

produced since. Where possible original spellings have therefore been retained. Dictionaries actually appeared in the first decades of the seventeenth century, but few people possessed them, and in any case their initial purpose was definition rather than pedantic spelling. It is likely that the obsession with the standardisation of spelling began only after the introduction of the dictionary, and since pronunciation still varied, may indeed originally have been intended by lexicographers essentially as an aid to getting their words in the right order.

In the case of people or places mentioned outside direct quotations these have been given consistency in the interests of intelligibility. So it is that the various Asshetons, and other spellings, have been rendered as plain 'Ashton' while 'Seaton' is preferred to 'Seton'. Likewise places such as 'West-Chester', 'Leverpoole', and 'Armeschurch' have taken their modern forms of 'Chester', 'Liverpool', and 'Ormskirk' outside direct quotations.

Younger readers will have no direct experience themselves of using pre-decimal Sterling currency. Before the early 1970s the pound sterling (£, L, from Latin *librae*) was divided into twenty shillings (*s.*, from Latin *solidi*, not actually an abbreviation for shilling), which in turn were divided into twelve pennies (*d.*, from the Latin *denarii*). From the thirteenth century until 1960 pennies could be quartered into farthings (from the Anglo Saxon *feorthing*, a fourth part). In the seventeenth century a frequently used monetary unit was the mark. There was never a coin of this value, but it was often used in accountancy and law. In this period it equalled 160 pennies, or two thirds of a pound, i.e. 13*s.* 4*d.* One half or one quarter of a mark (6*s.* 8*d.* or 3*s.* 4*d.*) are common sums in seventeenth-century documents, often as court fines. The guinea, which older readers will remember as a common term before decimalisation, was actually a coin first minted just after our period, in 1663.

Introduction

LORD DERBY, Lancashire's highest-ranked nobleman and its principal royalist, once offered the opinion that the English civil wars had been 'a general plague of madness'. Complex and bedevilling, the earl defied anyone to tell the complete story of 'so foolish, so wicked, so lasting a war'. Yet attempting to chronicle and to explain the events is fascinating and hugely important. Both nationally and at the county level, the impact and significance of the wars can hardly be over-stated: the conflict involved our ancestors fighting one another, on and off, for a period of nine years; almost every part of Lancashire witnessed warfare of some kind at one time or another, and several towns in particular saw bloody sieges as well as at least one episode characterised as a massacre; nationally the wars resulted in the execution of the king; in Bolton in 1651 the seventh Earl of Derby himself was executed for high treason. In the early months of the civil wars many could barely distinguish what it was that divided people in 'this war without an enemy', as the parliamentarian Sir William Waller famously wrote; yet by the end of it parliament had abolished monarchy itself and entered upon what turned out to be a relatively short-lived experiment in republicanism. Over the ensuing centuries this period has been described variously as a rebellion, as a series of civil wars, even as a revolution.

Lancashire's role in these momentous events was quite distinctive, and relative to the size of its population particularly crucial. Some of this was because of geography: the proximity to Ireland was critical, while the position in respect to Wales and Scotland was not without importance. Significant, too, were the presence of a mainly royalist Yorkshire across the Pennines and the role of Cheshire so close across the Mersey. Lancashire was thus at the centre of the wars, even if it was located several days' journey from London: it lay in the middle of the 'British archipelago'. Equally significant was the social composition of the county: the long-established position of the Derby

family, and the growing but essentially localised impact of textile production and organised commerce in the south-east of the county. Lancashire also has a serious claim to be considered as the place where the real war – the shooting war, rather than the war of words – actually began: the first attested death due to military action took place on the streets of Manchester.

Yet what was even more singular was the role of religion. God bulked large and terrible in the seventeenth-century mind. God spoke personally to the Puritan, and in different ways was equally dominant in the lives of Catholics. Apart from the foreboding walls of Lancaster castle, churches were often the most significant buildings a Lancastrian ever saw, and it was denomination which marked a man as ‘one of us’, or ‘one of them’. In Lancashire this division was starker than in any other place in England. The established church held a statistical majority, but there was a higher proportion of Catholics here than in any county, and a smaller, but vigorous, low church faction. We now refer to these reformers as Puritans, and tend to have a somewhat simplistic view of what might be regarded as their fundamentalist belief: but usually they saw themselves simply as more ‘exact’ Christians, who listened more closely to the biblical word than most. Some were indeed the fanatical killjoys of popular belief, or eccentrics; some did regard themselves as specifically ‘chosen’ by God; but many others were cultured and surprisingly ordinary men. Most regarded the reformation of the church as incomplete, and took issue with the Arminian innovations in the Church of England, which in the 1630s were being championed by Archbishop Laud.

Estate – or class to use a modern but not interchangeable term – was important, but in Lancashire, as virtually everywhere, the war was not a simple case of gentleman against commoner. Establishment figures were to be found on both sides. In no way was this war for democracy – the term would have meant nothing to most Lancastrians of the time. Parliament represented specific interests as much, or even more, than the king’s supporters. It was, however, often portrayed as a war fought to uphold ancient liberties, or against ‘oppression’ by the royal party. Both sides strove to represent themselves as the party of continuity, of public safety, peace, and not least importantly, as the upholders of true religion. The nobility may have been natural royalists, but the remainder split for many other reasons, not least significant of which was their God. That ‘fundamental’ opinions helped to whip up hatred of an enemy should come as no surprise, although as the great historian Conrad Russell put it, ‘to say that the parties were divided by religion is not the same thing as to say that religion caused the Civil War’.



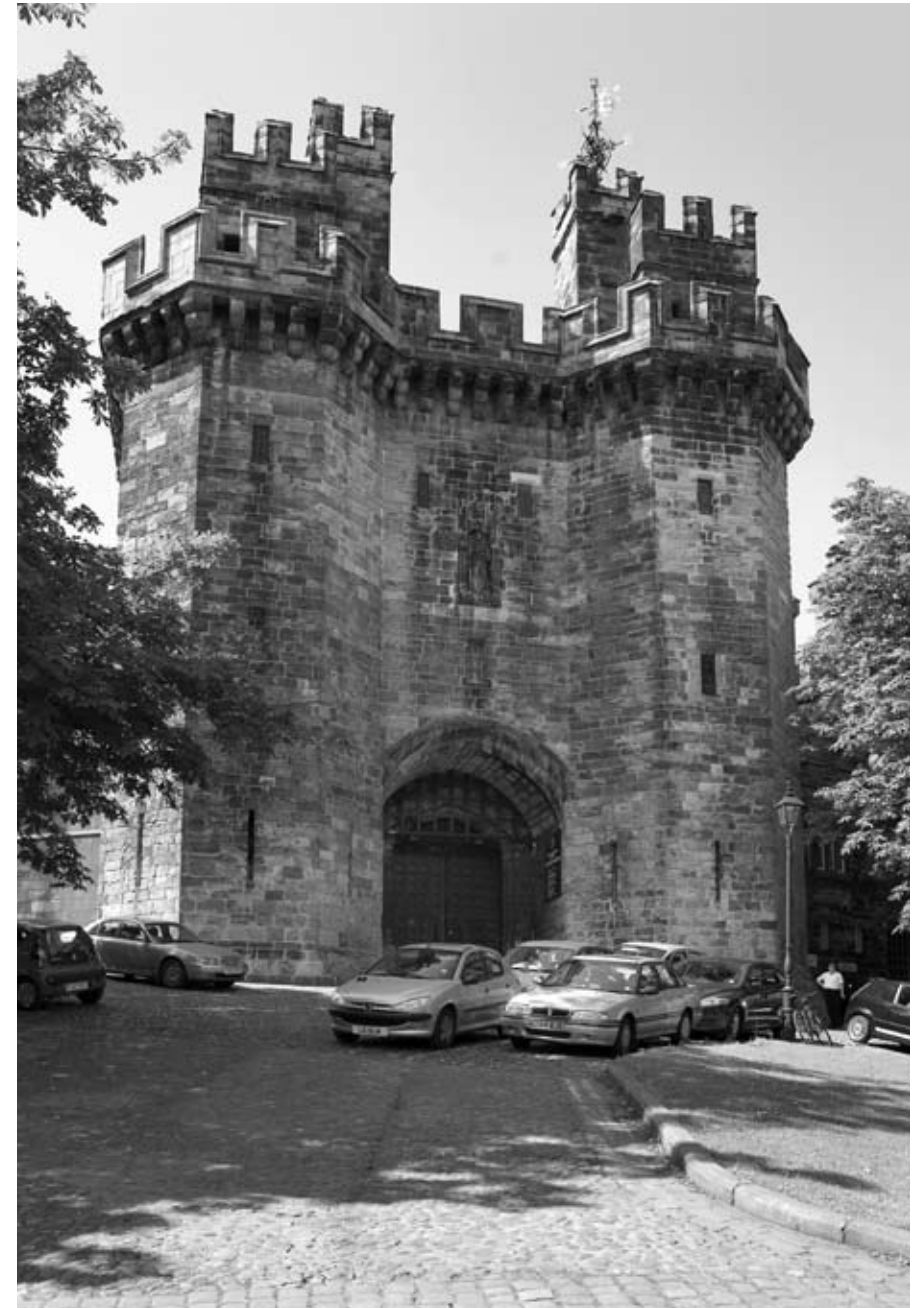
The seventh Earl of Derby, prominent royalist nobleman in the Lancashire civil wars.

At first, most Lancastrians were reticent about the notion of fighting one another. In the minds of Lancastrians it appears that the war was 'caused' somewhere else – London, Rome or Ireland – depending on point of view. Arguments can be made, moreover, that key characters, such as Lord Derby, or Richard Holland, did not really want to go to war at all. Some of the parliamentary leaders were good friends of future royalists before war came, and the majority of Lancashire leaders, on both sides, were pillars of their communities in the years leading up to war.

Yet it would be a serious mistake to assume that what held true in the summer and early autumn of 1642 was still taken for granted just six months later. The depth of division and the sheer destructiveness of the war are difficult to exaggerate. By 1644 the war was all-encompassing. Campaigning was no longer seasonal, and local government, in so far as it existed, was now designed essentially to provide troops and pay. As the war progressed moderates became less moderate, and with the passage of years radicals, and radical solutions, came to the fore. Many unusual concepts, inconceivable in 1642, were embraced more or less willingly in 1649.

In this sense at least 'neutralism', though it existed in a form, died an early death. Men may have joined the fight reluctantly, given up their goods, money and horses grudgingly, but once battle was joined all were consumed to a greater or lesser extent in its fire. And, with anything up to 10,000 Lancastrians under arms at any given moment, and with a demographic structure biased towards the young, it can rightly be claimed that the proportion of adult male combatants to the population as a whole rivalled that of either of the world wars of the twentieth century. Conscription in a form we might recognise was acknowledged in 1643. There were specialists, professionals, arguably some 'mercenaries' – but most of the soldiers in the ranks were 'ordinary' men. Many were 'civilians in uniform': others were merely civilians, armed with clubs – 'clubmen' – or with hunting weapons, pikes and bills.

To a very small population, many of whom used little cash at all, the cost of the war would be almost incomprehensible. The parliamentarians kept better records than their opponents, and we know that the parliamentary county committee alone would swallow up to £3,000 in cash every month: what the royalists used, and how much was plundered, requisitioned, or destroyed – and how much lost, because men fought rather than farmed – can only be guessed at. Money eventually gave out, sometimes food was exhausted, and promissory notes, particularly those given out by the losers, proved to be worthless. Some fortunes were made through the purchase of enemy estates



The gatehouse of Lancaster Castle. Lancaster Castle sits on top of a prominent hill overlooking the city and the river Lune. It is by far the most imposing fortified building still surviving in Lancashire.

PHOTOGRAPH: CARNEGIE, 2009

at knock-down prices, but those who actually gained from the war financially were very few and far between.

A good case can be made for stating that the English civil wars were the most destructive, and most costly, conflict in terms of both lives and goods, that Lancashire has ever experienced. On the other hand, the determination of the contestants, and the fury of the battle, sieges, fires, plagues and famines does not appear to have been matched by a concomitant level of atrocities and lasting bitterness. Sixty years after the civil wars 'papist' was still an insult, but 'cavalier' and 'roundhead' were acquiring more comfortable historical resonances.

The only serious history of the civil wars in Lancashire was that of Ernest Broxap, published nearly a hundred years ago, in 1910. It was a good history, and remains a useful book despite the passage of time. Certain aspects of the local war have since been illuminated in some detail, as for example the role of the gentry, the Commonwealth administration, the Derby family, and the transactions of the Lancashire Committee with Cheshire. Nor is it just that a great deal of new scholarship has now to be taken into account. Generally speaking county record offices did not exist in 1910, and Lancashire's was not established in anything like its present form until 1940. This has brought much that is new to light, including quarter sessions papers and church registers. Perhaps even more significantly many documents have been transcribed and reprinted – as for example by the Chetham Society and the Record Society.

A county study is still relevant today, for the history of England lies in its shires. The military organised at county level, as did the law, and taxation was largely assessed and collected at county level. Emissaries from central government, from king or parliament, went out to the counties. Lords lieutenant of the counties raised the only armies that had existed in the years leading up to 1642. Parliament's war effort would eventually encompass 'associations' of several counties, and a form of 'national' army controlled from the centre in the shape of the New Model, but this was not how it started out. Parliament's first ability to fight was based on respected members of the local community calling out the militia, or raising other troops, at county level. Other contributions to the cause, like the London Trained Bands, or the navy, were the exceptions to this basic rule. The 'county committee' was the visible manifestation of parliament in the country, and its main forum in the localities. 'The county' therefore had its own distinctive life and history within the story of the wars. Lancashire's story was exceptional, and twice – in 1644 and especially in 1648 – the course of the war within the county was of crucial importance to the course of the national conflict. In the very

wet August of 1648, indeed, the entire outcome of the Second Civil War, the life of the king, and the institution of a Britain's only period of republican government, depended entirely upon the outcome of a single battle that took place in Lancashire.

For many years some have regarded military history as somehow separate from the mainstream, somehow unworthy of serious analysis and consideration. The war in Lancashire demonstrates the fallacy of this argument. The war finally began over who had the right to direct the military, and its opening moves were almost entirely concerned with control of recruiting and physical resources such as munitions. The way the war was fought, its costs, and the capture of territory influenced not just the outcome, but the objectives of those doing the fighting. There was, in fact, a symbiotic relationship between the nature of the war and the development of the political history.