

SURREY DURING THE COMMONWEALTH.

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THIS County, from its position between the Metropolis and Southern England, formed a natural vantage ground for King and Parliament to recruit their forces or centralize their positions. The castles and lesser strongholds also afforded some aid, while the Thames enabled supplies to be carried, or defensive works to be projected.

The old loyalty of Surrey to the Royal cause is well known, and the Civil war period fully brought out this feeling, till, under Fairfax and Cromwell, it succumbed to the popular party.

Our local annals, though lacking the force and dash of those contests which occurred in the north of England and Midlands, are still rife with incidents which have formed a defined part of Surrey lore.

Such a crisis always evokes special and personal characteristics, and whether viewing the changes wrought in the ecclesiastical or civil Government, or the terrible ruin of historic buildings, it is a chapter without which any account would be incomplete.

The towns which naturally stood foremost in this period were Guildford, Farnham, and Kingston, all which displayed their loyalty to Charles I, and though these were conspicuous, there were lesser places which played their part, as Croydon, Dorking, Lambeth, and Reigate. All were more or less associated with important events, and elucidate some phase of local interest.

Farnham, from its border site, may justly claim our first attention; even the keep of to-day carries us back to the period of its strength, and the changing fortunes of occupation during the Civil war. In 1644 we read in the State Papers (Domestic Series) that the Farnham forces are in "great want of money," and appeal for contributions to the eastern and middle divisions of the County. At this time, local associations had been formed for defence. Throughout the Commonwealth, Farnham seems to have been more a depôt than a stronghold; at the beginning of the war, it was held for the King, but in 1642 Sir John Denham, its governor, left it and joined the King at Oxford. Sir William Waller, the next possessor, blew it up for the Parliamentarians, for whom it was secured. In support of the statement that Farnham was more of a depôt, the Additional MS. 25,585 British Museum, has preserved an "Inventory book of Stores, received into the Royal Ordnance Office, for supply at Farnham and Windsor Castles (1645)." The siege of Basing House, and the battles of Newbury may have had some influence on the fortunes of Farnham, as the insurgents found a refuge in this border castle; however, it was certainly the base of operations against the Royalist forces in the south.

Charles I, on his way from Hurst Castle, met Harrison the regicide here, and in 1647, on his escape from Windsor forest, passed through "Farnham town." In connection with this forest, it is to be noted that the King's unwise measure for fixing the limits of Windsor forest, so as to include it in western Surrey, brought universal disapproval.

In 1641 Parliament interfered, and an Act was passed for ascertaining the bounds of all the forests in England, and as appertaining to Surrey, ended in the freedom of the whole County from forest laws, with the exception of the Royal park at Guildford. In a printed book, 4to, 1646, allusion is made to this measure: "Forresta de Windsor in Com. Surrey; the meers, limits and bounds of the forest of Windsor in the County of Surrey." Thus was defeated one of the weak projects of the

King, which resulted in the alienation of many of his adherents.

There are some illustrations of portions of Farnham Castle in the Kerrich collection (Add. MSS., British Museum, Nos. 6,735, 6,736), being pen-and-ink sketches of the keep and other parts, but the drawings vary much in power and accuracy. Others will be found in the sumptuous interleaved copy of Manning and Bray's *Surrey*, at the same museum, both in water-colour and outline, especially in Vol. XVIII of that book.

In 1648 the fortifications of Farnham were demolished, and henceforth its military annals cease; during the siege it is interesting to note that George Withers, the poet, became its governor, but lost that appointment through the negligence of Sir Richard Onslow.

In Vol. VIII, Part I, *Surrey Archaeological Collections*, will be found a valuable essay on the "Historical Associations of Farnham Castle," from early to later times, by the Hon. St. John Brodrick, M.P.

KINGSTON-ON-THAMES.

More loyal than any of the Surrey towns, a distinction which stamps even its present attitude, it was the "rendezvous" of the Royal and Parliamentary forces, and afterwards fell into the hands of the Earl of Essex and Prince Rupert. Its central position, where committees sat during the Civil War, and near Hampton Court, naturally conduced to this importance.

An Inquisition was held here (28 Jan. 1658), as to the ecclesiastical benefices of the hundred of Brixton, which included Wimbledon and the chapelries of Mortlake and Putney; this document, with others relating to livings in East Surrey, is contained in the Parliamentary Surveys (Vol. XXI), Lambeth Library; to all the documents names of witnesses are added, as well as occasional seals.

In 1642 the Royalists welcomed Charles to Kingston, and gave him the command of the bridge, which was the only one up the river after that of London. The

river banks afforded defence, and the State Papers of 1648 mention an order of a

“Circular letter to the keeper of ferries at Lambeth, Chelsea, Putney, Hampton Court and Shepperton, to prevent the confluence of people with those who have taken up arms against the Parliament and are now in and about Surrey—to take care that the horse ferry be fixed in the Middlesex side at night and guards kept, so that none be allowed to pass in day time, except market people with passes from the state.”

Even after the king's death we read that, in 1661, a “drawbridge was to be perfected at Kingston-on-Thames, and a guard put on it.”

That this bridge must have brought in a considerable income can be seen from a “Book of rents and Revenue of the great bridge at Kingston (1605–1705)”, preserved among the Corporation records, and referred to in the *Historical MS. Commission Report*, Vol. III, p. 332.

In 1642, Sir Richard Onslow went with the train bands of Southwark to defend Kingston, but they were rudely repulsed and called “Round-heads.”

Near Kingston Hill, occurred in 1648, that very last struggle of Royalty between Lord Francis Villiers and the Parliament, when the former was killed in the skirmish. In the same year was issued “Surrey's Petition to Parliament,” which occasioned many tumults. The words of the petition, as given in Rushworth's *Historical Collections*, are as follows:—

“That the King may be restored to his due honor and just rights, according to the oath of allegiance and supremacy—that he may forthwith be established on his throne—that the free born subjects of England may be governed by known laws and statutes now in force in the kingdom.”

That the King was often at Kingston, from the adjacent Hampton Court, is well known, but how completely all traces of his rule were effaced, appears by the Chamberlain's accounts, which in 1658 record “for taking down the King's arms in the Town Hall of Kingston, seven shillings,” and an earlier entry, in 1651, paid for “blotting out the King's arms in the Church.”

Among the many printed relics of the Commonwealth time, occurs one of local interest, entitled, "A new declaration from the army, presented to Sir Thomas Fairfax, *neece Kingston*, at his advance towards Windsor," 4to, 1647, preserved amongst the pamphlet collection in the Guildhall Library.

Besides Guildford, whose castle must have afforded some aid, from its position on the route to Winchester, and parts of Hampshire, where the Civil War was raging, the smaller Surrey castles were associated with the contending armies. Of these were Reigate, Betchworth and Sterboro', and of the first-named, the State papers in 1648 relate—

"That it was not to be surprised by the enemy and that if any works have been made about it, they be demolished."

And another order that—

"Starboro (Sterboro) Reigate, Merton Abbey, and other places be rendered indefensible, lest they should endanger the peace of the kingdom."

Reigate Castle appears to have been in a decayed state (21 James I); some remains were standing about a century ago. Lord Somers, whose "tracts" on historical subjects are well known, was in part owner of the manor of Reigate, and he was "greatly opposed to Charles II and James II."

While the Surrey castles were identified with the great conflict, some of the smaller towns, as Croydon, Dorking, and Putney shared in the troubles. Croydon, from its convenience to London, and on the route to more distant places southwards, was the head quarters of Fairfax's army in 1644.

Sir William Brereton, of Cheshire, was in command of the historical palace, the home of the Archbishops for many hundred years, and then wrested from the See of Canterbury and offered for sale. The survey of this manor, taken in 1649, like the other Bishops' manors, was elaborate in detailed description. Croydon Palace suffered less than some houses, and after the

Restoration was repaired by Archbishop Juxon, and still recalls, though in greatly altered form, the annals of a long past.

In Dorking we meet with allusions to our period, for in 1648 was a "meeting of freeholders, who sent a petition to the nobility and gentry to Parliament in favour of Episcopacy, that the king might be restored to his lawful honor and dignity." Copies were ordered for printing, but the movement resulted in riots at the Parliament House. (*Godwin's History of the Commonwealth*, Vol. II.)

Putney, from its nearness to town and river advantage, was the head-quarters of the Parliament in 1647, when general councils were held here, and, "according to former order, met in Putney Church, where, after much debate, a declaration was agreed on to be presented to the Commissioners residing with the army, to be by them presented to Parliament." (*Rushworth's Collections*, Vol. VIII, 1701.)

After the battle of Brentford, when the Royalist army marched to Kingston, the Earl of Essex followed, and a bridge of boats and forts were constructed each side of the river. The State Papers, 1648, refer to the meeting of Surrey men on Putney Heath, while the Kentish met at Blackheath, in furtherance of those associations which were formed for local defence. It is also stated that the subscribers to the petition in favour of episcopacy met on Putney Heath. Fairfax made Putney, like Kingston, one of his centres, and it may here be noticed that the interleaved copy of Manning and Bray's *Surrey*, at the British Museum, has some excellent portraits of Ireton, Fairfax, and Lambert. Sermons on the death of some of these generals were preached at Westminster Abbey in 1646, 1651.

Two or three historic houses were brought into prominence during this period, viz., Nonsuch, Oatlands, and Wimbledon, all of which were at one time royal abodes, the two former of much note under Henry VIII, Elizabeth, and the earlier Stuarts.

Like other Crown lands, they were "surveyed" by the Commissioners, and their minute description at this time is both interesting and instructive. The Survey of Nonsuch, printed in the *Archæologia* of the Society of Antiquaries, among other things, mentions the felling of timber, so common an occurrence in Commonwealth annals, and further states :

"The trees within the Parke aforesaid, already marked forth for the use of the navie, are found to be in number, 2805, two hundred thereof growe so neare unto Nonsuch House that the cutting down thereof will very much impayre the magnificence of the structure."

Oatlands Palace is especially linked with Charles I, for he granted the estate to his Queen, Henrietta Maria; most of the buildings were destroyed and the land disparked during the interregnum; no part of the original now remains. Several despatches were dated from this house during the Stuart times and later. A water colour from the original drawing by Antonio Van Wyngaerd (1559) is preserved in Vol. XVI of Manning and Bray; there is also an engraving in the same work, entitled "A view of the King's Palace at Oatlands." The house was taken down in the late part of the 17th century, and the name alone is retained near Weybridge. At Wimbledon, the manor was the property of Henrietta Maria in 1638; an inventory of the King's goods and pictures was taken when this, with other Crown lands, were sold in 1649, and has been printed in W. A. Bartlett's *History of Wimbledon* (1865), and in Vol. X of the *Archæologia*.

Wimbledon was purchased of the Parliamentary Commissioners by Adam Baynes, and afterwards in 1652 by General Lambert, who lived here till the death of Oliver Cromwell. At the Restoration, it came into the Queen's hands again, and was afterwards held by the Earl of Bristol. Engravings and a "Survey" of this house are extant, and one of the printed single sheets so numerous in the Commonwealth time, was entitled "Form of the new communion by which the forces act, that are under the command of Charles Fleetwood, &c.

Printed at Leyden in 1659, at the sign of the impudent rebell in Wimbledon Court."

While Crown property fell under the Parliament, Church lands were no less molested, and the Surveys of these estates are to be found at the Record Office, British Museum, and Lambeth Palace.

At the last-named, are twenty-one volumes of such Surveys, several of which relate to livings in Surrey, as well as a series called "Augmentations of Church Lands," taken 1657; also replete with minute information as to extent of land, names of incumbents or preaching ministers as then called; and a variety of matter, without examination of which a complete history of the Commonwealth could not be written.

Farnham, Lambeth, and Croydon Palaces, naturally hold a prominent place; the Surveys of these manors have mostly been printed. "Lambeth House," in Laud's time, suffered greatly from the invaders, and it was in such danger in 1640 that the Primate sent his Hebrew, Greek, and Arabic MSS. to the Bodleian Library; for, says he, "they are not safe in my house during these perilous times."

The sale of Bishops' lands provided for the arrears of pay for the army under Fairfax, and among several documents which touch on this subject, the Additional MS. 9,049 (British Museum) gives an exhaustive account.

Such periods as the Civil war bring out incidents unheard of at other times; in East Surrey we read of the malcontents holding "private assemblies for insurrection, the meetings being at Epsom, under pretence of the waters there."

A favourite method of procedure was by cipher notes, sometimes concealed in the dress of the bearer, written on small pieces of paper, also by cipher correspondence.

News-letters and journals were another medium, and frequently contained lampoons, satirical verses, or portrait caricatures, which conveyed a political or party meaning. These newspapers were, so to speak, itinerant; the "Mercurius Aulicus" was begun when the

King was at Oxford in 1642, and the opposite or Parliamentary journal was the "Mercurius Britannicus." Another, the "Mercurius Civicus," the first number of which appeared June 1643, had a portrait of Charles I. No price is mentioned in these early newspapers; they were probably sold at three-halfpence a copy, as appears by an allusion to a Royalist success, "Will ye buy any 1½d. tickets?"

Funds were wanted to maintain the warfare, and some of the finest gold and silver plate was melted down to keep the Royalist troops from perishing in the winter 1643-4. Another source of income was felling of timber, as appears by the Parliamentary Surveys of 1630, alluded to in respect of Nonsuch Park, above mentioned; a general order was also issued to "apprehend all as make waste of the timber provided for use of the Commonwealth."

A much more stringent and far-reaching measure was enacted in what was called "Committees for the advance of money." These documents, "edited from the original in the Record Office," in 3 vols. (1642-56), are replete with varied information. The Committees investigated everything as to property, assigning the value for assessment, &c. The demands were at first limited to residents within twenty miles of London. The proceedings were without party distinction, and the Royalists ("delinquents," as they were called) were more heavily taxed as the Parliamentary party increased. The demands were in many cases severe; some tried to elude payment by putting away their goods or absenting themselves. The "depositions" give full details as to property, and are very valuable to the topographer. As regards Surrey, the following names have been extracted, which will give some idea of those who were called on to contribute: Beddington (Sir Francis Carew), Clapham (Sir Robert Needham), Camberwell (Sir E. Bowyer), Battersea (Sir John St. John), Putney (Sir William Beecher), Titsey (Sir Edward Gresham), Stoke (Sir Anthony Vincent), Wotton (Geo. Evelyn). An arbitrary method of procedure was shown in the

case of Marmaduke Gresham, of Limpsfield, who in 1649 was indicted that he "sent aid to the Essex insurrection, advised the Surrey men to shut up the Parliament doors, and afterwards entertained some of the parties at his house in Surrey."

Another complaint was brought against Sir Ambrose Browne, of Betchworth Castle, that in 1650, "he secretly raised a troop of horse for the king, kept them in his castle, and afterwards sent them to Oxford." There were also "Committees for corresponding," which were nearly on the same principle as the "Committee for advances." Kingston seems to have been the central meeting place of this and other bodies, but the Parliamentary Committees first sat at Haberdashers' Hall, and then at Westminster. The volumes above named are very useful in showing the relative strength of both sides during the Commonwealth and their political tendencies, besides revealing a great deal of family history. A Receiver-General was appointed for each county, and the accounts were regularly supervised.

The changes introduced at this time could not but be difficult of management. "Parliament was overpowered by the crowd of affairs, which the confusion of war had thrown into its hands, by confiscations, sequestrations, appointments to civil and military offices; in fact, the whole administration of the State."¹

¹ Green, *History of the English People*, 1882.