

Austrey Losses from Levies and Free Quartering of Troops c. 1643-1646



Lists of taxpayers are an invaluable source for genealogical investigation. The *Account of the Inhabitants of Austrey to the Commissioners appointed for the taking of accounts for the county*, dated March 1647, found among the State Papers of the Exchequer in the Public Record Office (SP 28/186), is particularly useful as a guide to the Civil war impositions placed on the parish of Austrey in north Warwickshire. It includes a very detailed list of the payments and claims made by the principal inhabitants of the parish, starting with a list of “subsides” or taxes paid by the inhabitants on the eve of the Civil War from April, 1641 to June the following year. These amounts were paid to the Warwickshire county commissioners through local gentlemen, who were probably personally known to the inhabitants. In April, 1641 Mr Perkins of Marston collected the first of two subsidies amounting to £6-8-0. Then in June, 1641, Mr Whitehall of Oldberry collected two more subsidies of the same amount, followed by a further two subsidies collected by Mr Walker of Fillongley in December that year. In May, 1642 the Austrey inhabitants made a “Contribution” of £8 for “the relief of subjects in Ireland”, to Mr Richard Beardsley, the high constable of Amington. In September 1641 Sir George Devereux demanded £10-17-6 for Poll Money. Nine months later, in June the following year, Waldyne Willington of Burley, later put in command of the garrison at Tamworth, collected the first half of a payment of £19-10-0 towards the levy of four thousand pounds demanded from the county. Mr William Reeve of Poulehall in the parish of Polesworth, later collected the other half owing “saving that of this last payment forty and eight shillings ... imposed upon the tithe corne”, making a total amount of £77-1-6 collected for these two years alone. In 1645 the principal landholders of Austrey were forced to pay “Proposition Money” (or Public Faith) for their goods and lands. This imposition was in effect a forced loan, following an ordinance passed in May 1643 requiring all persons worth more than £10 a year in land or £100 in personal estate to pay a fifth of their revenue or a twentieth of their estate. The amounts for Austrey landholders were collected by Thomas Basnet of Coventry and Robert Graybrook of Middleton. A list of 15 names is recorded. In June 1645 Mrs Elizabeth Leving, widow paid £14 to Mr Thomas Basnet and Thomas Barwell paid £2 for his goods to Mr Robert Graybrook of Middleton. In October that same year the widow Ann King, paid £14 for her lands to John Hales esquire and to Mr Thomas Basnet, while Richard Crosse paid £10 proposition money for his lands and goods to Thomas Basnet, and a further £6 to John Hales esquire and to Thomas Basnet. George Willington, Thomas Varnham and Richard Spencer respectively paid sums of £2-10-0, £5 and £2 to Robert Graybrook of Middleton. Mr John Prior, the vicar, paid £12 to John Hales esquire. Anne Hall, widow paid £5 to Mr Robert Graybrook and to Mr Thomas Basnet. Christopher Palmer paid £1-10 and Mr John Monck paid £6, William Taverner paid £3-10, Robert Ball paid £4 and

Thomas Taylor paid £5. Altogether these 14 Austrey inhabitants paid a total of £82-10-0 for these forced loans.

At the start of the war the Committee of Militia demanded regular payments to support parliamentary garrisons: including £117 ordered to be paid to Captain Otway and his deputies in July 1643 and then £728-0-0 to cover the 31 months until the 1st May, 1646 representing the sum of six pounds a week "which amounteth to saving that out of this was abated sixteene pounds or thereabouts to the Impropriation for two years". Otway, who commanded troops from the Coventry garrison made frequent visits to Austrey and the surrounding parishes to collect these levies.

The Committee later recorded that it had not yet paid the sixteenth payment into the Treasury from first of May 1646 until the 8th of June the following year, but it had made regular weekly payments amounting to £67-4-0 to Major Hawksworth, for four months from 1st May to 22nd August, £19-4-0 for the first three months after that, and the same amount for a further three more months thereafter, amounting to £931-8-0.

Next to taxation and subsidies there was the issue of billeting or quartering of troops. This often put a severe strain upon the farming inhabitants. We learn for example that Lord Denbigh, the parliamentary commander, received a petition from the inhabitants of Cubbington that no more troops be quartered on them as those already sent had consumed all their provisions. (R.E. Sherwood, *Civil Strife in the Midlands*, pg 118). Of particular interest is a long list of Austrey accounts for quartering and losses from 1644-6 which was submitted as a claim to the county committee in March, 1647. In January 1645 sixteen men of Sir Thomas Fairfax and his Army under the Command of Major Spencer were quartered with one day and one night at eighteen pence a day and a night for a man and a horse, amounting to a claim for £10-4-0. The soldiers frequently took horses, the first listed from Austrey worth £2-6-8, with no owner recorded. It appears that from around mid-1644 at brief intervals the village was infested with horses and troopers belonging to the parliament who arrived suddenly, stayed for a few days and then just as suddenly departed. A typical claim submitted to the county committee is that eight score men with their horses under Colonel Drumwell under Captain Knight & Captain Margerum were quartered here about whitsontide 1645 for a day and a night valued at £12.

Some of the soldiers were foragers from the garrison at Leicester which fell to the king in May, 1645. A further "fourescore men and so many horses of Colonel Hacker of Leicester" were quartered here for eight days and nights about the beginning of March, 1645, at the standard rate of eighteen pence for a man and a horse a day and a night, for which the residents claimed £48. In July, 1646, after Leicester Fairfax had recaptured the city, "fourescore souldiers beinge footmen of the garrison of Leicester" were quartered at Austrey for two days and two nights, rated at six pence a day for a man", a claim for £4 re-imbusement. In September 1646, some 40 soldiers "being horsemen of Colonel Drumwell under captaine Middleton were quartered eight days and eight nights" ... a further claim for £24. The record further shows that "nigh that time five score horsemen" of general Fairfax's own troops were quartered in Austrey for a day and a night, for which the inhabitants claimed £7-10-0. Again in November and December 1646, after the king's surrender at Oxford, 34 foot soldiers of

General Fairfax's army under the command of Captain Knight were quartered here for eight weeks, amounting to a claim by the villagers amounting to £23-16-0.

The Exchequer accounts include payments exacted from the town to pay for horses or quartering, including £9-5-4 paid by the parish to Captain Bowes "in lieu of foure horses for the Earl of Denbigh" and £6 "paid to John Williams, quartermaster to Captain Robert Meredith in lieu of quartering fifty men" on 21st February 1646. Meanwhile the local gentry in adjoining parishes continued to be prevailed upon to make generous donations to maintain the Parliamentary Army. In June 1646 Mr Thomas Willington of Whateley paid £13-5-4 "towards the maintayning of generall Fairfax his army" and a further £17-16-0 "for the British Army in Ireland" while Mr Francis Fetherstone of Shustoke also gave £24-1-6 to the Army in Ireland, in December 1646.

The inhabitants of Austrey drew up a very precise list of claims to the Exchequer to be re-imbursed for horses taken by the parliamentary troops from garrisons under the command of the earl of Denbigh. In June 1644 Captain Ashleyhurst's troops from Derby took away a young horse worth £7 from James Prior. Richard Read had a mare taken from him valued at £5-10-0 by Captain Smythe's men, also under the command of the Earl of Denbigh. In September 1646 it is recorded that soldiers under the command of Captain Watson of Derby did take from Mr George Willington "a gray gelding mare" worth £7. In November, 1646, William Taverner had a bay mare worth £6 taken from him by Captain Swathan [?] of Derby and his men. The taking of horses was a contentious issue that led to direct appeals and petitions to the commander in chief. In 1644 Lord Denbigh received intelligence that Waldyne Wyllington, the governor of Tamworth, had received complaints from poor countrymen that a certain Lieut. Col. Moore had taken horses from them without leaving others in their stead. Although Wyllington had sent out a party of musketeers to bring in Lieut. Col. Moore and subsequently restored these horses to their owners, it appears that this practice along with forced levies, was so widespread that Denbigh himself had tacitly given approval for it and other expedencies, later being charged with "raising money by his own warrant". (*Journal of Commons*, III, pg 700, cited in Sherwood, pg 118).

Further claims were made for "quartering and plundering" by the Scots, who were allied to the Parliamentary cause from September, 1643 through an agreement by the Committee of Both Kingdoms. Those who stopped in Austrey may have been part of the "motley horde" commanded by Lord Leven that joined up with Sir John Gell's Derbyshire forces and moved south into Warwickshire arriving at Alcester on 8th July, 1645. The Scots had a bad reputation for "perfect plundering" and "insolent pillageing" which "makes their bretheren never invite them two nights together" according to *Mercurius Aulicus*, the royalist broadsheet (Sherwood, pp 202-203). They made good progress but felt themselves "ill-used called upon to march, march, marchthe country people looking upon us as enemies". It was fortunate for the Austrey inhabitants that the Scots stayed there only two nights before moving on to Alcester. The county committee allowance of £120 a day to cover 14 days provisioning barely covered their expenses, and the losses. The parish accounts from Austrey record that forty-nine of the inhabitants claimed losses amounting to £163. (Hughes, p. 256) Mr John Prior, the vicar of Austrey claimed £4-10-0 for "grasse, hay, provender, mault and pease" and a further £1-10-0 for "meate and drink & services done with a man and two horses" for two days. He further

charged that they took his mare worth £4. Thomas Page “was diminished by them in mony & ale & for grasse & quartering” worth £2 while Mr George Willington suffered a loss of £5, “for quartering 20 men & 40 horses & goods they did take from him”. Joseph Tallis claimed £2-15 for quartering 12 men & 30 horses & for grasse, hay & provender and a further 10s for services done with 2 men & two horses for 7 days and £5-5-0 for goods taken from his house.

Some of the claims were for small household items or livestock taken away or consumed. Thomas Barwell claimed £2 for quartering 24 men, and as many horses for two days and £1-6-8 for “three lambes a hatt, & shoose and other things”. The widow Anne King, claimed £1-4-0 for quartering fourteen men and their horses for two days with a further claim of £2-10-0 for “eight sheep ... a bible, linnens, & five shillings in mony”. John Nichols wanted £1-16 for quartering 13 men, and for two sheep (which they had probably eaten). Percy Turner claimed £1-6-8 for quartering 16 men and their horses and for “two yards of linnen cloth and 2 lambes”

James Prior claimed £1-10-0 for quartering 17 men & 17 horses for two days and a further 6s for 2 horses 2 days and for horses taken away by them. Thomas Mould wanted 14s for quartering 16 men for 2 days and £1-12-0 for “a hatt, eight shillings in mony & six strikes of mault”. Raphe Browne claimed £2-5-0 for quartering 25 men & 25 horses for 2 days and a further £1-8-0 for “linnens, irons and other things and two sheep”. John Smart was out of pocket 18s for quartering 10 men and 10 horses for 2 days and £4 for grasse eaten by other quartered horses.

Richard Arnold claimed £1-16-0 for quartering 11 men & 11 horses for 2 days, and for three sheep taken from him and for cheese. Robert Crosse claimed £1-4-0 for quartering 14 men and 14 horses two days and £2 for a mare they took from him and £2-8-0 for “grasse of a close eaten, & linnens, woollen & other things”.

Some of the Austrey claimants made outright claims for losses from “plunder”. Richard Clark claimed for 15s worth of goods taken from him by the Scots while John Wright claimed he was “diminished by the Scots by quartering & plundering” £1-14-0. Thomas Farrion was allegedly “diminished by them with quartering & plundering” £12. Richard Wakelyn claimed 6s for quartering 8 men for a day & a night. William Taverner demanded £3-10-0 for quartering 16 men and 28 horses for 2 days and for the grass eaten, and another £1 for the four sheep they had taken. Thomas Robynson lost “13 strikes of mault & a mare & some apparrell taken from him” valued at £4-12-0. Thomas Houlden claimed £1-8-0 for quartering 15 men and their horses and £1-15-6 for “linnens taken from him by them”. This seemingly endless list of claims for quartering, food, clothing, livestock and grazing or “spoiled grass” is part of a pattern repeated throughout the midlands.

The list of claimants includes just about all of the landholders in the parish, suggesting that the soldiers were dispersed according to the capacity of the householders. Some probably camped out

with their horses in the fields. Few of the Austrey households appear to have been left untouched. In addition to those already mentioned, there is a long list claims for the Scots' depredations on the parish for a two day stay in June, 1644. Barnabie Smart claimed £1-11-0 for quartering 15 men and 25 horses and 10s for cheeses other things items taken from him. Richard Mylner wanted £1-4-0 for quartering 15 men for two days, and having a strike of wheat and some other things taken from him. Philipp Smyth claimed 10s 8d for quartering 8 men for two days and 8s to cover a strike and a half of peas, two shillings and some iron taken. Raphael Lagoe wanted £1-4-0 for quartering 19 men for two days and 14s to cover a flaxen shirt, and some other things taken. Richard Crosse claimed £2-12-8 for quartering men and horses for 2 days, and for providing the service of a man and two horses. He also claimed for spoiled grass and for a lost saddle and some other things including a sheep and a mare worth £2-10-0. William Crosse claimed £2-19-0 for quartering an indeterminate number of men and horses for two days, and providing them with ale. They also took 13s, and five sheep and kidnapped one of his servants, amounting to a claim for £1-17-0, and a further £1-4-10 for blankets, sheets and napkins including grass eaten and spoiled by other quartered horses. Thomas Hanson claimed 18s for quartering 14 men for two days and a further £5 for 19 sheep and some linens. Robert Erpe wanted £1-1-4 for quartering 16 men two days, and £1 to cover the loss of 13s, sheep and other things and for grass eaten by other quartered horses. Henry Cooke claimed £1-5-0 for quartering 16 men for two days, and £2-12-8 for "grasse in his little close ... eaten and spoyled" and 38s in money and some clothes. Widow Clarke claimed a modest 12s for quartering 14 men for two days. Edward Hele claimed £1 for quartering 15 men for two days and a further £2-2-0 for 13 sheep and half a mutton, a mare, half a quarter of malt, a woollen hat, a flaxen shirt and other things and five shillings worth £2-7-6. The widow Anne Beck asked for £1-4-0 for quartering 18 men for two days and 9s for a carpet, a velvet cushion, and six sheep.

The list went on, every household making a claim it seems. Robert Taylor claimed £1-5-0 for quartering 14 men and 14 horses for 2 days. Jacob Cooper 12s for quartering 13 men for two days. Thomas Arnold claimed £1 for quartering 16 men for two days. Robert Taverner £1-5-0 for quartering 22 men and horses two days and 18s for "a fustian doublet ... 4 cushions and some other things, and six cheeses & five shillings". Richard Read wanted 12s for quartering 8 men for two days, Christopher Palmer £1-10-0 for quartering 16 men and their horses for two days and £5-4 for four strikes of wheat, four strikes of peas, 4 pounds and 4 shillings in money. He also claimed £2 for "2 paires of sheets, 2 pillows, 2 shirts & other linnens, a hatt, a pannell, a bridle, a brase of bells, 2 paire of stockings, a sack & other things" including "tobaccho" worth 16s and nine sheep worth £1-16-0.

Thomas Stretton claimed £1-16-0 for quartering 23 men their horses for two days, £2-8-0 for 13 sheep and £1-3-0 for "grasse eaten & spoyled in two closes", and for three halters and other implements of husbandry. Richard Tallis claimed 18s for quartering 16 men for two days and John Beck 15s for quartering 14 men their horses. Richard Crispe 12s for quartering 18 men for two days and £1-4-0 for six sheep. Thomas Taylor claimed £2-16-10 for quartering men and horses two days, and provision which they did take away and another 13s 4d for two sheep taken from him, and grass eaten and spoiled by other horses.

Altogether losses from quartering and plunder for Austrey alone, in the three years 1644, 1645 and 1646 amounted to about £383. Elsewhere the Exchequer records an amount of £1,305 collected from the combined parishes of Austrey and Newton, for the 145 weeks from 13th July 1643 to 2nd May 1646. (SP 28/136/33) The list of claims submitted to the county committee in 1647 was witnessed by eight of the principal landholders in the parish, excluding the Kendalls and the Spencers who had been with the Parliamentary garrison at Maxstoke. Where Henry Kendall Sen. was captain of the garrison, with his son Henry Kendall a Lieutenant. William Smart, a joiner's son, Joseph Orton, Henry Spencer and John Crispe, were all listed in the garrison musters from March 1644 to October 1645.



Endnotes and References

P.R.O. *The account of the inhabitants of Austrey co. Warws. to the Commissioners appointed for the taking of accounts for the county March 1646/7*, SP28/186.

Witnesses who signed the claims: Richard Crosse, George Willington, William Crosse, William Taverner, John Smart, Thomas Taylor, Thomas Barwell (his marke), Thomas Varnham (his marke),

Maxstoke musters, SP 28/121A, SP 28/122

Charge expressing particularly... free quarter &c, ref. Coventry Garrison, SP 28/161

R.E. Sherwood, *Civil Strife in the Midlands, 1642-1651* (London, 1974)

John Wroughton, *An Unhappy Civil War....1642-1646*, Bath, 1999.

Mercurius Aulicus, 18 July 1645

Ann Hughes, Politics, *Society and Civil War in Warwickshire, 1620-1660*.