Context

Identity and representation

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Cover:

A detail from *The world turn’d upside down: or, a briefe description of the ridiculous fashions of these distracted times*

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Foreword

The articles published in this edition of Context have been developed from papers presented at the 2015 conference of postgraduate students in the Department of History and Archaeology at the University of Chester.

Participation in the conference is open to both taught and research postgraduate students, and the intention is to offer an opportunity for students to present their work to a wider audience than supervisors and examiners. As such, it demonstrates the continuing development of a postgraduate student ‘culture’ in the department.

The conference was also addressed by Dr Jennifer Hillman, British Academy postdoctoral research fellow and lecturer in early modern European history in the department. During her keynote lecture, Dr Hillman spoke about academic careers and funding opportunities.

This selection of articles resulting from the conference should encourage other postgraduate students to participate in future conferences.
The British Civil Wars strained loyalties and allegiances throughout the country, on a community and also on a personal and familial level. Shropshire was no exception in that regard. There were families such as the Corbets who held vastly different political opinions, and in Shrewsbury loyalties were divided amongst those who had previously worked closely together administering the town’s affairs, so much so that several were branded as traitors or disbarred from holding office as a result of their allegiance to and identification with the aims of Parliament. Yet there were also pockets of the county, particularly in the south-west who, eventually worn down by the depredations of war, became ‘aggressively’ neutral and took a protectionist stance in an attempt at self-preservation. Some individuals were regarded with suspicion by both sides due to their wavering beliefs, and there were others who altered their allegiance after the first two Civil Wars, presumably in reaction to the execution of the King. It is also apparent from consideration of the surviving archival evidence that many individuals and communities were reluctant to involve themselves in the war at all and simply tried not to alienate either side of the conflict, usually without success.

Malcolm Wanklyn has already studied the patterns of allegiance within the county and that of neighbouring Cheshire in great detail and this article does not seek to cover the same ground. Instead it is designed to illustrate, using local examples, that identification of a person or community as being either for the King or Parliament is not always a clear-cut issue. There are many reasons behind allegiance: a matter of politics, principle, pride or family obligation, or there could be an element of self-interest hiding behind the facade of loyalty.¹

With the exception of a few individual rebellions, the county had always supported the recognised monarch, but had defied the Church by supporting the Empress Maude in her struggle for the throne with her

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cousin Stephen. From the Conquest until the reign of the early Tudors, the county had formed a vital part in the defence of the English border from a Welsh invasion. Along with its fellow marcher counties, Shropshire was a vital buffer zone and, accordingly, it received many royal visits. In both the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the Courts of the Exchequer, the Kings Bench and Parliament sat within the county, albeit on a temporary basis. The county was heavily fortified, particularly down its western borders, with even small villages having motte and bailey-style defences. Settlements such as Bishop’s Castle, Ludlow, Bridgnorth, Oswestry, Clun and Caus grew up in and around the defences; others, such as Newport, Market Drayton, Shifnal, Madeley, Baschurch and Ruyton-Eleven-Towns, which were initially based around fortifications, developed further for purely economic reasons. As a result of this loyalty, many of the towns were granted royal charters and exemptions over the payment of tax; subsequently the county economy flourished. By the time of the Civil War Shropshire’s importance to the Crown was much diminished, but it would not be unreasonable to expect that when war became inevitable the county would follow Charles’s call to arms. In fact there was unease in several quarters, and there were efforts either to try and negotiate a peace between the two sides, or to remain neutral in the dispute.  

Within the county most did support the Crown, but even in the 1630s there were pockets of society that did not accept Charles I’s views and policies on both religion and taxation. It is apparent in Shrewsbury in particular that the foundations of support for Parliament went back some decades among the more godly merchants who espoused the puritan cause. Their religious outlook encouraged the development of public preaching by those such as William Bright, who was paid a handsome £46 per year for his services. The wealthy brewer and merchant draper William Rowley and two former bailiffs of the town, Richard Hunt and

John Nicolls, were both prominent townsmen who were also non-conformists. Rowley persuaded the puritan preacher Julius Hering to minister to the godly of the town, his stipend being funded by the wealthy London merchant Rowland Heylyn, whose sisters were married to Hunt and Nicolls. The movement was allowed to flourish further, as the new Bishop of Lichfield Thomas Morton had already proved to be lenient towards non-conformists in his previous dioceses of Lancashire and Cheshire.3

When Charles I became King, Arminianism began to flourish, which led to conflict within the town. In particular Peter Studley, the vicar of St. Julian’s and St. Chad’s, was a supporter of Archbishop Laud, who promoted the doctrine that was also followed by the King. He publically denounced the puritans within his parish, including Rowley, George Wright, Humphrey Mackworth and the heads of 17 other prominent families, which led to many leading members of the town staying away from Studley’s church. There were also splits in the town council over this issue as one of the members, Sir William Owen of Condover, was a supporter of Studley. By 1635 Hering had been forced to leave the town with his family, whilst Studley’s star was in the ascendant. Differences in religious practices were not the only dividing factor within the county; pockets of discontent over Charles’s taxation of the shires manifested themselves over the Ship Money assessment and Muster Master’s fee. In 1635 the Ship Money assessment for Shrewsbury was £456 10s, Bridgnorth £51 10s, Ludlow £102, Bishop’s Castle £15 10s, Oswestry £51 and Much Wenlock £302.4

Among other county towns up and down the Welsh border, only Gloucester, with a figure of £500, had to pay more than Shrewsbury, whereas Hereford’s assessment was £220 and Chester’s much-disputed sum was £260. Shrewsbury, like Chester, had petitioned over the proportion of Ship Money it had to provide compared to the rest of the county,

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and there had been a general reluctance to pay the sums due, as evidenced by the numerous missives from the Sheriffs of the county and the Privy Council between 1636 and 1638 to the bailiffs of the town to collect the arrears due.\(^5\)

The driving force behind this minor rebellion was Sir John Corbett of Adderley, a former Sheriff of the county who was nicknamed ‘The Patriot’. He had long railed against what he saw as Charles’s illegal taxation policies, and refused to pay his contribution towards the Forced Loan, resulting in imprisonment in the Gate House of the Fleet Prison. He was eventually released after successfully issuing a writ of *habeas corpus*, but was further incarcerated while awaiting trial before the Star Chamber for instigating a revolt within the county concerning the payment of the Muster Master’s fee. Introduced by Elizabeth I to try and ensure that each county was properly defended by professionally trained soldiers, the provisions had been largely repealed by her successor; so when Charles I decided to make further provisions for the militia there was some concern that the assessments of the Muster Master’s (the professional soldier employed to train local men) fees were legitimate. It was not until 1641 that Corbett’s grievances over that matter were resolved; Parliament announced that the imposition of the £30 Muster Master’s fee was illegal, that proceedings should be dropped against Sir John and reparations be made. This in itself was not unusual because many counties were reluctant to pay these taxes, as shown by the generally slow collection rate; but times were changing throughout the county and the growth of the puritan movement in Shrewsbury led to a more independent-minded view of affairs. Of the twelve members of parliament (MP) that the county sent to London, four (Sir John Corbet, MP for the shire, Richard More for Bishops Castle, William Pierrepoint, son of the Earl of Kingston, for Much Wenlock and William Spurstowe for Shrewsbury) all espoused the Parliamentary cause.\(^6\)


In late 1641 and early 1642, there seemed to be little thought as to the taking of sides within the county administration. Shrewsbury Corporation decided on 1 October to strengthen the town’s ‘three gates and that the Water-loade heade shall forthwith be repayred and a cage builded at the Welsh Bridge’. On 15 January it was decided to test the town’s ordnance and purchase new cannon costing £20. By May, in this ‘tyme of emenente danger’, guards were posted on the gates both day and night, and repairs to the walls were undertaken at a cost of £50. The number of guards was stepped up in August with portcullises and chains being put on the gates, and the townspeople were urged to arm themselves in readiness for attack. Certainly, the Mayor’s accounts of the following year show a marked increase in repair work to both the walls and the town’s ordnance, with loads of sand, lime, wood and stone coming in from surrounding areas to be used on the town walls and bridges. At that time it was also agreed by the defence committee that no person should wear colours denoting any allegiance to either side, the entry in the Book of Orders for 30 August stating that ‘this assembly considering the greate distractions that are now in this kingdom, and the greater feares the inhabitants of this corporation are in, have by one unanimous consent agreed to joyne together for the preservation of the peace of this towne and liberties against all unlawfull force’.

Yet as 1642 progressed and war was ever more likely, lines were being drawn between the two sides. Thomas Hunt, a Parliamentarian described by the eminent divine Richard Baxter as a ‘plain hearted, honest, godly Man, entirely beloved, and trusted by the Soldiers for his Honesty’, had started to drill volunteers under the town walls, an action endorsed by Parliament as being necessary for the ‘Service and Defence of his Majesty and the Kingdom’, and those who supported the King began to fight back. Charles I issued his Commission of Array for Shropshire on 22 June, while at York. The Commissioners, some of whom were local

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worthies, were summoned on 24 July by the then High Sheriff Sir John Weld to attend to the business in hand, namely to secure the county for the King and raise money, troops, horses and arms for the cause. A muster of the militia was arranged for 2 August at Shrewsbury, but those who supported Parliament pre-empted the issue; Parliamentary proclamations condemning the legality of the Commissions were read out to the crowd and apparently well-received, although the Royalists tried to disrupt proceedings. The following day, Thomas Hunt trained 300 ‘orderly men’ in the town, whilst just a short distance away the Royalists Sir Vincent Corbet and Richard Lloyd trained their men. Then

Mr. Ottley, under Colour of the Commission of Array, with the High Sheriff, the Mayor of this Town, many of the Commissioners of Array, with the Irish and other Commanders, of which near One Hundred were Townsmen of Shrousebury, the rest Strangers, marched up and down the Town. This Night there was a great Uproar, but ended without Hurt.8

On 8 August the Grand Jury at the Shropshire Assizes declared their loyalty to the King by way of a ‘declaracon and protesacon’, and indicted

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Thomas Hunt for training and exercising men under a Parliamentary Ordinance. Parliament commanded the indictment to be withdrawn, and ordered an investigation into whether or not the empanelled jury had been hand-picked by the Royalist faction in the county. Even though Parliament stated that the Grand Jury had no business meddling in such affairs, the declaration stood. Signatories to the document, which indicated a ‘readiness to obey his Majesty in all lawful ways for putting the country in a posture of arms for his defence’ included some notable names, such as the High Sheriff Sir John Weld, Sir Vincent Corbet, and Francis Ottley. Others who put their names to the document included Sir William Whitmore of Apley, who was Sheriff of the county in 1620 and Weld’s son in law, Sir Thomas Wolryche of Dudmaston, linked through marriage to the Ottleys, former MP for Much Wenlock and later promoted by Charles to become Governor of Bridgnorth, and Sir William Owen of Condover, allied to the Needhams (Viscounts Kilmorrey) by marriage, who had served as bailiff of Shrewsbury in 1621 and Sheriff two years later. Over one hundred gentlemen signed the document, but surprisingly neither Sir Richard Newport nor his son Francis. The attitude of the some of the local clergy was also affirmed with another ‘resolucon’ signed by at least 17 members on 24 August, in which they did ‘declare and protest with our lives and fortunes, preaching and prayer .... Ye honor and safety of his Mat’ies royall person’. The document, however, went on to pronounce that they were still loyal to Parliament, the laws of the land and the liberty of the subject.9

The opinion of the Newports mattered within the county; the family was, by the mid seventeenth century, the largest and wealthiest of the Shropshire landholders. They came from merchant stock, having made their money in the wool trade, and cemented their wealth and land-

holdings through judicious marriages. Richard Newport was knighted in 1615 by James I. He was made Sheriff in 1628 and elected as MP for the county between 1614 and 1629. Through marriage the family was related to the Levesons, wealthy landholders whose estates were mainly in Staffordshire but who still had influence in Shropshire. In April 1642 Francis Newport MP seemed to betray some Parliamentarian sympathies, as he had supported the Governor of Hull, Sir John Hotham, in his refusal to allow the King into the city. Yet the previous year he had been publically named as one of the ‘Straffordians, Betrayers of their country’, as he had refused to attain Lord Strafford. His father also displayed signs that he wanted to remain neutral, although his loyalties frequently seemed to change. Even in the days before the King arrived at Shrewsbury, Newport was in correspondence with his brother-in-law Leveson, hoping that the latter would intervene with Lord Strange (soon to be Earl of Derby), local recruiter in both Cheshire and Shropshire, to offer assurances of his neutrality. Yet that position did not tally with his actions at the militia meeting on 2 August when initially he seemed to support Thomas Hunt, intervening during the fracas that ensued, However, later the same day he allegedly appeared with Francis Ottley’s colours in his hat. Furthermore, Newport was in contact with other Royalists later that month.10

Wanklyn suggests that this seemingly neutral stance could simply have been a time-wasting exercise to ensure that the county gentry were firmly behind the King, or, on a more personal note it was so that he could have honours bestowed upon him in order to win him over to the Royal cause. Yet Sir Richard was not further ennobled until gifting money and goods to the King upon his arrival in Shrewsbury in September. Phillips, on the other hand, was of the opinion that Newport simply foresaw the

damage that war would do to the country as a whole if the Royal actions were not reined in. Charles arrived in Shrewsbury on 20 September, having been assured of a warm welcome by the Corporation who had declared on 15 August that not only should the King have free access to the town, but also be afforded the best entertainment possible. Clarendon described Shrewsbury as being ‘very commodious’, and a draft speech prepared for the Mayor shows that Charles was to have the keys to the town along with the staff and mace. It was upon his arrival that there was the first real sign of Richard Newport’s loyalties, as he gave £6,000 to the King for his cause, and was made a baronet as a result. From then on, although there is no evidence of him taking any physical part in the war, he was active for the Royalist cause. His house at High Ercall was garrisoned for the Crown and, when his estate was sequestered by Parliament after the end of the war, he was deemed to have caused the Shrewsbury magazine to have been moved to Ludlow and Bridgnorth, weakening the town’s defences and so encouraging Charles I’s visit. Francis Newport did see action, but was captured at the siege of Oswestry in June 1644.11

One person whose loyalty was never in question was Francis Ottley, whose motivation seemed purely to be one of support for the Crown. He was rewarded for his endeavours by the King, but certainly not to the extent that Sir Richard Newport was, probably because his ‘gift’ to the Crown was more military than financial. Francis Ottley was probably the most organized and motivated of the Commissioners, as he seems to be the conduit through which most correspondence was sent. As a result of his loyalty and hard work, Charles ordered on 10 September that he be made the commander of a ‘Companie of two hundred ffoote’ to be trained by him in order to secure the town, and when the King left on 12 October, Ottley was appointed as Governor of Shrewsbury. Ottley took his job seriously, demanding that the townspeople swear an oath upon pain of

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death that they ‘detest and abhor the notorious rebellion that goes under the name of the Parliament Army’. He also went about ensuring that the Corporation strengthened the town’s defences, and established the manufacture of muskets. There were many other constants in the Royalist camp throughout the war, all of whom paid the price financially at the end of the war, when their estates were sequestered as a result of aid given to the Crown. One of these was Sir Vincent Corbet of Moreton Corbet. He was a former commander of the county militia and was the commander of a company of dragoons, and as a result of his involvement was ordered to pay £1,588 in fines. Ottley’s forfeiture came to £1,200.12

On the other hand there were those who declared their allegiance to Parliament from the outset, one of those being Sir John Corbet (Sir Vincent’s cousin). There was a distinct lack of a Parliamentarian presence in the county during the early months of the war; those who had been vocal in their support had been wise enough to leave the vicinity, particularly as on 14 October the King declared that Thomas Hunt, Humphrey Mackworth and Thomas Nichols (Niccolls) were to be apprehended for high treason. Furthermore, with the Corporation’s agreement, William Rowley, Owen George, John Prowde, John Lloyd, John Lowe, John Mackworth, Richard Cheshire, John Betton, Thomas Wingfield and George Williams were declared to be ‘disaffected to his Majesty’s person and government, [and] shall bee sequestered from the several meetings till they have cleared themselves’. It was not until 10 April 1643 that Parliament ordered that a committee be established in Shropshire with Sir John Corbet as its commander in chief. The committee members also included William Pierrepont, Thomas Mytton, Robert Corbet, Thomas Nichols, Humphrey Mackworth, Thomas Hunt and Samuel More amongst others. As with their Royalist counterparts, they were to raise troops, horses and funds for the cause.13

13 Owen and Blakeway, pp.430-431; An Ordinance for raising Forces for the defence of the County of Warwick, the Cities and County of Coventry, the County of Stafford, the City and County of Lichfield, and parts adjacent to the said Counties,
There seemed to be no wavering of Parliamentarian loyalties during the first Civil War, although there were disagreements and some suspicions as to motive amongst the committee members themselves. There were distinct tensions between Colonel Thomas Mytton and the rest of the Shropshire committee, as is evidenced in the letter books of Sir William Brereton. Mytton was a local man, from Halston near Oswestry. His family, too, had made their money in the wool trade, and were well established in the county. Mytton acquitted himself extremely well during the war, but was very ambitious. The rest of the committee suspected that Mytton wanted to be made their commander-in-chief, and later Governor of Shrewsbury. They saw the time that he had spent in London as desertion; yet his wife was clearly based in London throughout the war. They intimated their dislike of Mytton through their letters to Brereton, inferring that he could not be trusted to co-operate with them as he ‘carries himself crossly towards us in all matters’, nor in their eyes could he be trusted as it was ‘no new thing for Col. Mytton to overshoot the truth’. Auden believed that the rest of the Shropshire committee were so jealous of Mytton that they disagreed with his appointment as governor of Oswestry, believing that they were the only people who should have a say in the process, even though the position was granted by Sir Basil Feilding, Earl of Denbigh and commander-in-chief of the Parliamentary army in the region, and was confirmed by Parliament. The meeting, in which their complaints were raised, then seemed to develop into a riot, with Feilding calling Mackworth a liar and threatening both to cudgel and stab him. Robert Clive (another committee member) was called a jackanapes and then kicked. Mytton on the other hand did not take kindly to the employment of the professional soldier Lieutenant Colonel Reinking as the committee’s commander, and a dispute later developed as to who was really responsible for the taking of Shrewsbury.14


Parliament was very much under-represented in the county effectively until the end of the war. All the other Corporations were initially for the Crown, as were the main towns. Many of the larger houses were garrisoned with Royalist troops, and ruined castles were repaired to repel any Parliamentarian advance. Of the latter, it was only Hopton Castle in the south-west that was held for Parliament at the beginning of the war. Owned by the Parliamentarian Henry Wallop and garrisoned in February 1643 by Samuel More, it was taken the following month by Sir Michael Woodhouse, the Royalist commander at nearby Ludlow, and his men and ‘fourty prisoners of the same command ... were basely murthered after the surrender’. Yet as the war progressed Parliament gradually took command of the towns and garrisons, the first to fall being Wem in September 1643, with Ludlow holding out until June 1646. On the face of it, however, Shropshire was a Royalist county for the majority of the war, yet as time went on more and more people became frustrated by the price that was being paid for their loyalty, not just in the terms of lives lost, but in financial hardship. From the outset of the war there was a lacklustre response by the county’s population to demands for money, arms and men. Ludlow in particular, was very unresponsive to demands to raise money for the King’s forces, and even after an appeal to Lord Capel over the level of their assessment they pleaded poverty. Further, the order to muster suitable men at Shrewsbury on 22 September 1642 was all but ignored, and in December the absentees were ordered to make themselves known or otherwise be marked as disaffected towards the Crown. In Shrewsbury the mayor was inundated with petitions from the townspeople complaining about the cost of billeting troops. For example, John Garbett petitioned in September 1643 for payment of monies due from various officers, including Lord Capel, the total being more than £11.15


15 John Corbet, An historicall relation of the military government of Glocester, from the beginning of the Civill Warre betweene King and Parliament, to the removall of Colonell Massie from that government to the command of the westerne
Throughout the county, however, despite protestations of loyalty, contributions towards the Crown’s campaign were few and far between. The idea that the county could rely on horsepower provided by the gentry soon fell by the wayside, so it was agreed to raise a troop of dragoons to be commanded by Sir Vincent Corbet. However, instead of enough money being raised for 1,000 men, contributions to pay only 298 had been collected by January 1643, as ‘they will say much and do nothing’. Even when troops were raised they often found that ‘our own Countrymen will give us no Wages’. Things were made worse when Prince Rupert was put in charge of the campaign finances for the area in early 1644. He demanded a payment of £9,000 from the county and, when realising that Church Stretton was behind with its payments, he ordered Thomas Edwardes, a local man and Sheriff of Shropshire, to collect £500 within 24 hours. When that did not occur he sent 100 of his musketeers to plunder Edwardes’s house, even though Edwardes was loyal to the Crown. One of the ways in which the prince gathered more money for the cause was by way of what Wanklyn calls ‘Prince Rupert’s tax’, an assessment based on the value of landholdings that was put in place to replace the free quarter provision. There is little remaining evidence apart from ‘an account of the aid levied on householders in Acton Scott at the time of Prince Rupert’. Richard Oakley in the Purslow Hundred was targeted, as was Francis Newport’s estate at High Ercall, both of whom referred to the tax imposed upon them during their representations to the Committee of Compounding.16

forces (1645), p. 85; Shropshire Archives: XLB/7/7/1/10, XLB/8/3/1/76, XLB/7/7/1/11, XLB/7/7/3/54/55, XSB/C/6/32/4.
There was thus, often, a lack of enthusiasm for any involvement in the war, although there were those such as Jonathan Langley who wrote to Ottley from his refuge in Birmingham, having been forced to leave Shrewsbury because his neutrality was interpreted as disaffection for the Crown. In his request to be allowed to return home, he wrote ‘I never had any intention nor yet have of taking up arms of either side; my reason, this my protestation al-ready binds me to both King and Parliament’. There were those who claimed later to have been dragged into the Royalist camp, which is an unsurprising response given that they were about to lose financially when their estates were sequestered. Having said that, most were actual supporters of the Crown, but simply wanted to live a quiet life and not become involved at all. One such person was Humphrey Walcot of Walcot, near Bishop’s Castle, who was a very wealthy man from a London family of merchant adventurers. He was seized by Royalist troops, despite his loyalty to the Crown, and was detained at Ludlow until he ransomed himself. Charles issued a warrant on 23 September ‘inviting’ Walcott to give a donation of £5,000 for maintenance and support. There is no obvious proof of payment, possibly due to the inter-vention of his kinsman, Lord George Digby, but Walcott handed over both his war horse and pistols to Prince Rupert.17

For one particular community, however, there was no diffidence shown over their loyalty, which was to their own community. The small town of Clun was home to the Clubmen movement that appeared in pockets throughout the country. It came under the lordship of the Royalist Howards, but was also influenced by the Parliamentarian stance of nearby Hopton. The residents were buffeted by both sides, but particularly by the local Royalist commander, Vangeris, who was based at Stokesay (owned by Lord Craven). Eventually the townspeople, organised by Gervase Needham, a minister from Bishop’s Castle, decided to defend


themselves. Contemporary reports describe 1,500 men from both Clun and Bishop’s Castle refusing to be enjoined in Prince Maurice’s latest muster requests, with the emphatic cry that they had ‘taken up Armes for the defence of their lives, their liberties and estates, and that they will sacrifice their blood for the preservation of their country’. The Parliamentarian newsbook *Mercurius Britannicus* pointed out that the reason behind the revolt was the ‘friendly usage thay received from his Majesty’s mercifull officers in those parts: and particularly from one Colonel Van Gare (Vangeris) a Dutchman’. Their demands were simply that the nearby garrisons of Stokesay and Lee be disbanded, Van-geris and his men removed and the inhabitants be allowed their own commanders. If the demands were not met then the threat was that others from Leintwardine, just across the border in Herefordshire, would join them. The Common Hall books from Bishop’s Castle also show that there was more emphasis put on self-defence than aiding the Royalist party, and for this the town was later partly razed to the ground by the Royalist Sir William Vaughan, the so called Devil of Shrawardine. This show of indifference to the wider war was seemingly brought on by the unremitting demands made upon them by local garrisons rather than for any other purpose. It did not help that not only was Vangeris ruthless, but also he was an outsider. In examining the surviving evidence there appears to have been no true enmity between the local people, no matter what side they fought on or supported, but there was a real dislike of those who were not county born, which included not only the vast number of Irish soldiers who were billeted in the county, but also British commanders such as Lord Capel, a Hertfordshire man who, the legend goes, was beaten by ‘the women of Wem and a few musketeers’.

Allegiance can change for various reasons, and after the end of the first and second Civil Wars and execution of the King, one prominent Parliamentarian who had once had decided influence within the county,

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18 *A diary or, An exact journall faithfully communicating the most remarkable proceedings in both houses of Parliament*, Number 40, 13th-20th February 1645; *Mercurius Britannicus*, Thomason/ 5:E.24 [16], Number 65, 6th-13th January 1645, p. 517; *Perfect occurrences of Parliament*, Thomason/ 44:E.258 [6], Number 20, 20th-27th December 1644; Shropshire Archives: XBB/C/1/1/1, Auden/228/3/3; Samuel Garbett, *The History of Wem* (1818), p. 220.
wavered and finally withdrew his support. Sir Thomas Myddleton of Chirk Castle, just across the border in Wales, was Mytton’s brother in law and, in June 1643, had been appointed as Major General of the horse and foot in North Wales. He was active throughout the war, helping Mytton seize Oswestry, and was a regular attender of various county committees in North Wales. However, Parliament began to have suspicions about his continued loyalty after 1649, and he joined Booth’s Royalist uprising in 1659, declaring that Charles Stuart was King. Upon the failure of the rebellion he fled to London, but his estates were sequestered as a result of his involvement. He was later rewarded by Charles II by being elevated to Commander in Chief of the troops in North Wales. With Myddleton and Mytton being related through marriage, this undoubtedly would have led to some difficulties within the family. Mytton’s own children were both Royalists (although they did not proclaim any allegiance during the war) but their family was not the only one divided by the loyalties proclaimed in war. There was, of course, the Corbet family and Humphrey Mackworth’s mother, Dorothy Gorton, was a Royalist, who in 1643 wrote to Sir Francis Ottley (a relative through her second marriage), to assure him of her loyalty. The Pierrepont family was split in two with the Earl of Kingston and his eldest son Robert supporting the King, whereas William and his brother Francis were for Parliament.  

Some allegiances were seemingly motivated by personal gain, such as was the case when the King visited Shrewsbury. Many county gentlemen were knighted as a result of their donations towards the King’s cause. Thomas Lyster handed over a purse of gold, and was knighted as a reward, and similar honours were bestowed on Thomas Eyton and

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Thomas Scriven, presumably in recognition of their donations. It was not just the county elites who had such a motivation, for those lower down the social scale also gained. The army pay (when it actually was provided) was a better wage than could be gained by general labouring. Even in a small village (almost a hamlet) such as Myddle near Wem, 13 men were recruited by Sir Paul Harris, who sent out warrants to all the fit men in Pimhill Hundred, and offered 14 groats a week pay to fight for the King. But it was sometimes the case that those who were seen to be loyal to one side were in fact double-dealing to a greater or lesser extent. The sequestration of estates produced some strange results, as was the case of Sir William Owen of Condover. On the face of it he had supported the Crown throughout, but apparently he had been in communication with the Parliamentary committee during the war, offering shelter at his house three miles from Shrewsbury. It was also suspected that as he owned the Council House next to Shrewsbury Castle, he had allowed the Parliamentarian forces to attack the town using his dwelling as an access point. This latter information was never confirmed by the local sequestration committee, but they accepted that he had been extremely useful to their cause, and fined him a mere £314, despite the fact that he had been a Royalist Commissioner of Array.20

In conclusion, it is evident that the question of allegiance and loyalty or identification with a particular cause was very rarely clear-cut. There were often many motives or pressures behind the decisions made, and sometimes the parameters altered, facilitating a change of direction. Hence those inhabitants of Shrewsbury who were initially happy to billet the King’s troops soon showed their disaffection for the cause that was costing them dear. The same is true of the inhabitants of Clun, who had

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been left to their own devices to preserve their community against raids by the locally-based troops. The question of what, if any, side to choose in war is ultimately a personal one; however, it has to be conceded that some simply followed family loyalties, while others such as Sir William Owen were allegedly ‘thrust into the Commission of Array’. The overwhelming sense that can be derived from the surviving archival evidence is that few of the county’s inhabitants were interested in becoming involved in the conflict. There were, of course, those such as Ottley on the one side and Mytton on the other, who took part in actual combat, but many of the county gentry gave financial support to their cause, generally only when pressured to do so, and orders to muster were often ignored. Furthermore, despite the frequently differing political views, even within families, there was little real enmity among the county men themselves. They may not really have wanted war to come to their shire but, if they had to become involved, then county men should be in control, not outsiders, whether they be foreign-born or not.
‘That factious City’: Exeter during the Civil War, a city with two identities?

Sam Chadwick

The 17th century was a period of turmoil for Britain. Tensions had arisen between Protestant and Catholic beliefs, between the emerging merchant class and the old land-owning gentry, between the king’s wish to rule by Divine Right and Parliament’s attempt to limit this, and between the English core and Britain’s other identities, those of Wales, Cornwall and Scotland. Ireland’s relations with the hub, too, were being re-shaped. These tensions merged into a series of wars, starting with the first ‘Bishop’s War’ or ‘Scots’ War’ in 1639, which were not resolved until the 1688 ‘Glorious Revolution’.

The wars brought about substantial changes to the identity of Britain. They are classically represented as one grand war with three phases, 1641-1646, 1648 and 1649-1652. Many different areas were caught up in the fighting. In England and Wales a total of around 150 towns were affected, with around 10,000 houses being destroyed. Many castles were slighted, so that they no longer could be used as a fortification or hold the weight of large cannon. Several fortifications were damaged to the point of ruination. The war is often represented as just two sides, Cavaliers and Roundheads; in fact the true identity of the war was one of several disparate factions all attempting to gain their own objectives. Histories of the Civil War have often tended to focus upon major national campaigns and principal armies occasionally clashing in glorious and decisive battles. However, these wars were shaped more by the gaining and holding of territory through skirmishes and sieges rather than these grandiose battles. Indeed the war’s duration and its repercussions for the civilian population make sieges a much better representation of how the Civil War was experienced.

As one would expect, these sieges were mostly located in contested areas. However, sieges not only took place where one ‘side’ was advancing and another retreating. Areas where one side had initial control but whose armies had either been defeated or moved to another key location quickly became the location of sieges. These sieges could have considerable effects on the war as a whole. During a siege, a small
force could hold off a much larger army, pinning it and its resources down, threatening sallies and providing pressure should other armies arrive to contest the area. Winning a siege, on the other hand, meant that the land and income could be assimilated into the victors’ territory. Cities and castles were often a source of supplies and ordnance. Cities themselves often housed powder mills and other means of manufacture. Taking a location not only secured the resources in the location itself, but also ensured the loyalty of the nearby area as well as making the territory more difficult to recapture.

Exeter is a useful case in point. Study of its alignment not only reveal details about itself, but also themes and trends that run throughout the Civil War. Exeter’s location on the river Exe – a major artery that allowed trade and communication with Europe – and its position between Royalist Cornwall and the Parliamentarian counties of Somerset, Wiltshire and Dorset made it a heavily contested prize. It had stone walls, originally built by the Romans but reinforced several times. It had already been besieged during the medieval and early modern periods, during an 18-day Norman siege of 1068 and a five-week siege during the Prayer Book rebellion in 1549. The city was one of only a handful of walled towns situated in Devon and Cornwall during this period and was situated on a ridge of high ground near the river, functioning as the county town. It was also was fourth or fifth in size and wealth in the country. Despite its wealth, before the Civil War its economic fortunes had declined. Wartime tax increases and a movement of its trade hub from France and Spain to Holland were causing hardship to the city.21

Exeter is well-represented in a variety of primary sources but the records are particularly polarised, with some types of resources abundant while others are noteworthy by their absence. Andriette’s study noted that the lack of correspondence, and especially the absence of royalist county committee records, has severely limited the scope of studies of Exeter. The study suggests that defeat in 1646 brought about a widespread destruction of official and private royalist papers by those

attempting to spare themselves future losses because of past political indiscretions but that ‘the businesslike habits of many parliamentarians, most of whom expected full payments for their efforts in support of Parliament, resulted in their keeping complete accounts of their wartime expenses’. A complete set of chamber act books and extraordinary accounts relating to the maintenance and enhancement of the City walls and defences during the Parliamentarian occupation remain, but those from the period of Royalist occupation are missing. As a key location and one that was regularly in dispute, Exeter appears frequently in the newspaper pamphlets of the time, particularly in those allied to the Parliamentarian cause. This is probably because any force moving from Royalist Cornwall very quickly became a threat to the Parliamentarian south. The walls of a city like this are usually a vital resource. Exeter retains about 72.5% of its wall length, approximately 1705m in length. Though much of its length is intact, very little of its height or significant fortifications remain. Unfortunately the primary type of stone that was used prior, during and after the Civil War, is the same type, breccia. Breccia erodes badly, making it difficult to identify damage and repairs and, unlike Barnaby’s Tower at Chester, damage inflicted by artillery is impossible to distinguish from natural spalling. Exeter was also a bombing target in the later stages of World War Two, meaning that relatively little about the Civil War can be gained from examining standing buildings. There are numerous reports created by the Exeter Museums Archaeological Field Unit, which reveal much through the archaeology of the city.  

Like many towns, Exeter attempted to remain neutral through the Civil War, hoping that by fortifying it would not be an easy target and that the war would quickly be determined elsewhere. Exeter had a strong ‘Godly’ puritanical group who had held political power, but had also recently elected Robert Walker as mayor, a man who later became a strong supporter of the King. Many of the leading merchants were royalists, as was, perhaps unsurprisingly, the Dean and Chapter. Unlike other locations, Exeter appeared to have put more emphasis on the

concept of neutrality. In early 1642 (still 1641 in the contemporary calendar) they printed *To the Right Honourable, the Lords and Commons in Parliament The humble petition of the mayor, aldermen, and common-councell of the city of Exeter*, a letter requesting peace, warning about the economy and also reaching out to both Parliament and the King.\(^{23}\)

However, Mark Stoyle has claimed that the emphasis on difficulties with Bishops ‘suggests that the petitioner were not pushing a truly neutral line’. As the nation began to slide to war, Exeter was not deeply allied to either side. Despite this it built up its defences during this period, possibly in a vain attempt to make itself an unsuitable target. The Earl of Bath visited the city in an attempt to enlist the city for the King. Exeter continued with its neutralist agenda and members of the corporation allowed Bath in, on the condition that he did not appear in a warlike manner. During this period, Simon Zeaguer was arrested and charged for making traitorous remarks about the King. Bath, finding that he could not win over the county jurors, left the city. Captain Pym, a parliamentarian officer, attempted to march with his forces into Exeter via its Eastgate, at the start of November 1642. Despite the council giving instructions to admit this force (unlike that of Bath’s a few months earlier), the watchmen at the gate refused to let him in and there were riots in the streets, showing Exeter as a deeply split and not inherently Parliamentarian city. These actions have been described as ‘a neutralist mask’. According to Stoyle, a significant proportion, possibly even a majority of the population, opposed the Parliamentarian faction. In an earlier work, he located this Parliamentary zeal, not in the city as a whole but its council at the time. Andriette claimed that the ‘peace-loving people of Exeter and Devon ... were dragged into a conflict which they as yet did not view as their own cause, and for which there was much reluctance'. Considering the arrest of Simon Zeaguer, the riots when Captain Pym entered and the ease at which Exeter was later to become a

Royalist stronghold, the ‘neutralist mask’ assessment appears undeserved. Exeter appears to have been polarised, with factions on either side ensuring a serious reluctance to engage in the conflict.24

Once the city was taken for Parliament it managed to remain out of direct conflict until late 1642. Unfortunately subsequent events are difficult to understand, due to contradictions in the primary sources. It appears probable that there was a minor troop movement in November, in which the Royalists attempted to besiege the city. This initial movement was beaten back by a sally from Exeter, resulting in a retreat from the Royalists and possibly a significant defeat. What is more certain is that the Royalists arrived in late December under Ralph Hopton to begin another siege. The surrounding key locations of Alphington, Powderham and Topsham were taken just before Christmas, while the Parliamentarians under Colonel Ruthven reinforced the city itself. Early on the morning of 31st December 1642, the Royalists attempted to attack the city by stealth but this was discovered and they were beaten off. The Royalists then began to assault the city, but this part of the siege was abandoned the following day. Hopton’s forces slowly pulled back from the City. Both Parliamentarian and Royalist newspapers stated that a Parliamentarian force sallied out from Exeter and inflicted a significant defeat on the Royalist forces, though the latter did announce that the story ‘upon examination was found to have but little truth in it’. Either way the 1642 siege of the City had come to an end.25

Between mid-January 1643 and summer 1643, Exeter remained out of any direct conflict, though due to the movement of armies it is certain to have felt under pressure and a potential target. On 23 January 1642, an order was sent out with specific instructions to reinforce the city, repair its structures, acquire ordnance and prepare the ground for siege. Suspected Royalist supporters were rounded up or fined. The *Mercurius Stoyle, Deliverance to destruction*, pp. 56, 59-60, 60-61; M Stoyle, *Exeter City Defences Project: Documentary Evidence for the Civil War Defences of Exeter, 1642-3* (Exeter: EMAFU, 1988) p. V; Stoyle, *Deliverance to destruction*, pp. 60, 62-63; Stoyle, *Exeter City defences*, p. V; Andriette, p. 54.

Aulicus reported ‘such outrages and violence committed on the Kings good subjects, as hath been seldom heard of in this Kingdome’ had taken place in Exeter, and named the numerous fines that were imposed upon the population. Though Mercurius Aulicus was very partisan and likely to exaggerate the extent of these events, the orders given on 23 January did command ‘Dr Salter, Mr Rodes, Thos. Orchard & others who came lately in to be secured or put forth of the Cittye’.  

The extra fortification and enhancement of the city proved to be prudent. By Thursday 1 June 1643 ‘Sir Ralph Hopton making the best use of his late great victory had brought his conquering Army close unto Exeter’, which the Mercurius Aulicus stated ‘was neither able nor disposed to hold out against him’. By 19 June the Royalists had control of Topsham and had begun to tighten their siege of Exeter. The Parliamentarians attempted to relieve Exeter by sending in a force by sea. These forces ended up in battle with the besieging army, by the end of which three ships had been run aground, one burnt and the other two captured. Reinforcements for the Royalists arrived under Prince Maurice around 20 August. After an assault the Royalists managed to take part of the Parliamentarian fortifications on the south side of the city (presumably Mount Radford). The Royalists proceeded to offer terms to Exeter, but this was refused. The Royalists then turned the artillery from the mount on to the city and begin bombarding it. Almost immediately after this had been done, the Parliamentarians surrendered the city.

For a significant period Exeter remained under Royalist control. Sir John Berkeley was appointed governor, Royalists were restored to the council, a mint to was set up to produce coin for the Royalist forces and the city became the Royalist headquarters in the South. Exeter’s identity switched to that of a devout Royalist stronghold. The following year was peaceful for Exeter, despite an invading Parliamentarian army going through Devon to Cornwall. The queen travelled from Oxford to Exeter with the intention of traveling to Europe, but ended up having her child in

26 Devon Record Office. Exeter Civil War Document, DD 36995 (1642); Mercurius Aulicus, 8 January 1643; Devon Record Office. Exeter Civil War Document, DD 36995 (1642).
27 Mercurius Aulicus 28 May 1643; Peachey, pp. 8-10, 11-12.
Exeter instead. The first half of 1645 proved uneventful for Exeter again. The city only became the focus of military works after the Royalist defeat at Naseby, which freed up the Parliamentarian army to engage in the south-west.\textsuperscript{28}

The Parliamentarian force moved into Topsham on 25 October 1645. By 26 October reinforcements arrived and the Parliamentarians were able to establish their troops within two miles of Exeter, causing the Royalists to burn more of the suburbs. The Parliamentarians dug in, fortifying three locations, Stoke Cannon, Bedford House and a mansion at Poltimore. By 14 November these fortifications were completed. To protect themselves from the winter and illness, the Parliamentarians remained in their occupied and fortified locations. Early in December Fairfax ordered some of his men to occupy the town of Crediton. This was made into a permanent Parliamentarian base, putting pressure on Exeter from the west of the River Exe as well as the east. The focus for Fairfax now became taking Powderham Castle, and a significant skirmish was fought around a nearby church, causing severe losses to the Royalists. The Parliamentarians planned for two assaults of Exeter, the first delayed by bad weather, the second by an army providing relief for the besieged Royalists. The opposing forces skirmished while the Parliamentarians slowly closed around the city. On two occasions relieving armies were beaten back. When dealing with nearby armies, Fairfax was able to leave a portion of his army besieging the city, keeping it under pressure (unlike Brereton at Chester). After the last army in the west was defeated it became apparent that Exeter could not hold out. By the 9th April a surrender was agreed between John Berkeley and Thomas Fairfax, ending Exeter’s part in the Civil War.\textsuperscript{29}

The language in the newspapers and official documents relating to and representing the events in Exeter appears particularly vitriolic compared to that of other locations. This aggressive language could be

\textsuperscript{28} Hoskins, p74.
\textsuperscript{29} Stoyle, \textit{Deliverance to destruction}, p. 109; J Spriggs, \textit{Anglia rediviva} (London: John Partridge, 1647); Stoyle, \textit{Deliverance to destruction}, pp. 111, 112, 116; Anon, \textit{A true copy of the articles agreed on at the surrender of Exeter} (London: F. Coles, 1646).
due to the tensions inherent in a situation of uncertain loyalties, or as a consequence of the hard fought battle. The parliamentary forces identified their opponents as ‘malignants’, accusing them of ‘plunder and spoyle’ in small towns and villages, of which one was ‘now miserably pillaged by the beggarly Cavaliers’. The extreme language even went to the extent of identifying the Royalists with the devil. One report stated that

The Rogues boast abroad that they killed Captaine-Gould (whom I saw in good health this morning) and that the Citie of Exeter gave them 30,000. li. To be gone, which is as false a lye as the father of lies can invent.\(^{30}\)

The Royalist newspapers could be just as vitriolic, but tended towards the simple term ‘Rebels’. This sort of language does not appear to be limited to the press and official letters of the time. A letter from 1644 recorded words said by an unnamed ship’s captain to Captain Bowdon, a royalist sailor. The letter stated that the captain was ‘raging at his most sacred Majestie calling him Papist, and casting many other false, opprofrious scandals upon his Majestie saying they had rather fall in to the hands of Turkes, then any that were of the Kings party’.\(^{31}\)

The use of vitriolic language and harsh representations was not limited to Exeter. In a letter dated 29 May 1643, Charles wrote to the Parliamentarian city of Bristol about the imprisonment of certain individuals who had refused to join the Parliamentarian cause. In his letter the king used language like ‘horrid and odious rebellion’, ‘traiterous’, ‘horrid murder’ and ‘betrayers’, and that their actions ‘thereby call the just judgment of God and bring perpetual infamy upon that our city’. During the later years of the war the language appears to


\(^{31}\) Mercurius Aulicus, 28 May 1643; Exeter Record Office Manuscript 3799M-3/0/8/14.
have been less rancorous, newspapers directly identifying the leaders and simply referring to the forces as the ‘Enemy’.32

This early level of vitriol did not occur in other sieges like those of Chester and Lichfield. For instance in Chester, though bombarding the city, Brereton stated that the aim was ‘To correct them in the city’ and that ‘it would be no difficult work to consume the city, but that would be no delight to us nor advantage, who much rather desire the reducement and preservation than ruin and destruction thereof’, a very different attitude to that of using titles like ‘malignants’. A factor that may have softened the rhetoric is that Brereton was present at the siege, whereas the previous examples were from printers physically removed from the fray in London, and from the king, who would not have been as influenced by the day to day fighting. Another factor that may have made the language more extreme is that of the identity of the people. The Cornish were seen as ‘other’ to English writers at this stage. Though this factor also applied partly to the Welsh, the Cornish were assembled together as an army and could be seen as having invaded English lands and having sacked cities, where the actions of the Welsh in the north-west was more one of bolstering armies and protecting Royalist-held Chester.33

One aspect that is difficult to determine about Exeter is the level of its physical defences during each period during the war. By the end of the war it had become one of the most heavily-defended structures and was even considered more defendable than Oxford. The river Exe provided significant defence for Exeter; whoever had possession of Topsham, Powderham Castle and Cowley Bridge would effectively control the passage over the river. If the besiegers did not have these locations it was effectively impossible to cut Exeter off entirely from its surroundings. Unlike Chester’s nuclear defences, Exeter had a sprawling defence system, a central body connected by four projected forts. In between the city

proper and the forts consisted of a dead zone with ditches and embankments.34

Unlike many other settlements from the Norman Conquest onwards, the city wall underwent continuous repair and maintenance up until the Civil War. Before the outbreak of war it was probably in a significantly better state for defending the city. One source, *True and remarkable passages from the last of October to this present day*, contains an account of the work that had been done so far: ‘wee already have made good the decayd wals, & fortified our town with good and hansome outworkes, have Ordnance planted, and indifferent store of Ammunition, and some quantity of resolv’d Souldiers to stand for the King and Parliament’.35

A month later *True and ioyfull newes from Exceter* reported that by late 1642 Exeter already had ramparts, buttresses with artillery on or adjacent to it, more than the initial six guns and was quite prepared for being bombarded with smaller guns. The next significant document that records the defences is in two manuscripts, named the *Exeter Civil War Document*. These two documents are one and the same, one a draft of the other. Both have details missing: the draft does not contain all the information, while the neat copy is water-damaged and some parts of the document are lost. The document is dated 23 January 1642, and therefore falls after the unsuccessful November and December 1642 sieges but before the summer 1643 siege.36

Thus Exeter appears to have been a formidable settlement, representative of the conflict in some respects. It shares several major characteristics of other locations, initial neutrality being followed by a more intensely aggressive reaction as war became a reality, finally ending with a more peaceful and resigned atmosphere as the war fizzled out. It mirrors the identity of the nation, under weak parliamentarian control, changing sides as the Royalists appeared to be winning. Then, as the

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35 Blaylock, *Exeter City Defences*, p. 1; W. D., *True and remarkable passages from the last of October to this present day*, (1642).
Royalists lost control across Britain, Exeter’s complacency also ebbed away.

Exeter diverges from the general picture in the strength of its fortifications and the effectiveness of its various besiegers. The polarised newspapers of the time began by representing their opponents as evil, using negative terms presumably aimed at shattering any inherent neutrality and inflaming the populace for war. As the war continued, the newspapers changed their tack and identified the commanders directly, presumably to vilify these individuals, while allowing lesser men to lay down their arms. Exeter itself appears to have embodied this strife, with its reports, petitions and accounts ranging from neutral to divisive. Exeter rather than having two fixed, separate identities appeared to be of one mixed, factious and malleable identity.
Representations of Twelfth-Century Chester
Vanessa Greatorex

There is a dearth of extant primary sources about twelfth-century Chester. Apart from five fairly late charters and the Chartulary of St Werburgh's Abbey (which mostly deals with the abbey's landholdings outside the city), the hiatus can only be filled with chronicles and other literary works. They were all written in Latin by monks, so the views expressed do not necessarily mirror those of the population as a whole, and are certainly not impartial. Nevertheless, they do provide some interesting depictions of twelfth-century Chester. This paper assesses the ways in which the city was represented in the works of William of Malmesbury, Henry of Huntingdon, Gerald of Wales, Richard of Devizes and Lucian of Chester.

William of Malmesbury
Born of mixed Norman and English parentage, William of Malmesbury (c.1090-c.1142) was a Benedictine monk of Malmesbury Abbey. He was a great collector of chronicles, and an avid reader and researcher who began writing ‘in order to bring forcibly into the light things lost in the rubbish-heap of the past’. His works include the Gesta Regum Anglorum

1 CALS, ZCH/1, c.Oct 1175/May 1176, issued by Henry II; CALS, ZCH/2, c. Aug 1189-1193 and CALS, ZCH/3, c.Aug 1189-1193, both issued by John, Earl of Mortain and Lord of Ireland (later King John); CALS, ZCH/4, c. Oct 1190-1193 and CALS, Z/CH/5, c. Oct 1190-1193, both issued by Ranulf ('de Blundeville'), sixth Norman Earl of Chester. The first three concern the trading rights of Chester’s citizens in Ireland, while the others confirm the traditional rights, customs and privileges of the citizens and gild merchants. All are held by Cheshire Archives and Local Studies (CALS).

2 For a printed edition, see J. Tait, Chartulary of the Abbey of St Werburgh, Chester, Parts I and II (Chetham Society of Lancashire and Cheshire New Series, Vols. 79, 1920, and 82, 1923).


'Deeds of the Kings of the English'),\textsuperscript{5} which eventually turned into a three-volume history of England bookended by the death of Bede in 735 and of William himself c.1142,\textsuperscript{6} and the \textit{Gesta Pontificum Anglorum} ('Deeds of the Bishops of the English').\textsuperscript{7} This covers saints and ecclesiastical activity in England from the arrival of Augustine in 597 to the 1120s, when the work was compiled. The first version was in circulation c.1125, with various updates and revisions released over the ensuing decade.\textsuperscript{8}

Chester is occasionally mentioned in both works, the emphasis frequently being on religious matters. Much is made of the city’s connection with St Werburgh,\textsuperscript{9} a Saxon princess and abbess, whose remains were brought to the city from Hanbury in 875 to prevent them falling into the hands of the marauding Danes.\textsuperscript{10} Revealing more than he perhaps intended, William says she ‘lies at Chester in the monastery of that city, which Hugh earl of Chester, ejecting a few clerks who resided


\textsuperscript{6} \textit{Oxford Dictionary of National Biography} <http://www.oxforddnb.com/>


there in a mean and irregular manner, has recently erected.’’\textsuperscript{11} The latter part of the sentence demonstrates the dismissive attitude of Norman incomers to the existing Anglo-Saxon Church and also illustrates William of Malmesbury’s own divided loyalties as a man with the mingled ‘blood of two races’.\textsuperscript{12} While appearing to ally himself with the Norman Church and to disparage Anglo-Saxon asceticism, he is unable to bring himself to suppress the truth completely: Hugh d’Avranches, the first Norman Earl of Chester, bullied out the existing clerics in order to snatch the glory for the abbey’s foundation himself. The ejected clerics may not have put up much resistance; their removal from office may have been without physical conflict – but power politics clearly took precedence over religious harmony in Chester when St Werburgh’s was refounded as a Norman abbey. This hints at the city’s enforced subjugation to Norman rule, implying that the transition between Anglo-Saxon and Norman governorship was at best uneasy, with the potential to erupt into social unrest. The insinuation may be subtle, brief and unintentional, but it nevertheless exists, reflecting the Domesday Book description of Chester as ‘greatly wasted’\textsuperscript{13} after the Conquest.

It also echoes the chronicler’s earlier reference to the decline of another Mercian religious house: ‘Rapendun’ (i.e. Repton), formerly ‘a great monastery, now a vill belonging to the Earl of Chester, and its glory grown obsolete with age’.\textsuperscript{14} Clearly Hugh d’Avranches, despite his refounding of St Werburgh’s Abbey in Chester, was not pious enough to forfeit a vill, with all its attendant rents and resources, in order to facilitate restoration of another Anglo-Saxon monastery. This is touched on again in \textit{Gesta Pontificum}, when William notes that Repton’s ‘famous monastery...is now part of the lands of the Earl of Chester.’\textsuperscript{15} Earl Hugh’s comparative willingness to re-found St Werburgh’s perhaps, therefore, underlines the status of Chester as a place of both regional and religious

\textsuperscript{11} William of Malmesbury, \textit{The Kings Before the Norman Conquest}, pp.205-206.
\textsuperscript{13} Philip Morgan, \textit{Domesday Book: Cheshire} (Chichester: Phillimore, 1978), C 262c, paragraph 23.
\textsuperscript{14} William of Malmesbury, \textit{The Kings Before the Norman Conquest}, p.203.
\textsuperscript{15} William of Malmesbury, \textit{Gesta Pontificum Anglorum} (Preest), p.201.
importance. That said, the chronicler makes no reference in the *Gesta Regum* to other religious houses in Chester, though he does mention the Church of St Peter in the *Gesta Pontificum.*

He is aware that Chester was previously known as the city of legions and knows that it stems from the city’s Roman origins. He says it ‘shares a border with the north Britons’, which probably means the Celtic peoples of North Wales (the border being the River Dee). He adds that, in common with other northern locations, Chester’s surrounding area is not suited to growing cereal crops, but that cattle, fish and dairy products are plentiful, with richer people living chiefly on meat and being especially fond of bread made from barley or wheat. Two-way trade with Ireland meant that any essentials not cultivable locally could readily be imported, presumably including grain for the prized bread. All this suggests that the city’s inhabitants were well-fed and, by implication, contented, with no necessity to become disorderly or disaffected in response to famine or low food stocks.

To summarise, William of Malmesbury’s *Gesta Regum Anglorum* and *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum* contain several scattered references to Chester’s episcopal status, its first earl, the refounding of St Werburgh’s Abbey, the miraculous powers of St Werburgh, local foodstuffs and international trade. It is clear that the city – a place of relative safety in the ninth century – suffered in the early years of Norman rule but managed to reinforce its religious importance and retain its association with a saint linked to Anglo-Saxon royalty. Ecclesiastical tensions are hinted at, but there is never any suggestion that these spilled over to mar

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the smooth running of the city. The Earl used the refounded Abbey to strengthen Norman control of the region, and sufficient stability was achieved for food to be plentiful and merchants to operate in and out of the city. The overall impression created by William of Malmesbury, then, is of a city where the driving forces were religion, commerce and secular power.

**Henry of Huntingdon**

Like William of Malmesbury, Henry of Huntingdon was an Anglo-Norman. He was born around 1088, and taken to Lincoln at the age of twelve to be educated in the Bishop’s household. In the 1120s the Bishop encouraged him to write a history of the English people. The first version was finished by 1130. Periodic continuations and revisions appeared over the next couple of decades, with the final version being completed in 1154 and copied a year or so later. Henry’s *Historia Anglorum* (‘History of the English People’) was popular during his lifetime and influenced the composition of many subsequent chronicles. However, as his translator Diana Greenway points out, in Henry’s time history was a literary genre, not unbiased reportage, and writers were expected to invent dialogue to help bring scenes to life, so strict adherence to the bare facts was sometimes subordinate to the construction of an interesting anecdote. An example of this is the brave but arrogant speech Henry puts into the mouth of Earl Ranulf II of Chester during the 1141 siege of Lincoln Castle, when England was disrupted by

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the tussle for power between the late Henry I’s daughter Matilda and her cousin Stephen.

There is no evidence that Henry of Huntingdon ever visited Chester, and he says nothing about the city itself, but at several points in his Historia Anglorum he does mention people associated with the city – principally its bishops, earls and St Werburgh. His writing could therefore be taken as a reasonable indicator of the city’s reputation beyond its immediate location. It has a saint who works miracles, churchmen and earls who are important enough to mix with royalty, and strong leaders who play a major role in national events. The city may be distant from Henry’s own base, but it is both too significant to be disregarded, and too insignificant – or too well governed and guarded – to itself be a centre of conflict during the civil war between Matilda and Stephen.

Gerald of Wales
Descended from Marcher barons and Welsh royalty, Gerald of Wales was born at Manorbier Castle in Pembrokeshire sometime around 1146. His greatest ambition was to become the Bishop of St Davids, and to this end he took every opportunity to raise his profile and make himself useful to England’s most influential churchmen. In 1188 he accompanied Baldwin, the Archbishop of Canterbury, on a preaching tour of Wales, the object of which was to raise support for the Third Crusade. He recorded

32 Lewis Thorpe, ‘Introduction’ in Gerald of Wales, The Journey Through Wales, p.16.
his impressions of the places visited in a book called *Itinerarium Kambriae*, commonly known in English as *The Journey Through Wales*.

The tour began in Hereford two days after Ash Wednesday and took in all four of Wales’s cathedrals – Llandaff, St Davids, Bangor and St Asaph – as well as a number of less prominent locations, but the most important stop of all was not in Wales. It was east of the border, in England: Chester. Although Gerald himself does not describe Chester as the premier location, it is not difficult to justify this deduction. The archiepiscopal party arrived in the city on Holy Thursday (the day before Good Friday) and spent the whole of Easter there. A sermon exhorting able-bodied men of military age to take the Cross was preached by the Archbishop on Easter Sunday. It seems logical to infer that the objective was for the most important churchman in England to preach on the holiest day of the year in the most prominent city on the tour. As a result of the Archbishop’s sermon in Chester, Gerald says: ‘many people took the Cross’. What he diplomatically refrains from discussing is whether the primary motivation of the individuals pledging to fight in the Holy Land in God’s name was piety, suggestibility, a guilty conscience in need of redemption or a combination of these and other factors.

In addition to stating the outcome of the Archbishop’s sermon, Gerald says a number of other things about Chester which were completely unrelated to the purpose of the tour. For instance, he notes that its inhabitants believed that the shifting sands of the Dee, which altered the river’s fords and navigable channels, could predict whether England or Wales would ‘beat the other or be unsuccessful in war in any particular

year.’\textsuperscript{38} It could be argued that this provides evidence of endemic tension between England and Wales; however, Gerald moves on swiftly, choosing to dwell instead on the abundance of salmon in the river, and in no way suggesting that Chester is any more prone to attack than any other Marcher settlement.

On the contrary, the city is depicted as a safe haven for incognito royalty, and, says Gerald, ‘boasts’ of being the burial place of both the Holy Roman Emperor, Henry V, and of England’s last Anglo-Saxon king, Harold II.\textsuperscript{39} Henry V (1086-1125), according to Chester’s residents, spent his last days in the city as a hermit in voluntary exile before being buried in St Werburgh’s Abbey,\textsuperscript{40} while Harold II supposedly escaped to Chester after the Battle of Hastings and lived incognito as an anchorite ‘in constant attendance’ at church.\textsuperscript{41} The identity of both monarchs allegedly came to light ‘only when they each made their last confession’.\textsuperscript{42}

Received wisdom today is that Henry V died in Utrecht in 1125 and was buried at Spier,\textsuperscript{43} but Walter Map claimed in \textit{De Nugis Curialium} (‘Courtiers’ Trifles’ c.1181/82) that the repentant Emperor had gone into voluntary exile to atone for his sins and that many men mendaciously claimed to be him.\textsuperscript{44} The views of twelfth-century Cestrians would therefore be consistent with contemporary tales of the Emperor’s survival. Adding weight to the Emperor’s association with Chester, the nineteenth-century antiquarian Joseph Hemingway mentions a ‘long-standing tradition’ that during his years in Chester Henry was known as Godscallus or Godstallus, hence the name Godstall Lane for a narrow street opposite St Werburgh’s Cathedral;\textsuperscript{45} but his fellow historian George Ormerod is extremely sceptical about the legend and points out that the

\textsuperscript{38} Gerald of Wales, \textit{The Journey Through Wales}, p.198.
\textsuperscript{39} Gerald of Wales, \textit{The Journey Through Wales}, pp.198-199.
\textsuperscript{40} Gerald of Wales, \textit{The Journey Through Wales}, p.198.
\textsuperscript{41} Gerald of Wales, \textit{The Journey Through Wales}, p.199.
\textsuperscript{42} Gerald of Wales, \textit{The Journey Through Wales}, p.199.
\textsuperscript{43} See Thorpe’s note 406 in Gerald of Wales, \textit{The Journey Through Wales}, p.198.
\textsuperscript{45} Joseph Hemingway, \textit{History of the City of Chester from the Foundation to the Present Time} (Chester: J. Fletcher, 1831), p.49.
tomb associated with the Emperor in Chester Cathedral is far too late in architectural style (gothic not Norman) and more likely to be that of an abbot. Gerald maintains neutrality by simply relaying the beliefs of Cestrians without stating his own views.

With regard to Harold II, Bishop Guy of Amians’s *Carmen of Hastingae Proelio* ('Song of the Battle of Hastings', c.1066), William of Poitiers’s *Gesta Guillelmi* ('Deeds of William’, c.1075), The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,* and the *Bayeux Tapestry* indicate that the last Saxon king was killed at Hastings, but the anonymous twelfth-century *Vita Haroldi* ('Life of Harold') claims he survived, living as a hermit until his death and burial at Waltham Abbey. On 14 October 2014 – the anniversary of the Battle of Hastings – Stratascan, the same geological survey company involved in locating Richard III’s body in a Leicester car park, began looking for Harold’s body in the grounds of Waltham Abbey Church and subsequently applied for a licence to exhume an unmarked grave near the east wall of the Church, but further announcements about the

explorations have yet to be made. Even if remains of the right date are uncovered at Waltham Abbey, it would not necessarily preclude the possibility that Harold spent time in Chester after the battle.

It could be argued that, by recounting these legends, Gerald was covertly pointing to the gullibility and pretension of the people of Chester, but that interpretation of his reportage is somewhat undermined when, without witnessing them himself, he goes on to describe three ‘prodigies of nature’ which were alleged to exist in the Chester area.

The first of these was a deer-cow borne of the alleged union between a stag and a cow. Its forequarters were bovine, but its rump, legs, hooves and tail were like a deer’s. It was, Gerald says, more domesticated than wild and fully accepted by the rest of the herd.\(^{54}\) He does not specify whether the herd in question was of cows or of deer, but from the mention of domesticity the former seems more likely. The same Chester-based animal is also somewhat irrelevantly mentioned in Gerald’s book about Ireland, *Topographia Hibernia*, one manuscript of which features a picture of the curiosity.\(^{55}\)

This interest in unusual creatures continues with his description of the ‘deformed and hybrid’ offspring of a liaison between a monkey and a bitch. Gerald says the puppies were ‘ape-like in front but more like a dog behind’. Unfortunately, they were killed ‘out of hand with a stick’ by a horrified ‘country bumpkin’.\(^{56}\) Possibly this self-appointed executioner thought he was doing the puppies a kindness, but he was nevertheless punished for killing them by his master.\(^{57}\) This could be taken as evidence that inhabitants of Chester were piously more compassionate than their rural counterparts towards God’s creatures, even those afflicted by physical abnormalities. Equally, it could be surmised that the master was angry because killing the puppies deprived him of the opportunity to make any money from them. Gerald makes no attempt to interpret the motivations of those involved. He simply recounts the incident.

\[\text{http://www.eppingforestguardian.co.uk/news/11876199.} \]
\[\text{Have the remains of King Harold been found in Waltham Abbey?} /\]
\[\text{Gerald of Wales, *The Journey Through Wales*, p.199.}\]
\[\text{BL, Add MS 34762.}\]
\[\text{Gerald of Wales, *The Journey Through Wales*, p.199.}\]
\[\text{Gerald of Wales, *The Journey Through Wales*, p.199.}\]
He finishes his account of Chester by writing of a woman who was born without hands but able to sew with her long-toed feet ‘to the great astonishment of all who saw her.’

So, to Gerald, Chester was a place where the Church could count on the support of its pious citizens. But it was also a place of wonders, where exiled kings found refuge and strange creatures had a better chance of survival than in rural areas. The implication is that, from Gerald’s perspective, Cestrians were sufficiently compassionate and sophisticated to embrace the unusual, and certainly a cut above ignorant country-dwellers.

Richard of Devizes
Richard of Devizes (c.1150-c.1200), however, was rather less positive about the city. Little is known about his origins, but the general assumption is that his cognomen indicates his birthplace. The age at which he moved from Wiltshire to the neighbouring county of Hampshire is unknown, but he spent most of his life as a Benedictine monk at St Swithin’s Cathedral Priory in Winchester, where he is believed to have been one of the compilers of the Annales de Wintonia (Winchester Annals). He is also credited with writing, in the early 1190s, the Chronicon de Rebis Gestis Ricardi Primi (‘Chronicle of the Acts of Richard I’). The fictitious narrator of this is a French Jew who warns his compatriots to avoid northern cities plus Worcester, Chester and Hereford because the Welsh are ‘too prodigal with the lives of others’:

Sed nec in arctois sedem tibi legeris urbis Wigornia Cestria Herefordia propter Walenses uite prodigos.

However, he is also scathing about Canterbury, Rochester, Chichester, Oxford, Exeter, Bath, York, Ely, Bristol, the Scots and the Cornish, while

58 Gerald of Wales, The Journey Through Wales, p.200.
Durham, Norwich and Lincoln are allegedly devoid of French-speakers, and villages, markets and towns are, the narrator claims, populated only by ‘rude and rustic inhabitants’. Although ‘in every place there are some good’, there is much less good to be found ‘in them all than in Winchester alone.’

Though wittily satirical in style and therefore not intended to be taken too seriously, Richard of Devizes’s description of English towns is, at heart, simply a piece of propaganda designed to promote his own chosen location – Winchester – by denigrating others. Chester is not singled out but bracketed with other Marcher cities, and the objection is not so much to the cities themselves or to their residents as to violent Welshmen with little respect for national boundaries. Nevertheless, we can infer from his warning that Chester was potentially vulnerable to attack in the twelfth century, so the safety of its citizens could not be taken for granted. This provides a rather different picture from Gerald’s, in which its citizens felt sufficiently confident about the safety of the city to contemplate leaving their families and possessions behind to fight for Christendom in the Holy Land.

**Liber Luciani de Laude Cestrie**

By far the most detailed description of twelfth-century Chester occurs in *Liber Luciani de Laude Cestrie*, which, loosely translated, means ‘The Book of Lucian in Praise of Chester’. It was written c.1195, and lengthy extracts from it were transcribed and edited by M.V. Taylor in the early twentieth century. More recently, twenty-eight extracts, with a useful ‘facing text’ option showing translations by Dr Mark Faulkner, were uploaded on the

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62 For instance, in the same section the French abhorrence of cleanliness and of the Flemish is also lampooned.

Mapping Medieval Chester website.\textsuperscript{64} There are also two readings of translated extracts viewable online,\textsuperscript{65} these being the legacy of an exhibition and lecture series on medieval Chester staged by the city’s Grosvenor Museum in 2013.

Nothing is known about Lucian beyond what can be gleaned from his book. He was educated at Chester’s Collegiate Church of St John the Baptist, was clearly familiar with life as a monastic scribe (suggesting he was or had been one himself), described himself as an alumnus of St Werburgh’s Abbey, and may even have been its sub-prior.\textsuperscript{66} There are also grounds for believing he was linked to Combermere Abbey in Cheshire’s Vale Royal.\textsuperscript{67}

So he was steeped in the Catholic Church, well enough educated to be aware of the classical tradition of producing texts extolling the virtues of particular cities, and very keen to play an active role in promoting his home town. In fact, he could legitimately be described as Chester’s first public relations officer – but, unlike Richard of Devizes, he did not champion his city by denigrating other places, but focused instead on describing its merits.

For instance, he says it has a river teeming with fish (and thus a flourishing fishing trade), an internationally significant seaport (used by vessels from Aquitaine, Spain, Ireland and Germany), a market (attracting buyers and sellers from several miles), and plenty of nearby woods, pastures, meat and cattle.\textsuperscript{68} He reports that the city’s inhabitants are

\textsuperscript{64} \url{http://www.medievalchester.ac.uk/texts/facing/Lucian.html} [accessed 2 June 2014].

\textsuperscript{65} 3 Lucian De Laude Cestrie \url{http://vimeo.com/59659137} and 4 Lucian De Laude Cestrie \url{http://vimeo.com/59659298} [both accessed 15 September 2014]. Unfortunately, the actor is anachronistically prone to waving his spectacles about, even though the earliest documentary reference to eyeglasses – in Sandro di Popozo’s \textit{Traité de Conduite de la Famille} – did not occur until 1289, and there is no definite evidence of a pair existing in England until 1326. Patrick Robertson, \textit{The Shell Book of Firsts}, revised edn (London: Ebury Press and Michael Joseph, 1983), p.168.

\textsuperscript{66} Taylor, \textit{Liber Luciani de Laude Cestrie}, pp.11, 54-55, 61.

\textsuperscript{67} Faulkner, ‘The Spatial Hermeneutics of Lucian’s \textit{De Laude Cestrie}, p.92.

\textsuperscript{68} Taylor, \textit{Liber Luciani de Laude Cestrie}, pp. 46, 47, 63, 65.
convivial, hospitable, generous, merciful and compassionate towards the poor and afflicted, but adds they are easily angered and do not submit readily to servitude.  

He describes Chester as the western limit of the Roman Empire, which suggests that he was fully aware of the part the Romans played in founding the city. Yet he chooses to disregard historical and topographical evidence and instead uses Chester as a prop to support his religious agenda, bizarrely opining that the city must have been founded by a prophet and claiming that the Latin version of its name was derived not from *castra*, meaning ‘military camp’, but from *Cis-tria* ‘threeply’ because of its ‘learned bishop, generous archdeacon and shining clergy’.  

According to him, Chester’s many religious establishments collaborate in harmony, with St John in the east, St Peter in the west, St Werburgh in the north and St Michael in the south acting as guardians to protect the city. This is a clear instance of massaging the truth, because St Peter’s Church is actually in the centre of the city, and St Michael’s is quite some distance from the southern city wall.

Undaunted by this, Lucian claims that Chester has two straight streets which cross in the centre to make four arms, each with its origin in a gate. This, he says, is symbolic of the Cross and the four evangelists. Again, his assertion is not quite accurate. The streets he means are Northgate Street, Eastgate Street, Watergate Street, and Bridge Street, which all did lead to a gate in the Middle Ages. However, the existence of St Peter’s Church, on the site of the Roman *Principia* in the city centre, rather spoils Lucian’s vision by creating a decided kink between the north and south arms of the imaginary cross.

Interestingly, for someone so keen to promote his fellow churchmen, he makes no mention of the Archbishop of Canterbury’s visit, which took place less than a decade before *De Laude Cestrie* was written. Even more intriguingly, his work is mysteriously not referred to in either the *Annales*

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Cestrienses (‘Annals of Chester’) or Polychronicon, both of which were compiled in the very same abbey – the annals in the thirteenth century and Polychronicon in the fourteenth.\textsuperscript{74} So possibly his Christian interpretation of Chester’s topography did not find favour with clerics close to home, although, further afield, York Minster did own a copy of the book.\textsuperscript{75}

**Multiple viewpoints**

To William of Malmesbury Chester was a place of abundance where commerce and religion flourished. To Henry of Huntingdon it was associated with powerful magnates. To Gerald of Wales it was a place of piety and wonders. To Richard of Devizes it was a place of danger. To Lucian of Chester it was a spiritual textbook.

In short, Chester’s identity in the twelfth century very much depended on who was imposing the identity on it, and this has very much continued to the present day, with Chester being marketed as a Roman walled city, a haven for ghosts and a race-goer’s paradise. It’s Roman. It’s medieval. It’s Georgian. It’s Victorian. It’s a twentieth-century urban eyesore and a twenty-first-century redevelopment zone.

So this foray into twelfth-century representations of Chester leads to two questions which perhaps belong more in a philosophical debate than a history essay:

Is ‘identity’ merely an artificial construct founded on delusion and bias?

\textsuperscript{74} The most widely available printed editions of these works are Richard Copley Christie (ed.), Annales Cestrienses: Or Chronicle of the Abbey of S Werburg, at Chester (The Record Society for the Publication of Original Documents relating to Lancashire and Cheshire, 1887, Kessinger Publishing Rare Reprints, 2007), and the nine volume Rolls Series of Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden Monachi Cestrensis, edited by Churchill Babington and Joseph Rawson Lumby (1865-1886) and reprinted Cambridge University Press/Cambridge Library Collections – Rolls, 2012.

And what is it about the human psyche which prompts us to impose limiting identities on places – and, indeed, people – when the full story is far richer and more complex?

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