

**THE ENGLISH CIVIL WAR IN THE LOCAL AREA
INCLUDING INFORMATION ON THE PART
PLAYED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY
GARRISON AT COLEORTON**



BY SAMUEL T STEWART - APRIL 2022

PREFACE

The front cover photograph (copyright David Maltby) of a 5cm diameter carved round stone cannon ball, which was found buried in the allotments adjacent to the Griffydam Wesleyan Methodist Cemetery almost certainly dates from the English Civil War period when the site of Coleorton's manor house and St. Mary the Virgin's parish church became one of the key Parliamentary forces regional garrisons'. A similar stone cannon ball has also interestingly been dug up in "The Woolrooms". Stone cannon balls were still commonly being used in the Civil War period, although cheap iron balls had also been introduced. The British Museum website describes a stone of a similar diameter (1.901 inches) as being a late Medieval or post Medieval cannon ball dating between AD 1450-1750. This makes it a correct size for a Falconet cannon. Falconets were invented in the late 15th century and were used throughout the 16th and 17th centuries.

Ashby Castle and town suffered damage from cannon balls fired at it from Coleorton, only two miles distant, but more about that later. It is purely conjecture, but cannon balls could well have been fired from Coleorton at approaching Royalist forces from the north / east, hence them being found in the above locations. Photographs on the front cover of Ashby-de-la-Zouch castle were taken by the author.



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SUGGESTED COMPLIMENTARY READING

For those wishing to find out more about this important event in British history, the author recommends the following publication, copies of which are still held at Ashby Museum, and from which certain information has been included in this publication:-

**LORD LOUGHBOROUGH
ASHBY-DE-LA-ZOUCH
and
THE ENGLISH CIVIL WAR
BY
MARTYN BENNETT
(First published April 1984)**

Numerous other complimentary publications on social and industrial history in the local area are free to download and read on the authors website:-

<https://samuelstewart940.wixsite.com/mysite>

RESEARCH

The following story is based on an eclectic range of research information about the Civil War but information is restricted in general to events which took place in the local areas whilst also focusing on the Parliamentary garrison established at Coleorton.

The author has attempted to narrate it in a format that hopefully makes for relaxed and enjoyable reading.

EVENTS LEADING UP TO A PARLIAMENTARY FORCES GARRISON BEING ESTABLISHED AT COLEORTON IN NOVEMBER 1644. IT WAS DESTROYED BY THE ROYALIST ASHBY GARRISON IN EARLY SPRING 1646

The intention of this publication is not to provide an in depth narration of the Civil War, as there are many excellent publications already in existence which do that. The main focus of it is to relate what is known about Coleorton's important participation through the Parliamentarian's garrison which was established in the area of Sir Sapcote Beaumont's (2nd Viscount of Swords) manor house and St. Mary's parish church. However, it is important to included some limited back ground information on events leading up to this, in order to provide the reader with a basic understanding of what happened.

The Civil War began in August 1642, when King Charles I had deserted his increasingly unfriendly Parliament earlier in the year. Charles established his court in York, in the Spring of 1642. He marched south in August to Nottingham, where his first attempt at recruiting a Royalist army began. In Leicestershire, Henry Hastings, the son of the Earl of Huntingdon had already been extremely successful in raising a substantial Royalist militia force. By all reports, Henry Hastings, who had a close relationship with the King, proved to be a most effective commander of the Royalists army. There was no equivalent to Hastings in either Nottinghamshire or Derbyshire and the Derbyshire County gentry including the Earl of Devonshire, were reluctant to become involved, presumably due to the potential danger of losing their wealth, lands and possibly their lives also.

The Earl of Devonshire, along with the Lord Lieutenant, the Earl of Rutland failed in their efforts to raise the militia for the King, and he remained in Nottingham until the 13th September 1642. On the following day, his hastily mustered militia of Derbyshire came under review, and failed to make an impression on the King with the result that he selected only five hundred men for his service. In Derby, on the 15th September, the King commandeered every firearm available, with the promise of their return once Parliament had been defeated. In addition, he forced through a loan of £500 from the Corporation.

The King and his troops marched from Derby to Shrewsbury via Uttoxeter, to try and raise support from the Welsh which proved to be unsuccessful. Following the indecisive battle of Edgehill in October 1642, the king established a base of operations for his army in Oxford, while in the north-east he had a second force, commanded by the Earl of Newcastle. These armies needed to be organised into one fighting force which was not any easy task, and these counties remained under Parliamentary control which blocked the Royalist efforts. Of all the midland counties, Derbyshire was economically and strategically important to the cause, with the income from taxes raised from farming and duties paid by its highly prosperous lead industry. Lead was a vital war material, used in the manufacture of ammunition etc. By the end of the year 1642, the King's early advantage in Derbyshire and its neighbouring counties had been lost. The Parliamentary forces faced little or no resistance in Derbyshire from the King's troops and basically enjoyed safe passage through the county.

A turn of events now took place, when one man by the name of Sir John Gell of Hopton, a former Deputy Lord Lieutenant with a militia background, was prepared to try and organise a force to fight the Royalists. Whilst the King dallied in Nottingham and Derby, he took an opportunity to travel to Northampton where he received a colonel's commission from the Parliamentary commander there, the Earl of Essex, to recruit a regiment of some 1,200 men to hold back the Royalist forces at Derbyshire.

Sir John Gell had apparently become wealthy from the rents of his estates at Hopton and elsewhere and from extensive interests in the lead industry. Not unlike others in the gentry classes, he was instinctively opposed to the King's absolutist ambitions to impose high church Anglicanism on the church especially as he was a Presbyterian. Gell was successful in controlling the county Royalists, insisting on their adherence to Parliament, and repelling attacks from the northern forces led by the Duke of Newcastle. Of course, Gell's main enemy was Hastings, within an easy march of Derby from Ashby-de-la-Zouch.

Hastings had arrived at Ashby-de-la-Zouch Castle on June 22nd 1644, where he gathered his friends and had about 100 colliers brought from his father's mine in South Derbyshire. From the castle armoury he provided them with muskets and pikes.

Having gone to Hull at the Earl of Essex's suggestion, Gell obtained a Parliamentary regiment of two hundred infantry men from the Governor, Sir John Hotham. Gell marched the regiment to Derby and started to fortifying the town.

A Parliamentary Committee had been set up in Derby by January 1643 which was dominated by Gell and his younger brother Thomas and two sons-in-law. They had all been recently raised to Deputy Lords Lieutenant. Helped by his relatives and ally Sir George Gresley (**later to command the Coleorton Garrison**), plus his appointment as Governor of Derby on January 15th, ensured that the Committee came under his control. Although challenges to his position came along, he in fact remained in control until the King's surrender at Newark in May 1646.

The Derby regiment continued to grow, with further cavalry, dragoons and artillery, and Gell soon found himself part of combined operations outside the county.

THE FOLLOWING SECTION IN BLUE IS RELEVANT TO COLEORTON

At the outbreak of the war, Lord Henry Hastings of Loughborough, was appointed Colonel General of the East Midlands to command the Royalist forces in four midland shires and was supported by two vital strongholds in Leicestershire, one at Ashby-de-la-Zouch, his family seat, and the other at Belvoir Castle. Early in the conflict, the Royalists consolidated their position in the north through garrisoning the strategic towns of Lichfield and Tamworth.

His considerable army in the North Midlands, containing some four thousand troops who were deployed over several garrisons which provided the flexibility to move troops around at short notice as the fighting demanded. These became known as "The Flying Army of Ashby-de-la-Zouch.. Some six hundred men formed the Ashby garrison who caused significant problems for the Parliamentarians. Ashby castle was described as being extremely well fortified in a Parliamentary newsletter, *The Perfect Diurnal, of 16th Nov.1644.....with vaults under the ground, through which they can go from one fort to another at their pleasure; provisions they have good store; hung-*

beef plenty round about their kitchen within, and have lately been killing and salting of more.....

Although both sides had garrisoned strategic towns and strongholds, both the King and the Parliamentarians struggled to secure control of the south and north west areas of the Midlands. Their enthusiastic supporters - commanders like the Earl of Stamford (Parliamentarian) and the formidable Henry Hastings (Royalist) of Ashby-de-la-Zouch raised troops at their own expense to assist their cause, on the fear of risking life, lands or property.

As the conflict developed, battle lines shifted and Tamworth castle was captured by the Parliamentarians under the command of Col. William Purefoy in June 1643.

By October 1644, Gell had turned his attention to Tutbury Castle by setting up a garrison at Barton Hall, about three miles distant. The garrison was established by Captains Greenwood and Barton of Sander's cavalry. From there they attacked Tutbury with the outcome on Nov 16th 1644 that Gell was able to report to Essex that the Royalist defenders had surrendered and laid down their arms, refusing to fight for the cause any further.

In November, Gell sent Sanders himself to help in setting up a similar operation at Coleorton, near Ashby in order to nullify the effectiveness of the Ashby garrison.

In addition to the one at Coleorton, two further garrisons were established at Bagworth and Kirby Bellars. The location of the Coleorton garrison was a clever strategic move as it was within cannon firing range of Ashby some two miles distant and attacks on the Royalist stronghold of Ashby Castle and the town continued for over two years from there.

It seems reasonable to assume that the Parliamentary forces chose this strategic site at Coleorton for three reasons:-

- It sat on a high ridge overlooking the surrounding countryside.
- It was only 2 miles distance from Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Castle, the Royalist stronghold, which could be reached by cannon fire.
- The lead on the church roof would be extremely useful for making musket shot etc.
- The hall re-built in 1607 from a modest manor house provided them with some degree of shelter together with the additional surrounding farm buildings adjacent to the church.

From their lofty location, the Parliamentary forces were able to launch cannon balls towards the siege of the Royalist stronghold at Ashby Castle two miles away. Griffydham was about the same distance and the Woolrooms, in line with it, about half that distance. Presumably the canon balls found at Griffydham and in the Woolrooms were being fired at advancing Royalist forces, although that is open to conjecture of course and there is no way of proving it.

They had a collective strength in excess of four hundred and twenty horse and six hundred troops on foot. Their stated purpose according to a Narration of the Siege of Leicester reprinted by John Nichols the Leicestershire Antiquarian, stated that this was to contain the Royalists and 'recover the lost hundred' of Framland, providing support for Sir Jarvis Lucas's garrison at Belvoir.

Sanders arrived at Coleorton with five troops of his cavalry to be bolstered with troops from Leicestershire, the arrangement specifying Derby dragoons as well as cavalry. Sanders was soon complaining that they had not been sent - *"It is some foote we desire, with whose helpe we can save our quarters and doe our owne business in this part of Derbyshire"*.

Sanders further complained about the conditions and threatened to leave - *"we this night lie horse and men in the fields ... pinched with cold"*. The infantry failed to arrive, though letters from Gell did come, provoking more complaints - *"We expected mouskets, and not papers yesternight"*.

Gell must have accused Sanders of cowardice for proposing to leave Coleorton, as Sanders's reply protested that his soldiers were brave men - *"our horse have not been slow to ayd others upon the least alarum"*. A Leicestershire force of horse and foot was on its way to join them *"and that you will engage none of your foote after such importuning is strange"*. In spite of all the continuing acrimony, the Coleorton garrison succeeded in its objects of impeding the royalist lines of communication and keeping the Parliamentary ones open.

Quarrels in the Parliamentary Committee became more venomous late in 1644, when the post of "Recorder at Derby" became vacant in November and Gell proposed his brother Thomas. Thomas Gell was a barrister and must have seemed the obvious man for the job. Sanders, however, did not agree, and his characterisation of Thomas Gell in a letter written from the garrison at Coleorton threw grave doubt on Sander's objectivity.

Thomas Gell, "sweet Tom Gell", according to the Countess of Rutland, for whom he had worked, and a faithful ally of his brother in all his causes, including the Parliamentary one, was, as far as Sanders was concerned *"unfit for the place... in respect of his mean estate, want of learning, law and honesty, his conversation being so scandalous, for unclean swearing and hating all honest men; that he favoured malignants and enemies in arms and was not to be trusted or confided in"*.

Gell, predictably, was furious and gave Sanders a verbal beating at a meeting in Derby Town Hall. Sanders, apparently unrepentant, wrote to Gell from Coleorton - *"I wonder at your slanderous words spoke of me in the open hall at Derby. I desire our actions may be compared and weighed, then it will appear whether I be a brownist, a coward, a knave or noe. What I am and what I have done moste in these partes know: but to call me a knave, malice and envy itself (and I perseave there is enoffe in you towards me of both). I am confident my integrity will defend me. I confess ... I think the Lieutenant Colonel unfit to be Recorder and I will hinder it all I can. For two brothers and two sons-in-law solely to rule a county, all honest men resent. I seek not the place of governor or colonel. Rather than hinder the public, I will sit down from arms and seek to do the kingdom service in another way and I be not called (for I will not by unlawful meanes seek it) I will returne to a private life and soe end my dayes ... I desire that personal dislikes and grudges may not hurt the public."*

Sanders's reference to the Gell family control of the Committee indicates personal jealousy and his last sentence is an unlikely declaration of self denial from an ambitious man. To admit to being a "Brownist" or Independent would at that stage to have been admitting to political extremism and Gell had clearly drawn blood with his gibe"

As the war progressed, we would have seen a detrimental impact both on the inhabitants of Coleorton and on the 'civilian' population of northwest Leicestershire in general. The men who lived and worked in the areas would have been most affected as many would have been recruited to fight for the opposing sides, with little option given no doubt. The damage caused to farms for example which would have been severely plundered can only be imagined.

Royalist Ashby was in dire circumstances, with the enemy permanently sited two miles away at Coleorton. It is recorded that the Coleorton garrison fired on the castle from their site on the hill. It is certain that they attacked the town on many occasions. Troops were billeted in the town and many raids were made by the Parliamentarians with a view to capturing some of these. Constant attacks were made upon the outworks or fortifications built in the town.

Life for the garrison between attacks would be pretty eventful. Constant raids to secure food and other provisions would be necessary now that the regular system of collecting taxes would have been curtailed.

Plague hit Ashby in late June 1645. From Parliamentary accounts, we are told that the garrison were forced out of the castle buildings and into the park. As for the death toll we cannot say. The parish register for St. Helens church is blank from the end of June 1645 up to May 1646. Whether this indicates that there were too many deaths we can only speculate. The garrison it seems, was reduced to only sixty men. At the end of October, six hundred reinforcements arrived and in the following months offensive raids were carried out. On January 16th, 1646 the garrison sallied out and captured a mortar being carried to the siege of Newark, for once again that town was in difficulties. Five days later three hundred men were despatched to help at the siege of Chester.

It appears that for all Parliaments boasting, the force at Coleorton was not a very efficient one. An attack by units from Leicester broke into Ashby at the turnpike (Leicester Road?) in late January and surprised the sentinels but revenge was forthcoming: the Ashby garrison attacked and destroyed the Coleorton garrisons quarters. The garrison at Coleorton, having been established in November 1644 by the Parliamentarians met its demise in the early spring of 1646.

Ashby Castle fell on February 28th 1646. A synopsis of the history of the castle leading to its final demise can be found on page 13.

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WILLIAM PESTELL (RECTOR OF COLEORTON) AND HIS FAMILY DRIVEN OUT OF THEIR HOUSE BY THE PARLIAMENTARIANS WHEN THEY ESTABLISHED THE GARRISON

Thomas Pestell the elder and his wife Katherine's second son William graduated with a B.A. in 1634 and an M.A. in 1638 from Queens' College, Cambridge. He was appointed rector of Cole-Orton, in 1640 by Sir Sapcote Beaumont (2nd Viscount of Swords). It is thought he and his family would have been living in the old Rectory in the grounds.

William Pestell, his wife and family were driven out of their home in November 1644 by the parliamentary soldiers during the Civil War under Sir John Gell when they captured Coleorton and established their garrison there. Contrary to the custom of the time, they were apparently cruelly used.

At the turn of the seventeenth century, a servant in the house of William Pestell at Coleorton by the name of Ann Harris, who had been in this employ during the 1640's claimed to remember the abuse and mistreatment her employer received during the civil war at the hands of the Parliamentary soldiers. She actually recalled and cited in a letter sent by William Hunt to another Clergyman named John Walker in Exeter. William Hunt was appointed Coleorton parish rector by Sir Thomas Beaumont (3rd Viscount of Swords) in 1700. He followed John Harrison who had succeeded William Pestell on his death in 1696. Hunt and Walker well knew, that during the war, all too many Anglican clergy had experienced mistreatment. Ann Harris recalled that the Parliamentary soldiers had forced William Pestell and his wife, who was heavily pregnant at the time, out of their home with the children to ride bareback on a horse to Tamworth some sixteen miles away. She and the children were recorded as being supported by charity. Walker recorded that William Pestell of Coleorton was taken to Tamworth and beaten 'black as a shoe'. This was recording in Walker's *Suffereings of the Clergy*. After the accession of Queene Anne, John Walker had made it his sole ambition in life, to collect memories of people such as Ann Harris which was to be part of a major work on Anglican clergymen whose homes, income and possessions had been sequestered. The correspondence which made up the greater part of Walker's correspondence are held at the Bodleian Library and is one of the major research sources available from ordinary people such as Ann Harris and older peoples memories of the Civil War. A few poignant examples were apparently written by witnesses themselves. Walker relied heavily on reports from the parish clergy in his writings.

William's aged father Thomas Pestell the older lodged a formal complaint with Sir George Gresley, the Commander of the Garrison. Whether the Rector of Cole Orton received either apology or compensation is doubtful, but on the Restoration, he was again inducted by Sir Thomas Beaumont (3rd Viscount of Swords) into the living c.1662. He was also instituted into the Rectory of Ravenstone in 1667, apparently in plurality with Coleorton.

Robert Shirley of Staunton Harold, a devout Royalist, sheltered future dignitaries of the Restoration Church such as Sheldon, Henry Hammond, Peter Gunning and Dr. Robert Mapletoft, later Dean and Bishop of Ely respectively, as well as William Pestell (the rector of Coleorton), who had been sequestered / ejected in 1654. He also was a devoted Royalist, as would have been all the residents of Cole Orton in the days of the Civil War, from the Lord of the Manor downwards. Pestell officiated at Staunton Harold Church of the Holy Trinity and was paid £20 for doing so.

**PERTINENT NOTES EXTRACTED FROM THE BOOK BY
REV. A EVELEIGH EAGAR ENTITLED "COLEORTON AND THE
BEAUMONTS" PUBLISHED IN 1949. HE WAS RECTOR OF
COLEORTON AT THE TIME OF WRITING**

The following pertinent notes have been extracted from the book by the Rev. Algor Eveleigh Eagar entitled "Coleorton and the Beaumonts" published in 1949. He was Rector of Coleorton at the time :-

In the days of the Civil War, Cole Orton had a temporary importance. Rather over 2 miles from the Hall (manor house) lay the castle of Ashby-de-la-Zouch, which was a Royalist stronghold, and was under attack by Cromwellian forces, whose headquarters were at the Hall (manor house). The castle and the hall (manor house) was reduced to ruins, and Cole Orton church was extensively damaged. The "Roundheads" not only destroyed much of beauty and artistic value in the church, but also stripped the lead from the roof to make ammunition. It is also on record that the Lady Beaumont of those days was so impoverished as a result of the depredations of the Commonwealth soldiers that, after the restoration, Charles II gave a grant of 20 shillings a week for her maintenance.

In the Coleorton parish census carried out in 1603, James Stayce, the Rector at that time reported 160 communicants and that there was "no recusant and no coicant", i.e. there were no Papists who refused to attend the services of the Parish Church. He further stated that there was no parishioner above the age of 16 who was no a communicant, O tempora, O mores! Another censaus held in the same century, in 1676, was ordered by Henry Compton, Bishop of Lincoln (Leicestershire then formed a part of the Diocese of Lincoln). This showed that there were no "Popish recusants" and no "schismatical recusants". Conformists to the Church of England numbered 146 mewn and 145 women over the age of 16. The balance of men and women at the date of this census seems to have approached the ideal here. The report was made by William Pestell, Rector, Will Farnham and Gawen Walker, churchwardens. The population then in 1676 may then be reckoned as around the 400-500 mark. By 1948 the population of a much extended parish had only grown to between 1,000 and 1,100.

Mention has already been made of the importance of Ashby-de-la-Zouch castle as a Royalist stronghold in the Civil War, and of Cole Orton as a stronghold of the besiegers. Charles I was a guest at Ashby Castle shortly before the capture of Leicester by his forces, and his subsequent defeat at Naseby. The King was pursued by Cromwell's cavalry to the walls of Leicester. Thence, Charles fled to Ashby, where he was again entertained for one night, before leaving on the following morning for Lichfield on his way to Wales.

The parliamentary forces besieged Ashby for two and a half years. They used cannon from the fort at Cole Orton to drop cannon balls into Ashby, a full two miles away - a great range for those days. Frequent skirmishes occurred, these generally ending in favour of the Roundheads. For example, it is recorded that on the 26th of February 1645, the Royalists made an attempt to surprise and plunder the "town" of Cole Orton, but failed, loosing 70 or 80 of their horses.

An old resident of the parish told me that, just off Corkscrew Lane, which is one way of travelling from Cole Orton to Ashby, there is a copse which, as a child, she was frightened to enter for fear of ghosts of Commonwealth men who fell in the attacks on Ashby and who are believed to have been buried in this copse.

The Castle fell in February 1646, the garrison marching out with the honours of war. It was subsequently destroyed, its ruins standing today open to the inspection of the historically-minded and the curious. The ruins possess the dignity of a fallen "grand seigneur" of a past age. The rival stronghold, too, has vanished, but there stands on its site the more modern Hall.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

COLEORTON MANOR HOUSE AND HALL

The will of **Richard Beaumont**, who died in 1538, lists the inventory of particular rooms in his manor house. The rooms included are:-

Two bedrooms – the Red Chamber and the Green Chamber, one of which was over the hall. The parlour and the kitchen are also referred to. This would suggest a modest manor house, which had at least five main rooms, which at the time of the will were either empty or were occupied by other members of the family. Manor houses of the Tudor period vary significantly from very large and elaborate properties, to much more modest properties depending on the wealth held by the lord of the manor. The main sources of wealth in the Coleorton area were coal and agriculture, and there is evidence that during the 16th century, significant development and progress was taking place in local coal mining. The Beaumonts' who were lords of the manor at this time, would have benefited, either directly or indirectly from these developments, although it appears that Richard Beaumont had not devoted his attention to developing coal mining on his land. It was Richard's son Nicholas who really started to develop the potential of the Coleorton coal fields. Nicholas Beaumont's son and heir, Sir Henry Beaumont was lord of the manor from 1585 to 1607 and in an inquisition of his estate, on his death in 1607, the manor house described is significantly grander than the house described in 1573, suggesting either a re-build, or significant additions had taken place between these two dates. The 1607 hall is described as being of stud and plaster, and rough cast brick construction. The house included a "best dining chamber, rooms under the hall, bed chambers and dressing rooms, cellars and sollers (lofts?)", with probably other rooms on an upper floor. Outside there was an inner courtyard with a communal well, with houses on the east and west sides enclosed "towards the street with a stone wall". Old farm buildings ran down towards the highway, next to the manse was a two story stable, and next to that a barn with its own yard. Also associated with the main building were the Brew House, Dairy House, Chambers, and Malt House. New building work had been going on, since reference is made to "the new building of freestone". Adjacent to the manor buildings were the closes, or enclosed fields, called Netherfield, Cawbeck and the Carre, each with coalmines in them. Coalmines also existed in Gelsmoor and the Outwoods.

The hall was apparently completely re-built following the reformation in 1660 and the following painting by Sir George Howland Beaumont, 7th Baronet of Stoughton shows how it would have been in 1804 when he came from Dunmow in Essex to make Coleorton Hall his home. He re-built it to George Dance's design although substantial further additions were made to it in later years. Publications relating to this are free to download and read on the author's website.

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ST. MARY'S PARISH CHURCH

An engraving of St. Mary's Church viewed from the south east by S.Shaw Feb 1794. This is the earliest representation found of the church following the reformation

A BASIC HISTORY OF ASHBY CASTLE

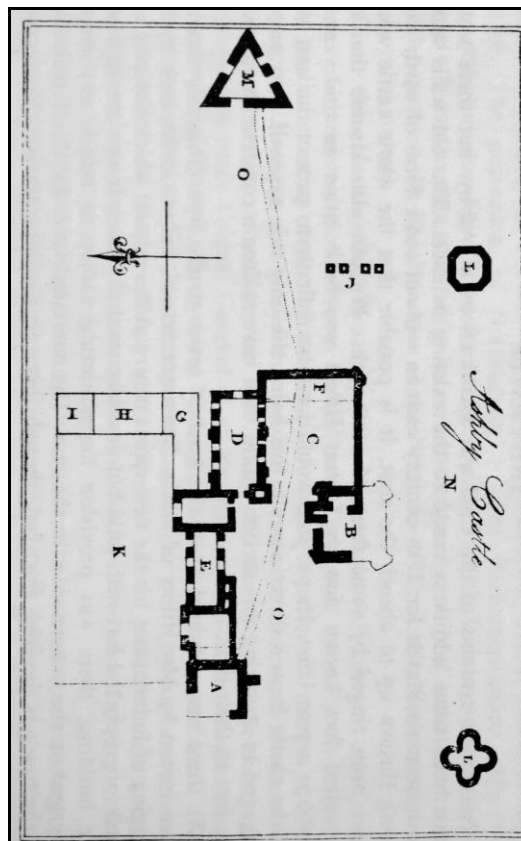
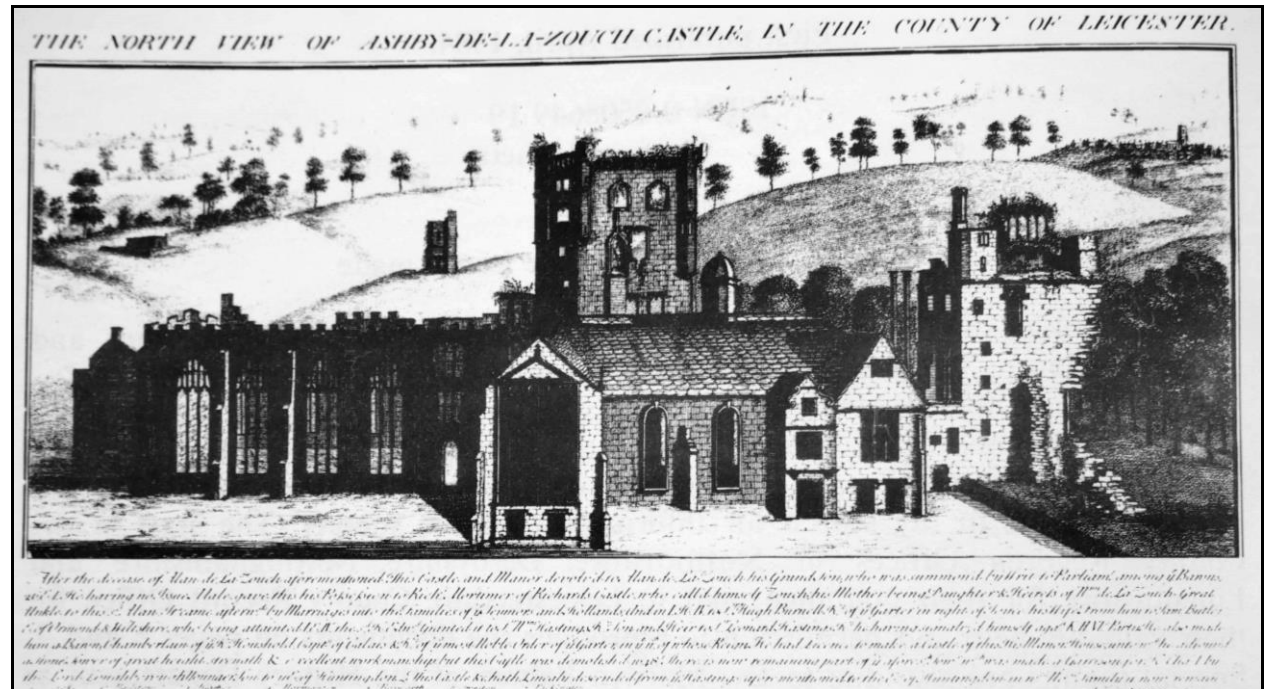
Originally there would probably have been a norman manor house on the site, most likely made of wood, but it was never a Motte and Bailey type. The style of the castle changed because the barons wanted to use stone and the soil mounds would not have been supportive enough for the stone walls, and so a walled area including firstly a wooden tower was devised, followed by a stone one. Very often walls would have been encircled by a moat, but no evidence suggesting a moat at Ashby castle has been found.

In 1464 Edward VI gave the manor to his Lord chamberlain, Lord Hastings, in recognition of his many eminent services and in 1471, as a result of fighting at Barnett and Tewkesbury to secure the Monarch's crown, he was given permission to convert the manor house at Ashby into a fortress. Until this time the building at Ashby would have consisted mainly of the hall and solar, there being no defensive buildings present. The most important development was the constructing of the Hasting's Tower at Ashby Castle. Outwardly it was in the form of a keep, but it was also built for comfort. A chapel to rival any in the country was also added, which was a little unusual as Ashby had its own at St. Helens church. The building at Ashby could now truly be called a castle, with stables and quarters for soldiers. In the courtyard to the south of the chapel, many of the walls have been demolished, but the priest's room can still be seen in outline to the east, but the whole west wall has gone. Lord Hastings remained loyal to Edward VII and his heirs, but was executed by Richard, Duke of Gloucester, as he was probably seen as a potential threat to the latter's succession to the throne as Richard III.

Most of the damage the castle subsequently suffered was caused during the Civil War, when Ashby was a Royalist stronghold as described earlier. The strength and fortifications of the garrison was increased and apparently Irish labour was brought in to do the work.. they of course were devout Catholics and Ashby being protestant, led to unpleasantness in the town. The Mount house to the east of the castle which was part of the outer garrison was built by the Irish.

By 1644, following the Battle of Naseby the Parliamentarians were in the ascendancy. The castle although too strong to be taken, fell victim to the plague and a shortage of food. On February 28th 1646, it was forced to surrender, and although "sighted", none of the main buildings were damaged. However, in 1648, the castle was granted to Lord Grey of Groby to be used as a prison, to house the Duke of Hamilton, a captive after the Scots' defeat in the 2nd Civil War. However, by November Parliament decided that it was advisable to destroy many of the chief castles in England to prevent them becoming centres of revolt. Members of the Leicester Committee were ordered to see to the destruction of Ashby Castle. One of the committee, William Bainbridge or Bainbrigg of Lockington was assigned to the task. During his stay in Ashby, he is reputed to have resided at "The Bull's Head". His task was to render the building both indefensible and untenable by exposing the interior to the elements. This was normally achieved by mining under one wall of the keep and firing the hole with gunpowder. What is left today, which can be seen in photographs on the front cover is with regard to the Hastings tower especially, and is very much as Bainbrigg would have left it. He did the job well, pulling out the kitchen walls and roof and also those of the Hasting's Tower The stone from the missing portions has been used in other buildings in the area, the manor house being a good example of this.

The castle played a very important role in the Civil War. The fact that it presented such a threat to the Parliamentarians is evidenced by the condition in which it now stands.



REFERENCES

TO THE

Ground Plan of the Castle.

- A. Kitchen Tower.
- B. Great Tower.
- C. Court.
- D. Chapel.
- E. Great Hall.
- F. Offices.
- G. Gaol.
- H. House of Industry.
- I. House, formerly occupied by Selina, Countess of Huntingdon.
- J. Gateway.
- K. Green.
- L. Irregularly formed Towers.
- M. Mount House.
- N. Garden.
- O. Subterraneous Passage.



**THE DAMAGED MOAT HOUSE (PART OF THE OUTER GARRISON)
WITH THE CASTLE IN THE BACKGROUND**

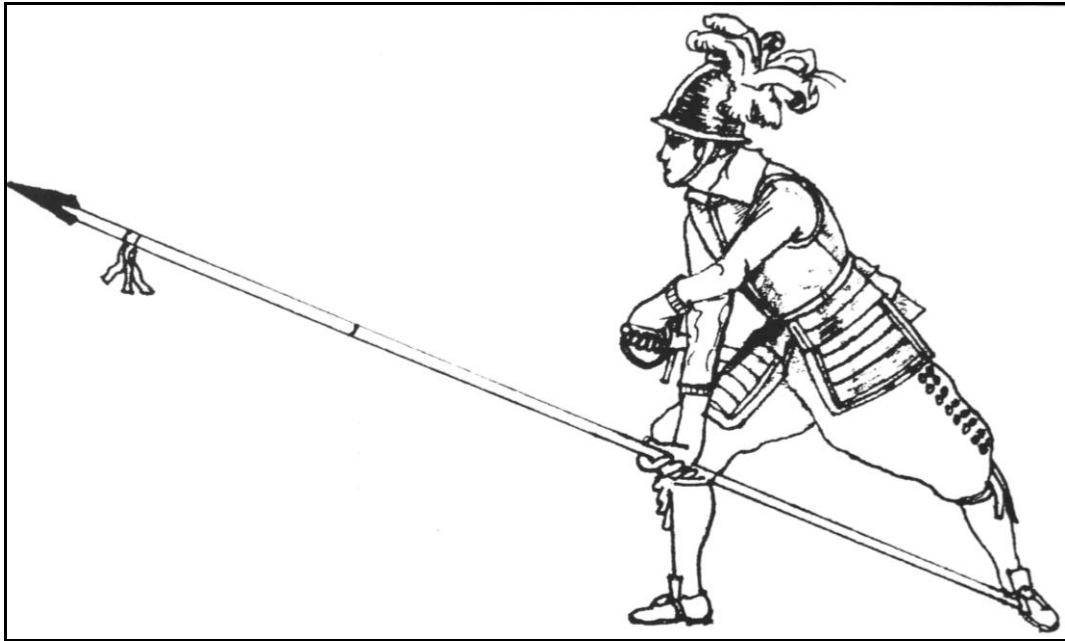
ILLUSTRATIONS OF SOLDIERS AND ARMAMENTS



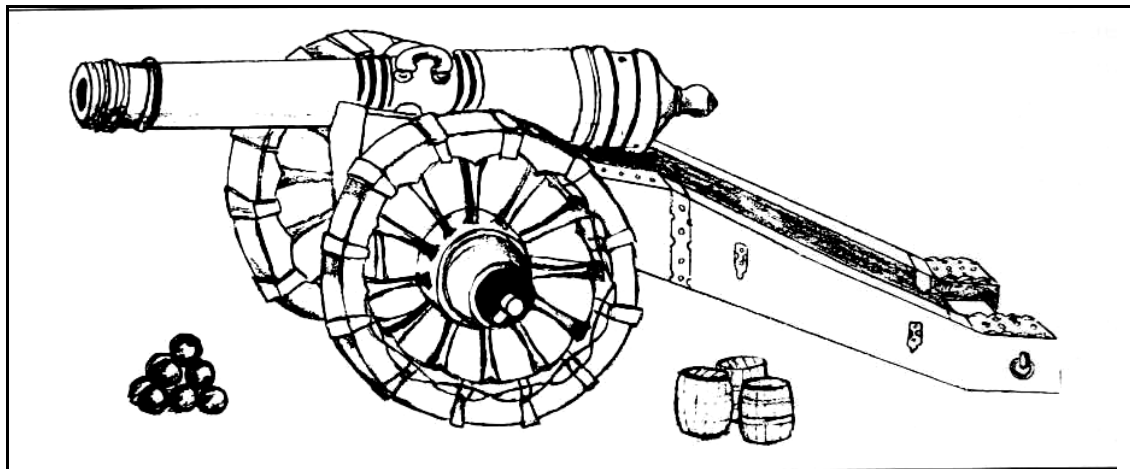
THE BATTLE OF EDGEHILL



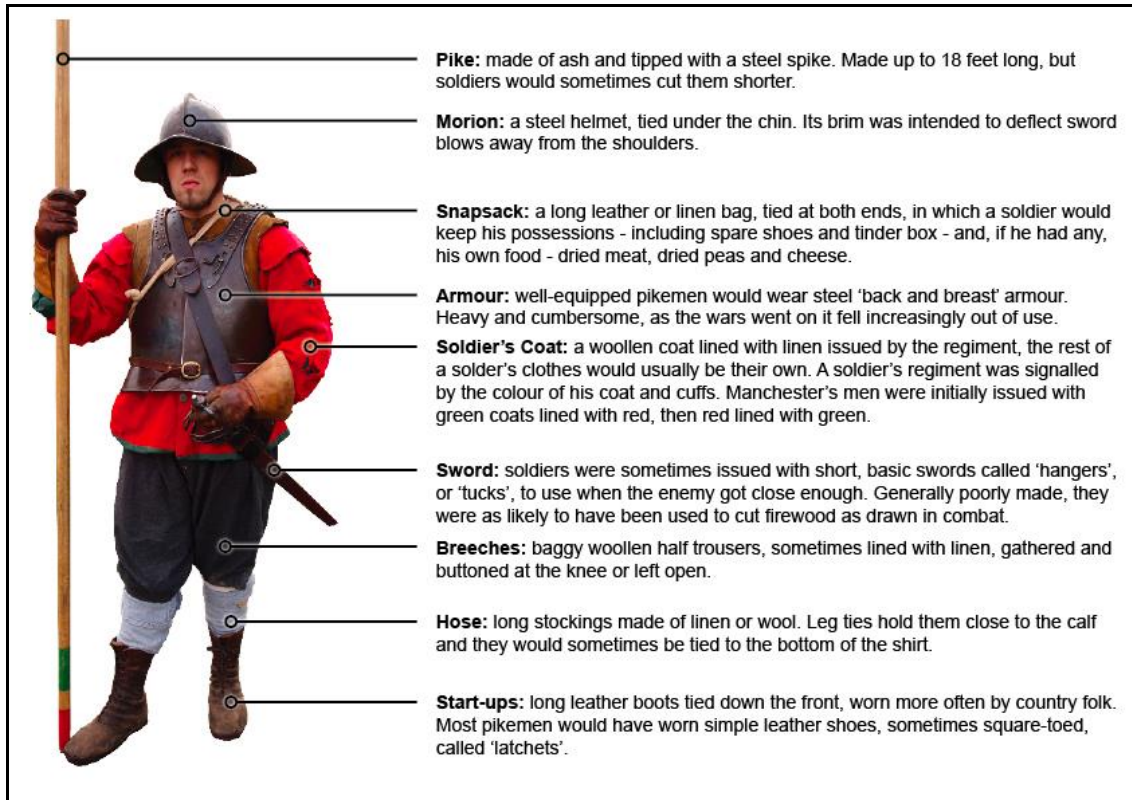
A MUSKATEER



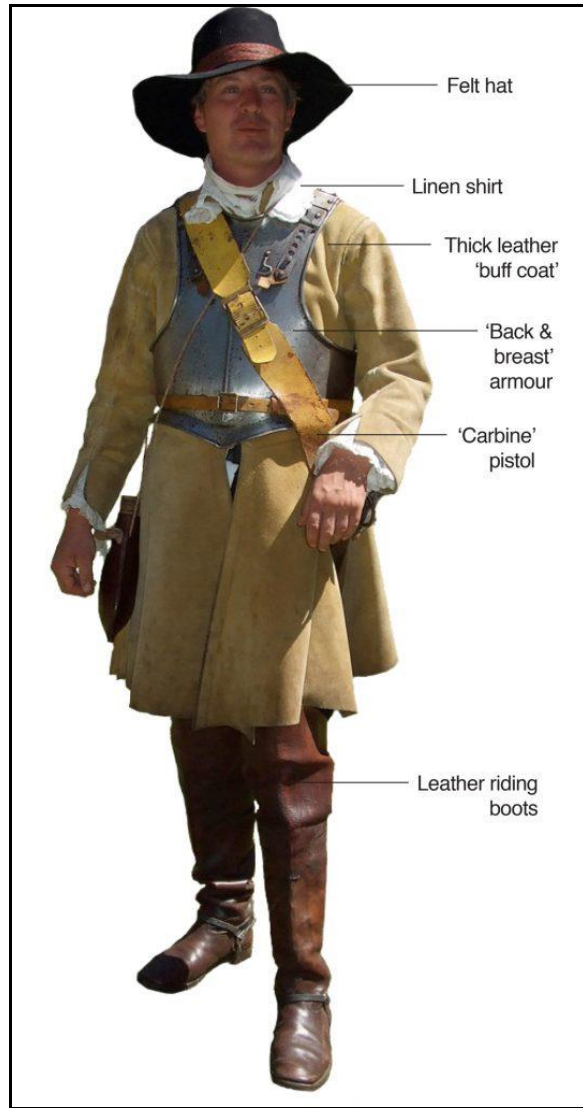
**PIKEMAN OF THE SORT THAT WOULD MAKE UP
A LARGE PROPORTION OF A GARRISON**



A CIVIL WAR FIELD CANNON



A ROYALIST CAVALRY TROOPER



A CAVALRYMAN