to a request from Charles I for contributions of money and plate from the inhabitants of their counties:

“the common voice of the multitude is that if they had never so much money they would not part with a penny of it to the maintenance of these wars which they say are made against themselves and their liberties against the commonwealth and Parliament which is the peoples prop and upholder of their liberties and privileges”²³

In September 1642 the Oxford city M.P.s had reported to the Commons that ‘a great part of the county of Berkshire are well

resolved and willing to afford us their best assistance’,²⁴ and in the following spring the Earl of Essex apparently met with much popular support during his siege of the royalists in Reading.²⁵ The inhabitants of the major boroughs in the county also appear to have supported Parliament during the war, and Newbury in particular was notorious as a centre of religious and political radicalism.²⁶ During the civil war years some of the common people in Berkshire had probably their first experience of popular demonstration when in August 1645 several thousand gathered on the Berkshire Downs near Compton to draw up a manifesto pro-

²⁴ *Historical Manuscripts Commission Portland MSS* Vol I p.58 30th September 1642

²⁵ Brit Lib E.247.31 *Perfect Diurnal* 17-24 April 1643, E.104.5 *Special and Remarkable Passages* 18-25 May 1643

²⁶ In February 1643 royalist Lord Grandison, writing to Prince Rupert, commented

... there is two gentlemen now come from Newbury, frighted from thence last night by intelligence they had of some of the enemy forces. (that they) were to come into Newbury, invited thither by the townsmen who have only reported the plague to be there to help the king's troops out. How slight so ever this may be, sure I am that (that) disaffected town cannot be too much punished by your Highness for at my coming from Basingstoke they stopped all our baggage and had detained it but they had heard we were strong enough to revenge it.

W. A. Day (ed) *Pythouse Papers* (1879) p.8 Grandison to Rupert, 8th February 1643. During May 1643 Charles I, when informed that the Mayor of Newbury had secretly communicated his wish to support the royalist cause, is reported to have replied that he was glad there was one righteous man left in Sodom, I.G. Philip (ed) *The Journal of Sir Samuel Luke* Oxford Records Society Publs. Vol 29 (1947) pp.73-4 12th May 1643. In the autumn of 1643 Newbury prepared a great welcome for Essex's army which was returning from relieving Gloucester, Brit. Lib.E.67.38 *True Informer* 23rd September 1643. In 1647 a pamphlet entitled *True Newes from Newbury or A Looking Glass for Sectaries* appeared in which the activities of religious radicals in the town were described, Brit. Lib. E.49.20 12th December 1647. For further information on the attitudes of the Berkshire townspeople see Durston thesis Vol 1 pp.218-20.

¹⁹ Brit Lib E.447.5 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* 6-13th June 1648

²⁰ Bodleian Library Tanner MSS Vol 57 f.197 Marten to William Lenthall 15th August 1648

²¹ For Eyres see Brailsford *loc. cit.*

²² Brit Lib E.460.21 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* 15-22 August 1648

²³ Brit Lib E.81.1 4th January 1643

testing against their sufferings, and subsequently began to march on Reading.²⁷

If gathering together men appears to have been relatively straight forward, obtaining a supply of mounts was more of a problem for Marten. Horses were valuable items of property and stocks in the county had been reduced by the disturbances of the civil war years. Marten solved this difficulty by allowing Eyres and his men to requisition what they needed from the stables and paddocks of the local gentry. Amongst landowners whose property was raided were Lord Craven of Hampstead Marshall, Charles Garrard of Lambourn and William Jones of Welford. Garrard later reported that when he asked Eyres on whose authority he acted 'laying his hand upon his sword (he) replied and said that the same was his authority ... that he took the said horses by as good authority as this informant and his father did take the tithes of the parish and required that there should be no more tithes taken for the future...' A further attack upon the house of Sir Humphrey Forster at Aldermaston is graphically related in an eye-witness account subsequently sent to the House of Lords.

"We do hereby certify that about the hours of 11 and 12 o'clock in the morning of the same day came 10 or 12 soldiers who pretended to be under the command of one Colonel Ayer and demanded quarter of Sir Humphrey Forster of Aldermaston, Berks, bart. but showed no order for the same although demanded by him. Yet Sir Humphrey civilly told them if the constable sent up his portions (as to) how many he should quarter, he would provide for them and immediately showed them the Generals protection to free this house, person and goods, providing for them elsewhere which he was ready to do, and gave them beer and very civil respect drinking to them and their Colonel. Upon which the soldiers departed (as we thought well pleased). Notwithstanding all this the same soldiers with about 60 or 80 more of the same troop or regiment, when the said Sir Humphrey, Sir Richard Langsmill, his lady

with some other of his friends were at dinner, after the dangerous wounding of his butler and without any cause at all given, came with their swords drawn and pistols fixed to the great terror of Sir Humphrey and his company broke up his stable, took away diverse horses, saddles, horse clothes, bridles and other furniture thereunto belonging and also broke up the doors of his dwelling house and court and took away diverse things yet unknown and commanded all the rooms in the house to be showed them pretending authority which they have not as yet showed; and also went into his park and took away (with the horses they had in the stable) 8 in number to the value of £150 at least, using uncivil speeches towards the Parliament and disrespecting the General's protection and said they had rather the wound which was given on his man had been on Sir Humphrey's heart: and in conclusion quartered 40 of them there until 4 of the clock next morning... this with a great deal more barbarous and uncivil carnage was used which would be too tedious herein to relate, and being eye witnesses thereof we could do no less than attest the same under our hands"²⁸

At about the same time one Joseph Jackman of London was attacked by a party of Marten's troops while travelling from Newbury to Kingsdene in Hampshire. Jackman claimed that he was assaulted stripped and threatened with death by the soldiers who then stole his horse, watch and £50 in cash.²⁹ These reports of the soldiers activities suggest that they shared Marten's radical outlook and his criticisms of both Parliament and the army and that some of them saw themselves engaged in a class struggle.

At the same time as he was raising his cavalry regiment, Marten made several other remarkable public demonstrations of his opposition to the inequalities of his contemporary society. In his official capacity of

²⁷ Durston thesis Vol I, pp.221-4

²⁸ Bod Lib Tanner MSS Vol 57 f.199 Certificate of F.A. Smith John Wright, Tho. Grove, James Veare, John Aubrey and John Young 16th August 1648

²⁹ Bod Lib Deposited MSS C.168 Portland MSS f.103 Information of Joseph Jackman 19th August 1648

justice of the peace at the summer quarter sessions in Berkshire, he instructed the jury of Berkshire freeholders to keep their hats on in the presence of magistrates, an act which constituted a serious insult to their social betters, telling the jurymen that 'they were the supreme authority and majesty of England'. Several weeks later he appeared at a court baron being held by tenants on the estates of Lord Craven and advised them to refrain from paying homage to their landlord, claiming that to do so was 'slavery' and 'a badge of the Norman Conquest'³⁰

The revolutionary implications of such public avowals of democratic and egalitarian principles by one of the local community's traditional rulers were obvious; certainly if the reports which appeared in several newsbooks at the time are reliable, many of the common people in Berkshire were eager to demonstrate their support for Marten's novel opinions. In the issue for 15-22 August *Mercurius Pragmaticus*, having outlined Marten's actions, comments:

"... with which dainty principles he so waters and plants and tickles the High Shoon of Berkshire that some thousands are become his proselytes, whom though he robs and plunders, yet they are well pleased as long as he tells them of the high prerogative of the people not to stand bare to him or anyone else. Thus he makes them believe they shall be kings and princes and in hope of this they are content first all to become beggars ... (There are) fresh complaints again against Henry Marten as robbing by the highway and plundering Sir Humphrey Forsters house, being become a

right Jack Cade in declaring against the king, lords, gentry, Parliament, the army all clergymen and lawyers saying further that he can raise six score thousand men for the maintenance of these principles.'³¹

The following week *Mercurius Elencticus* reported:

"Henry Marten is resolved to level all in Berkshire. And therefore, when they (Parliament) sent for him up (upon complaint of the country) he pished at the news, refusing not only to come but to read or so much to hearken to their summons, the greatest part of the Agitators of the army and such others as stand for the doctrine of levelling are come unto him so that within 8 days he is wonderful encreased, being nigh 1500 strong already. And I promise you the people are much taken with the hinges he moves on. For is it not a fine thing to see a clown become a carnival with a king; a sturdy beggar to run parallel with a Prince? Surely he cannot want soldiers that hath their encouragement such ample rewards to bestow upon them''³²

Neither of these unsympathetic publications had any reason to exaggerate the favourable reaction to Marten's activities, yet both had felt it necessary to offer explanations for an enthusiastic response. While it is impossible to discover exactly how many people joined Marten, his followers were certainly numerous enough to frighten both his fellow landowners in Berkshire and to alarm representatives of the gentry at Westminster. A number of Berkshire landowners attempted to resist Marten by fortifying the manor house of a royalist gentleman Sir John Backhouse of Swallowfield several miles south of Reading, and skirmishes between them and some of Marten's men appear to have occurred there

³⁰ Brit Lib. E.460.21 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* 15-22 August 1648. In one of his pamphlets *James Justified* William Walwyn said of Marten 'upon the bench at Reading where it being his lot to give the charge to the Grand Jury, in the first place, he wished them to be rightly informed of their own places and authority, affirming it to be judicial when as their own (meaning the justices) was but ministerial, and therefore desired them not to stand bare any longer but to put on their hats, as became them, and not to undervalue their country, which virtually they were.' Quoted by A. L. Morton *The World of the Ranters* (1970) p.192.

³¹ Brit. Lib. E.460.21 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* 15-22 August 1648 Shoon is an obsolete word for fool or lout

³² Brit. Lib. E.461.20 *Mercurius Elencticus* 23-30 August 1648

during the summer.³³ In addition in mid August the House of Commons ordered Marten and his chief officers to attend them at London and sent some cavalry to apprehend them and disburse their forces.³⁴

Eyres and another officer, Captain John Waldron, refused to travel to London, claiming that it would not be safe for them to do so because of 'the confluence and increase of the Malignant Party in the city'³⁵. Marten meanwhile, writing from Reading on 15th August, defended his actions in a letter to the Speaker of the Commons, William Lenthall, in which he made little attempt to conceal the contempt he clearly felt for his fellow M.P.s.

"Not knowing how I may be misrepresented at this distance yet hoping that the Honourable House had rather be served than waited upon, I thought it my part humbly to offer written account of such late proceedings in these parts as I may seem to be concerned in, if the House shall at any time descend to the leisure of being made acquainted herewith."

"Upon the encouragement of the noble General, of the Committee of Derby House and of the House itself, by an order of the Reviver dated 22nd May last, the Committee for this county did endeavour to raise forces for the safety thereof and to suppress the common enemy in this his latter spring. Accordingly 3 or 4 companies of foot were raised in this town but after a few weeks disbanded again for want of pay and many of the private soldiers persuaded and prevailed with to recruit your army before Colchester and your garrisons of Windsor and Wallingford. Horse

being more chargeable was longer in raising, but at last by the help of some friends and my own care and cost I have gotten up a troop of honest men (as I conceive) reasonably well appointed, notwithstanding the strange obstructions I met with from those that owed their country as much assistance as myself. This could not therefore be expected to be done without seizing the horses and arms of such as are your enemies, and that I have my men order to do, which I hope they will appear not to have exceeded. Besides I presume the House will consider that the extraordinariness of the occasion in this juncture of affairs may excuse a little over acting in the service of this nation, for which I do not doubt (though I cannot flatter myself with deserving it) but I shall receive the happiness of being favourably undertood if not well accepted by the Hon. House, whereunto all shall be submitted that belongs to (*sic.*)³⁶

At the end of August *Mercurius Melancholius* referred to Marten as 'generalissimo of all the Smock petticoats in his newly erected Empire of Berkshire'³⁷ By this stage, however, Major Fincher, the officer sent to apprehend Marten was already in Berkshire and had arrested or disbanded a number of his followers.³⁸ Marten himself along with Eyres and the cavalry had by then marched north out of the county³⁹. In Leicestershire it was later reported that 'the basest and vilest of men' resorted to them, and that the troops robbed and plundered boasting they would 'level all sorts even from the highest to the lowest'⁴⁰. They later moved on through Nottinghamshire. In November Marten returned south to Windsor to join the army and took part in the discussions between the

³³ M.A.E. Green (Ed) *Calendar of the Committee for Advance of Money* (1888) Vol III P.1292. Gilbert Garrard of Shinfield near Reading was reported to have 'adhered to the tumults of Sir John Bacchus' house at Swallowfield in opposition to Col. Martens troop raised in defence of the county and for the seizure of the horses and arms of the disaffected'.

³⁴ *Commons Journal* Vol 5 p.676 21st August 1648. Brit Lib E.460.21 *Mercurius Pragmaticus* 15-22 August 1648

³⁵ Bod Lit. Deposited MSS C.158 Portland MSS f.104 Eyre and Waldron to Mr. Burr 18th August 1648

³⁶ Bod. Lib. Tanner MSS Vol 57, Marten to Lenthall 15th August 1648

³⁷ Brit Lib E.462.7 *Mercurius Melancholius* 28 August to 4 September 1648

³⁸ Brit Lib E.462.13 *Perfect Weekly Account* 30 August to 6 September 1648

³⁹ Brit Lib E.462.10 *Kingdom's Weekly Intelligencer* 29 August to 5 September 1648

⁴⁰ Brailsford *loc. cit.*

levellers and army officers which resulted in the drawing up of the new *Agreement of the People*.⁴¹ The regiment remained in existence however and Marten was still issuing commissions to new officers at this stage. In November he wrote to one Simon Rice appointing him a captain, and outlined the ambitious tasks he had set his men.

"Whereas by virtue of that right which I was born to as an Englishman and in pursuance of that duty which I owe my said country I have resolved to raise and conduct a regiment of harquebusiers on horse-back on behalf of the people of England for the recovery of their freedom and for common justice against tyranny and oppression whatsoever, these are therefore to authorise and appoint and I do hereby constitute you Simon Rice to be capt. over one troop in my said regiment of horse consisting of 80 men besides officers and these to exercise in arms and lead accordingly to the commission".⁴²

In the following month the army purged the Long Parliament of all those M.P.s unsympathetic to its aims; Marten retained his seat and in January 1649 signed the warrant for Charles I's execution. Shortly afterwards his regiment of horse was incorporated into the army of the new commonwealth⁴³. In April 1649, however, Marten's troops were again causing alarm by their 'great oppressions and outrages' in Hampshire and in the following month many of them set off for the Leveller rendezvous at Banbury and were captured by Oliver Cromwell at Burford.⁴⁴

⁴¹ S.R. Gardiner *The History of the Great Civil War 1642-9* (1893) Vol IV p.268 and G.E. Aylmer *The Levellers in the English Revolution* (1975) p.40

⁴² *Clarke Papers* Vol II p.56 Marten to Rice 25th November 1648

⁴³ Brit Lib E.541.27, *The Moderate Intelligencer* 1-8 February 1649, *Commons Journal* Vol 6, p.129 2nd February 1649, Bulstrode Whitelocke *Memorials of English Affairs* Oxford (1843 edit) Vol II p.519

⁴⁴ *Clarke Papers* Vol II pp.212-3 Committee of thanks to Henry Mildmay 19th April 1649, Pauline Gregg *Freeborn John : A Biography of John Lilburne* (1961) pp.278, 280-1. William Eyres led the brief show of resistance to Cromwell at Burford

The sweeping social and political changes that Marten and his fellow radicals had hoped would follow the establishment of a republic in England failed to materialize in the 1650s, and Henry Marten took every opportunity to attack Oliver Cromwell, whom he saw as the arch-betrayer of the 'Good Old Cause' or republicanism. Tried and sentenced to death at the Restoration in 1660, Marten's sentence was subsequently commuted and he spent the last twenty years of his life a prisoner in Chepstow Castle.

The roots of Henry Marten's radicalism remain a matter for speculation. John Aubrey claimed that his hatred for monarchy derived from his having been called an 'ugly rascal' and 'whoremaster' by Charles I, and thrown out of a race meeting in Hyde Park on the king's orders. Aubrey claims that Marten went away patiently, *sed manebat alta mente repostum*. That sarcasm raised the whole county of Berkshire against him (Charles).⁴⁵ While such an incident may perhaps appear too trivial to account for the radicalism of an early theorist of democratic republicanism, one searches in vain for a more satisfying explanation in the Marten family background of great wealth and close identification with the governmental *status quo*. What can perhaps be said is that Henry Marten appears to have been an individual remarkably unfettered by the preconceptions of his time, able to appreciate the theoretical alternatives to the contemporary ordering of Society, and not afraid to expend his energy and resources in an attempt to bring about fundamental changes.

As for the "High Shoon of Berkshire" their flirtation with revolutionary activity ended abruptly and without any real gains. Fifth Monarchist groups⁴⁶ were prominent at

⁴⁵ Clark Aubrey's *Brief Lives* loc. cit

⁴⁶ B.S. Capp *The Fifth Monarchy Men* (1972) pp. 77-8, 85, 91, 107, 116-9, 128, 173, 216, 224, Appendix I pp. 239-70 Appendix II pp 272-3 T. Birch (ed) *A Collection of the State Papers of John Thurloe* Vol IV p.752 William Goffe to Thurloe 1st May 1656

Abingdon throughout the 1650s and in April 1656 one John Sturgeon, a radical Baptist preacher, drew large crowds when speaking at Reading against Cromwell's government.

Gradually, however, the local landed families re-established the strong, virtually autonomous control over the local community which they had enjoyed before 1640. Nevertheless the support of the common people for Marten in 1640 is very clear. It cannot be wholly explained as unthinking adherence to one of the shire's natural rulers, as most of these rulers were implac-

cably opposed to Marten's objectives. Nor can Marten's undoubted personal popularity be entirely divorced from his well publicised radical beliefs. Thus large numbers of common people in Berkshire would appear to have understood and agreed with Marten's criticisms of the injustices of their society and, while not sufficiently organised to seek change unilaterally, were prepared to give strong and active encouragement to one of their 'betters' who clearly considered them his political equals and wished to see them treated as such.