

The experiences of war widows during and after the  
British civil wars, with particular reference to the  
Midlands

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Stewart Beale

Centre for English Local History

School of History, Politics and International Relations

University of Leicester

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# **The experiences of war widows during and after the British civil wars, with particular reference to the Midlands**

**Stewart Beale**

The British civil wars of the mid-seventeenth century are collectively estimated to have been the bloodiest conflict in British history. More than three percent of the pre-war population in England and Wales perished during the wars, a figure proportionally higher than British losses in any other conflict. Despite this, historians have paid little attention to the experiences of the thousands of women whose husbands were slain during the fighting. This thesis seeks to address this oversight by examining petitions for relief submitted by female war victims to various national and provincial authorities. It assesses the ways in which the various regimes who governed England during this period sought to provide for war victims, the petitioning strategies utilised by widows in order to access relief, and the ways in which the petitioning activities of widows at Westminster and Whitehall compared to those of their counterparts in the provinces. Private correspondence and print material are also utilised in order to gauge contemporary attitudes towards war victims.

In doing so, the thesis sheds much light on the hardships inflicted on women during and after the civil wars. Yet the petitions for relief submitted by war widows are as much records of female agency as they are of victimhood. Rather than suffer in silence, countless widows engaged with national and provincial authorities during the mid-seventeenth century in an attempt to improve their livelihoods. As such, the thesis provides further evidence of the ways in which early-modern women sought to shape their lives. The thesis further argues that political allegiance and social status were significant factors in shaping women's experiences of widowhood. By examining the social welfare afforded to war victims, it also demonstrates how the study of war widows can help to bridge the divide between military and social historians.

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## Abbreviations

BL	British Library
Bod. Lib	Bodleian Library
<i>CJ</i>	<i>Journals of the House of Commons</i>
<i>CSPD</i>	<i>Calendar of State Papers Domestic</i>
CWAC	City of Westminster Archives Centre
DRO	Derbyshire Record Office
GA	Gloucestershire Archives
HMC	Historical Manuscripts Commission
HARC	Herefordshire Archive and Records Centre
<i>LJ</i>	<i>Journals of the House of Lords</i>
LRO	Leicestershire Record Office
LA	Lincolnshire Archives
NA	Northamptonshire Archives
NTA	Nottinghamshire Archives
<i>ODNB</i>	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i>
OHC	Oxfordshire History Centre
PA	Parliamentary Archives
TT	Thomason Tract
TNA	The National Archives
SP	State Papers
SRO	Staffordshire Record Office
WAAS	Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service

## Conventions

Dates are given according to the old-style calendar, but with the year beginning on 1 January. All figures in Tables 1.2, 1.3 and 2.1 have been calculated to the nearest shilling. Much of the content in Chapter 4 has been published by Taylor & Francis as S. Beale, 'War widows and revenge in Restoration England', *The Seventeenth Century*, 33 (2018), pp. 195-217.

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## Introduction

As he made his way through Westminster Palace in January 1646, the lawyer and politician Bulstrode Whitelocke was struck to see a large crowd of war widows gathered outside the doors of the House of Commons. According to Whitelocke, the women had converged at Westminster to petition for their husbands' arrears of pay, who had lost their lives in the services of the parliamentary army.<sup>1</sup> Whitelocke was particularly alarmed by the crowd's 'rude and impetuous' conduct towards MPs, who as they made their way through the throng of women towards the Lower House, were met with cries of 'Pay us our moneys! We are ready to starve'. Fearing for the MPs' safety, Whitelocke noted that the women seemed 'ready to tear their clothes from off their backs'.<sup>2</sup>

To Whitelocke, the 'rude and impetuous' women gathered at Westminster were simply part of a faceless and unruly mob of social inferiors.<sup>3</sup> Yet each of the women present at Parliament that day had their own story to tell, of the disruptive nature of the civil wars, of victimhood and bereavement. Perhaps present amongst the crowd was Joan Wilson. Her husband had served as a lieutenant in the parliamentary army at Thame in Oxfordshire, where he was 'cruellie wounded and shott'. Taken prisoner by royalist troops, Wilson was briefly incarcerated at Oxford. He was later ransomed and returned home, only to fall sick 'of his wounds w[hi]ch were not perfectly cured, and thereby contracting feavours and surfeits through heat and colds he died'. Having 'spent and consumed all shee had' during her husband's illness, Joan was left widowed and, so she claimed, on the brink of destitution. Desperate for relief, in early 1646 she petitioned the House of Lords for his arrears of pay. Her petition was read in the Upper House on 17 February.<sup>4</sup>

This thesis examines the experiences of widows such as Joan during and after the British civil wars. It does so primarily through an assessment of petitions for relief submitted by and on behalf of female war victims to various provincial and national

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<sup>1</sup> Many of these women's husbands had probably served in the earl of Essex's train of artillery. *CJ*, vol. 4, p. 400 (9 January, 1646); TNA, SP 16/511/128 (petition of 'manye widdowes' of the train of artillery).

<sup>2</sup> B. Whitelocke, *Memorials of English Affairs from the Beginning of the Reign of Charles I to the Happy Restoration of Charles II* (Oxford, 1853), vol. 1, p. 556.

<sup>3</sup> C. Hill, 'The many-headed monster in late Tudor and early Stuart political thinking', in C. Carter (ed.), *From the Renaissance to the Counter-Reformation: Essays in Honour of Garrett Mattingly* (London, 1965), pp. 296-324.

<sup>4</sup> PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/201 (petition of Joan Wilson).

authorities during the mid and latter half of the seventeenth century. It seeks to illuminate the bereavement and hardships inflicted on women who lost their husbands during the wars, and the ways in which the various regimes who governed England during this period sought to provide for their welfare. Drawing on personal correspondence, ballads, sermons and newsbooks, the thesis also analyses how women sought to come to terms with widowhood, how contemporaries sought to condole them, and how female war victims were represented in print and propaganda. Attention is given to both parliamentary and royalist widows, rich and poor, and of the ways in which political allegiance and social status shaped the experience of widowhood. For many of the women presented in this thesis, the death of their spouse and family breadwinner marked a decline toward destitution. For a select few, however, widowhood enabled them to pursue retribution against their wartime enemies.

The catalyst for this thesis has been Geoffrey Hudson's pioneering study of war widows and the county pension scheme.<sup>5</sup> Hudson demonstrated in his essay 'Negotiating for blood money' (1994) that pensions and one-off payments were awarded to maimed parliamentary soldiers and war widows by Justices of the Peace at Quarter Sessions between 1647 and 1660. After the Restoration, relief was similarly distributed to royalist war victims, although, according to Hudson, widows were rarely granted pensions outside of London. Hudson's research – which focused largely on the county of Cheshire – inspired a wave of comparative studies on the county pension scheme in Essex, Hertfordshire, Lancashire, Kent and Sussex.<sup>6</sup> These studies have assessed how successful claimants were at obtaining relief within these respective counties, and calculated the average worth of pensions awarded to war victims. As yet, however, no serious attempt has been made to examine the administration of military welfare in the Midlands. This historical oversight is somewhat surprising given the severity of the fighting in the region

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<sup>5</sup> G. Hudson, 'Negotiating for blood money: war widows and the courts in seventeenth-century England', in J. Kermode and G. Walker (eds), *Women, Crime and the Courts in Early Modern England* (London, 1994), pp. 146–169.

<sup>6</sup> D. Appleby, 'Unnecessary persons? Maimed soldiers and war widows in Essex, 1642-62', *Essex Archaeology and History*, 32 (2001), pp. 209–221; H. Cheatle, 'War widows in civil war Hertfordshire, 1642-1667' (BA dissertation, University of Nottingham, 2010); E. Wilbur Alley, 'A humble petition: Lancashire war widows, 1642-1679' (MA dissertation, University of Leicester, 2014); H. Worthen, 'The experience of war widows in mid seventeenth-century England, with special reference to Kent and Sussex' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Leicester, 2017).



during the civil wars. As Roy Sherwood notes, the Midlands ‘probably suffered more, and certainly for longer, than the rest of the country’.<sup>7</sup>

As well as its regional focus, this thesis looks beyond the Midlands to events in Westminster and Whitehall. As Whitelocke’s comments indicate, hundreds of parliamentary war widows disregarded relief administered in the provinces to petition Parliament and the Lord Protector during the 1640s and 1650s, whilst after the Restoration Charles II received numerous pleas for relief from the widows of royalist soldiers. Yet with some notable exceptions discussed below, these women have received little scholarly attention. The lack of studies on female war victims is surprising when we consider that their treatment and experiences cast light on a number of topics which have aroused much historical discussion, including the social impact of the civil wars, the role of women in the civil wars, and the nature of seventeenth-century poor relief. With this in mind, this introductory chapter outlines the key historiography of each of these topics, and how this thesis seeks to contribute to that historiography. In order to contextualise what follows, however, it is first necessary to provide a brief overview of the civil wars in the Midlands.

### **The civil wars in the Midlands**

The term ‘Midlands’ is used throughout this thesis to collectively describe the counties of Derbyshire, Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire. Far from a homogenous region during the seventeenth century, these counties varied enormously, both culturally and economically. The ways in which the civil wars unfolded across the region also varied markedly, with its impact felt more acutely in some areas than others.

The civil wars in England arguably both started and ended in the Midlands. On 22 August 1642 Charles I raised his standard at Nottingham, symbolically signalling the opening of the conflict. That same day, royalist troops under the command of the earl of Northampton clashed with parliamentary forces near Warwick, whilst the following month witnessed a more serious engagement at Powick Bridge in Worcestershire. Whilst

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<sup>7</sup> R. Sherwood, *The Civil War in the Midlands, 1642-1651* (Stroud, 1992), p. xi.

the former has been dismissed by some historians as a minor and inconsequential skirmish, the latter has come to be regarded as ‘the first armed clash between elements of the principal armies’.<sup>8</sup> Over the following years the Midlands played host to several important pitched battles – including Edgehill (1642) and Naseby (1645) – as well as numerous skirmishes and sieges. It also witnessed some of the war’s worst atrocities, including the royalist sacking of Birmingham in 1643, and the attack by parliamentary soldiers on royalist women camp followers at Naseby.<sup>9</sup> The culmination of the First Civil War in 1646 bought much-needed respite to the region, and although it saw few military engagements during the Second Civil War (1648), armed conflict returned to the Midlands in September 1651, when Charles II’s forces were crushed at Worcester by the New Model Army.<sup>10</sup>

There is little doubt that the Midlands were bitterly contested during the civil wars. Charles Carlton has asserted that ‘the main struggle’ of the conflict took place in the region, whilst Sherwood has labelled it ‘the Belgium of the English Civil War’.<sup>11</sup> Important royalist garrisons were established in the Midlands during the early 1640s at Worcester, Shrewsbury, Lichfield and Newark-on-Trent, which sat atop the main road between London and York, and controlled an important crossing over the River Trent.<sup>12</sup> Popular support for the royalist cause was prevalent along the southern and eastern borders of Northamptonshire, the iron and coalmining areas in south and east Derbyshire, and in the counties of Shropshire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire, which have been described by Anthony Fletcher as the ‘heartland of royalism’.<sup>13</sup> Parliamentary strongholds were established at Nottingham, Warwick, Coventry, Northampton and Gloucester. Popular parliamentarianism was particularly strong in north Warwickshire

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<sup>8</sup> A. Woolrych, *Britain in Revolution, 1625-1660* (Oxford, 2002), p. 236; P. Gaunt, *The English Civil War: A Military History* (London, 2014), p. 69.

<sup>9</sup> For a contemporary account of the sack of Birmingham see BL, TT E.100[8], *Prince Rupert's Burning Love to England Discovered in Birmingham's Flames* (London, 1643). Mark Stoye has described the attack on the royalist women at Naseby as ‘the single worst atrocity of the Civil War in England’. M. Stoye, ‘The road to Farndon Field: explaining the massacre of the royalist women at Naseby’, *The English Historical Review*, 123 (2008), p. 896.

<sup>10</sup> For an account of the battle see J. Willis Bund, *The Civil War in Worcestershire, 1642-1646, and the Scotch Invasion of 1651* (London, 1905).

<sup>11</sup> C. Carlton, *Going to the Wars: The Experiences of the British Civil Wars, 1638-1651* (London, 1992), p. 116; Sherwood, *Civil War in the Midlands*, p. 2.

<sup>12</sup> S. Jennings, *‘These Uncertain Tymes’: Newark and the Civilian Experience of the Civil Wars, 1640-1660* (Nottingham, 2009), pp. 6, 21, 34.

<sup>13</sup> S. Osborne, ‘Popular religion, culture and politics in the Midlands, c.1638-1646’ (Ph.D. thesis, University of Warwick, 1993), p. 224; J. Dias, ‘Lead, society and politics in Derbyshire before the civil war’, *Midland History*, 6 (1981), p. 52; A. Fletcher, *The Outbreak of the English Civil War* (London, 1981), p. 330.

and the lead-mining and sheep-rearing districts in north, west and central Derbyshire.<sup>14</sup> South Warwickshire, which was used as a thoroughfare by royalist troops travelling between Oxford and Worcester, experienced particularly high levels of plundering.<sup>15</sup>



Map I.1. The Midlands, including significant civil-war garrisons.

The human cost of the civil wars on an individual community within the Midlands is perhaps most vividly captured in the eighteenth-century antiquarian Richard Gough's account of Myddle in Shropshire. The parish and its neighbouring villages of Marton and

<sup>14</sup> A. Hughes, *Politics, Society and Civil War in Warwickshire, 1620-1660* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 150-151; Dias, 'Derbyshire before the civil war', p. 52.

<sup>15</sup> P. Tennant, 'Parish and people: south Warwickshire in the civil war', in R. Richardson (ed.), *The English Civil Wars: Local Aspects* (Stroud, 1997), p. 157.

Newton saw few direct military engagements during the 1640s, yet thirteen of the twenty inhabitants who enlisted in the royalist army were killed in action. Another, Thomas Ash, returned from the wars with nothing 'but a crazy body and many scarrs, the symptoms of the dangerouse service which he had performed'.<sup>16</sup> Given the severity of the fighting in the Midlands, hundreds of parishes across the region must have been similarly burdened with maimed soldiers such as Ash, not to mention the widows and orphans of those who failed to return.

### **The social impact of the civil wars**

Having provided a brief overview of the civil wars in the Midlands, it is now necessary to outline the key historiography which this thesis will build upon, starting with the social impact of the conflict. The British civil wars of the mid-seventeenth century are collectively estimated to have been the bloodiest conflict in British history. Although we will never know for certain precisely how many people perished during these wars, one historian has estimated that around 180,000 soldiers and civilians died in England and Wales, either through military combat or disease. This amounted to more than three percent of the pre-war population, a figure proportionally higher than British losses in either the First or Second World Wars. A further 90,000 men are purported to have returned to their homes wounded.<sup>17</sup>

The civil wars inflicted numerous other burdens on the British populace besides death and injury. Stephen Porter has estimated that more than 11,000 homes were destroyed as a result of the wars, and more than 55,000 civilians made homeless.<sup>18</sup> Predictably, the scale of wartime damage was severest in areas of the country where the fighting had been particularly intense. Between one third and one half of the inhabitants of Exeter were left homeless as a result of two sieges between 1643 and 1646.<sup>19</sup> As well as the physical destruction of their homes and towns, civilians were also subjected to unprecedented levels of taxation and plunder.<sup>20</sup> They were also forced to billet soldiers

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<sup>16</sup> R. Gough, *The Hystory of Myddle*, ed. D. Hey (Harmondsworth, 1981), pp. 71, 226-227.

<sup>17</sup> I. Gentles, *The English Revolution and the Wars in the Three Kingdoms, 1638-1652* (Harlow, 2007), p. 436.

<sup>18</sup> S. Porter, *The Blast of War: Destruction in the English Civil Wars* (Stroud, 2011), p. 66.

<sup>19</sup> M. Stoye, "'Whole streets converted to ashes': property destruction in Exeter during the English civil war", in Richardson (ed.), *The English Civil Wars*, p. 138.

<sup>20</sup> J. Morrill, *Revolt in the Provinces: The People of England and the Tragedies of War, 1630-1648* (Harlow, 1999), pp. 118-121; B. Donagan, 'War, property and the bonds of society: England's "unnatural" civil

in their homes, often at their own expense. Donald Pennington has argued that the intrusion of soldiers into people's homes represented 'the most widespread grievance of all' during the civil wars, whilst John Morrill and Ann Hughes have demonstrated that the cost of free quarter exceeded that of formal taxation in some parts of the country.<sup>21</sup> Meanwhile, the deplorable condition of roads, the destruction of bridges, and the inherent dangers of travelling also resulted in the closure of markets and disruption to trade.<sup>22</sup> Taken together, it is difficult to refute Martyn Bennett's assertion that few areas of the country escaped 'the effects of war'.<sup>23</sup>

Despite the studies outlined above, some historians continue to argue that the social impact of the civil wars has been underplayed, especially on those toward the bottom end of the social ladder. In her recent study of the Anglican clergy during the mid-seventeenth century, Fiona McCall asserted that historians 'still instinctively downplay the social effects of the English Civil War', and that the sufferings of 'ordinary people... seem barely to register in the general historical consciousness'.<sup>24</sup> The same might also be said for war widows. The first serious scholarly attempt to examine the aftercare afforded to civil-war combatants and their families was conducted by Charles Firth in 1901. In a brief but wide-ranging article published in *Cornhill Magazine*, and later in his monograph *Cromwell's Army* (1902), Firth assessed the roles of parliamentary regimental surgeons and the organisation of military hospitals during the 1640s and 1650s. He also offered an overview of the parliamentary legislation introduced during these decades for the relief of war victims.<sup>25</sup> Although Firth ignored the treatment of royalist soldiers almost entirely, he lauded Parliament for its efforts in providing for its maimed servicemen, widows and orphans.

Despite Firth's study, the experiences of war widows and maimed soldiers received little historical attention for much of the remainder of the twentieth century.

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wars', in E. Charters, E. Rosenhaft and H. Smith (eds), *Civilians and War in Europe, 1618-1815* (Liverpool, 2012), pp. 52-67.

<sup>21</sup> D. Pennington, 'The war and the people', in J. Morrill (ed.), *Reactions to the English Civil War, 1642-1649* (London, 1982), p. 117; Morrill, *Revolt in the Provinces*, p. 120; A. Hughes, 'Parliamentary tyranny? Indemnity proceedings and the impact of the civil war: a case study from Warwickshire', *Midland History*, 11 (1986), p. 50.

<sup>22</sup> P. Tennant, *Edgehill and Beyond: The People's War in the South Midlands, 1642-1645* (Stroud, 1992), pp. 151-157.

<sup>23</sup> M. Bennett, *The Civil Wars Experienced: Britain and Ireland, 1638-1661* (London, 2000), p. 108.

<sup>24</sup> F. McCall, *Baal's Priests: The Loyalist Clergy and the English Revolution* (Farnham, 2013), p. 1.

<sup>25</sup> C. Firth, 'The sick and wounded in the Great Civil War', *Cornhill Magazine*, 10 (1901), pp. 289-299; C. Firth, *Cromwell's Army: A History of the English Soldier during the Civil Wars, the Commonwealth and the Protectorate* (London, 1902), chapter 11.

Preoccupied with the debates over the causes of the civil wars and the construction of civil-war allegiance, historians gave little thought to the fates of war victims. As noted above, this changed during the mid-1990s following Geoffrey Hudson's study of the county pension scheme.<sup>26</sup> Following Hudson's example, the last twenty years have seen increasing numbers of studies on war victims. Eric Gruber von Arni has compared nursing and medical practice in the royalist and parliamentary armies, concluding that 'the care and welfare of the King's sick and wounded troops compared badly with Parliament's achievements'.<sup>27</sup> Historians have also examined the effects of psychological trauma on combatants, as well as the ways in which veterans remembered the conflict.<sup>28</sup> In his study of maimed-soldier petitions in Devon, Mark Stoyale concluded that the memory of combat 'haunted the minds' of royalist veterans well into the Restoration period.<sup>29</sup>

There have also been several studies on the experiences of war widows. Andrea Button has examined the petitions submitted for relief and redress by the women whose husbands were executed in the wake of Penruddock's Rising (1655).<sup>30</sup> Another study has assessed the experiences of royalist widows who petitioned the Committee for Compounding during the 1640s and 1650s to regain their confiscated estates, whilst Imogen Peck has explored how widows in Lancashire and Cheshire narrated their husbands' deaths in their petitions for relief.<sup>31</sup> Meanwhile, in her study of printed female petitions during the mid-seventeenth century, Amanda Whiting briefly considered the petitioning activities of parliamentary widows at Westminster during the 1640s.<sup>32</sup> Far

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<sup>26</sup> G. Hudson, 'Ex-servicemen, war widows and the English county pension scheme, 1593-1679' (D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1995); Hudson, 'Negotiating for blood money', pp. 146-169.

<sup>27</sup> E. Gruber von Arni, *Justice to the Maimed Soldier: Nursing, Medical Care and Welfare for Sick and Wounded Soldiers during the English Civil Wars and Interregnum, 1642-1660* (Aldershot, 2001), p. 37.

<sup>28</sup> Carlton, *Going to the Wars*, pp. 224-225; E. Peters, 'Trauma narratives of the English Civil War', *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, 16 (2016), pp. 78-94; M. Neufeld, *The Civil Wars After 1660: Public Remembering in Late Stuart England* (Woodbridge, 2013), chapter 2.

<sup>29</sup> M. Stoyale, "'Memories of the maimed': the testimony of Charles I's former soldiers, 1660-1730", *History*, 88 (2003), p. 225.

<sup>30</sup> A. Button, 'Royalist women petitioners in south-west England, 1655-1662', *The Seventeenth Century*, 15 (2000), pp. 53-66.

<sup>31</sup> H. Worthen, 'Supplicants and guardians: the petitions of royalist widows during the civil wars and Interregnum, 1642-1660', *Women's History Review*, 26 (2017), pp. 528-540; I. Peck, 'The great unknown: the negotiation and narration of death by English war widows, 1647-1660', *Northern History*, 53 (2016), pp. 220-235.

<sup>32</sup> A. Whiting, *Women and Petitioning in the Seventeenth-Century English Revolution: Deference, Difference, and Dissent* (Turnhout, 2015), pp. 118-123.

from being passive victims of the civil wars, these studies have demonstrated that female war victims possessed considerable agency in pursuit of their petitionary goals.

Despite these studies, much remains to be done to recapture the full range of war widows' experiences during the civil wars. We know little, for example, of the women who petitioned the Long Parliament and the Lord Protector during the 1640s and 1650s for relief and their husbands' arrears of pay. We know even less about the royalist widows who petitioned Charles II and the Convention and Cavalier Parliaments after the Restoration. Moreover, in the absence of any published study of the county pension scheme in the Midlands, we know virtually nothing about the experiences of war widows in this much-fought-over region. This thesis seeks to address these historical oversights in order to further our understanding of the social impact of the civil wars on female war victims.

## **Women and the Civil Wars**

Much has been written about women during the civil wars. We know, for example, that the 1640s witnessed an increase in female authors, publishers, preachers and prophets.<sup>33</sup> We also know that aristocratic women defended their property against hostile forces, and that women of all social ranks served as spies, nurses and couriers, donated money, plate and provisions to the armies, and helped fortify garrisons.<sup>34</sup> In these ways, women were able to express their allegiance to one side or the other, despite being prevented from enlisting in the armies.<sup>35</sup>

Away from the battlefield, women engaged in political activism through mass petitioning and demonstrations. Throughout the 1640s women took to the streets of

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<sup>33</sup> R. Bell and P. Crawford, 'Statistical analysis of women's printed writings, 1600-1700', in M. Prior (ed.), *Women in English Society, 1500-1800* (London, 1985), p. 265; S. Arnould, 'The sovereignties of body and soul: women's political and religious actions in the English civil war', in L. Fradenburg (ed.), *Women and Sovereignty* (Edinburgh, 1992), p. 231; K. Thomas, 'Women and the civil war sects', *Past & Present*, 13 (1958), p. 47; P. Mack, 'Women as prophets during the English civil war', *Feminist Studies*, 8 (1982), pp. 18-45.

<sup>34</sup> J. Eales, *Puritans and Roundheads: The Harleys of Brampton Bryan and the Outbreak of the English Civil War* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 3; A. Hughes, *Gender and the English Revolution* (Abingdon, 2012), pp. 36-38; S. Wright, 'Arundell, Blanche [*née* Lady Blanche Somerset], Lady Arundell of Wardour (1583/4-1649)', *ODNB*; K. Walker, 'The military activities of Charlotte de la Tremouille, countess of Derby, during the civil war and Interregnum', *Northern History*, 38 (2001), pp. 47-64; A. Laurence, 'Women's work and the English civil war', *History Today*, 42 (1992), pp. 20-25.

<sup>35</sup> P. Crawford, '"The poorest she": women and citizenship in early modern England', in M. Mendle (ed.), *The Putney Debates of 1647: The Army, the Levellers and the English State* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 207.

London to lobby Parliament on a range of topics, including their grievances against the practice of bishops and excessive taxes.<sup>36</sup> Alison Thorne has argued that the number of women who petitioned Parliament during the 1640s was so great that the decade ‘marked a new phase of political activism when women of the lower to middling sort began, for the first time, to intervene in the public sphere in sizeable numbers’.<sup>37</sup> The peace protests of 1643 and the Leveller demonstrations of 1649 and 1653 for the release of their imprisoned leaders are especially known to have attracted widespread female participation, and the petitions submitted to Parliament by these women have received much attention from historians.<sup>38</sup> Ann Hughes and Patricia Crawford have both argued that gender played an important role in the rhetoric of these petitions, and that the petitioners ‘confidently manipulated negative stereotypes of women’ in order to promote their petitionary goals. This was usually achieved by emphasising their familial roles as wives and mothers.<sup>39</sup>

As well as the ways noted above, women were further able to engage in political activism during the civil wars by heckling their ministers during divine service, participating in iconoclasm, or by taking political oaths.<sup>40</sup> John Walter has argued that it was ‘the norm’ for women to take the Protestation in some parts of the country during the early 1640s, and that the experience of doing so ‘both expressed and enlarged women’s own claim to membership of the political community’.<sup>41</sup> Walter further suggests that the Protestation – in which subscribers vowed to defend ‘the true, reformed protestant religion’, the king, and the ‘power and privilege of Parliaments’ – served to legitimise popular crowd action during the early 1640s, including the Stour Valley riots, where women are known to have participated in attacks on the properties of prominent Catholic families.<sup>42</sup> Meanwhile, Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford have

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<sup>36</sup> P. Higgins, ‘The reactions of women, with special reference to women petitioners’, in B. Manning (ed.), *Politics, Religion and the English Civil War* (London, 1973), pp. 179-222; P. Lee, ‘Mistress Stagg’s petitioners: February 1642’, *The Historian*, 60 (1998), pp. 241-256.

<sup>37</sup> A. Thorne, ‘Narratives of female suffering in the petitionary literature of the civil war period and its aftermath’, *Literature Compass*, 10 (2013), p. 134.

<sup>38</sup> Hughes, *Gender and the English Revolution*, p. 57.

<sup>39</sup> Crawford, ‘Women and citizenship’, p. 209; A. Hughes, ‘Gender and politics in Leveller literature’, in S. Amussen and M. Kishlansky (eds), *Political Culture and Cultural Politics in Early Modern England: Essays Presented to David Underdown* (Manchester, 1995), pp. 162-188.

<sup>40</sup> Crawford, ‘Women and citizenship’, pp. 206-207.

<sup>41</sup> J. Walter, *Covenanting Citizens: The Protestation Oath and Popular Political Culture in the English Revolution* (Oxford, 2017), pp. 204-205.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 233; J. Walter, *Understanding Popular Violence in the English Revolution: The Colchester Plunderers* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 240; *CJ*, vol. 2, p. 132 (3 May, 1641).



demonstrated that women also subscribed to the Solemn League and Covenant in 1643. By taking these oaths, women were not only displaying their loyalty to the parliamentary cause, but expressing ‘a self-conscious assertion of covenantal citizenship’.<sup>43</sup>

Whilst the historiography of women during the civil wars is considerable, it might be argued that much of this literature has focused on the exploits of wealthy, literate, or extraordinary women. Scholars have lauded the deeds of aristocratic women who defended their homes from attack, scrutinised the lives and works of literate women such as Lucy Hutchinson and Margaret Cavendish, duchess of Newcastle, and examined the exploits of women who spied, preached, published, and protested.<sup>44</sup> War widows rarely fall into such categories, although there were some notable exceptions. After her husband was hanged at Oxford for espionage during the early 1640s, for instance, Elizabeth Alkin, also known as Parliament Joan, served as a parliamentary intelligencer and publisher.<sup>45</sup> On the royalist side, Katherine Stuart, Lady Aubigny, was imprisoned in the Tower of London in 1643 for her involvement in a plot to raise troops in the capital for the king. Lady Aubigny had travelled to London from Oxford under the pretence of settling the affairs of her late husband, Lord George Stuart, who had been slain at Edgehill in 1642, and was caught carrying a commission of array signed by Charles I. An image of her holding the commission was later published in the anonymous 1646 broadsheet *England's Monument of Mercies* [Figure I.1], which celebrated Parliament's ‘miraculous preservations’ from ‘manifold plots, conspiracies’ and ‘contrivances’ during the First Civil War.<sup>46</sup> It is significant that despite being the only woman pictured in the broadsheet, Lady Aubigny is positioned in the centre in full profile, surrounded by smaller images of notorious male royalists including Prince Rupert, the earl of Newcastle, and Lord Digby. Precisely what the broadsheet's publishers hoped to achieve by this positioning is uncertain, although it perhaps reveals something about contemporary anxieties towards

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<sup>43</sup> S. Mendelson and P. Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England, 1550-1720* (Oxford, 1998), p. 399.

<sup>44</sup> For some of the numerous studies on Lucy Hutchinson see D. Norbrook, ‘Lucy Hutchinson versus Edmund Waller: an unpublished reply to Waller's “A Panegyric to my Lord Protector”’, *The Seventeenth Century*, 11 (1996), pp. 61-86; D. Hirst, ‘Remembering a hero: Lucy Hutchinson's memoirs of her husband’, *The English Historical Review*, 119 (2004), pp. 682-691. An overview of some of the recent studies on Margaret Cavendish can be found in W. Weise, ‘Recent studies in Margaret Cavendish, duchess of Newcastle (2000-2010)’, *English Literary Renaissance*, 42 (2012), pp. 146-176.

<sup>45</sup> M. Bell, ‘Alkin, Elizabeth [nicknamed Parliament Joan] (c.1600-1655?)’, *ODNB*; M. Nevitt, *Women and the Pamphlet Culture of Revolutionary England, 1640-1660* (Aldershot, 1988), pp. 105-112.

<sup>46</sup> BL, TT f.10[85], *England's Monument of Mercies* (London, 1646).

female conspirators in particular, who may have been regarded as more underhand, and thus more dangerous, than their male counterparts.<sup>47</sup>

Image I.1. Lady Aubigny holding the commission of array signed by Charles I, surrounded by other accused royalist plotters. Source: BL, TT f.10[85], *England's Monument of Mercies* (1646).

This thesis hopes to broaden our understanding of women's roles during the civil wars by throwing further light on the experiences of a group of largely disenfranchised females who have received little scholarly attention. Unlike Elizabeth Alkin and Katherine Stuart, few of the women presented in this thesis have their own entries in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. Most were obscure and illiterate, only making an impression on the historical record simply because their need for survival forced them to petition the authorities for relief. In particular, the thesis seeks to add to our knowledge of the ways in which women interacted with both provincial and national government during the civil wars, and to further illuminate a facet of female petitioning activity during these turbulent decades.

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<sup>47</sup> A. Hughes, 'Stuart [*née* Howard], Katherine, Lady Aubigny (d. 1650)', *ODNB*.

## Poor relief during the seventeenth century

The third key topic which this thesis addresses is the nature of seventeenth-century poor relief. This was chiefly set out by the Elizabethan poor laws of 1601, which instructed every parish in the country to collect and distribute relief in order to maintain their inhabitant poor. With minor amendments, these statutes provided the blueprint for the welfare of the poor throughout the course of the seventeenth century.

Under the 1601 legislation, every parish in England and Wales was required to appoint two overseers of the poor. Overseers were generally elected into office by the parish vestry (although in some parishes positions were rotated amongst householders), and served for a fixed term, usually of one year.<sup>48</sup> According to the contemporary manual *An Ease for Overseers of the Poor* (1601), overseers were required to be ‘subsedie men’ or ‘substantiall men’, who possessed ‘competencie of wealth and wisdome’. Only men of this ilk were deemed trustworthy enough not to abuse the office for their own benefit.<sup>49</sup> Their primary responsibilities included ‘imploying by worke, releeving by money, and ordering by discretion, the defects of the poore’.<sup>50</sup> This involved rating parishioners in order to raise adequate funds for the relief of the poor, and identifying which members of the parish were both in need of relief and, crucially, *deserving*, of it. Among other responsibilities, they were also charged with binding out pauper children as apprentices, and distributing material goods including clothing, fuel and food. In many parishes, churchwardens also played an important role in distributing such relief.

Who were the deserving poor? Steve Hindle has argued that in order to qualify for poor relief, parish officials expected claimants to exhibit certain characteristics – including sobriety and industriousness – and to conduct themselves in a certain manner – by regularly attending church, for example. Those who failed to display these virtues risked being denied relief, or, if they had already been granted a pension, having it temporarily withdrawn or permanently revoked.<sup>51</sup> Whilst the deserving poor typically consisted of widowed, orphaned, sick, aged, and impotent paupers, the undeserving poor comprised of the idle and vagrants. As Claire Schen has shown, however, ‘deserving’

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<sup>48</sup> S. Hindle, *On the Parish? The Micro-Politics of Poor Relief in Rural England, c.1550-1750* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 257-258; M. Goldie, ‘The unacknowledged republic: officeholding in early modern England’, in T. Harris (ed.), *The Politics of the Excluded, c.1500-1850* (Basingstoke, 2001), pp. 168-169.

<sup>49</sup> STC/7446, *An Ease for Overseers of the Poore* (Cambridge, 1601), p. 9.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>51</sup> Hindle, *On the Parish?*, pp. 380-386.

and ‘undeserving’ poor were not ‘static categories’ during the seventeenth century, but ones that were regularly adapted by parish officials in response to ‘military, social and religious exigencies’.<sup>52</sup>

The speed with which the 1601 poor laws were implemented across the country was far from universal. Paul Slack has argued that rural Northumberland had no system of official poor relief before the 1640s.<sup>53</sup> Meanwhile, Steven King and Alannah Tomkins have suggested that whilst poor relief in the south and east of England had become common by the end of the seventeenth century, ‘securing any relief, or adequate relief, was entirely uncertain in other regions of the country’.<sup>54</sup> More recently, an increasing number of county surveys have challenged this ‘slow-track’ approach to the implementation of poor relief.<sup>55</sup> In Norfolk, for example, it has been suggested that poor relief was almost universal across the county by the 1620s.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, Jonathan Healey’s survey of poor relief in Lancashire suggests that by the 1640s, even the remotest parts of the county had established poor rates.<sup>57</sup> We might therefore conclude that whilst the spread of poor relief was uneven during the early decades of the seventeenth century, there appears to have existed by the eve of the civil war a national system of welfare which extended across almost every parish in the country, with the exception, perhaps, of rural Northumberland.<sup>58</sup>

For those denied parish relief or who deemed themselves to have been unjustly treated by parish officials, the county Quarter Sessions offered a venue to voice their grievances and petition for welfare. As Steve Hindle has demonstrated, county magistrates could compel parish officials to grant housing or monetary relief to paupers. They could also award gratuities and pensions to petitioners from the county stock.<sup>59</sup> This stock was maintained by a weekly rate imposed by the bench on every parish within their respective county. The rate was collected by parish constables, who in turn delivered it

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<sup>52</sup> C. Schen, ‘Constructing the poor in early seventeenth-century London’, *Albion*, 32 (2000), p. 450.

<sup>53</sup> P. Slack, *From Reformation to Improvement: Public Welfare in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1999), p. 67.

<sup>54</sup> S. King and A. Tomkins (eds), *The Poor in England, 1700-1850: An Economy of Makeshifts* (Manchester, 2003), pp. 10-11.

<sup>55</sup> Hindle, *On the Parish?*, p. 235.

<sup>56</sup> T. Wales, “‘Living at their own hands’: policing poor households and the young in early modern rural England”, *Agricultural History Review*, 61 (2013), p. 28.

<sup>57</sup> J. Healey, ‘The development of poor relief in Lancashire, c.1598–1680’, *The Historical Journal*, 53 (2010), pp. 562-563.

<sup>58</sup> Hindle, *On the Parish?*, p. 296.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 411.

to high constables, and then to county treasurers. Under the bench's orders, treasurers then distributed this money to the poor. As we will see in Chapter 1, maimed soldiers were entitled to receive relief from the county stock during the early-seventeenth century, but until 1647 war widows were prohibited from doing so.

Although the average worth of parish and county pensions was likely to vary across the country, Tim Wales has suggested that the former rarely exceeded more than £2 a year during the first half of the seventeenth century.<sup>60</sup> The five years of dearth between 1646 and 1651 marked a 'distinctive phase in the development of poor relief', and catalysed an increase both in the number of people receiving pensions, and the worth of pensions themselves.<sup>61</sup> However, at a time in which an average labouring family would have required an estimated £11 per year for food, clothing and fuel, even those lucky enough to be granted such relief during the second half of the century often remained ill catered for.<sup>62</sup> As such, historians have come to recognise that parish and county relief were rarely, if ever, intended as sole forms of income, but as supplements to employment and/or variant forms of informal relief. This might include private charity, sporadic employment, bartering, borrowing, and gathering natural resources.<sup>63</sup> Kin and neighbourly assistance also offered an important means of survival, providing not only material necessities such as housing and food, but the additional benefits of protection and emotional support.<sup>64</sup> Together, these 'innumerable forms of subsidiary income' were vital to the survival of poor, forming what Olwen Hufton has termed with regards to paupers in eighteenth-century France, an 'economy of makeshifts'.<sup>65</sup>

For reasons discussed below, this thesis focuses on the distribution of military welfare at county and national level, rather than the parish. However, the historiography

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<sup>60</sup> T. Wales, 'The parish and the poor in the English Revolution', in S. Taylor and G. Tapsell (eds), *The Nature of the English Revolution Revisited* (Woodbridge, 2013), p. 58.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54; T. Wales, 'Poverty, poor relief and the life-cycle: some evidence from seventeenth-century Norfolk', in R. Smith (ed.), *Land, Kinship and Life-Cycle* (Cambridge, 1984), p. 354. See also S. Hindle, 'Dearth and the English Revolution: the harvest crisis of 1647–50', *The Economic History Review*, 61 (2008), pp. 64–98.

<sup>62</sup> K. Wrightson, *English Society 1580–1680* (London, 1982), p. 34.

<sup>63</sup> S. Hindle, "'Good, godly and charitable uses': endowed charity and the relief of poverty in rural England, c.1550–1750', in A. Goldgar and R. Frost (eds), *Institutional Culture in Early Modern Society* (Boston, 2004), pp. 172, 177, 187; Hindle, *On the Parish?*, pp. 34, 48.

<sup>64</sup> I. Krausman Ben-Amos, 'Gifts and favours: informal support in early modern England', *The Journal of Modern History*, 72 (2000), pp. 295–338; S. Hindle, "'Not by bread only?'" Common right, parish relief and endowed charity in a forest economy, c.1600–1800', in King and Tomkins (eds), *The Poor in England*, p. 41.

<sup>65</sup> O. Hufton, *The Poor of Eighteenth-Century France, 1750–1789* (Oxford, 1974), p. 16.

of poor relief outlined above raises a number of important questions that this study seeks to pursue. For instance, how successful were war widows at obtaining relief during the mid-seventeenth century, and how much money might they expect to receive? Whilst these questions have been discussed by historians elsewhere – and are discussed more thoroughly in Chapters 1 and 2 – no attempt has yet been made to apply them to the welfare administered at Whitehall and Westminster, or by county benches in the Midlands. Discussions concerning the characteristics of the deserving poor and the ‘economy of makeshifts’ are also pertinent to this study, and compel us to consider both the ways in which war widows sought to fashion themselves as worthy of relief in their petitions, and how those who were denied relief sought to provide for themselves and their families.

### **Methodology and structure**

This thesis seeks to examine the experiences of war widows during the mid-seventeenth century, primarily through an investigation of their interactions with both provincial and national government. During this period female war victims petitioned numerous provincial and national authorities for relief and redress, including county committees, county Quarter Sessions, Parliament, the Lord Protector and, after 1660, the Crown and the Privy Council. During the 1640s and 1650s, widows also petitioned various parliamentary committees, including the Committee for the Advance of Money, the Committee for Compounding, and the Committee for Taking the Accounts of the Kingdom. These petitions form the basis of this study. However, since a thorough examination of the surviving records of each of the authorities and committees mentioned above lies beyond the scope of this thesis, it has been deemed necessary to impose restrictions on the area of research.

Despite important studies on the county pension scheme in Cheshire, Essex, Lancashire, Sussex and Kent, little attention has been given to the experiences of war victims in the Midlands. For this reason, this thesis utilises the records of the county committees and county Quarter Sessions for the counties of Derbyshire, Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire in order to address this historical oversight. The records of the county committees contain petitions

for relief submitted by and on behalf of war victims, warrants of payments, and treasurers' account books, which list occasional sums of money awarded to widows. Meanwhile, the Quarter Sessions' records consist of sessions' rolls and order books. The former contains petitions for relief, whilst the latter details records of payments granted by county benches.

As well as its regional focus, the thesis looks beyond the Midlands to consider the experiences of war widows who petitioned Parliament and, after 1660, the Crown for relief. Whilst the widows who appealed to the county pension scheme have received some attention from historians, notably Hudson, the petitioning activities of their counterparts at Westminster and Whitehall have been given less consideration. In order to broaden our understanding of the range of widows' experiences during the mid-seventeenth century, we need therefore to look beyond the provinces to events in the capital. In particular, we need to consider why some women disregarded parish and county relief in order to seek welfare from Parliament and the Crown. We also need to assess how the petitioning experiences of women in the capital differed to that of their counterparts in the provinces, and how successful these petitioners were at obtaining relief. In order to attempt to answer these questions, this thesis examines widows' petitions submitted to the Long Parliament and the Lord Protector during the 1640s and 1650s, and to Charles II and the Convention and Cavalier Parliaments after the Restoration. These petitions are located in the State Papers and Parliamentary Archives respectively. The State Papers and parliamentary *Journals* also contain orders of payments to female war victims, and have proved indispensable to this study.

The thesis adopts both a quantitative and qualitative approach to examine the experiences of war widows during the mid-seventeenth century. Using records of payments found in sessions' order books, treasurers' accounts, and on the petitions themselves, it assesses how successful widows were at obtaining county relief in the Midlands, and the average worth of pensions and gratuities within each county. This information can in turn be compared with other studies of the county pension scheme, in order to determine how the experiences of war widows in the Midlands compared with those of female war victims elsewhere in the country. The thesis also considers county relief granted to maimed soldiers, in order to determine whether gender played a role in the distribution of military welfare. Similarly, the parliamentary *Journals* and the State Papers have been used for evidence of payments granted to war widows by Parliament

and the Crown. Since the value of payments granted to widows by these authorities ranged from hundreds of pounds to just a few pounds, no attempt has been made to use these records to calculate the average worth of pensions. Nevertheless, these records still provide an important insight into the welfare administered to widows at Westminster and Whitehall.

The thesis also adopts a qualitative approach by examining what widows' petitions reveal about their experiences of the civil wars, and the ways in which female petitioners sought to fashion themselves as worthy of relief. Here, issues arise with regards to the authorship of petitions. As far as it has been possible to tell, none of the supplications considered in this thesis were written by the petitioners themselves. Instead, they were penned by literate males, likely members of the parish elite, clergymen, and professional scribes.<sup>66</sup> As with women's legal depositions recorded during this period, widows' petitions 'cannot give us an unproblematic, unmediated access to a recognizable "women's voice"'.<sup>67</sup> Moreover, since petitions were written for a specific purpose – typically to secure monetary relief – they were deliberately crafted to present claimants 'in the best possible light'.<sup>68</sup> As Jonathan Healey has noted with regards to seventeenth-century pauper petitions, these documents often 'contain exaggeration, inattention to uncomfortable detail, and even downright distortion'.<sup>69</sup>

Despite these caveats, it would be wrong to conclude that widows had no say regarding the construction and content of their petitions, or that details found in their supplications were entirely fabricated. In his study of female letter-writers during the sixteenth century, James Daybell argued that for a woman to be considered the author of a text, what mattered was not her ability to write, but that she could 'communicate orally what she wished to have set down, or that she was able to participate in the process of revision'.<sup>70</sup> As historians including Hudson, Healey, Stoye and David Appleby have argued, there are several reasons to suggest that widows were involved in narrating orally the content of their petitions.<sup>71</sup> These reasons are discussed more thoroughly in Chapter

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<sup>66</sup> Hudson, 'Negotiating for blood money', p. 156.

<sup>67</sup> L. Gowing, *Domestic Dangers: Women, Words and Sex in Early Modern London* (Oxford, 1996), p. 9.

<sup>68</sup> Stoye, "'Memories of the maimed'", p. 209.

<sup>69</sup> J. Healey, *The First Century of Welfare: Poverty and Poor Relief in Lancashire, 1620-1730* (Woodbridge, 2014), p. 107.

<sup>70</sup> J. Daybell, *Women Letter-Writers in Tudor England* (Oxford, 2006), p. 90.

<sup>71</sup> Hudson, 'Negotiating for blood money', p. 156; Healey, *The First Century of Welfare*, pp. 107-108; Stoye, "'Memories of the maimed'", p. 210; Appleby, 'Unnecessary persons?', p. 212.



3, although chief amongst them is that since petitioners were often required to appear in person to present their petitions, and may well have been questioned by the authorities on the content of their supplications, they likely had to contain some truth. We might therefore conclude with Stoye's assertion that whilst scribes 'determined the precise wording' of petitions, the majority of their content was based on the testimony of the petitioner.<sup>72</sup>

Issues also arise due to the patchy survival rate of the primary material on which this thesis is based. This is especially the case for the sessions' records. For Staffordshire, which possesses the fullest set of surviving records of all the Midlands' counties, three order books cover the period 1640 to 1667, and there is an almost uninterrupted set of sessions' rolls. Elsewhere, there are almost no surviving records for Northamptonshire prior to the Restoration, but an almost complete set of sessions' rolls from 1660 until the end of the seventeenth century, as well as several order books. In Lincolnshire, a mixture of sessions' rolls and order books survive for the division of Lindsey, but there are few comparable records for the divisions of Kesteven and Holland.<sup>73</sup> Meanwhile, Gloucestershire, Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire and Warwickshire all have surviving order books, but no sessions' rolls. Derbyshire and Worcestershire have some extant rolls, although these are far from complete, and there are no surviving records at all for Rutland. Extant order books for the boroughs of Lincoln, Oxford and Gloucester – which held their own sessions separate from those of the county – have also been examined. The patchy survival rate of the sessions' records hampers any meaningful attempt to determine the precise number of war victims who appealed for relief in most of the counties considered in this thesis. Nevertheless, as we shall see in Chapters 1 and 2, enough pertinent material has survived to shed considerable light on the experiences of war victims and the administration of military relief in the Midlands during this period.

Lastly, due to the constraints in time and space it has not been possible to consider parish relief. Since most overseers' and churchwardens' accounts for this period failed to distinguish between 'widows' and 'war widows', trawling through such records in search of payments to female war victims often proves a frustrating and fruitless task. There are

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<sup>72</sup> Stoye, "Memories of the maimed", p. 210.

<sup>73</sup> The earliest surviving order books for Kesteven and Holland start in 1674. S. Peyton (ed.), *Minutes of Proceedings in Quarter Sessions held for the Parts of Kesteven in the County of Lincoln, 1674-1695* (Lincoln Record Society, 26, 1931); LA, QQS A/1/1; LA, HQS A/2/1.

some notable exceptions. The churchwardens' accounts for the Suffolk parish of Cratfield contain several records of payments to war widows who passed through the village between 1643 and 1646, including two widows whose husbands were 'slayne at Banbury'. They also record payments of 1s apiece to Margaret Myller and Ann Harison, 'ther husbands slayne at Woodstock in Derbyshire', and to '6 poore widows and 7 small children whose fathers wer killed in the warres'.<sup>74</sup> Similarly, the constables' accounts for Upton in Nottinghamshire contain payments to three war widows in 1654, including 2d to a minster's wife whose husband had 'dyed att Worcester feight' three years previous.<sup>75</sup> Whilst this thesis does not deny that hundreds, perhaps thousands, of war widows were likely maintained by parish relief during the mid-seventeenth century, the difficulties involved in recovering evidence of such payments ensures that its focus lies chiefly with the welfare administered at county and national level.

The thesis is split into three parts. Part 1 examines the ways in which relief was administered to war victims during the mid-seventeenth century, both at national and county level. Chapter 1 focuses on the experiences of parliamentary widows from the outbreak of civil war in 1642 until the Restoration in 1660. First, it examines the parliamentary legislation introduced during these years in response to the mounting number of war victims. Paying attention to widows petitioning both at Westminster and in the provinces, it then considers how successful women were at obtaining relief, and how much money they might expect to receive. Chapter 2 pursues similar lines of enquiry, only for royalist widows who petitioned the Crown and county magistrates after 1660.

Part 2 shifts attention away from parliamentary legislation and records of payments to examine the petitions themselves. More specifically, it assesses the language and rhetoric used by petitioners as they sought to fashion themselves as worthy of relief. Chapter 3 examines some of the many petitioning strategies utilised by female war victims, drawing attention to three in particular: female vulnerability, familial responsibility, and wartime activism. In doing so, the chapter considers how the civil wars may have transformed pre-existing petitioning strategies. By comparing the petitions of officers' widows with those of the rank-and-file, the chapter also assesses the

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<sup>74</sup> L. Botelho (ed.), *Churchwardens' Accounts of Cratfield, 1640-1660* (Suffolk Record Society, 42, 1999), pp. 54, 55, 66.

<sup>75</sup> M. Bennett (ed.), *A Nottinghamshire Village in War and Peace: The Accounts of the Constables of Upton, 1640-1666* (Thoroton Society, 39, 1995), p. 90.

impact of social status and military rank on petitioning strategies. Whilst most widows who submitted petitions during this period sought monetary relief, a significant minority desired retribution against their wartime opponents. Chapter 4 examines the petitions of a number of royalist widows to the Convention Parliament in 1660, whose husbands had been executed during the 1640s and 1650s for their perceived loyalty to the royalist cause. These women demanded that the judges and jurors who had presided over their husbands' trials be excluded from the Act of Indemnity and Oblivion and, in some instances, that they be awarded reparation. The chapter considers how the petitioning strategies adopted by these women differed from their counterparts who petitioned for relief, as well as the attitude of the Restoration regime towards private retribution.

Whilst petitions offer an important insight into the experiences of war widows during the mid-seventeenth century, numerous other sources can also be drawn upon, notably private correspondence and contemporary print material. With this in mind, Part 3 seeks to utilise some of these sources in order to consider contemporary attitudes towards war widows. Chapter 5 examines letters of condolence sent to war widows following the deaths of their husbands. Although the nature of these sources requires us to focus on literate women drawn from the gentry and aristocracy, the ways in which contemporaries sought to console widows nonetheless offers a poignant insight into the grief caused by the loss of a spouse, which was undoubtedly shared by women further down the social ladder. Lastly, Chapter 6 assesses how war widows were depicted in print and propaganda. Drawing on a range of print material, including ballads, sermons, tracts and newsbooks, it considers the ways in which widows were represented in print during the mid-seventeenth century, and what purposes these representations served. In particular, the chapter demonstrates how the treatment of war widows became an important component of civil-war propaganda, first between royalists and parliamentarians and, after the First Civil War, between the Presbyterian and Independent factions at Westminster. Overall, the thesis hopes to demonstrate the sheer range of widows' experiences during the civil wars, and to illustrate the determination and courage shown by many of these women in the face of bereavement and adversity.

# Chapter 1. The administration of relief during the civil wars and Interregnum

## 1.1 Introduction

When the opposing armies of Charles I and his Parliament met at the battle of Edgehill on 23 October 1642, few could have predicted the protracted and bloody series of conflicts which would follow. For the previous decade, England had pursued a foreign policy centred on military non-engagement, steadfastly refusing to become embroiled in the dynastic and religious wars that raged across Europe. For some Englishmen and women, the 1630s were celebrated as ‘halcyon days’ of peace.<sup>1</sup> Recent scholarship has dismissed the traditional notion that England’s non-participation in European warfare during the 1630s resulted in the country being ill-prepared to wage war, first against Scotland in 1639, and then with itself three years later. Numerous Englishmen found employment in the ranks of foreign armies during the 1620s and 1630s, and at Edgehill the armies of both king and Parliament boasted hardened veterans of European campaigning.<sup>2</sup> In terms of military care and provision, however, it would soon become apparent that existing welfare strategies were less in need of an overhaul than complete rebuilding.<sup>3</sup>

As the civil wars lengthened and the scale of bloodshed mounted, Parliament passed a number of ordinances during the 1640s and 1650s in an attempt to encourage further enlistment, and to provide support for families torn apart by war. The result was a complex system of relief that operated at parochial, provincial and national level. This chapter seeks to explore the administration of relief from the outbreak of civil war in 1642 until the Restoration in 1660. Although royalist soldiers and widows were afforded some relief during these years (see Chapter 2), the focus of this chapter lies with

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<sup>1</sup> B. Donagan, ‘Halcyon days and the literature of war: England’s military education before 1642’, *Past & Present*, 147 (1995), p. 65.

<sup>2</sup> B. Donagan, *War in England, 1642-1649* (Oxford, 2008), chapter 3; M. Fissel, *English Warfare, 1511-1642* (London, 2001), p. 303; I. Roy, ‘England turned Germany? The aftermath of the civil war in its European context’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 28 (1978), pp. 130-131.

<sup>3</sup> E. Gruber von Arni, *Justice to the Maimed Soldier: Nursing, Medical Care and Welfare for Sick and Wounded Soldiers and their Families during the English Civil Wars and Interregnum, 1642-1660* (Aldershot, 2001), pp. 63-64; B. Donagan, ‘The casualties of war: treatment of the dead and wounded in the English Civil War’, in I. Gentles, J. Morrill and B. Worden (eds), *Soldiers, Writers and Statesmen of the English Revolution* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 114.

Parliament's attempts to provide for the flood of parliamentary war victims during the 1640s and 1650s, and with the resultant policies implemented both at Westminster and in the provinces during these decades. How were existing welfare strategies adapted during the mid-seventeenth century as a result of the outbreak of civil war? How did those who operated welfare systems attempt to cope with the enormous strains of supporting thousands of maimed soldiers, war widows and orphans, and with what success? And what happened to the scores of injured foreign soldiers and their families who served in the parliamentary army?<sup>4</sup> These are some of the questions which this chapter seeks to answer.

## **1.2 Military relief before the civil wars**

Before we can begin to answer these questions, it is first necessary to consider the existing military welfare strategies already established in England prior to the 1640s. As discussed in the introduction, the Elizabethan poor laws of the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries introduced legislation into England and Wales for the relief of maimed servicemen. For the first time, wounded soldiers and sailors were granted the right to petition Justices of the Peace at Quarter Sessions for pensions. Passed in 1593 in response to the war with Spain during the 1580s and 1590s, this nationwide pension scheme represented 'Europe's first state system of benefits for rank and file disabled ex-servicemen'.<sup>5</sup> By 1601, county magistrates were empowered to tax every parish in their respective counties at a weekly rate of no more than 10d. This money was delivered by high constables to county treasurers, who under the authority of the bench distributed it in session to maimed soldiers.<sup>6</sup> Whilst the legislation acknowledged the sacrifices made by servicemen injured in the name of Queen and country, however, it failed to recognise the impact war placed on the families of those killed in battle. Significantly, the legislation failed to extend to the dependants of slain soldiers, who were instead forced to rely on parish relief and means of informal support for their survival.

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<sup>4</sup> The roles played by foreign soldiers during the civil wars is examined in M. Stoye, *Soldiers and Strangers: An Ethnic History of the English Civil Wars* (New Haven, 2005).

<sup>5</sup> G. Hudson, 'Ex-servicemen, war widows and the English county pension scheme, 1593-1679', (D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1995), pp. 2, 17-18.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

Following Elizabeth's death in 1603, England enjoyed an extended period of international peace. Much to the exasperation of many of his subjects, Elizabeth's successor James I refused to partake in the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648), failing even to send military assistance to his daughter, Elizabeth, when she and her husband Frederick, the Elector Palatine, were deposed from the Bohemian throne by Imperial forces in 1620.<sup>7</sup> Whilst caution and pacification had been hallmarks of English foreign policy under James, the succession of his son Charles in 1625 prompted a dramatic shift in direction. In 1625 an English naval force led by Sir Edward Cecil unsuccessfully attacked the Spanish port of Cadiz, whilst two years later a second force led by the duke of Buckingham attacked the French island of Ile de Ré, with equally disastrous consequences. As well as tarnishing the reputation of the duke and inflicting national humiliation, the two campaigns ended with thousands of English fatalities and many wounded.<sup>8</sup> As the bedraggled survivors returned home, strains began to appear in the welfare system designed to maintain them. In 1632 the Hampshire bench informed the Privy Council that 'the number of mayhmed souldiers are soe much increased since the late accons of Cades and Rhee that wee have more penconers already then money to pay them'.<sup>9</sup> As a maritime county containing the naval base at Portsmouth, Hampshire undoubtedly felt the impact of the two campaigns more acutely than most. Nevertheless, the bench's petition provided the government with a clear indication of the shortcomings of current military welfare strategies, in a country which had previously enjoyed over twenty years of uninterrupted peace.

As well as petitioning county magistrates for relief, veterans of the Ile de Ré campaign also appealed directly to the Privy Council in London.<sup>10</sup> Significantly, so too did a number of widows. Jane Denton's husband was slain serving as a drum-major under the command of Colonel Borrowes, whilst her son, Lancelot, was dangerously wounded after receiving a shot through the shoulder. In 1630, Jane requested the Privy Council to admit her son to Sutton's Hospital in London, and for a yearly pension to maintain her five children.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, in 1633 Margaret Waterton petitioned for her husband's arrears

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<sup>7</sup> C. Durston, *James I* (London, 1993), pp. 45, 49, 50.

<sup>8</sup> R. Cust, *Charles I: A Political Life* (Harlow, 2005), pp. 50, 68; A. Bellany and T. Cogswell, *The Murder of King James I* (New Haven, 2015), p. 284; T. Cogswell, 'John Felton, popular political culture and the assassination of the duke of Buckingham', *The Historical Journal*, 49 (2006), p. 364.

<sup>9</sup> TNA, SP 16/220/17 (petition of the Hampshire bench).

<sup>10</sup> See for example TNA, SP 16/100/139 (certificate of John O' Moeny); SP 16/120/1 (petition of Deacons Bull); SP 16/158/72 (petition of Thomas Sherley).

<sup>11</sup> TNA, SP 16/181/130 (petition of Jane Denton).

of pay, who had been killed serving as a master-gunner on-board the *Seaflower*. Margaret complained that she had received no part of her husband's wages, nor 'any releife in pittie of the losse of her husband as other widdowes had'.<sup>12</sup> Her assertion that the government was compensating war widows in the wake of the Ile de Ré campaign is borne out in a further petition submitted to the Privy Council in 1632. The supplicant, Thomas Farryer, was the executor of the will of Martha Roberts, widow of Captain John Roberts, who was 'slayne... in the Isle of Rees'. According to Farryer's petition, Martha had been granted £300 from the Crown following her husband's death, of which £50 was paid upfront. Now liable for Martha's debts, Farryer requested the remaining £250 in order to appease his creditors, and to provide for her three surviving daughters.<sup>13</sup>

By the time that civil war broke out in 1642, the county pension scheme for maimed ex-servicemen had been in operation in England and Wales for over forty years. The lack of a centralised welfare system ensured that the distribution of relief during the first four decades of the seventeenth century was delegated to the localities, overseen by county magistrates and parish officers. Although some women were awarded relief by the Crown in the wake of the disastrous Ile de Ré campaign, such relief appears to have been sporadic, and granted only to officers' widows, rather than the wives of common sailors. Denied access to county and national welfare, most war widows instead relied on parish relief and means of informal support for their survival. This was to change in the autumn of 1642, when the battle of Edgehill prompted a dramatic change in attitudes towards military welfare.

### **1.3 Westminster and military welfare**

On 24 October 1642, one day after the battle of Edgehill, Parliament passed an ordinance confirming the award of 'competent maintenance and allowance' to maimed parliamentary soldiers, as well as to the widows and orphans of those slain. Despite conveying overtones of moral responsibility towards war victims, the ordinance was a self-admitted enlistment strategy, designed for the 'better encouragement' of labouring men to join the ranks of the parliamentary army. Concessions were also made to men and women of higher social standing. Parliament promised that should 'any persons of

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<sup>12</sup> TNA, SP 16/247/45 (petition of Margaret Waterton).

<sup>13</sup> TNA, SP 16/256/83 (petition of Thomas Farryer).

estate' be killed in action, they would 'take the estates, wives and children of such persons into their protection'. Advancing notions of honour, loyalty and self-sacrifice, Parliament assured its recruits 'upon all occasions [to] let their children and posterity know the respect they beare to the memory of those who have spent their lives in the service of the Church and Commonwealth'.<sup>14</sup>

Out of this legislation, Parliament established the Committee for Sick and Maimed Soldiers the following month. This committee was tasked with maintaining London's permanent military hospital – the Savoy – as well as granting gratuities and pensions to parliamentary war victims.<sup>15</sup> The administration and financing of the committee has been extensively analysed by Eric Gruber von Arni.<sup>16</sup> During the early stages of the war the committee received sporadic payments from the treasury and voluntary contributions held in London's churches. Through these funds, it awarded gratuities to 80 widows whose husbands were slain at Brentford in November 1642.<sup>17</sup> As the war progressed over the following year, however, it soon became apparent that additional revenue was required to maintain the escalating number of war victims. In response, in October 1643 Parliament passed an ordinance for levying £4,000 on the City of London and fifteen counties under its control for the relief of maimed soldiers, widows and orphans. High constables were charged with collecting and delivering the money to Cordwainers' Hall in London, where the Committee for Sick and Maimed Soldiers oversaw its distribution.<sup>18</sup> When this ordinance lapsed in summer 1644, Parliament ordered that the committee receive a monthly portion out of the excise tax to cover its expenditure. In 1653 the committee was abolished and reformed under the title of the Hospitals' Committee.<sup>19</sup> Its responsibilities remained the same as before, however, and by April 1659 more than 2500 maimed soldiers and 4000 widows and orphans were receiving pensions from the committee.<sup>20</sup>

Despite the committee's efforts, the sheer volume of war victims and the limited resources at Parliament's disposal ensured that many women missed out on obtaining

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<sup>14</sup> *CJ*, vol. 2, p. 820 (24 October, 1642); *LJ*, vol. 5, p. 421 (24 October, 1642).

<sup>15</sup> A second permanent military hospital was established in London at Ely House in 1648.

<sup>16</sup> Gruber von Arni, *Justice to the Maimed Soldier*, chapter 4.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 64-65, 68.

<sup>18</sup> C. Firth and R. Rait (eds), *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642-1660* (London, 1911), vol. 1, pp. 328-330.

<sup>19</sup> Gruber von Arni, *Justice to the Maimed Soldier*, pp. 70, 65-66.

<sup>20</sup> *CJ*, vol. 7, p. 627 (7 April, 1659).



relief. As a result, dissatisfied parliamentary widows gathered at Westminster Palace during the second half of the 1640s to voice their grievances and solicit MPs for welfare. Their presence was a cause for alarm for some MPs, many of whom remembered only too well the violent demonstrations of August 1643, when thousands of women had appeared before Parliament to demand a peaceful resolution to the war.<sup>21</sup> Amongst the peace protesters had been numerous soldiers' wives and widows, who were reported to 'cry out for their slain and imprisoned husbands'.<sup>22</sup> The mass attendance of war widows at Westminster prompted several attempts throughout the 1640s to restrict their access to Parliament. In August 1646, the Commons ordered £10,000 to be granted from the excise for the relief of female war victims, on the condition that they 'remain quiet at their houses, and not attend at the doors of the House'. Those who failed to do so risked losing 'the advantage of this intended relief'.<sup>23</sup> Yet by June 1647 much of this money remained unpaid. Alarmed by the increasing number of widows gathered outside Parliament, the following month MPs issued a sterner warning that should they continue 'coming to the doors of the Houses, the House will take order severely to punish such insolencies and contempts'.<sup>24</sup> This order was aimed specifically at wagoners' widows whose husbands had probably served in the earl of Essex's army, which had been routed at Lostwithiel in 1644.<sup>25</sup> Meanwhile, in September 1648, following the culmination of the Second Civil War, the Lords threatened that any widow who solicited Parliament 'with their clamours, and frequent the doors and passages to the Houses, to the dishonour and disturbance of them in their proceedings', risked being denied relief.<sup>26</sup>

Most of the women who received pensions from the Committee for Sick and Maimed Soldiers probably resided either in, or in the vicinity of, the City of London.<sup>27</sup> Yet Parliament also received numerous petitions from officers' widows during the 1640s and 1650s, some of whom had travelled great distances to submit their supplications. Often seeking their husbands' arrears of pay, these women usually proved well-informed as to how much money was owed them. After her husband was slain at Colchester in

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<sup>21</sup> P. Higgins, 'The reactions of women, with special reference to women petitioners', in B. Manning (ed.), *Politics, Religion and the English Civil War* (London, 1973), pp. 189-197; A. Hughes, *Gender and the English Revolution* (Abingdon, 2012), p. 57.

<sup>22</sup> HMC, *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Marquis of Bath* (London, 1904), vol. 1, p. 17.

<sup>23</sup> *CJ*, vol. 4, p. 650 (20 August 1646).

<sup>24</sup> *CJ*, vol. 5, p. 195 (2 June, 1647); *CJ*, vol. 5, p. 245 (16 July, 1647).

<sup>25</sup> *CJ*, vol. 4, p. 707 (28 October, 1646); *CJ*, vol. 4, p. 738 (4 December, 1646).

<sup>26</sup> *LJ*, vol. 10, p. 516 (28 September, 1648).

<sup>27</sup> Gruber von Arni, *Justice to the Maimed Soldier*, p. 72.

1648, for instance, Katherine Needham noted in her petition to the Lords that he was owed £2796 11s for his services.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, the widow of Captain Henry Bowen noted in her petition to the Commons in 1653 that ‘there is the sum of £760 in arrear of pay to him’.<sup>29</sup> Determining how successful petitioners were in recovering their husbands’ arrears or obtaining relief from Parliament is often difficult to assess. A cursory glance through the parliamentary *Journals* reveals orders of payments to dozens of officers’ widows during the 1640s and 1650s, many of which amounted to hundreds of pounds. Since the *Journals* rarely indicate whether these sums of money were ever actually received by widows, however, they can often only be used as evidence of Parliament’s *intention* to relieve war victims, rather than genuine payments. Given the problems Parliament experienced raising revenue during the civil wars, as well as the number of war victims requiring relief, it is likely that many women were forced to wait years, if not indefinitely, to receive the payments promised them.<sup>30</sup>

How much money widows could expect to receive from Parliament depended largely on their social standing and their husbands’ military rank. Predictably, the largest sums were granted to the wives of parliamentary commanders. In 1648 Parliament awarded the sum of £5,000 to Katherine, Lady Brooke, out of the sequestered estates of the royalist earl of Antrim. Katherine’s husband, Robert Greville, second baron Brooke, had served as commander of the West Midlands Association from December 1642 until his death at Lichfield in 1643. Her household accounts reveal that by 1651 this sum had been paid in full.<sup>31</sup> Lady Brooke was far from the only parliamentarian widow to receive the revenues from confiscated royalist estates, and throughout the 1640s Parliament frequently ordered relief to officers’ widows from the treasury of the Committee for Compounding at Goldsmiths’ Hall in London, often in lieu of their husbands’ arrears. Widows were even encouraged to participate in the process by identifying and informing the authorities of un-confiscated royalist estates, usually in return for a share of the composition fine.<sup>32</sup> At the lower end of the social ladder, Parliament issued considerably smaller payments to officers’ widows to cover the costs of their husbands’ funerals. In

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<sup>28</sup> PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/267 (petition of Katherine Needham).

<sup>29</sup> PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/282 (petition of Anne Bowen).

<sup>30</sup> Gruber von Arni, *Justice to the Maimed Soldier*, p. 72.

<sup>31</sup> A. Hopper, “‘To condole with me on the Commonwealth’s loss’: the widows and orphans of Parliament’s military commanders”, in D. Appleby and A. Hopper (eds), *Battle-Scarred: Mortality, Medical Care and Military Welfare in the British Civil Wars* (Manchester, forthcoming); A. Hughes, ‘Greville, Robert, second Baron Brooke of Beauchamps Court (1607-1643)’, *ODNB*.

<sup>32</sup> See for example *CJ*, vol. 4, p. 525 (28 April, 1646).

December 1646 Susanna Bassett was awarded £10 to bury her spouse, Major Bussy Bassett, whilst three years later the widow of Captain James Farrett was awarded £20 for the same purpose.<sup>33</sup> In one instance, Parliament also granted money for the burial of a war widow, in lieu of her husband's arrears of pay. In January 1648 the Commons granted £10 to the 'friends' of Magdalen Marcus, whose husband, Captain-Lieutenant James Marcus, had been slain at Gloucester in 1643, and 'who hath not left anything to bury her'.<sup>34</sup> By paying for such burials, Parliament was likely attempting to avoid accusations of neglect, especially towards its deceased officers and their widows. As we will see in Chapter 6, royalist polemicists were prone to exaggerating Parliament's mistreatment of its war victims, and reports of impoverished parliamentary widows unable to bury their husbands would only have provided further ammunition for Parliament's opponents.

The execution of Charles I in January 1649 and the subsequent sale of his property and goods provided Parliament with additional and much needed revenue. Most of the money raised was used to fund the expanding of the navy, but some found its way into the hands of war victims.<sup>35</sup> Unfortunately for Parliament, Charles's death failed to bring an end to the civil wars, and the late 1640s and early 1650s saw renewed fighting between parliamentarians and royalists, first in Ireland and Scotland, and culminating at Worcester in September 1651. Each of these engagements ended in decisive victories for Parliament, yet this military success was soon offset by the escalating number of war victims in need of relief.<sup>36</sup> Despite this, Parliament remained committed to upholding its pledge to provide for war widows. In December 1651 the Commons granted gratuities to six officers' widows whose husbands had been slain at Worcester, ranging from £20 to £200.<sup>37</sup> Four months later, a further four officers' widows were awarded one-off payments of between £20 and £40.<sup>38</sup> Another widow to receive relief after Worcester was Elizabeth Guise, whose husband had been hanged in the city by royalist soldiers after he

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<sup>33</sup> *LJ*, vol. 8, p. 70 (27 December, 1645); *CJ*, vol. 4, p. 390 (30 December, 1645); *CJ*, vol. 6, p. 217 (26 May, 1649). See also *CJ*, vol. 4, p. 410 (17 January, 1646); *LJ*, vol. 8, p. 464 (14 August, 1646).

<sup>34</sup> *CJ*, vol. 5, p. 426 (11 January, 1648); S. Roberts (ed.), *The Cromwell Association Online Directory of Parliamentary Army Officers*, [www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/cromwell-army-officers](http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/cromwell-army-officers) [date accessed 18 August 2017].

<sup>35</sup> J. Brotton, *The Sale of the Late King's Goods: Charles I and His Art Collection* (Basingstoke, 2006), pp. 211, 240-241.

<sup>36</sup> On 20 November 1651 alone the Commons considered the petitions of 95 officers' widows, many of whom had lost their husbands during the campaigns in Scotland and Ireland. *CJ*, vol. 7, pp. 38-40 (20 November, 1651).

<sup>37</sup> *CJ*, vol. 7, p. 51 (16 December, 1651).

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117 (7 April, 1652).

was discovered passing intelligence to the parliamentary army. Shortly after the battle Cromwell wrote to William Lenthall, Speaker of the House of Commons, on Elizabeth's behalf. He noted that her husband had been 'barbarously put to death by the enemy', and that Elizabeth 'deserveth more commiseration'. This evidently had the desired effect, for the Commons soon granted her £200 for her relief.<sup>39</sup> This was one of several letters written by Cromwell to Lenthall during the civil wars on behalf of war victims.<sup>40</sup>

Having solicited Parliament on behalf of war widows during his employment as a parliamentary commander, Cromwell found himself the recipient of their supplications after becoming Lord Protector in December 1653. Many of these petitions were submitted on behalf of officers' widows whose husbands had died campaigning in Ireland and Scotland, although in September 1654 Thomasine Bennett petitioned Cromwell on account of the death of her husband, Captain William Bennett, at Brentford twelve years earlier.<sup>41</sup> In June 1650 Parliament had granted Thomasine a weekly pension of 22s out of the treasury at Goldsmiths Hall, but four years later the widow complained that this had been suspended until she procured an order for payment from the Council of State. The petition was referred to the Council, who in January 1656 ordered that her pension be continued.<sup>42</sup>

Throughout the civil wars and Interregnum, Parliament remained committed to upholding its pledge to provide for the widows of parliamentary soldiers. Between 1642 and 1660 pensions were awarded to female war victims by the Committee for Sick and Maimed Soldiers and its successor the Hospitals' Committee, whilst efforts were also made to reimburse officers' widows for their husbands' arrears of pay. In order to fully appreciate the extent of parliamentary military welfare, however, it is necessary to shift attention from the centre to the localities. As this chapter will now demonstrate, the relief afforded to parliamentary war victims at Westminster during the 1640s and 1650s operated in tandem with a localised system of welfare administered in the provinces by parliamentary county committees and county benches. Drawing on evidence from the

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<sup>39</sup> J. Willis Bund, *The Civil War in Worcestershire, 1642-1646, and the Scottish Invasion of 1651* (Gloucester, 1979), pp. 238, 255; *CJ*, vol. 7, p. 13 (6 September, 1651); H. Cary, *Memorials of the Great Civil War in England from 1646 to 1652* (London, 1842), vol. 2, p. 378.

<sup>40</sup> Cary, *Memorials of the Great Civil War*, vol. 2, p. 243; Bod. Lib, MS Tanner 56, f. 241; BL, TT E.460[28], O. Cromwell, *A Full Relation of the Great Victory Obtained by the Parliament's Forces* (London, 1648), p. 5. The parliamentary commander Sir Thomas Fairfax also wrote to Lenthall on behalf of war widows. See Bod. Lib, MS Tanner 57, f. 411; MS Tanner 58, f. 740; MS Tanner 59, f. 750.

<sup>41</sup> TNA, SP 18/76/1 (petition of Thomasine Bennett).

<sup>42</sup> *CJ*, vol. 6, p. 428 (22 June, 1650); *CSPD 1655-1656*, p. 150.

Midlands' records, the following two sections examine how military relief was administered in the localities during these decades, and to whom it was administered. They also draw attention to some of the difficulties experienced by provincial office-holders tasked with maintaining thousands of war victims.

#### **1.4 County committees and military welfare**

Parliamentary county committees were formed in almost every county in England and Wales during the winter of 1642-3, in response to the need to direct and oversee the local war effort.<sup>43</sup> Whilst the structure and operation of each committee varied from county to county, their responsibilities remained broadly similar: committees were charged with raising and financing troops, collecting taxes, and overseeing the defence of the county. They were also responsible for confiscating the estates of royalist delinquents. Whilst county committees have been studied by historians interested in, amongst other things, the operation of the parliamentary war effort and the relationship between central and local government, little attention has been paid to the role they played in issuing relief to war victims.<sup>44</sup>

One possible reason for this historical oversight is the patchy survival rate of pertinent material. In Warwickshire, the problem lies not so much in the scarcity of surviving documentation but in its overwhelming abundance. As well as hundreds of loose papers, letters, orders and warrants, the accounts of the committee treasurer and county commanders have also survived.<sup>45</sup> Elsewhere, petitions submitted on behalf of war victims to the committees of Nottinghamshire, Gloucestershire and Derbyshire have survived, although of these three counties only Gloucestershire has any meaningful sets of accounts. In Staffordshire, meanwhile, several extant account books and an order book provide some insight into the committee's expenditure towards war victims during this period, but no petitions have survived.<sup>46</sup> Nothing pertinent for the purpose of this study

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<sup>43</sup> C. Holmes, 'Centre and locality in civil-war England', in J. Adamson (ed.), *The English Civil War: Conflicts and Contexts, 1640-42* (Basingstoke, 1988), pp. 155-156.

<sup>44</sup> See for example J. Morrill, *Cheshire, 1630-1660: County Government and Society during the English Revolution* (Oxford, 1974); A. Fletcher, *A County Community in Peace and War: Sussex, 1600-1660* (London, 1975); A. Hughes, *Politics, Society and Civil War in Warwickshire, 1620-1660* (Cambridge, 1987); A. Warmington, *Civil War, Interregnum and Restoration in Gloucestershire, 1640-1672* (Woodbridge, 1997).

<sup>45</sup> Hughes, *Warwickshire*, p. 169.

<sup>46</sup> D. Pennington and I. Roots (eds), *The Committee at Stafford, 1643-1645: The Order Book of the Staffordshire County Committee* (Manchester, 1957).

has been identified for the committees of Herefordshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire or Worcestershire.

Table 1.1 illustrates the number of war widows and maimed soldiers who petitioned the county committees of Derbyshire, Gloucestershire, Nottinghamshire and Warwickshire between 1643 and 1649, whose petitions have survived. Although the total number of petitioners is unimpressive, it is noteworthy that widows comprised less than a third of the total number of petitioners across the four counties. Nine claimants acknowledged that either they or their husbands had already received some form of relief from their respective county committees prior to submitting their petitions. Claimants in Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Warwickshire typically addressed their petitions to the entire committee – ‘To the Hon[ora]ble Comittee of Parliam[en]t resident in Nottingham’, for example – rather than individual committeemen. In contrast, petitioners in Gloucestershire usually addressed their supplications solely to the governor of the city of Gloucester, Edward Massey. Massey’s military responsibilities may have made him an obvious choice for petitioners, especially since many appear to have served in the city under his command.<sup>47</sup>

**Table 1.1 The number of war victims who petitioned county committees, 1643-1649.**

	<b>Soldiers</b>	<b>Widows</b>
Derbyshire	12	10
Gloucestershire	7	4
Nottinghamshire	21	9
Warwickshire	13	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>53 (70%)</b>	<b>23 (30%)</b>

Source: Derbyshire, TNA, SP 28/226; Gloucestershire, TNA, SP 28/228 and SP 28/229; Nottinghamshire, TNA, SP 28/240 and SP 28/241; Warwickshire, TNA, SP 28/247 and SP 28/248.

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<sup>47</sup> For Massey’s career see A. Warmington, ‘Massey, Sir Edward (1604x9–1674)’, *ODNB*; R. Massie Collins, *Major General Sir Edward Massie: A Cavalier Among the Roundheads?* (Broadway, 2002).

Few petitioners listed their civilian occupation or military rank. The majority had probably served in the rank-and-file, although claimants who had served as officers or non-commissioned officers included one ensign, four corporals and two sergeants. Whilst little can therefore be said regarding the social status of claimants, a pattern is discernible when we examine the regiments in which they served. The overwhelming majority of soldiers who formed the subject of these petitions belonged to county garrisons and regiments, rather than transient field armies. In Warwickshire, for instance, more than one-third of the soldiers had served in the garrison at Warwick, under its governor Colonel John Bridges. Another soldier had served under Thomas Hunt, governor of Astley and a captain in the county force; one under Matthew Bridges, a captain in the Warwick foot; and another under Captain Waldive Willington, governor of Tamworth from 1643-46.<sup>48</sup> In Gloucestershire, meanwhile, all of the petitioners who cited specific military action referred to engagements which had occurred within the county, and the same is true for all but one of the petitions submitted to the Nottinghamshire committee. This is not to suggest that all of the petitioners were necessarily local – indeed, at least one petition submitted to the Nottinghamshire committee was done so by a soldier who resided outside of the county – but it does indicate that the service of these men was predominantly provincial rather than national.<sup>49</sup>

Around 80 percent of the dated petitions within this sample were submitted between 1646 and 1648. This coincided with the culmination and aftermath of the First Civil War, when provincial forces and garrisons were being disbanded, and committees across the country were attempting to settle soldiers' arrears of pay.<sup>50</sup> Petitioners often cited that they or their husbands had received little or no pay during their time in the army, whilst some displayed intimate knowledge regarding the outstanding sums owed them. One widow from Nottinghamshire complained to the committee that at the time of her husband's death, he:

was behynd for 23 weeks pay as a comon souldgier vli viis iiijd [£5 7s 4d], & for sixteene weeks pay at 7s p[er] the weeke 6li 13s as a corporrall, and for 22 weeks pay at 10s vjd p[er] the weeke as a sargant all w[hi]ch amounts to xxijli xis iiijd [£23 11s 4d].<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> TNA, SP 28/247, 248; Hughes, *Warwickshire*, pp. 178, 196.

<sup>49</sup> TNA, SP 28/241/531 (petition of William Mofett).

<sup>50</sup> Hughes, *Warwickshire*, p. 208; J. Morrill, 'Mutiny and discontent in English provincial armies, 1645-1647', *Past & Present*, 56 (1972), pp. 49-74.

<sup>51</sup> TNA, SP 28/241/595 (petition of Winifred Badge).

Although the widow acknowledged to having already received £10 from the committee, the rest of her husband's arrears remained unpaid. In a second example from Nottinghamshire, the mother of Thomas Mosley noted that there was 'a greate deale of money' owed to her son in outstanding wages prior to his death. Annexed to her petition was a second document setting out her son's military service and arrears, from the time he enlisted as a foot soldier in the garrison at Nottingham on 2 December 1643, to the time he was slain during a skirmish at Trent Bridge on 19 April 1645. The document noted that her son had received a total of £7 11s during his sixteen months of service, and that he remained £40 3s 4d in arrears.<sup>52</sup> These claimants were clearly well informed, and had likely received this information from their relatives' commanding officers. Along with her petition and record of her son's service, the mother of Thomas Mosley submitted a third document to the committee; a certificate signed by her son's regimental officer George Hutchinson, confirming Thomas's service.<sup>53</sup> For all her efforts, however, she received a gratuity of just 40s in April 1647.

Whilst many petitioners cited outstanding wages owed to either themselves or their husbands, few claimants specifically requested these be paid. Petitioners were far more likely to request monetary relief (expressed in various ways, including 'some maintenance'), rather than their arrears of pay. Evidently, the issue of outstanding wages was being utilised by petitioners as a strategy in an attempt to elicit some form of payment from the committees. Elsewhere, petitioners also requested material goods such as bedding, firewood and livestock, whilst John Barrett, a maimed soldier from Gloucestershire, asked for 'some cloths (both linin and woolin) speedily that I may not perish for want therof'.<sup>54</sup> Other supplicants requested money to cover the costs of travel, either to friends and family, or, in the case of one Derbyshire soldier, to one of the military hospitals in London. One widow in Nottinghamshire was permitted to enjoy her house rent free, whilst another in Gloucestershire requested a surgeon to treat her lame leg.<sup>55</sup> For these petitioners, military relief was evidently viewed as a contribution towards one's livelihood rather than a full living. Meanwhile, at least one war widow requested monetary relief as repayment for her own wartime services, rather than that of her

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<sup>52</sup> TNA, SP 28/240/733, 734 (petition and certificate of Widow Mosley).

<sup>53</sup> TNA, SP 28/240/735 (certificate of Widow Mosley).

<sup>54</sup> TNA, SP 28/228/361 (petition of John Barrett).

<sup>55</sup> TNA, SP 28/226/430 (petition of William Bullivant); SP 28/241/565 (petition of Widow Robinson); SP 28/228/667 (petition of Jean Harris).



husband. Two years after Daniel Whyte was slain at Banbury in 1644, his widow Hester petitioned the Warwickshire committee to reimburse her expenses when she had tended to two maimed parliamentary soldiers after Edgehill. According to her petition, the soldiers had resided with Hester for three months, ‘she being constrayned many tymes to be up night & day w[i]th them’. In April 1646 the committee awarded her a gratuity of 20s.<sup>56</sup>

Table 1.2 illustrates the mean one-off payments granted to petitioners. Due to the modest sample of extant petitions, these figures need to be treated with caution. The amount awarded to each claimant was usually recorded beneath or in the margin of their petition, often accompanied with the signatures of between one and five committeemen who approved the payment. Since almost every supplicant considered in this sample received a payment from their respective committee, it would appear that only the successful petitions were retained. It is therefore impossible to determine how many petitioners (if any) were denied relief. Despite these caveats, it is striking that in each county female petitioners received less than their male counterparts.

**Table 1.2 The mean payments made to petitioners, 1643-1649 (the figures in brackets indicate the number of recorded payments).**

	<b>Soldiers</b>	<b>Widows</b>
Derbyshire	37s (11) <sup>57</sup>	23s (9)
Gloucestershire	33s (6)	21s (4)
Nottinghamshire	26s (12)	22s (8)
Warwickshire	31s (13)	-

Source: Derbyshire, TNA, SP 28/226; Gloucestershire, TNA, SP 28/228 and SP 28/229; Nottinghamshire, TNA, SP 28/240 and SP 28/241; Warwickshire, TNA, SP 28/247 and SP 28/248.

<sup>56</sup> TNA, SP 16/539/169 (petition of Hester Whyte).

<sup>57</sup> This excludes the payment of £8 to one James Leech, a soldier in Sir John Gell’s company, in 1647. This sum was twice as much as the next highest amount awarded by the Derbyshire committee. TNA, SP 28/226/319 (petition of James Leech).

As well as the petitions submitted by war victims, evidence of the care afforded by county committees to parliamentary soldiers and their families can be found in treasurers' account books and orders of payment issued by committeemen. These records further reveal that wounded soldiers and widows received gratuities from committees throughout the First Civil War, although such payments to widows in particular were infrequent and often meagre in size. In Gloucestershire, for instance, the accounts of the committee treasurer Thomas Blayney covering the period from March 1643 to October 1644 record payments to just four widows, including £2 12s 6d to Anne Morgan, 'whose husband was slaine in the seidge' of Gloucester.<sup>58</sup> Elsewhere, Thomas Basnet's accounts for the Warwickshire county committee from March 1643 to June 1646 record one-off payments to just four war widows, ranging from 1s 6d to £1.<sup>59</sup> Another four widows were recorded receiving weekly payments of 2s 6d in lieu of their husbands' arrears, including Goodwife Ellis, whose husband was slain at Banbury in 1644. Ellis first appears in Basnet's accounts on 28 September 1644, when she was awarded 10s towards burying her husband, and was still receiving weekly payments from the committee as late as May 1647.<sup>60</sup> In Nottinghamshire, meanwhile, Mary Alcock was one of at least three widows who received regular payments from the committee in lieu of their husbands' arrears. By February 1645 Mary was receiving a weekly sum of 2s following the death of her husband at Trent Bridge, and she was still receiving payments from the county committee in October 1648.<sup>61</sup>

In dispensing military relief, it is perhaps significant that many of the committeemen combined their administrative duties during the 1640s with positions in the county forces. Of the thirteen committeemen in Warwickshire who endorsed payments to petitioners, eight served as officers in the local regiments.<sup>62</sup> In Nottinghamshire, meanwhile, at least seven of the fifteen committeemen who signed petitions played an active military role during the First Civil War. Admittedly the most prevalent amongst them was Nicholas Charlton – a relatively obscure figure who was never employed in a military capacity – yet on the whole the evidence suggests that the

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<sup>58</sup> TNA, SP 28/129, Part 5.

<sup>59</sup> TNA, SP 28/137, Parts 2 and 3.

<sup>60</sup> TNA, SP 28/137, Part 7.

<sup>61</sup> For payments to Mary Alcock in February 1645 see TNA, SP 28/241/166 and 174. For payments in October 1648 see SP 28/241/1180 and 1184. Mary appears to have received payments from the committee on an *ad hoc* basis, often receiving a number of weeks' pay in one instalment.

<sup>62</sup> They were Thomas Willoughby, John Bridges, William Purefoy, Gamaliel Purefoy, Peter Burgoyne, John Barker, Mathew Bridges and William Colemore.

distribution of military relief was personal.<sup>63</sup> Committeemen were likely to have known many of the victims who petitioned for relief, who in some instances would have served under their command. In 1647, for example, George Hutchinson was one of two Nottinghamshire committeemen who authorised the payment of 10s to a widow whose husband had served in his own regiment.<sup>64</sup>

Despite playing an important role in the administration of military relief, the relationship between provincial authorities and war victims at times proved acrimonious. In November 1643, Parliament established the Committee for Taking the Accounts of the Kingdom. Based at Cornhill in London, the Committee was tasked with auditing the accounts of the county committees. To aid its task, subcommittees were established in each county. The personnel appointed to these subcommittees differed to those who sat on the county committees, and in some counties tensions arose between the two.<sup>65</sup> In August 1645, Isabell Pont, widow of Major Abraham Pont, accused the Warwickshire subcommittee of confiscating her husband's accounts in a ploy to avoid paying his arrears of pay. In a petition to the central Committee at London, she noted:

And when shee was a suiter for her husbands arrears w[hi]ch are greate, the Comittee for takeing the Accompts of Warwickshire, sent for her husbands clarke and tooke from him her husbands booke of account and all papers belonging to his troope, by which meanes shee canot learne what is due unto him, and in the meane time shee is ready to famish.<sup>66</sup>

Given her husband's association with the Warwickshire county committee – he had, after all, served as an officer in the county forces – Isabell may have found herself a victim of the ongoing feud between the county committee and the accounts subcommittee, which proved to be particularly rancorous in Warwickshire after the creation of the latter in the summer of 1644.<sup>67</sup> Her complaints were eventually resolved, however, and in August 1647 Parliament ordered the payment of £400 to Isabell out of the funds of the Committee

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<sup>63</sup> They were James Chadwick, Joseph Widmerpool, George Hutchinson, Francis Pierrepont, Francis Thornagh, Gervase Lomax and John Mason. For the composition of the Nottinghamshire county committee see A. Wood, *Nottinghamshire in the Civil War* (Oxford, 1937), pp. 124-134.

<sup>64</sup> TNA, SP 28/240/731 (petition of Jane Barton).

<sup>65</sup> D. Pennington, 'The accounts of the kingdom, 1642-1649', in F. Fisher (ed.), *Essays in the Economic and Social History of Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1961), pp. 182-203.

<sup>66</sup> TNA, SP 16/510/82 (petition of Isabell Pont).

<sup>67</sup> Hughes, *Warwickshire*, pp. 215-219, 238-247; Pennington, 'The accounts of the kingdom', pp. 195-197; D. Mosler, 'The "other civil war": internecine politics in the Warwickshire county committees, 1642-1659', *Midland History*, 6 (1981), pp. 58-71. Pont was slain near Pershore, Worcestershire in November 1644. P. Tennant, *Edgehill and Beyond: The People's War in the South Midlands, 1642-1645* (Stroud, 1992), p. 203.

for the Advance of Money at Haberdashers' Hall, as settlement for her husband's arrears.<sup>68</sup>

Meanwhile, in 1646 the Warwickshire county committee became embroiled in a dispute with the Staffordshire bench regarding the treatment of Corporal John Peacock, a parliamentarian soldier wounded at Banbury. Peacock had petitioned the Warwickshire committee for a pension in October that year, noting that he was disabled to labour for his living. In a letter to the Staffordshire bench that month, the committee acknowledged that whilst Peacock was worthy of relief, 'It is out of our capacities to satisfy his desires... because it appeares to us that many yeares before his engagem[en]t in this service hee was an inhabitant of Kings Swinford w[i]thin yo[u]r county'.<sup>69</sup> Basnet's accounts reveal that on 30 October the Warwickshire committee had awarded Peacock £3 for his arrears of pay, but they were clearly unwilling to expend an annual pension on him if it could be avoided.<sup>70</sup>

The committee's demands received short shrift from the Staffordshire bench. Whilst no responding correspondence has survived, a second letter sent from the Warwickshire committee in April 1647 reiterating Peacock's eligibility for relief indicates that their initial letter was either ignored or rebuked.<sup>71</sup> The Staffordshire bench no doubt reasoned that since Peacock had taken up arms in Warwickshire, where he had served in the county forces under Colonel Thomas Willoughby, his welfare remained that county's responsibility.<sup>72</sup> Refusing to back down, the Warwickshire committee noted that they would gladly relieve Peacock 'had he beene resident within our county when hee first engaged', according to the terms of the ordinance. Since he was a resident of Staffordshire, however, they again requested 'that hee may bee the subject of yo[u]r compassions at yo[u]r next Q[uarte]r sessions'.<sup>73</sup> Although no further documents survive from this episode, the correspondence between these two administrative bodies demonstrates the desire of the authorities within each county to protect their own resources. Despite expressing sympathy towards Peacock, neither the Warwickshire

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<sup>68</sup> *CJ*, vol. 5, p. 281 (21 August, 1647); *LJ*, vol. 9, p. 399 (23 August, 1647).

<sup>69</sup> SRO, Q/SR/260//2 (correspondence regarding Corporal John Peacock).

<sup>70</sup> TNA, SP 28/137 Part 2.

<sup>71</sup> SRO, Q/SR/260/1 (correspondence regarding Corporal John Peacock).

<sup>72</sup> An order for payment in the Warwickshire county committee's papers notes that Peacock had served as 'a corporall under Collonel Willoughby'. This was probably Thomas Willoughby, a committeeman and colonel of foot in the county forces. TNA, SP 28/248/898; Hughes, *Warwickshire*, pp. 150, 176.

<sup>73</sup> SRO, Q/SR/260/1 (correspondence regarding Corporal John Peacock).

committee nor it seems the Staffordshire bench were willing to accept responsibility for his welfare.

### **1.5 Quarter Sessions and military welfare, 1647-1660**

The money distributed by county committees was not the only form of provincial relief available to war victims. In 1647 Parliament passed a raft of legislation aimed at rejuvenating the Elizabethan county pension scheme. Under mounting pressure from the army following the culmination of the First Civil War, the legislation was intended to appease the increasingly vocal demands of a disgruntled and mutinous force. By passing the burden of war relief back to the counties, it was also an attempt to ease the strain on the national treasury at Westminster.<sup>74</sup> For the next thirteen years (and in some cases beyond), pensions and gratuities were awarded to maimed parliamentary soldiers and widows by Justices of the Peace at county Quarter Sessions. Despite providing war victims with a more localised route to welfare, however, the enormous demand for relief, coupled with suspicions of fraudulent practices, placed huge strains on the provincial office-holders charged with maintaining and operating the welfare system.

In order to qualify for relief, maimed soldiers were required to obtain a certificate signed by their commanding officer confirming both their military service and that their injuries prevented them from working. If the said officer was dead or a soldier was unable to obtain their signature, they could instead seek the support of ‘persons of credit’: often the parish vicar or members of the parish elite.<sup>75</sup> The certificate was to be presented in person to magistrates in session, often with a petition outlining the claimant’s case for relief. If successful, petitioners were awarded a pension or one-off payment, usually paid by the county treasurer. Whilst magistrates were empowered to grant relief, however, they were not obliged to do so, and maintained the ‘power of revocation or alteration’ of any pension awarded. Widows and orphans were expected to follow the same process of application, but Justices were instructed to allow them only such relief that was left over from the county stock once all soldiers had been provided for. The scheme was funded

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<sup>74</sup> G. Hudson, ‘Negotiating for blood money: war widows and the courts, in seventeenth-century England’, in J. Kermode and G. Walker (eds), *Women, Crime and the Courts in Early Modern England* (London, 1994), p. 150; *CJ*, vol. 10, pp. 97-98 (4 March, 1648). The army’s grievances during this period are discussed in Morrill, ‘Mutiny and discontent’, pp. 49-74.

<sup>75</sup> Firth and Rait, *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum*, vol. 1, pp. 938-940.

by parochial taxation, with every parish in the county charged at a weekly rate of no more than 2s 6d and no less than 3d.<sup>76</sup> In 1651, an additional ordinance extended the granting of relief to maimed soldiers and the families of those slain in Scotland and Ireland. This ordinance dictated that pensioners were to receive no more than 4s weekly.<sup>77</sup>

There is little in the way of direct evidence to indicate how war widows obtained certificates from their husbands' commanding officers. In this regard, a letter sent from Ellen Wiggins of Leeds to the parliamentary Captain Adam Baynes in March 1649 is unusual, perhaps even unique.<sup>78</sup> Although nothing of note has been found regarding Ellen's husband, he had perhaps served as a junior officer in Baynes's own regiment of horse.<sup>79</sup> Written in the first-person, Ellen appears to have penned the letter herself. She opened her correspondence by detailing her poverty, noting that 'employments are so very scarce and all kind [of] victualls so extradordenarily deare that I and mine [children] are in great danger of perishinge by famine'. She continued that whilst she had considered travelling to London to petition Parliament for relief, the thought of a lengthy wait at Westminster had dissuaded her: 'it is not possible for me to come to London to wait and attend soe long and uncertainely as I must see what may be the procurement there'. Whether Ellen had been discouraged to travel to the capital based on the advice or experiences of other war widows is uncertain. What is clear, however, is that she had deliberated over whether to appeal to provincial or national authorities, and adjudged that the former offered a quicker and surer route to relief.

At the time Ellen penned her letter in 1649, Baynes was working in London as a financial agent for Colonel John Lambert's regiment.<sup>80</sup> Although addressed to him, the letter was not sent to Baynes directly, but was passed to his brother Robert in Pontefract, who in turn enclosed it in his own correspondence to Adam.<sup>81</sup> This suggests that Ellen was familiar with Baynes's correspondence network, and perhaps also that she knew Robert personally.<sup>82</sup> She implored Baynes to write a letter to the West Riding bench on

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<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 997-998.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 556-559.

<sup>78</sup> BL, Add. MS 21417, f. 60.

<sup>79</sup> D. Scott, 'Baynes, Adam (bap. 1622, d. 1671), parliamentary army officer', *ODNB*.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> BL, Add MS 21417, f. 61.

<sup>82</sup> Robert Baynes had also served as a captain in the parliamentary army. Roberts (ed.), *Online Directory of Parliamentary Army Officers* [date accessed 18 August 2017].

her behalf, informing them ‘that my husband was slaine beinge in office under you’. She further requested:

that you would be pleased to certefy also my sad and distressed condicon to them and move them to helpe me w[i]th some yearely maintenance... for I have no way as I conceive to seeke for reliefe but this.<sup>83</sup>

With the Easter Sessions less than a month away, Ellen requested that Baynes respond ‘with all possible speed’. Although no further correspondence has survived, it appears that Baynes responded favourably to Ellen’s request. At the Easter Sessions at Wakefield, the West Riding bench awarded the widow a one-off payment of £2.<sup>84</sup>

The implementation and administration of the county pension scheme relied fundamentally on the cooperation of county magistrates and parish officeholders. If the parliamentary *Journals* are anything to go by, however, then the former showed initial reluctance to impose Westminster’s directives. In March 1648, the Lords bemoaned that war victims were disregarding provincial welfare and instead flocking to Westminster for relief, ‘to the great dishonour of the Parliament, and much vexation and affliction to the said poor people’. The continued presence of large numbers of war victims at Westminster was put down to the failure of county magistrates to adequately implement the county pension scheme, which ‘hath hitherto been so much neglected’. With the spring assizes approaching, the Lords instructed the judges going on the circuits to:

do your utmost endeavours... to cause the said ordinances to be put in execution; with an especial charge to all the Justices, and other officers and ministers, within their several counties, to prosecute the same with all diligence; and that you do there further declare unto them, that, at the next following assizes, you are commanded to take a strict account of their proceedings therein; and if that then you shall find any neglect therein, there shall be such fines and punishments inflicted on the offenders, as the contempt of a business of so much piety, charity, and honour, doth require.<sup>85</sup>

No evidence has been found in the parliamentary *Journals* to indicate that any county magistrate was subsequently fined by Parliament for failing to uphold the 1647 legislation. Nevertheless, the episode illustrates how the administration of war relief had the potential to put strain on centre-local relations, and further underlines Parliament’s reliance on provincial officeholders during the mid-seventeenth century to implement its

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<sup>83</sup> BL, Add. MS 21417, f. 60.

<sup>84</sup> West Yorkshire Archive Service, QS10/2/261. I am grateful to Dr Andrew Hopper for this reference.

<sup>85</sup> *LJ*, vol. 10, pp. 97-98 (4 March, 1648).

policies in the localities.<sup>86</sup> As we shall see, this episode was not the last time during this period that the issue of war relief prompted discord between Parliament and county magistrates.

The Quarter Sessions' records for the Midland counties of Derbyshire, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire, the division of Lindsey (Lincolnshire), and the borough of Gloucester contain details of 166 parliamentary soldiers and 95 widows who appealed for relief between 1647 and 1660. These figures include 62 applicants whose petitions and/or certificates have survived amongst the sessions' rolls, and a further 199 listed in order books and treasurers' accounts. Due to the struggles experienced by magistrates in maintaining war victims during this period, however, it is probable that these numbers represent a fraction of the total number of parliamentary soldiers and widows who requested relief during the 1640s and 1650s. Most claimants were humble men and women who had served (or whose husbands had served) in the rank-and-file. Of the 77 war victims to appear in the Staffordshire sessions' records during this period, only four claimed that they or their husbands had served as officers. In terms of the relief awarded to widows, 21 percent were awarded one-off payments, 45 percent pensions, and ten percent were referred back to their parishes for relief. These figures are almost identical for maimed soldiers, although a slightly higher percentage of male petitioners received pensions (52 percent). Only four percent of widows and two percent of soldiers were outright denied relief, although given the large number of unknown outcomes (20 percent and 19 percent respectively), this percentage may have been significantly higher.

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<sup>86</sup> A. Colby, *Central Government and the Localities: Hampshire, 1649-1689* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 233.



**Table 1.3 The mean annual pensions and gratuities awarded to war victims, 1647-1660 (the figures in brackets represent the number of recorded payments).**

	Mean annual pension		Mean gratuity	
	Soldiers	Widows	Soldiers	Widows
Derbyshire (1649)	-	-	40s (1)	-
Borough of Gloucester (1647-1660)	38s (7)	16s (1)	6s (12)	8s (6)
Lindsey, Lincolnshire (1649-1660)	41s (5)	-	20s (1)	-
Northamptonshire (1658-1660)	37s (8)	40s (3)	13s (4)	27s (3)
Nottinghamshire (1654-1659)	55s (4)	44s (20)	-	-
Staffordshire (1647-1660)	51s (17)	40s (1)	13s (6)	17s (7)
Warwickshire (1647-1660)	40s (3)	27s (3)	35s (8)	37s (3)
Worcestershire (1655)	47s (36)	34s (5)	-	-

Source: Derbyshire, DRO, Q/SB/2; Borough of Gloucester, GA, GBR G3/SO4-6; Lincolnshire, LA, LQS A/1; Northamptonshire, NA, QSR 1/8-16; Nottinghamshire, NTA, QSM/1/13 and H. Hampton Copnall (ed.), *Nottinghamshire County Records: Notes and Extracts from the Nottinghamshire County Records of the Seventeenth Century* (Nottingham, 1915), pp. 94-95; Staffordshire, SRO, Q/SO/5-6 and Q/SR/250-307; Warwickshire, S. Ratcliff and H. Johnson (eds), *Warwick County Records, Quarter Sessions Order Book* (Warwick, 1936), vols. 2-4; Worcestershire, WAAS, 110/1/90.

Table 1.3 illustrates the mean value of pensions and gratuities awarded to war victims across the Midlands during this period. The discrepancy in these payments – both in terms of gender and county – are undoubtedly swayed by the patchy survival rates of the sessions’ records, and need therefore be treated with caution. When working with a

modest sample size such as this, it is also important to acknowledge that the data is easily skewed by the higher pensions awarded to officers, despite the fact that they were issued far less frequently than the more modest sums awarded to the rank-and-file. With this in mind, the table excludes the exceptionally large pension of £10 issued to the widow of Captain Thomas Buller by the Nottinghamshire bench in 1653.<sup>87</sup> The figures above also fail to allow for change over time. The rate of pensions often varied as Justices saw fit to increase or decrease their worth. The case of John Hale, a maimed soldier from Gloucester, neatly illustrates this point. Between 1640, when he returned home from the Second Bishops' War, and 1656, when his pension was revoked, the rate of Hale's pension changed six times.<sup>88</sup> Although few claimants appear in the court records with the same frequency as Hale, many pensioners experienced reductions (and, occasionally, increases) in their pensions.

Despite these caveats, it is worth highlighting that, with the exception of Northamptonshire, maimed soldiers received higher pensions than war widows in each of the counties considered in this study. In contrast, widows received higher gratuities than maimed soldiers across the region. It is not readily apparent why average payments fluctuated between counties, but thanks to David Appleby's work on the county pension scheme in Essex, and Hannah Worthen's comparative study on Sussex and Kent, it is possible to compare the average sums awarded to war victims in the Midlands with their counterparts in the southeast of England.<sup>89</sup> In Essex maimed parliamentary soldiers and widows enjoyed average pensions of 45s 5d and 44s 5d respectively, whilst in Sussex and Kent war victims were usually granted pensions of around 40s. These figures suggest that the pensions granted to war victims in the Midlands were similar to those distributed elsewhere in the country.

Whilst the patchy survival rates of the sessions' records prevent a detailed assessment of the administration of relief in each county, it is evident that most shires were overwhelmed with the volume of war victims requiring welfare during the 1640s and 1650s. In 1648, for instance, the mayor and bailiffs of Northampton complained that

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<sup>87</sup> Hampton Copnall (ed.), *Nottinghamshire County Records*, p. 94. This sum was twice as much as the next highest pension awarded by the Nottinghamshire bench.

<sup>88</sup> GA, GBR G3/SO4-6.

<sup>89</sup> D. Appleby, 'Unnecessary persons? Maimed soldiers and war widows in Essex, 1642-1662', *Essex Archaeology and History*, 32 (2001), p. 214; H. Worthen, 'The experience of war widows in mid seventeenth-century England, with special reference to Kent and Sussex' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Leicester, 2017), pp. 56-57.

the town was 'extremely full of maimed soldiers and poor widows made by these wars, being continually infested by the garrisons of Banbury and other [garrisons] near adjoining'.<sup>90</sup> In neighbouring Warwickshire, the number of claimants in the county was so great that in August 1652 Justices were forced to call a general meeting at the Red Lion in Kenilworth, to:

consider of a way for relief of the said maimed soldiers and widows and appoint unto them such pensions and allowances as shall be necessary and to discharge such of the old pensioners from their pensions as are dissolute, able to work, live out of country or have less need than these maimed in the late wars.<sup>91</sup>

The following year the Warwickshire bench stripped at least four soldiers of their pensions, with instructions for their parishes to maintain them. These measures proved inadequate to sustain the number of claimants in the county, however, and in 1656 magistrates were forced to acknowledge the 'many maimed and weak persons there are who have served the commonwealth in the said county of Warwick and yet want pensions by reason there is not money in the Treasurer's hands'.<sup>92</sup> In Nottinghamshire in 1655, meanwhile, the volume of petitioners was so great that Justices bemoaned that 'the County Stocke was soe small and the pencons soe many'.<sup>93</sup>

Of all the Midland counties, Staffordshire offers the richest collection of extant sessions' records for this period, and it is here that we see the strains of the administration of military relief most acutely. In 1648 – in response to the parliamentary legislation of the previous year – Justices quadrupled the yearly rate for the relief of war victims within the county from £50 to £200.<sup>94</sup> Despite the heavy increase in taxation, however, the financial resources available to the bench remained inadequate to provide for all maimed soldiers and war widows within the county. We have seen how magistrates in Warwickshire were forced to revoke a number of pensions during the 1650s in order to ensure that relief was directed towards the neediest. In Staffordshire, this practice was carried out with particular vigour. In 1651, 1652 and 1656, Justices were instructed to review the eligibility of all pensioners residing within their respective hundreds. The number of pensioners had 'growne to a greate number', and magistrates feared that many

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<sup>90</sup> *CSPD 1648-1649*, pp. 45-46.

<sup>91</sup> S. Ratcliff and H. Johnson (eds), *Warwick County Records, Volume III: Quarter Sessions Order Book, Easter 1650 to Epiphany 1657* (Warwick, 1937), p. 128.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 168, 169, 184, 188, 334.

<sup>93</sup> Hampton Copnall (ed.), *Nottinghamshire County Records*, p. 95.

<sup>94</sup> SRO, Q/SO/5.

of those receiving pensions were undeserving of relief. As the order book for Easter 1651 noted, ‘some underserving persons by meanes of friends have crept into the liste and take away the pay from the more needy and deserving’.<sup>95</sup> This criticism was likely directed towards parish officials, who may have endorsed the claims of undeserving petitioners in order to shift the burden of relief from the parish onto the county. Magistrates also reiterated that to qualify for relief soldiers were required to be disabled from working, not simply wounded; the order book noting that ‘ev[er]ie wound is not to be accompted to be a mayme for reformacon’.<sup>96</sup>

The decision taken by the Staffordshire bench to review all pensioners in 1651 was likely prompted by the volume of claimants who appeared before the bench during that year. More petitioners appeared before the bench in 1651 than any other year during the 1640s and 1650s. The peak in claimants may have been triggered by the parliamentary ordinance of 1651, which permitted victims of the Scottish and Irish campaigns to petition for relief. Indeed, two claimants who appeared before the bench that year claimed to have been wounded in Ireland, whilst two widows noted that their husbands had been slain against the Scots, albeit in northern England as the defeated Scottish army fled north after the battle of Worcester in September 1651.<sup>97</sup> The dearth years of 1646 to 1651 may also have caused an increase in the number of claimants that year, although its impact in Staffordshire appears to have been less severe than elsewhere in the country.<sup>98</sup> In 1652 a further inspection of pensioners was ordered after the court was informed that some within the county had sizeable estates to maintain themselves, and that others suffering from ‘light wounds are able in bodie and doe still follow their callings and get their livings as well as before’.<sup>99</sup> Although these claims are impossible to substantiate, the fact that the bench acted upon them suggests that magistrates were particularly wary of fraudulent practice. Justices were instructed to ‘view the wounds and maimes’ of every soldier, and to determine which pensioners ‘are fit to be dismissed of the said stipends and others more deserving to be put into their roomes’.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> For soldiers wounded in Ireland see SRO, Q/SR/274/10 (petition of George Jennings); Q/SR/274/8 (petition of William Holden). For soldiers slain fighting the Scottish army see Q/SR/274/15 (petition of Margaret Nicholls); Q/SR/274/14 (petition of Ann Wealer).

<sup>98</sup> S. Hindle, ‘Dearth and the English Revolution: the harvest crisis of 1647-50’, *The Economic History Review*, 61 (2008), p. 79.

<sup>99</sup> SRO, Q/SO/5.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

Despite keeping a watchful eye on pensioners, the Staffordshire bench does not appear to have revoked widows' pensions on account of remarriage. Geoffrey Hudson has argued that 'there is almost no evidence' of this practice occurring across the country during the Interregnum, but evidence from some Midland counties challenges this assertion.<sup>101</sup> In Shropshire in 1658, the bench ordered that all pensions paid to remarried widows be revoked, whilst in Gloucester one Jane Wall was stripped of her pension in 1656 upon reports that she had remarried.<sup>102</sup> In Northamptonshire in 1659, meanwhile, the bench ordered that any pensions awarded to 'widowes of souldiers slaine in the service of the state that have since the granting of the said pensions married againe, be disregarded'.<sup>103</sup> It is uncertain how many widows were subsequently struck off the pension list, although the ruling appears to have provoked a number of complaints. At the following sessions, magistrates saw fit to award gratuities to four parliamentary widows whose pensions had been revoked.<sup>104</sup> Despite the bench's benevolence towards these women, however, it is telling that none had their pensions restored. Since the 1647 parliamentary ordinance did not stipulate that widows were to be barred from receiving pensions on account of remarriage, the treatment of these women demonstrates how provincial magistrates possessed considerable autonomy to interpret the legislation of the county pension scheme as they deemed fit.

## 1.6 Foreign war victims and military welfare

It has been somewhat implicit in this study thus far that the recipients of military welfare during this period were English. Yet thousands of foreign soldiers served in the armies of both king and Parliament during the civil wars, and the provision and care accorded to these men and their families forms an important yet largely overlooked sub-plot to the narrative of the administration of relief during this period. The scarcity of evidence means we will never know for certain how many foreign men served on British soil during the civil wars, nor how many were killed or wounded in action.<sup>105</sup> Nevertheless, it can be demonstrated that some measures were taken by the authorities of both national and

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<sup>101</sup> Hudson, 'Negotiating for blood money', p. 154.

<sup>102</sup> O. Wakemen (ed.), *Orders Made by the Court of Quarter Sessions for Shropshire: January 1636-May 1660, October 1652-October 1659* (Shropshire County Records, 11, 1901), vol. 2, p. 35; GA, GBR G3/SO6.

<sup>103</sup> NA, QSR 1/13.

<sup>104</sup> NA, QSR 1/14.

<sup>105</sup> Stoye, *Soldiers and Strangers*, p. 95.

provincial government during the 1640s to provide for this important sub-group of the parliamentary army.

By far the largest group of non-English soldiers to fight in England during the First Civil War were the 21,000 Scottish men who served in the ranks of the Army of the Solemn League and Covenant.<sup>106</sup> This force entered England in January 1644 following the ratification of the Solemn League and Covenant, and remained south of the River Tweed until February 1647. Under the *Articles and Ordinances of Warre* issued by the Covenanter commander Alexander Leslie, first earl of Leven, shortly before his army's departure from Scotland, the provision for wounded Scottish soldiers was the responsibility of regimental surgeons.<sup>107</sup> As Leven's army progressed southwards, however, it became increasingly common for the maimed and sick to be billeted in local communities whilst they recuperated from their wounds and ailments.<sup>108</sup> The accounts of the Nottinghamshire county committee during the time of the third siege of Newark (November 1645 – May 1646) reveal several payments awarded to injured Scottish soldiers sent to Nottingham for their recovery. In late 1645 the committee paid 10s to a maimed Scottish soldier 'to travell into his owne country or to the Scottish Army as he desireth', whilst in May the following year it awarded 5s to Willam Scott, 'a Scotch soldier (having lyen longe wounded here)'.<sup>109</sup> Stuart Jennings has shown that the Scottish army aroused much discontent amongst the populace surrounding Newark during the time of the siege, largely due to its levying of money, food, clothing and horses for the war effort.<sup>110</sup> The petition of Widow Nixon from Bathley, a parish five miles north of Newark, to the Nottinghamshire committee in July 1646 demonstrates that alongside these hardships, some citizens were forced to endure the intrusion of maimed Scottish soldiers into their homes. Nixon complained that she was 'burdened still with a wounded Scottish souldier which... hath now brought her to such poverty that shee can neither releive him nor herselfe'. She was granted 20s from the committee towards the soldier's maintenance.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>107</sup> BL, TT E.30[17], *Articles and Ordinances of Warre: For the Present Expedition of the Army of the Kingdome of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1644), p. 2.

<sup>108</sup> Gruber von Arni, *Justice to the Maimed Soldier*, pp. 53-54.

<sup>109</sup> TNA, SP 28/241/531; SP 28/241/114. See also SP 28/241/535, 563, 567.

<sup>110</sup> S. Jennings, 'The third and final siege of Newark (1645-1646) and the impact of the Scottish army upon Nottinghamshire and adjacent counties', *Midland History*, 37 (2012), pp. 142-162.

<sup>111</sup> TNA, SP 28/241/622 (petition of Widow Nixon).

Alongside the sporadic relief outlined above, some attempts were made at Westminster during the 1640s to reimburse the widows of Scottish soldiers in lieu of their husbands' arrears of pay. In July 1645 Parliament established a committee headed by Sir Henry Mildmay to:

receive informations from such widows, as well English as Scotts, whose husbands have died in the Parliament's service, and have arrears due from the State to them, concerning papists and delinquents estates not yet discovered.<sup>112</sup>

The suggestion that Scottish as well as English widows were encouraged to act as informants of un-confiscated royalist estates is noteworthy, and likely referred to the 'large numbers' of women who had accompanied the Covenanter army into England in 1644.<sup>113</sup> Meanwhile, the experiences of two Scottish widows – one a parliamentarian, the other a royalist – suggest that the road from Westminster to Scotland was well trodden during the 1640s and 1650s, as female war victims sought relief and redress from Parliament. In December 1645 the widow of Sir John Livingstone petitioned the Lords for her husband's arrears, who had lost his life 'in the Scotts Army'. She requested her husband's outstanding wages to 'transport her into her native country of Scotland', and to help provide for her five children.<sup>114</sup> Meanwhile, in May 1654 the constables of the Nottinghamshire parish of Upton paid 1s to a widow 'who came from Scotland', and whose husband had been slain serving in the royalist army at Worcester three years previous. According to the constables' accounts, the widow's estates had been sequestered following her husband's death, and she was travelling to Westminster with her children and maid, presumably to attempt to secure their release.<sup>115</sup>

As well as troops from across the British Isles, both Parliament and Charles I enlisted the services of foreign professional soldiers. Drawn largely from continental Europe, these men were often employed in specialist roles such as engineers and gunners, or else as cavalymen or officers.<sup>116</sup> It is likely that few of these men were accompanied by their families, although occasional records of payments indicate that the wives of some foreign soldiers were present in England during the 1640s. In February 1645 the Staffordshire county committee awarded £10 to 'the widdow of the Dutch Captain' slain

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<sup>112</sup> *CJ*, vol. 4, p. 197 (5 July, 1645).

<sup>113</sup> Stoye, *Soldiers and Strangers*, p. 85.

<sup>114</sup> *LJ*, vol. 8, p. 18 (1 December 1645).

<sup>115</sup> M. Bennett (ed.), *A Nottinghamshire Village in War and Peace: The Accounts of the Constables of Upton, 1640-1666* (Thoroton Society, 39, 1995), p. 91.

<sup>116</sup> Stoye, *Soldiers and Strangers*, p. 102.

at Biddulph House.<sup>117</sup> The widow in question may have been Margaretta Rolenstrom, the widow of an unnamed captain ‘slayn at the Bedolph House’ in February 1644, who received £5 from the Shropshire county committee in March that year in lieu of her husband’s arrears of pay.<sup>118</sup> Regrettably, virtually nothing is known of Rolenstrom’s military service. He may have served in the regiment of the German Commissary-General Hans Behr, which was active in the West Midlands in early 1644, and which contained a number of Dutch and Walloon troops.<sup>119</sup> Significantly, at least one Dutch woman is known to have travelled with this regiment. In 1644 the parish records for Wasperton, Warwickshire noted that a ‘Dutch man & woman’ had been quartered on the parish as Behr’s forces passed through the area on their way to Gloucester.<sup>120</sup>

The arrears of pay owed to Captain Rolenstrom were relatively modest when compared to the outstanding wages owed to a second Dutch captain, Mathias Froom, following his death in 1643. Froom had initially served as an officer under Sir Hugh Cholmley in Scarborough, but deserted the garrison following Cholmley’s defection to the king in March 1643. He was later appointed a captain of horse under Lord Willoughby in Lincolnshire, and was mortally wounded at Gainsborough four months later.<sup>121</sup> In February 1646 his widow Elizabeth presented an account of her husband’s arrears to the parliamentary Committee for Petitions, starting from the time he was commissioned as a captain in Willoughby’s regiment on 1 April and ending at his death on 31 July, and amounting to £232 18s in total. This committee was established by the Long Parliament in November 1640 to consider answers to new petitions submitted to Parliament.<sup>122</sup> The committee referred the case to the Committee for Taking the Accounts of the Kingdom, which set about investigating the validity of her claims. Froom’s military conduct had evidently ruffled the feathers of some Lincolnshire parliamentarians, who in a letter to the Committee for Accounts described him as ‘a des[pe]rate rude man’ and ‘a great plunderer’ within the county. They also cast aspersions over Froom’s allegiance to the parliamentary cause, noting that he had spent time at the royalist garrison at Newark.

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<sup>117</sup> TNA, SP 28/134.

<sup>118</sup> TNA, SP 28/131.

<sup>119</sup> P. Tennant, *The Civil War in Stratford-upon-Avon: Conflict and Community in South Warwickshire, 1642-1646* (Stroud, 1996), pp. 83-84; Hughes, *Warwickshire*, p. 256; Stoyle, *Soldiers and Strangers*, p. 95.

<sup>120</sup> Cited in Tennant, *Civil War in Stratford-upon-Avon*, p. 84.

<sup>121</sup> A. Hopper (ed.), *The Papers of the Hothams, Governors of Hull during the Civil War* (Camden Society, 5<sup>th</sup> series, 39, 2011), p. 304; BL, TT E.95[9], *A True and Exact Relation of all the Proceedings Against Sir Hugh Cholmley’s Revolt* (London, 1643), pp. 2, 6, 8.

<sup>122</sup> J. Hart, *Justice Upon Petition: The House of Lords and the Reformation of Justice, 1621-1675* (London, 1991), pp. 65, 67, 176-177.



Although the allegations regarding Froom's constancy were contradicted by a certificate signed by Willoughby confirming the Dutchman's loyal service, they further underline how foreign parliamentary officers became increasingly associated with disloyalty as the war progressed.<sup>123</sup> Whether these claims deterred the committee from releasing Froom's arrears is unclear, however, for no further evidence regarding the case has been identified in either the State Papers or parliamentary *Journals*.

If the evidence regarding the experiences of foreign parliamentary widows is limited, that relating to their royalist counterparts during the 1640s and 1650s is scarcer still. In one well-documented example, the widow of Colonel Nicholas Byron was awarded a pass from the House of Lords in August 1647 to return to her native Holland.<sup>124</sup> Her husband had served as the royalist governor of Chester in 1643, and was mortally wounded near Ellesmore, Shropshire two years later. It remains uncertain whether his widow returned to Holland, however, for in October 1647 the Upper House debated whether to allow her a yearly annuity of £40 from the sequestered estates of her brother-in-law, Sir John Byron, as her jointure.<sup>125</sup> In 1657, meanwhile, her son Ernestus compounded for his father's estates, having recently come 'of age'.<sup>126</sup>

More is known of these women's activities after the Restoration, where at least three foreign widows petitioned Charles II for relief. Although the petitioning activities of these women take us beyond the chronological boundaries of this chapter, they nevertheless provide important evidence of the attitudes towards foreign war widows during the mid-seventeenth century. Clara Magdalena was the 'Germaine borne' widow of Major-General Sir John Henderson, a Scotsman who had served as governor of Newark from December 1642 until October 1643. It is unclear when the couple were wedded, although through his roles as a professional soldier and later as a diplomat to Charles II, Sir John had spent considerable time in Germany both prior to the civil wars and during the 1650s. In 1662, Clara requested relief from the king 'to convey her to her said native country'.<sup>127</sup> The following year Veronica Platt, the 'Venetian borne' widow

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<sup>123</sup> TNA, SP 28/265/172-177; Stoye, *Soldiers and Strangers*, p. 104.

<sup>124</sup> *LJ*, vol. 9, pp. 385 (13 August, 1647).

<sup>125</sup> P. Newman, *Royalist Officers in England and Wales, 1642-1660: A Biographical Dictionary* (New York, 1981), p. 55; *LJ*, vol. 9, pp. 385, 493 (13 August and 23 October, 1647).

<sup>126</sup> M. Green (ed.), *Calendar for the Committee for Compounding* (London, 1892), vol. 5, p. 3245; P. Newman, *The Old Service: Royalist Regimental Colonels and the Civil War, 1642-1646* (Manchester, 1993), pp. 108-109.

<sup>127</sup> Newman, *Royalist Officers*, p. 186; S. Murdoch and D. Worthington, 'Henderson, Sir John (1632-1658)', *ODNB*; TNA, SP 29/66/186, 187 (petition of Clara Magdalena).

of Colonel Richard Platt, petitioned the king for a gratuity, as did Katherine Hoffman in 1665. Katherine's husband was the German mercenary Captain Augustine Hoffman, who had served in the Covenanter army during the 1640s, before switching allegiance in 1650. Katherine was also likely German, and referred to herself in her petition as 'a stranger here'.<sup>128</sup> Regrettably, the State Papers contain no further reference to either Katherine Hoffman or Clara Magdalena, although in 1663 Veronica Platt was granted a gratuity of £100 from the Crown.<sup>129</sup>

Mark Stoye has argued that the civil wars 'prompted a dramatic upsurge in xenophobic feeling among the English people'.<sup>130</sup> Foreign soldiers serving on both sides quickly gained a reputation for violence and plunder, whilst several high-profile defections from Parliament to the king ensured that foreign parliamentary officers were viewed by their own side with increasing distrust as the war progressed. This argument has been challenged somewhat by Andrew Hopper, who notes that some foreign parliamentary officers earned praise from contemporaries during the 1640s for their constancy.<sup>131</sup> The limited evidence presented above is too fragmentary to comment on contemporary attitudes towards foreigners. What it does demonstrate, however, is that sporadic payments were made to foreign war victims throughout the mid-seventeenth century, first by Parliament during the 1640s and 1650s, and later by Charles II after the Restoration. Moreover, in some instances foreign war victims deliberately emphasised their nationality in their petitions for relief in order to accentuate their vulnerability and helplessness.

## 1.7 Conclusion

Parliament's pledge in October 1642 to support its maimed soldiers, war widows and orphans was unprecedented. Never before had female war victims in England been entitled to receive military pensions. Although the system of relief that emerged during the following years and which operated both in London and the provinces was far from

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<sup>128</sup> TNA, SP 29/83/102 (petition of Veronica Platt); SP 29/142B/4 (petition of Katherine Hoffman); E. Furgol, *A Regimental History of the Covenanting Armies, 1639-1651* (Edinburgh, 1990), pp. 376-377; S. Reid, *All the King's Armies: A Military History of the English Civil War, 1642-1651* (Staplehurst, 1998), p. 244.

<sup>129</sup> *CSPD 1663-1664*, p. 341.

<sup>130</sup> Stoye, *Soldiers and Strangers*, p. 204.

<sup>131</sup> A. Hopper, *Turncoats and Renegades: Changing Sides during the English Civil Wars* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 69-72.

perfect, the evidence presented above suggests that Parliament remained resolute in its commitment to maintain war victims throughout the 1640s and 1650s.

In the capital, hundreds of widows received pensions from a central parliamentary committee, whilst officers' widows petitioned Parliament directly for their husbands' arrears of pay. The scale of the payments distributed at Westminster usually varied according to the social standing of the claimant and the military rank of her husband, although the limited resources at Parliament's disposal ensured that even the wives of parliamentary commanders were often forced to undergo lengthy waits to recover their husbands' arrears.<sup>132</sup> Despite expressing concern for the plight of female war victims, however, both the Commons and the Lords demonstrated unease when widows attended Parliament in large numbers. This is demonstrated by several orders passed during the 1640s which sought to restrict widows' access to Parliament.<sup>133</sup>

In the provinces, meanwhile, county committeemen and Justices of the Peace worked tirelessly to relieve war victims. The relief distributed in the provinces was often modest in size compared to that distributed at Westminster, and typically issued to humbler women whose husbands had served in the rank-and-file. With the exception of Northamptonshire, war widows received smaller average pensions than maimed soldiers in each of the counties considered in this study, but larger average one-off payments. Overburdened with claimants and acutely aware of the finite resources at their disposal, provincial authorities constantly sought ways to reduce the number of pensioners within their counties. Justices remained particularly wary of fraudulent claims, whilst in some counties widows were stripped of their pensions on account of remarriage. Lastly, the relief afforded to foreign war victims underlines how the hardships and bereavement caused by the civil wars extended across the British archipelago and beyond.

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<sup>132</sup> Hopper, 'The widows and orphans of Parliament's military commanders' (forthcoming).

<sup>133</sup> For further attempts by Parliament to restrict public access to Westminster Palace during the seventeenth century see C. Kyle and J. Peacey, "Under cover of so much coming and going": public access to Parliament and the political process in early modern England', in C. Kyle and J. Peacey (eds), *Parliament at Work: Parliamentary Committees, Political Power and Public Access in Early Modern England* (Woodbridge, 2002), p. 12.

## Chapter 2. The administration of relief after the Restoration

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter assesses the administration of relief following the Restoration. In his study of the county pension scheme, Geoffrey Hudson presented a damning assessment of the treatment of war widows after 1660. Pensions that were widely awarded to parliamentary widows at Quarter Sessions during the 1640s and 1650s were largely denied to their royalist counterparts outside of London after 1660, in a move which saw the rights of female war victims ‘turned back’.<sup>1</sup> This conclusion was supported by David Appleby’s comparative research on Essex, but contradicted by his later study on Kent, where a number of royalist widows were awarded pensions.<sup>2</sup> In light of Appleby’s findings, the first part of this chapter examines the Midlands’ sessions’ records in order to establish whether war widows across the region were denied county pensions. The second part of this chapter examines petitions for relief submitted by royalist widows to Charles II. Over 100 such petitions survive amongst the State Papers, and yet they have received little scholarly attention. Contrary to Eric Gruber von Arni’s assertion that pensions to war widows ‘ceased altogether’ following the Restoration, an assessment of these petitions reveals that numerous female war victims were granted yearly annuities from the Crown.<sup>3</sup>

First, however, we might briefly pause to consider the welfare afforded to royalist war victims during the 1640s and 1650s. Despite growing academic interest in royalists and royalism during the civil wars and Interregnum, we still know little about the experiences of royalist widows during these years.<sup>4</sup> Gruber von Arni has convincingly argued that Charles I ‘failed to attach the same high priority’ as Parliament to the care

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<sup>1</sup> G. Hudson, ‘Negotiating for blood money: war widows and the courts in seventeenth-century England’, in J. Kermode and G. Walker (eds), *Women, Crime and the Courts in Early Modern England* (London, 1994), pp. 151-152, 162.

<sup>2</sup> D. Appleby, ‘Unnecessary persons? Maimed soldiers and war widows in Essex, 1642-1662’, *Essex Archaeology and History*, 32 (2001), p. 217; D. Appleby, ‘Veteran politics in Restoration England, 1660-1670’, *The Seventeenth Century*, 28 (2013), p. 335.

<sup>3</sup> E. Gruber von Arni, *Justice to the Maimed Soldier: Nursing, Medical Care and Welfare for Sick and Wounded Soldiers and their Families during the English Civil Wars and Interregnum, 1642-1660* (Aldershot, 2001), p. 87.

<sup>4</sup> J. McElligott and D. Smith (eds), *Royalists and Royalism during the English Civil Wars* (Cambridge, 2011); J. McElligott and D. Smith (eds), *Royalists and Royalism during the Interregnum* (Manchester, 2010).

and welfare of war victims. Denied access to the county pension scheme, most maimed royalist soldiers and widows were ‘referred to their home parishes for support’.<sup>5</sup> Regrettably, since churchwardens and overseers rarely distinguished between ‘widows’ and ‘war widows’ in their accounts, locating female war victims in parish records is often problematic. A number of petitions submitted to Charles II after the Restoration suggest that some officers’ widows were awarded pensions by his father during the early 1640s, although these often appear to have gone unpaid. Katherine Byron insisted that despite being promised a pension by Charles I following the death of her husband, Sir Thomas Byron, in December 1643, it was never granted.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, the daughter of Colonel Francis Windebank complained that her mother had been granted a pension of £200 from the king following the death of her husband in 1645, ‘w[hi]ch she never received’.<sup>7</sup> The fact that Charles had approved this pension in the first place is noteworthy, since Colonel Windebank had been executed at Oxford for cowardice after surrendering Bletchington House to the parliamentarians.<sup>8</sup>

## **2.2 Quarter Sessions and military welfare, 1660-1679**

Charles II’s accession to the throne in May 1660 facilitated a dramatic shift in the administration of war relief. Within months of his return from exile, the London military hospitals at the Savoy and Ely House had been closed, and all in-patients and out-pensioners – including hundreds of parliamentary widows and orphans – were discharged back to their counties.<sup>9</sup> In the provinces, meanwhile, Justices worked to eradicate parliamentarians from the pension lists. The zeal with which magistrates carried out this task varied from county to county. In Northamptonshire, for instance, all pensions awarded to parliamentary war victims were suspended in autumn 1660. In contrast, Justices in Essex awarded pensions to two parliamentary soldiers after 1660, whilst in

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<sup>5</sup> Gruber von Arni, *Justice to the Maimed Soldier*, pp. 37, 38.

<sup>6</sup> TNA, SP 29/17/71, 72 (petition and certificate of Katherine Byron).

<sup>7</sup> TNA, SP 29/66/253 (petition of Frances Windebank).

<sup>8</sup> P. Newman, *The Old Service: Royalist Regimental Colonels and the Civil War, 1642-1646* (Manchester, 1993), p. 125.

<sup>9</sup> Gruber von Arni, *Justice to the Maimed Soldier*, pp. 86-87; Appleby, ‘Veteran politics’, p. 333.

Staffordshire a number of parliamentarians were retained on the pension list until the summer of 1662.<sup>10</sup>

The declining fortunes of parliamentary war victims after 1660 corresponded with an upturn in the treatment of their royalist counterparts. In June 1662 Parliament passed legislation entitling maimed royalist soldiers, widows and orphans to petition magistrates at Quarter Sessions for relief.<sup>11</sup> The two year interlude between Charles's coronation and the passing of this act was to allow the new regime time to begin disbanding the Commonwealth army, and to ensure that all parliamentary pensioners awarded annuities during the 1640s and 1650s were purged from the county lists.<sup>12</sup> In the Midlands, magistrates in Shropshire and Staffordshire had already begun awarding pensions to royalist veterans prior to the enactment of the 1662 legislation. In contrast, Justices in Northamptonshire awarded few pensions to royalists before 1662.<sup>13</sup> The contrasting speeds with which counties moved against parliamentary pensioners and began replacing them with royalist ones between 1660 and 1662 suggests much about the financial and political climate in the localities in the immediate aftermath of the Restoration. As David Appleby has argued, the reluctance of some county benches to bestow relief on royalists between 1660 and 1662 may have reflected an unwillingness to continue levying rates for the relief of war victims, whilst the payment of pensions to some parliamentary veterans in counties such as Staffordshire was likely indicative of the continued presence of sympathetic Justices on the county benches after 1660.<sup>14</sup>

In total, 512 royalist soldiers and 40 widows have been identified amongst the sessions' records for the counties of Herefordshire, Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire, Staffordshire and Worcestershire, the division of Lindsey (Lincolnshire), and the boroughs of Gloucester, Lincoln, and Oxford, following the Restoration. This includes 112 claimants whose petitions and/or certificates have

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<sup>10</sup> Appleby, 'Veteran politics', p. 335; NA, QSR 1/18; Appleby, 'Unnecessary persons?', p. 216; SRO, Q/SO/7.

<sup>11</sup> 'An act for the releife of poore and maimed officers and souldiers who have faithfully served His Majesty and His Royal Father in the late wars' (1662), in J. Raithby (ed.), *Statutes of the Realm: Volume 5, 1628-1680* (London, 1819), p. 389.

<sup>12</sup> Appleby, 'Veteran politics', p. 335.

<sup>13</sup> R. Kenyon (ed.), *Orders Made by the Court of Quarter Sessions for Shropshire: January 1660-April 1694* (Shropshire County Records, 12, 1901), pp. 72, 74-77; SRO, Q/SO/7; Appleby, 'Veteran politics', p. 335.

<sup>14</sup> Appleby, 'Veteran politics', p. 335. For the composition of various commissions of the peace at the Restoration see G. Forster, 'Government in provincial England under the later Stuarts', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 33 (1983), p. 31.

survived amongst the sessions' rolls, and 440 recorded in various order books and treasurers' accounts. In terms of the relief awarded to claimants, 38 percent of widows were awarded county pensions, 38 percent gratuities, and 10 percent were referred back to their parishes for support. Only two widows were denied relief outright, although given the number of unknown outcomes (10 percent), this figure may have been higher. In contrast, 87 percent of soldiers received pensions, 5 percent gratuities and 1 percent parish relief. Similarly only 2 soldiers were denied relief outright, although the outcome of 7 percent of soldiers' petitions are unknown.

Table 2.1 illustrates the mean pensions and gratuities awarded to war victims after 1660. For most counties the surviving sessions' records are so patchy as to render these figures historically meaningless. Furthermore, no relevant records have survived for Derbyshire and Warwickshire. The table excludes a small number of unusually high payments made to royalist soldiers and widows.<sup>15</sup> Although these statistics must be viewed with a degree of scepticism, three points are worth highlighting. First is the dearth of pensions awarded to widows. The extant sessions' records for the seven counties and three corporations considered here detail just fifteen female pensioners. Moreover, for five of these women the records fail to disclose how much their pensions were worth, and thus they have been omitted from the data displayed in Table 2.1. In contrast, 321 soldier-pensioners have been identified in the same records. There is little in the surviving records to suggest that the fifteen royalist widows who were granted pensions were exceptional in terms of their circumstances or past conduct. The exception to this was Helen Briggs of Spilsby, Lincolnshire who was awarded a pension of £3 in 1676 not only on account that her husband had served in the royalist army, but because she herself had been 'very instrumental in releivinge many soldiers of his maj[es]ties army in the tyme of the wars'.<sup>16</sup> Second, despite appearing infrequently in the sessions' records, it is significant that when women *were* granted pensions, they often received as much or more than maimed soldiers. Third, in terms of regional variation it is striking that the average pensions awarded in the West Midlands' counties of Staffordshire and Herefordshire were significantly lower than elsewhere in the Midlands. This excludes the boroughs of Lincoln, Gloucester and Oxford, where the mean yearly annuities were all below 30s.

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<sup>15</sup> These payments were pensions of £9 to Captain John Rogers (Herefordshire), £10 to Major Christopher Pickering (Northants), £10 to Richard Pearson (Notts), £9 to Captain Thomas Bradley (Lincs), £6 13s 4d to Woolston Roberts (Leics), and £20 to Katherine Orton, widow of Captain Orton (Leics).

<sup>16</sup> LA, LQS/A/2/1, p. 225.

**Table 2.1 The mean annual pensions and gratuities awarded to war victims, 1660-c.1700.**

	Mean annual pension		Mean gratuity	
	Soldiers	Widows	Soldiers	Widows
City of Gloucester (1660-1701)	29s (1)	-	-	5s (1)
Herefordshire (1665-1673)	28s (47)	-	22s (8)	-
Leicestershire (1678-1700)	42s (19)	40s (1)	-	-
Lindsey, Lincolnshire (1665-1678)	47s (46)	50s (2)	-	68s (2)
City of Lincoln (1660-1668)	24s (8)	50s (2)	-	-
City of Oxford (1660-1676)	22s (35)	25s (1)	-	5s (1)
Northamptonshire (1660-1687)	43s (59)	48s (4)	24s (13)	47s (6)
Nottinghamshire (1660-1662)	54s (2)	-	-	-
Staffordshire (1663)	29s (108)	-	-	-
Worcestershire (1677-1681)	-	-	14s (5)	-

Source: City of Gloucester, GA, GBR G3/SO6; Herefordshire, HARC, Q/SO/1; Leicestershire, LRO, QS 6/1/2/1; Lincolnshire, LA, LQS/A/2/1; City of Lincoln, LA, BROG 1/1/1; City of Oxford, OHC, QS/C/A2/O2; Northamptonshire, NA, QSR 1/21-122; Nottinghamshire, H. Hampton Copnall (ed.), *Extracts from the Nottinghamshire County Records of the Seventeenth Century* (Nottingham, 1915), p. 95; Staffordshire, SRO, Q/SO/7; Worcestershire, WAAS, 110/1.



How do we explain the relative absence of widows from the pension lists after 1660? Thousands of widows of royalist soldiers must have survived the Restoration, and thus the infrequency in which they appear in the sessions' records demands consideration. It is possible that many women were simply turned away by Justices. Magistrates in Shropshire and Warwickshire issued blanket bans on the payment of pensions to all widows soon after the Restoration, and other counties may have followed suit.<sup>17</sup> Less extreme, in 1668 the Northamptonshire bench refused to grant pensions to any widow who had remarried. Although the number of widows who remarried declined during the seventeenth century, even amongst poorer women, this ruling likely barred a number of women from receiving relief.<sup>18</sup> Hudson has suggested that the discrimination of provincial authorities towards war widows after 1660 was ideological, and that royalists 'were unwilling to accord women the same status as maimed soldiers'.<sup>19</sup> Whilst there is likely much in this statement, it is important to note that there were legal and practical considerations as well. The 1662 legislation stipulated that widows and orphans were to be paid 'out of the surplusage' of the county stock, once relief had first been issued to maimed soldiers.<sup>20</sup> Under the letter of the law, Justices were therefore required to prioritise veterans over widows. If the number of maimed soldiers requiring relief had already drained limited county resources, magistrates had little choice but to ignore the appeals of widows. Having survived the 1640s and 1650s without access to county welfare, moreover, many women would have been hard pressed to persuade Justices that they now required financial support.<sup>21</sup>

With so few royalist widows appearing in the sessions' records, it is necessary to consider how these women were able to support themselves and their families. One suspects that many relied on parish relief, and under the 1662 act parishes were instructed to hold war widows in 'special regard'.<sup>22</sup> Other women would have relied on employment, kin networks or private charity. A number of petitions submitted to the almshouse in Bruton, Somerset after 1660 were done so on behalf of royalist war victims,

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<sup>17</sup> Kenyon (ed.), *Quarter Sessions for Shropshire*, p. 74; Hudson, 'Negotiating for blood money', p. 151.

<sup>18</sup> NA, QSR 1/147; B. Todd, 'The remarrying widow: a stereotype reconsidered', in M. Prior (ed.), *Women in English Society, 1500–1800* (London, 1985), pp. 54–92.

<sup>19</sup> Hudson, 'Negotiating for blood money', p. 152.

<sup>20</sup> Raithby (ed.), *Statutes of the Realm*, p. 389.

<sup>21</sup> Appleby, 'Unnecessary persons?', pp. 216, 217.

<sup>22</sup> Raithby (ed.), *Statutes of the Realm*, p. 389.

including at least one widow.<sup>23</sup> Maimed royalist veterans are also known to have been awarded places as almsmen in cathedrals during this period.<sup>24</sup> Lastly, some women may also have appealed to their husbands' former officers and military commanders for relief. In her biography of her husband, the royalist commander the duke of Newcastle, Margaret Cavendish recalled the time a widow of a soldier slain in her husband's army 'came one time to beg some relief of my Lord'. The widow was rebuked by Newcastle, however, who informed her 'that he was not able to relieve all that had been loyal to His Majesty'.<sup>25</sup>

As they had been during the 1640s and 1650s, Justices continued to remain wary of fraudulent practice after the Restoration. In Northamptonshire, all pensions were suspended in 1667 'upon consideration of the multitude of pensioners in this county not qualified to receive such pensions and of the great charges of the taxes and other contributions which lie upon this county'.<sup>26</sup> Intriguingly, a similar order was also passed in Devon that year, although the general suspension of pensions in these two counties does not appear to have been part of a nationwide initiative.<sup>27</sup> Although the Northamptonshire bench failed to specify what it meant by persons 'not qualified', the order likely referred to those capable of employment, a criterion which disqualified claimants from receiving relief. The pension of William Galford, for example, was suspended on account of his 'travelling trade by which he might live comfortably', whilst another pensioner was described by magistrates as 'a person neither maimed nor indigent but one that has a trade by which he very plentifully maintains himself and his family'.<sup>28</sup> Magistrates were also wary of former parliamentarians conning their way onto the pension lists. In Leicestershire, George Barton's yearly pension of 40s was suspended during the 1670s after he admitted to serving in the parliamentary army, whilst in 1668 Justices in Northamptonshire ordered that Elizabeth Tresham was only to receive a pension of £3 after she had satisfied the bench 'that her husband was never a souldier in

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<sup>23</sup> S. Hindle, *On the Parish? The Micro-Politics of Poor Relief in Rural England, c.1550-1750* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 162-163.

<sup>24</sup> I. Atherton, E. McGrath and A. Tomkins, "'Pressed down by want and afflicted with poverty, wounded and maimed in war or worn down with age?": Cathedral almsmen in England, 1538-1914', in A. Borsay and P. Shapely (eds), *Medicine, Charity and Mutual Aid: The Consumption of Health and Welfare, c.1550-1950* (Aldershot, 2007), pp. 11-34.

<sup>25</sup> Wing/N8536, M. Cavendish, *The Life of the Thrice Noble, High, and Puissant Prince William Cavendish* (London, 1667), p. 242.

<sup>26</sup> NA, QSR 1/50/146.

<sup>27</sup> M. Neufeld, *The Civil Wars after 1660: Public Remembrance in Late Stuart England* (Woodbridge, 2013), p. 77.

<sup>28</sup> NA, QSR 1/60/32; QSR 1/52/62.

the parliaments service'.<sup>29</sup> In Herefordshire, meanwhile, magistrates actively encouraged prospective claimants to inform on current pensioners. In 1670, Robert Ravenhill was awarded a pension of 28s 6d that had formerly belonged to George Powell, after he had informed the bench that Powell had served as 'a soldger for the Parlyam[en]t'.<sup>30</sup>

The decision of the Northamptonshire bench to suspend all pensions in 1667 prompted a wave of petitioning activity the following year, as royalist war victims sought to have their pensions reinstated. Significantly, many of these petitions were submitted by widows. At the Easter and Trinity sessions 1668, at least eight royalist widows complained that their pensions had been revoked. One of these women, Alice Mercer, noted that her yearly pension of 52s 'among many others was by a former order suspended'.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, Susanna Gilloway, Jane Watts and Elizabeth Aldrige complained that their pensions had been 'stopped for reasons not knowne to yo[ur] peticoners', whilst Alice Palmer requested that her pension of £2 'formerly granted to her may be continyed'.<sup>32</sup> Unfortunately for these women, none appear to have successfully persuaded the Northamptonshire bench to reinstate their pensions. Susanna Gilloway, Jane Watts and Elizabeth Aldrige were each granted gratuities of 30s, and instructed not to trouble the court again. Alice Palmer was referred back to her home parish of Warkton, where the overseers and churchwardens were instructed to award her 1s 6d per week. Meanwhile, the petitions of Mary Wrench and Ellen Browne were simply marked 'disallowed'.<sup>33</sup>

The strict measures imposed by the Northamptonshire bench did not go unchallenged. In 1668, one Thomas Rogers complained to the Privy Council at Whitehall concerning his revoked pension. When the Council enquired about the charges raised by Rogers, the bench was forced to defend its actions. It claimed that the escalating number of pensioners within the county had seen the expenditure of war relief rise beyond £350 a year. This, the bench complained, was a 'burthen we find very grievously to the county'. The high cost of welfare had forced magistrates to conduct a review of all pensioners within the county. In regard to Rogers, the bench concluded that he was capable of

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<sup>29</sup> LRO, QS 6/1/2/1 f. 50; NRO, QSR 1/51.

<sup>30</sup> HARC, Q/SO/1, fos. 144-145, 156.

<sup>31</sup> NA, QSR 1/50/71 (petition of Alice Mercer).

<sup>32</sup> NA, QSR 1/50/79 (petition of Susanna Gilloway, Jane Watts and Elizabeth Aldrige); QSR 1/50/81 (petition of Alice Palmer).

<sup>33</sup> NA, QSR 1/49/85 (petition of Mary Wrench); QSR 1/49/86 (petition of Ellen Browne).

employment. 'Should [we] admit him and all such persons as he is unto pensions', the bench noted, 'it would [be] such a hevy burthen upon the county which we beleeeve they could very hardly undergoe'.<sup>34</sup> As well as highlighting the bench's concerns over potential fraudulent claims, the episode again demonstrates the possibility for tension between the central government who legislated the law, and the county authorities charged with both its implementation and, more importantly, its financing.

As well as appealing to the Privy Council, some disgruntled war victims also turned to Parliament to resolve their disputes with county magistrates. On 21 February 1671 a petition was presented to the House of Lords on behalf of the widows of fifteen royalist officers.<sup>35</sup> Unable to secure relief under the county pension scheme, the petitioners complained that the 1662 act for the relief of war victims was no longer 'pursued' by Justices across the country. Having 'long attended' Parliament for redress, the women concluded that the neglect of county magistrates towards their plight had left them impoverished and likely to perish. The following month a second petition was presented to the Upper House by thirteen royalist widows, seven of whom had signed the supplication submitted to the Lords the previous month. The petitioners, most of whom appear to have resided in the City of London and its adjacent counties, noted that more than £2200 had been collected in the capital and the counties of Surrey and Middlesex each year between 1662 and 1665, for the relief of maimed soldiers, war widows and orphans. However, little of this money had found its way into the hands of female war victims. The petitioners requested that the treasurers in each of these jurisdictions be called before the Lords to provide an account of the monies they had raised and distributed to war victims, and that their 'great necessities may be speedily relieved'.<sup>36</sup>

The petitioners' assertiveness in seeking to bring the county treasurers to account for their perceived inaction towards them was likely enhanced by their status as officers' widows. Given that several treasurers were subsequently ordered to respond to the accusations levied against them, moreover, the Lords appear to have taken these women's complaints seriously. William Mason, who had served as county treasurer in Surrey in 1669, denied accusations of neglect toward female war victims, and informed the Lords that at least four royalist widows in the county had received pensions during his tenure.

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<sup>34</sup> NA, QSR 1/52/61-62 (petition and correspondence regarding Thomas Rogers).

<sup>35</sup> PA, HL/PO/JO/10/346/373 (petition of royalist officers' widows).

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid* (second petition of royalist officers' widows).

Meanwhile, George Walsh, the treasurer for the east division in Middlesex, not only denied the petitioners' claims, but informed the Upper House that they had been 'much misinformed' by the widows' supplication. Since the 1662 act stipulated that widows were only to be granted relief from the county stock once all maimed soldiers had first been awarded welfare, Walsh maintained that Justices were not legally bound to issue relief to female war victims unless there was sufficient money to do so. He further insisted that many widows were aware of this legislation, but had petitioned the Lords anyway in order to stir up trouble: 'some of them are more to blame because the Justices of the Peace in their s[ai]d sessions have severall tymes bin sollicitid by them in this matter, but have answered that the pet[it]ione[rs] are not within the reliefe of the s[ai]d Act as the case stands'.<sup>37</sup> By early April the widows' case had been referred to the parliamentary Committee for Petitions, but no further action appears to have been taken.<sup>38</sup>

The 1662 act for the relief of maimed soldiers, widows and orphans expired in 1679. After this date, most counties appear to have reverted back to the 1601 Elizabethan poor laws. Pensions continued to be granted to maimed and indigent soldiers, but after 1679 widows no longer possessed a legal entitlement to the county stock. Although some female war victims continued to receive pensions after this date, such cases were extremely rare.<sup>39</sup> Perhaps aware of the lapsing of the act, when Mary Elmes petitioned the Northamptonshire bench in 1684 she requested money towards 'placing out one of her children who is now fitt to be put to a trade', rather than a pension. She was subsequently granted a one-off payment of 40s from the bench towards 'placeing of her s[ai]d child forth an apprentice'.<sup>40</sup>

The evidence presented above lends credence to Hudson's argument regarding the treatment of royalist widows after the Restoration. In the Midlands, few widows received pensions during this period. By turning attention to the relief administered by the Crown at Whitehall, however, the remainder of this chapter will demonstrate that the Restoration regime did not turn its back entirely on female war victims.

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *LJ*, vol. 12, pp. 475, 477, 478 (1, 4 and 5 April, 1671).

<sup>39</sup> NA, QSR 1/120; Hudson, 'Negotiating for blood money', p. 151.

<sup>40</sup> NA, QSR 1/112 (petition of Mary Elmes); NA, QSR 1/113.

## 2.3 War widows and the Crown, 1660-1670

In November 1664 the churchwardens and overseers of St Margaret's in Westminster petitioned the Secretary of State, Sir Henry Bennet, pleading for financial assistance to help support their parish poor. The petitioners complained that the shortcomings of the parish had been exposed due to the primacy of its location to the kingdom's governing powers. A stone's throw from both Parliament and the royal court at Whitehall, the ranks of the inhabitant poor in St Margaret's had been swelled following the Restoration by the 'many souldiers widdowes and small children... which settle themselves heere upon attending either at the court or parliam[en]t for some releife'.<sup>41</sup> If the parish officials of St Margaret's are to be believed, then four years after Charles II's return to England, Whitehall and Westminster were awash with war widows and orphans seeking to secure relief from both king and Parliament.<sup>42</sup>

Despite recent studies by Hannah Worthen and Andrew Hopper, we still know more about the interactions between war widows and county magistrates than that between war widows and the authorities of central government.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, with the notable exception of P. R. Newman's study on indigent royalist officers, little concerted effort has been made to assess the distribution of relief from the Crown to royalist war victims during the 1660s.<sup>44</sup> The remainder of this chapter seeks to address this historical oversight by examining petitions submitted by the 'many souldiers widdowes' to Charles II during the first decade of the Restoration.<sup>45</sup> Brian Weiser has estimated that more than 10,000 individuals petitioned the king during the 1660s, and that little under 3,000 petitions are preserved in the State Papers.<sup>46</sup> An examination of these papers has uncovered 115 petitions submitted by 76 royalist widows between 1660 and 1670. The overwhelming majority of these documents were addressed directly to Charles II, with

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<sup>41</sup> TNA, SP 29/105/192 (petition of the churchwardens and overseers of St Margaret's, Westminster).

<sup>42</sup> The churchwardens' accounts for St Margaret's record payments to at least two war widows during the early 1660s. In 1662 Mary Lawson from Lancashire and Susan Spicer, 'a souldiers widdowe', were each awarded 5s. CWAC, SMW/E/1/42.

<sup>43</sup> H. Worthen, 'Supplicants and guardians: the petitions of royalist widows during the civil wars and Interregnum, 1642–1660', *Women's History Review*, 26 (2017), pp. 528–540; A. Hopper, "'To condole with me on the Commonwealth's loss": the widows and orphans of Parliament's military commanders', in D. Appleby and A. Hopper (eds), *Battle-Scarred: Mortality, Medical Care and Military Welfare in the British Civil Wars* (Manchester, forthcoming).

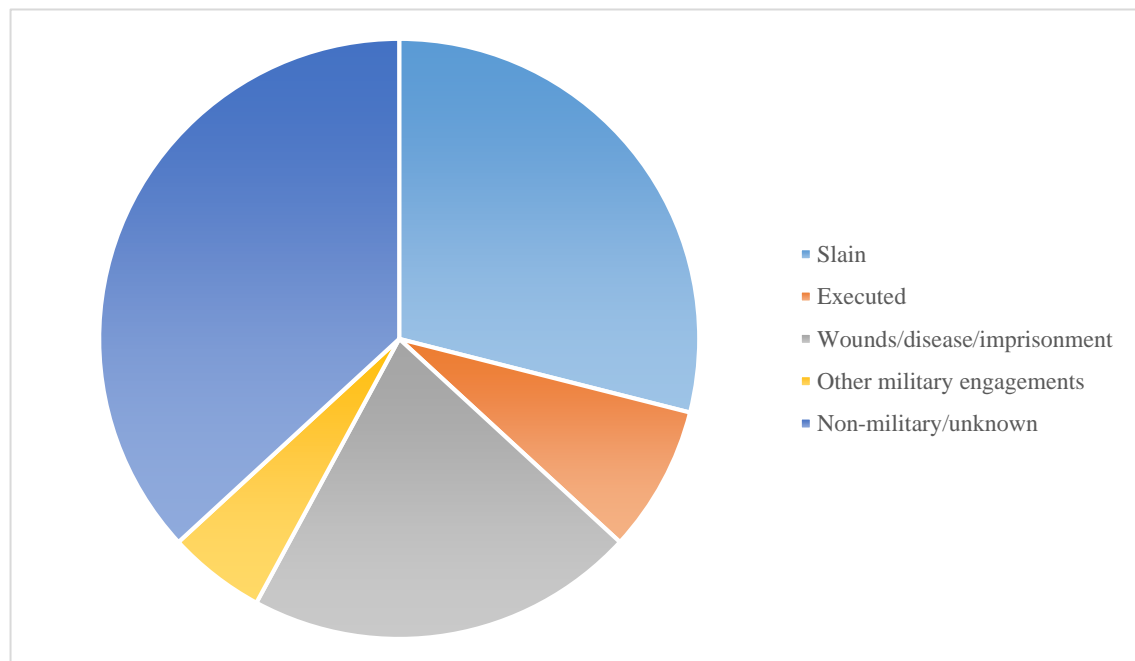
<sup>44</sup> P. Newman, 'The 1663 list of indigent royalist officers considered as a primary source for the study of the royalist army', *The Historical Journal*, 30 (1987), pp. 885–904.

<sup>45</sup> The petitions submitted by royalist widows to the Convention Parliament are examined in Chapter 4.

<sup>46</sup> B. Weiser, 'Access and petitioning during the reign of Charles II', in E. Cruickshanks (ed.), *The Stuart Courts* (Stroud, 2000), p. 207.

the occasional address extended to include his entire Privy Council. Of the husbands of these widows, 22 (29 percent) had been slain in battle during the civil wars; 6 (8 percent) had been executed by Parliament for their military conduct during the 1640s and 1650s; 16 (21 percent) had died from wounds, disease or imprisonment; 4 (5 percent) had died in other military engagements; and 28 (37 percent) had served during the civil wars but died later, either through non-military causes or by causes unknown [Figure 2.1]. In addition, a further four royalist female petitioners have been identified amongst the minute books of the Privy Council, and six in the register of requests kept by Gervase Holles, one of Charles II's four Masters of Requests.<sup>47</sup> This takes our overall total of royalist war widows who petitioned the Crown between 1660 and 1670 to 86.

**Figure 2.1 Petitioners according to their husbands' deaths, 1660-1670**



Source: TNA, SP 29.

Drawing on this evidence, the remainder of this chapter seeks to assess the experiences of war widows who appealed to the Crown for relief during the first decade of the Restoration. Constraints of time have prevented a thorough examination of petitions submitted after 1670, although some examples are provided as a means of

<sup>47</sup> TNA, PC 2/54-64; BL, Add. MS 5759. A second of Holles's register of requests dated 1670-1674 contains details of three war widows who submitted petitions. BL, Add. MS 15632.

gauging the Crown's attitude towards female war victims after this date.<sup>48</sup> First, the social status and geographic distribution of petitioners are examined, as are the various requests made by petitioners. Second, the practicalities of petitioning at Whitehall are considered, including the importance of intercessors and the expenses involved. After assessing the Crown's responses towards these women, this section concludes by examining a remarkable petition submitted to Charles II in 1664 on behalf of 163 royalist widows and orphans. Overall, the section demonstrates that the petitioning experiences of widows at Whitehall contrasted markedly with their counterparts petitioning in the provinces. The potential rewards were significantly greater, but so too were the costs involved. Moreover, whilst royalist widows petitioning in the provinces were often unable to secure county pensions, many women at Whitehall were granted generous payments from the Crown.

### **2.3.1 The petitioners**

This section provides a prosopography of the royalist widows who petitioned the Crown for relief between 1660 and 1670. It considers the social standing of claimants, as well as the military ranks of their former husbands. A marked difference in terms of wealth and social status is observed between the widows who petitioned Charles II and those who petitioned county magistrates. These disparities are borne out in the requests made by claimants, as women sought wealth, land and titles from the king in order to shore up or advance their family's status.

Whereas the majority of petitions submitted to county Quarter Sessions were by and on behalf of the widows of the rank-and-file, those submitted to the Crown were often from the widows of higher-ranking servicemen. As Table 2.2 illustrates, more than 30 percent of the surviving petitions were submitted by women whose husbands had served at or above the rank of colonel, and 60 percent by women whose spouses had served at or above the rank of captain. Assessing the social status of petitioners is somewhat precarious, especially since many claimed to have been financially ruined or

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<sup>48</sup> For examples of petitions submitted by war widows after 1670 see TNA, SP 29/303/86 (petition of Elizabeth Yates); SP 29/373/110 (petition of Margaret Herbert); SP 29/382/286 (petition of Mary Davenant).



fallen into poverty as a result of the wars. That said, many were from gentry families.<sup>49</sup> The highest ranking claimant was Mary Widdrington, whose husband, Sir William, had been created First Baron Widdrington in November 1643, and was later killed at Wigan Lane during the Third Civil War in 1651.<sup>50</sup> Other notable petitioners included the widows of Sir Thomas Tyldesley, Sir Thomas Byron and Sir John Urry, all of whom had been knighted after 1642 for their military services. Claimants were also geographically widely dispersed. Too few women disclosed their county of residence in their petitions to allow for a comprehensive analysis, but from those who did it is evident that claimants had travelled to the royal court at Whitehall from across the length and breadth of the country, including Hampshire, Norfolk, Northumberland, Somerset and Pembrokeshire. We might therefore conclude that the majority of war widows who petitioned the Crown during the 1660s were geographically widely dispersed, socially established women, whose husbands had served as field and regimental officers in the royalist army.

**Table 2.2 The military ranks of petitioners' husbands.**

Rank of husband <sup>51</sup>	No. of widows
Major General	4 (5%)
Colonel	23 (30%)
Lieutenant-Colonel	6 (8%)
Major	2 (3%)
Captain	14 (18%)
Lieutenant	1 (1%)
Cornet	2 (3%)
Other	8 (11%)
Unknown	16 (21%)
Total	76

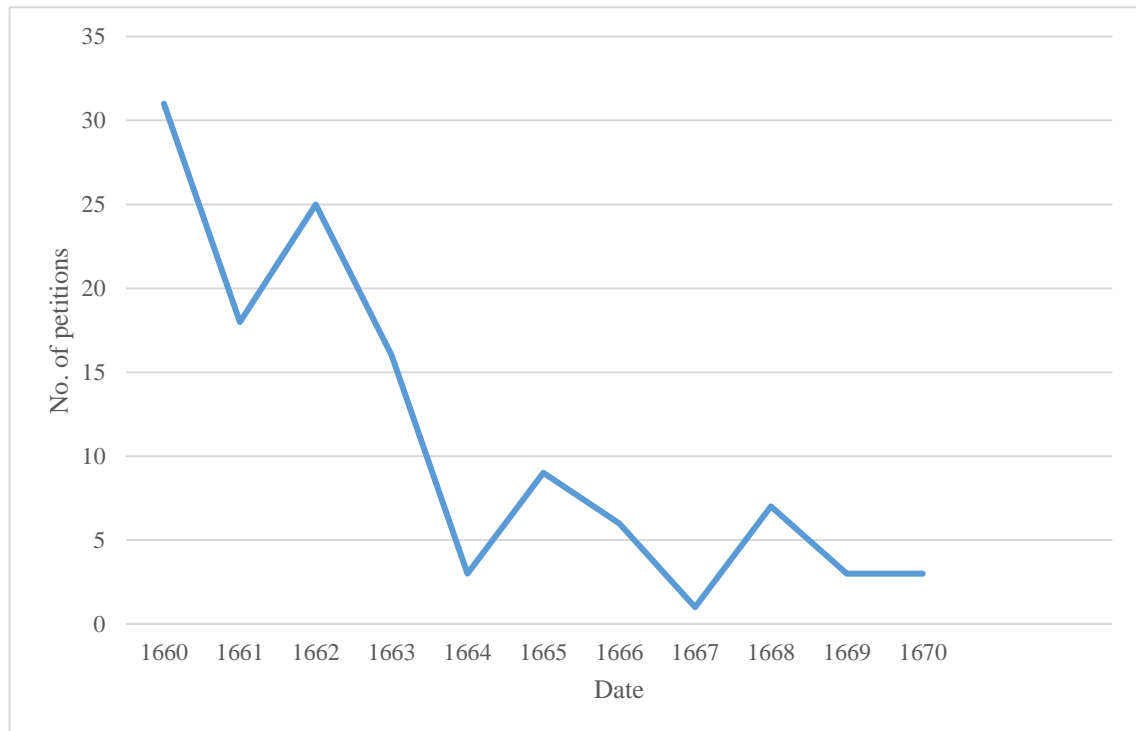
Source: TNA, SP 29.

<sup>49</sup> In contrast, less than 4 percent of maimed soldiers who appeared before the Devon bench between 1660 and 1690 were from the gentry or yeomanry. Hudson, 'Negotiating for blood money', p. 154.

<sup>50</sup> TNA, SP 29/21/255, 256 (petitions of Mary Widdrington); M. Bennett, 'Widdrington, William, first Baron Widdrington (1610-1651)', *ODNB*.

<sup>51</sup> This information is drawn from the petitions themselves, along with other secondary sources, notably P. Newman, *Royalist Officers in England and Wales, 1642-1660: A Biographical Dictionary* (New York, 1981).

**Figure 2.2 The number of petitions submitted by royalist widows to the Crown, 1660-1670.**



Source: TNA, SP 29; PC 2/54-64; BL, Add. MS 5759; Add. MS 15632.

Figure 2.2 illustrates the number of petitions submitted by royalist widows to Charles II and his Privy Council during the first decade of the Restoration. Predictably, the largest number of petitions were submitted in the immediate aftermath of Charles's return to England in 1660, as cavaliers flocked to Whitehall to seek reward and recompense for their services and sufferings. The number of petitions submitted by widows declined dramatically after 1662, and remained low – though without ever reaching zero – for the remainder of the decade. The decline in petitions submitted after 1662 coincided with two parliamentary acts passed that year intended for the relief of royalist war victims. The first of these granted £60,000 to indigent royalist officers, whilst the second permitted maimed royalist soldiers and widows to petition Justices of the Peace at Quarter Sessions for pensions.<sup>52</sup> Quantifying the significance of these pieces of legislation on the number of war widows petitioning at Whitehall is difficult, since neither act was aimed specifically at relieving these women. The former was intended

<sup>52</sup> Raithby (ed.), *Statutes of the Realm*, pp. 380-388, 389-90. See also Appleby, 'Veteran politics', p. 335; Newman, 'The 1663 list', pp. 885-904.

exclusively for the relief of royalist veterans, whilst the latter – which capped pensions at the modest sum of £20 a year – often fell far short of these women’s demands.

The requests made by war widows to the Crown were far more varied than those submitted to county benches. This is perhaps to be expected, since the Crown had far greater resources and patronage at its disposal than county Justices. Almost 60 percent of petitions requested monetary relief, either in the form of a pension or a gratuity, or through the repayment of loans made to the Crown during the civil wars [Table 2.3]. Such demands varied enormously in scale, from the yearly annuity of £300 requested by Frances Tyldesley, whose husband Sir Thomas was mortally wounded at Wigan Lane in 1651, to the £50 gratuity requested by Elizabeth Dobson, the widow of a royalist captain.<sup>53</sup> Some petitioners went further than others by drawing attention to specific funds of money from which they asked to be relieved. In her petition dated 1662, Elizabeth Hudson requested the sum of £500 which had recently been imposed on the clergyman Henry Feild in the King’s Bench for seditious preaching. There was more than an element of revenge to Elizabeth’s attack on Feild, whom she accused of hiring men to murder her husband, Dr Michael Hudson, at Woodcroft House in Northamptonshire in 1648.<sup>54</sup> Meanwhile, between July 1662 and November 1663, six widows appealed individually for relief from a fund of £2,000 that had recently been set aside by the Crown ‘for the use of those distressed widdowes’ whose husbands had served in the royalist army during the civil wars.<sup>55</sup> The release of this money may help to explain the dramatic decrease in widow claimants after 1662, whilst the knowledge displayed by these women regarding various pools of money and patronage at the Crown’s disposal indicates that many female petitioners were well-informed of events in and around Whitehall during the 1660s.

Thirteen widows requested relief and reward in the form of land. Grants of this sort extended beyond the jurisdiction of provincial magistrates, which perhaps explains why a number of widows overlooked county Justices in order to petition the Crown. Most women sought ownership of new lands and properties, although at least one widow requested the return of former lands which had been confiscated by Parliament during the

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<sup>53</sup> TNA, SP 29/65/38 (petition of Frances Tyldesley); SP 29/66/163 (petition of Elizabeth Dobson).

<sup>54</sup> TNA, SP 29/52/57 (petition of Elizabeth Hudson). For Hudson’s death see A. Hopper, ‘The reluctant regicide? Thomas Wayte and the civil wars in Rutland’, *Midland History*, 39 (2014), pp. 43–44.

<sup>55</sup> TNA, SP 29/57/243 (petition of Katherine Hitchcock); SP 29/66/163 (petition of Elizabeth Dobson); SP 29/77/154 (petition of Dorothy Dancastell); SP 29/83/127 (petition of Veronica Platt); SP 29/83/128 (petition of Elizabeth Wolseley); SP 29/66/188 (petition of Clara Magdalena).

1640s and 1650s. Mary Thorpe, whose husband had been executed for his role in Penruddock's Rising (1655), requested a workhouse in Wiltshire which had belonged to her husband prior to his death.<sup>56</sup> Other women requested lands which had formerly belonged to their wartime adversaries. Anne Duke, whose husband had died in exile in the East Indies having been deported following Penruddock's Rising, requested a lease of land in Christchurch, Hampshire, which had formerly been owned by the parliamentarian John Lisle. Lisle had presided over the trial of Anne's husband in 1655, and had earlier served as a commissioner at the trial of Charles I in 1649. Along with the regicides, he had forfeited his estates to the Crown shortly after the Restoration.<sup>57</sup> Meanwhile, in a second petition to the king dated 1662, Elizabeth Hudson requested a lease of land which had formerly belonged to one Francis Underwood, a parliamentarian officer who she also accused of instigating her husband's death.<sup>58</sup>

Seven petitions requested positions in the royal household, either for the petitioner themselves or for a family member. Prolific amongst these claimants was Elizabeth Cary, who in three separate petitions submitted to the Crown between 1660 and 1662 asked that her son be appointed a page in Charles II's privy chamber, a page of the back stairs to the queen, and, simply, for 'some place under your majesty'.<sup>59</sup> In June 1661, meanwhile, Rachel Belcher asked to be appointed a laundress to the queen, adding, somewhat prematurely, 'when the nation shall be made soe happy in having one'.<sup>60</sup> This position was coveted by a second war widow the following year.<sup>61</sup> Elsewhere, three widows requested the right to appoint a baronet. These women likely coveted the title in order to shore up their family's social standing. In 1660 the former widow of Captain Edward Bellot requested the right to confer a baronetcy upon her new spouse, whilst the following year the widow of Captain John Cary appealed to do the same upon 'some person that has been a loyall subject as her deceased husband'.<sup>62</sup> Cary had been due to receive a baronetcy from Charles I during the 1640s, but was slain at Lichfield before the title had been granted to him.

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<sup>56</sup> TNA, SP 29/9/167 (petition of Mary Thorpe).

<sup>57</sup> TNA, SP 29/20/96 (petition of Anne Duke); A. Button, 'Royalist women petitioners in south-west England, 1655-62', *The Seventeenth Century*, 15 (2000), pp. 54, 56; T. Venning, 'Lisle, John (1609/10-1664)', *ODNB*.

<sup>58</sup> TNA, SP 29/52/54 (petition of Elizabeth Hudson).

<sup>59</sup> TNA, SP 29/2/35; SP 29/2/157; SP 29/55/114 (petitions of Elizabeth Cary).

<sup>60</sup> TNA, SP 29/38/184 (petition of Rachel Belcher).

<sup>61</sup> TNA, SP 29/55/152 (petition of Jane Penning).

<sup>62</sup> TNA, SP 29/25/48 (petition of Sybilla Bellot); SP 29/48/61 (petition of Jane Cary).

**Table 2.3 Requests made by petitioners, 1660-1670.**

Requests made by widows	No. of widows
Pension	22
Other forms of monetary relief (gratuity, arrears, repayment of loans etc.)	52
Land / property (either for a lease of new land or to have former lands restored)	13
Warrant to create a baronet	3
Position in the royal household (either for themselves or a family member)	7
Almswoman's place	1
Recommendation for county pension	3
Other	24

Source: TNA, SP 29; PC 2/54-64; BL, Add. MS 5759.

The 'Other' row in Table 2.2 includes requests which are not easily categorised, or else were made infrequently by claimants. One widow requested that her son be admitted as a scholar into Charterhouse.<sup>63</sup> Meanwhile, in her petition in August 1660, Priscilla Cooke implored Charles II to prevent her father-in-law, Colonel Thomas Cooke, from disinheriting her and her children. Priscilla's husband Francis had served as a colonel in the royalist army before his death at Colchester in 1648, whilst his father, Thomas, had fought for Parliament.<sup>64</sup> Aggrieved by his son's allegiance, Thomas had threatened to disinherit Francis during the 1640s. The matter soon came to the attention of Charles I, and in November 1643 his Secretary of State, George Digby, wrote to

<sup>63</sup> TNA, SP 29/9/198 (petition of Anne Staunton).

<sup>64</sup> Newman, *Royalist Officers*, p. 84. This is possibly the same Thomas Cooke who worked as an agent for the Cambridgeshire county committee during the 1640s, and fought for Parliament at Worcester in 1651. C. Holmes, *The Eastern Association in the English Civil War* (Cambridge, 1974), p. 126.

Francis to assure him that the king would assist him in the dispute with his father.<sup>65</sup> Royalist defeat prevented Charles I from upholding his guarantee, however, and in her petition Priscilla insisted that her father-in-law:

will not afford y[ou]r pet[it]ione[r] nor her poor perishing orphans any releife or comfort in soe much as she is affrayd (because of his unnaturall hardnes of heart to her and her children) that he will disinheritt her sonne onely for her husbands integrity performed according to his duty and allegiance to his sacred majesties.<sup>66</sup>

Although the outcome of Priscilla's petition is unknown, the episode illustrates how family rifts caused by the war could persist long after the fighting ceased, to the detriment of both widows and orphans.<sup>67</sup>

### 2.3.2 The process of petitioning

Petitioners often travelled great distances to submit their supplications to the royal court at Whitehall. They did so because the potential rewards were far greater than those available from the county purse, and because the Crown offered more varied forms of reward – including titles, lands and offices – than those distributed by provincial authorities. In a society concerned with rank and status, it is also possible that many of these elite widows regarded petitioning county Justices with more than a degree of snobbery.<sup>68</sup> But what could these women expect when they reached the capital? What pitfalls might they experience along the way? And, most significantly, how likely were they to obtain relief? This section seeks to answer these questions by examining the process of petitioning at Whitehall.

Petitioning was an expensive and often time-consuming business. Although by the mid-seventeenth century a prospective petitioner might have a petition drawn up by a scribe or a clerk for as little as a few shillings, Jason Peacey has demonstrated that this initial outlay 'could pale in comparison with the expenses involved in lodging in London'.<sup>69</sup> That a number of widows were forced to endure costly and lengthy stays in the capital whilst they petitioned the Crown is borne out in numerous petitions. In 1661,

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<sup>65</sup> TNA, SP 29/13/111 (copy of letter from George Digby to Francis Cooke).

<sup>66</sup> TNA, SP 29/13/110 (petition of Priscilla Cooke).

<sup>67</sup> The will of Thomas Cooke, resident of Pebmarsh, Essex and a former parliamentary colonel, is printed in J. Muskett (ed.), *Suffolk Manorial Families, Being the County Visitations and Other Pedigrees* (Exeter, 1900), vol. 1, p. 80. The document, dated 1679, contains no reference to Priscilla or her children.

<sup>68</sup> Hopper, 'The widows and orphans of Parliament's military commanders' (forthcoming).

<sup>69</sup> J. Peacey, *Print and Public Politics in the English Revolution* (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 272, 238, 242.

Elizabeth Poyer, the widow of Colonel John Poyer, complained that she had been in the capital ‘for the space of 22 moneths and upwards... destitute and unpittied hitherto by any’.<sup>70</sup> In 1662 the widow of Sir John Henderson bemoaned that she had attended the court ‘above 30 moneths & is still without any releife’, whilst in 1670 the wife of Sir John Urry claimed to have expended so much money during her stay in London that she was unable to bear the charges of her travel back to her native Scotland, ‘haveing tarried hier almost two yiers’.<sup>71</sup> Far from home, petitioners also faced the prospect of being distanced from their families and loved ones for months, if not years at a time. Dorothy Byron, whose husband Sir Gilbert had served as governor of Rhuddlan Castle during the First Civil War, complained in 1661 that she had been forced to send her children ‘to some friends for their releife’, and begged a pension so that ‘shee may enioy the comfort of callinge back her said children’.<sup>72</sup> Similarly, Elizabeth Poyer noted that she had been ‘forced to be at 200 miles distance from her poore & comfortlesse children’ whilst she sought relief in the capital.<sup>73</sup> Alluding to the separation of mother and child was a powerful and emotive tactic utilised by petitioners in order to elicit sympathy from the Crown, but it was also a reality which some women were forced to endure whilst they petitioned the royal court.

Feelings of frustration could become further exacerbated as petitioners were left to the mercy of the Crown’s bureaucracy. Nowhere is this more evident than in the case of Jane Palmer, whose husband had been wounded and captured at Worcester in 1651, and later died imprisoned at Lambeth House. Upon petitioning the Crown in 1663, Jane was granted permission from the king to collect the ‘charitable benevolence’ of ‘well disposed people’ in London and several other counties, provided that she first receive a patent from the Lord Chancellor, the earl of Clarendon. Unfortunately for Jane, Clarendon refused to issue her a patent on account that her warrant issued by Charles II had not also been endorsed by the rest of the Privy Council. After a failed appeal to the Council to endorse her warrant, Jane was forced to petition the king for a second time the following year. She complained that being shunted from office to office had left her feeling helpless, ‘haveing been tosed to & againe like a tennis ball, to the utter ruine of

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<sup>70</sup> TNA, SP 29/39/271 (petition of Elizabeth Poyer).

<sup>71</sup> TNA, SP 29/66/187 (petition of Clara Magdalena); SP 29/445/123 (petition of Widow Urry).

<sup>72</sup> TNA, SP 29/36/126 (petition of Dorothy Byron).

<sup>73</sup> TNA, SP 29/39/271 (petition of Elizabeth Poyer).

her selfe & fower fatherlesse children'. In 1666 the Crown recommended Jane to the Berkshire bench for relief.<sup>74</sup>

During the first few years of his reign, Charles was rarely absent from his palace at Whitehall. There were few restrictions on who could enter the palace, and throughout the 1660s the privy and presence chambers were accessible to all but 'mean or ordinary persons'.<sup>75</sup> The likelihood is that many petitioners were therefore able to submit their supplications in person, if not to the king himself, then to his Privy Council or one of his Masters of Requests. With the demand for relief high, however, a well-placed contact or patron at the royal court might help to advance a petitioner's request above the competition.<sup>76</sup> That contemporaries recognised the advantage of intercessors is borne out in the petition of Frances Bowles, a maimed soldier shot at Edgehill, who bemoaned in his address to Charles II that he had 'noe friends at court'.<sup>77</sup> Some women certainly sought to utilise their connections with the royal household. Jane Penning, who had served as a laundress in the household of Charles's sister the duchess of Orleans for nine years, noted in her petition dated 1662 that both the duchess and Charles's mother, Henrietta Maria, had 'mediated for her w[i]th yo[u]r Ma[jes]ty'.<sup>78</sup> Elsewhere, Rachel Belcher noted that her husband had served as a groom of the chamber to the duke of York as well as a captain of foot in the royalist army during the 1640s, whilst Elizabeth Griffin claimed to have been employed as a nurse to Charles's sister Mary, Princess of Orange, during the princess's childhood.<sup>79</sup> In March 1661, Elizabeth was awarded a yearly pension of £200.<sup>80</sup> Whilst petitioners recognised the advantage of intercessors, however, the petition of Anne Butler in 1662 suggests that their use did not guarantee immediate success. In her address to the king, Anne – who may have been a kinswoman of James Butler, duke of Ormond – complained that:

about a yeare since shee came upp to this cittie [London] and presented her humble peticon by the hands of his Grace the Duke of Ormond to yo[u]r sacred Ma[jes]tie for releife, which was referred to my Lord Treasurer but hitherto nothing is done for her and her poore children who languish in greife and want.

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<sup>74</sup> TNA, SP 29/85/43; SP 29/99/240 (petitions of Jane Palmer); *CSPD 1666-1667*, p. 283.

<sup>75</sup> B. Weiser, *Charles II and the Politics of Access* (Woodbridge, 2003), pp. 26-28.

<sup>76</sup> For the importance of intercessors see D. Hirst, 'Making contact: petitions and the English Republic', *Journal of British Studies*, 45 (2006), p. 32.

<sup>77</sup> TNA, SP 29/2/203 (petition of Frances Bowles).

<sup>78</sup> TNA, SP 29/55/152 (petition of Jane Penning).

<sup>79</sup> TNA, SP 29/38/184 (petition of Rachel Belcher); SP 29/33/145 (petition of Elizabeth Griffin).

<sup>80</sup> *CSPD 1660-1661*, p. 555.



This second supplication was enough to secure Anne a yearly pension of £100.<sup>81</sup>

The ways in which the monarchy provided for needy cavaliers during the 1660s has undergone recent historical revision. Contrary to contemporary ballads such as *The Cavalier's Complaint* (1660) – which lamented the poor treatment shown by Charles II towards his father's supporters – David Appleby has suggested that 'strenuous efforts were made to recompense those who had suffered in the service of the Crown during the civil wars and Interregnum'.<sup>82</sup> This view is largely, though by no means fully, borne out by the treatment of royalist widows who petitioned Charles II during the 1660s. Before assessing the Crown's responses towards these women, we might pause to consider some of the pressures placed on the monarch and his advisors with regards to their provision and maintenance. As we have seen, many claimants were the widows of prominent figures in the royalist army, some of whom had become national figures during the civil wars. Men such as Henry Lilburne had been propelled onto the national stage during the 1640s, as news of his exploits were printed in newsbooks and pamphlets.<sup>83</sup> Another, Sir Thomas Tyldesley, had performed with such distinction during the First Civil War that Charles I had felt obliged to write to him in June 1646 that '[t]he greatest of my misfortune is that I cannot reward so gallant and loyal a subject as you are'.<sup>84</sup> In much the same way that Parliament was compelled to reward the widows of its own commanders during the 1640s for their exemplary services and sacrifices, so too we must consider the pressures placed on the Crown to reward and maintain the spouses of its most distinguished servants.<sup>85</sup>

Charles may also have felt compelled to uphold pledges of reward and relief granted by his father during the 1640s. In 1661 Katherine Byron reminded the king that 'yo[u]r Father promised yo[u]r pet[it]ione[r] a pencon'.<sup>86</sup> Other petitioners claimed to have been promised relief by Charles II himself as he and his exiled court moved around Europe during the 1650s.<sup>87</sup> Veronica Platt, whose husband was slain during the first battle of Newbury in 1643, was assured by Charles at his court in France that 'she should bee satisfied for all her losses when it pleased God to restore' him to his throne. In 1663 she

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<sup>81</sup> TNA, SP 29/53/41 (petition of Anne Butler); *CSPD 1661-1662*, p. 354.

<sup>82</sup> Wing/C1570A, *The Cavaleers Complaint* (1660); Appleby, 'Veteran politics', p. 335.

<sup>83</sup> BL, TT E.459[4], *A Terrible and Bloudy Fight at Tinmouth Castle* (London, 1648).

<sup>84</sup> Newman, *Royalist Officers*, p. 381.

<sup>85</sup> Hopper, 'The widows and orphans of Parliament's military commanders' (forthcoming).

<sup>86</sup> TNA, SP 29/14/71 (petition of Katherine Byron). See also SP 29/20/43 (petition of Elizabeth Bracy).

<sup>87</sup> For the exiled royal court see G. Smith, *The Cavaliers in Exile, 1640-1660* (Basingstoke, 2003).

was awarded a gratuity of £100.<sup>88</sup> A second widow, Katherine Hitchcock, whose husband was mortally wounded in a skirmish near Oxford, was introduced to Charles at his court in Bruges by her kinsman the duke of Ormond, where, she claimed, he was ‘pleased to promise that if it pleased God to restore your Ma[jes]tie to your crowne and dignity, you would in some measure behold the distressed condicon of yo[u]r pet[it]ione[r]’.<sup>89</sup> Since the State Papers contain no further reference to Katherine, it is uncertain whether or not she was successful in eliciting money from the Crown.

Once a petition had been considered by the king and his Privy Council, it was often referred to the Lord Treasurer, Thomas Wriothesley, earl of Southampton, to examine its content more thoroughly and to recommend a suitable course of action.<sup>90</sup> Consequent instructions do not survive for many petitions, and to date no additional orders have been identified for more than half of the widows in our sample. This does not necessarily mean that these women were denied relief outright, but unless a thorough investigation of an individual proves possible, their fates for now must remain unknown. Fortunately, a number of petitions bear endorsements signed by Charles’s officials. Southampton’s reports to the king are particularly revealing, disclosing a genuine compassion towards a number of female war victims, checked by an acute awareness of the limited resources at the Crown’s disposal. In October 1662, the Lord Treasurer was pleased to recommend one war widow for a gratuity of £40, noting that ‘it will be an Act of Charity’.<sup>91</sup> When he reviewed the request of Lady Tyldesley for a yearly pension of £300 a few months later, however, Southampton advised Charles to ‘retrench somewhat of the annuall sume petitioned for’, reminding the king that ‘the pentions in the generall [are] now amounting to soe great a sume’. Heeding his Lord Treasurer’s advice, Charles awarded the widow a yearly pension of £200.<sup>92</sup>

As we have seen above, county magistrates were often disinclined to award pensions to royalist widows after the Restoration. The distribution of relief in the provinces stands in contrast to that awarded in the capital during the 1660s, where a number of widows were awarded pensions and gratuities worth hundreds of pounds from

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<sup>88</sup> TNA, SP 29/83/127 (petition of Veronica Platt); *CSPD 1663-1664*, p. 341.

<sup>89</sup> TNA, SP 29/57/243 (petition of Katherine Hitchcock).

<sup>90</sup> Weiser, ‘Access and petitioning’, p. 205. Occasionally petitions from widows were referred to the Secretary of State, Sir Edward Nicholas, and, after 1662, his successor, Sir Henry Bennett.

<sup>91</sup> TNA, SP 29/58/181 (note on the petition of Margery Smith).

<sup>92</sup> TNA, SP 29/65/38 (note on the petition of Frances Tyldesley); *CSPD 1663-1664*, p. 133.

the Crown. This might suggest that the Restoration regime was more comfortable giving pensions to officers' widows than to the wives of the rank-and-file. As Gruber von Arni has correctly pointed out, however, the theoretical awarding of pensions did not ensure that they were necessarily paid on time, if at all.<sup>93</sup> In this regard, Southampton's warning to the king in November 1662 is particularly significant. Having been asked to consider the petition of a royalist widow, the Lord Treasurer noted 'I that have soe often represented the many pentions that are already granted, & the improbability of paying most of them, can very ill advise the granting more pentions'.<sup>94</sup> When asked to consider a widow's petition the following year, the Lord Treasurer again warned Charles that 'yo[u]r treasure is... much charged'.<sup>95</sup>

Whilst it is important to remain objective as to whether the pensions granted by the Crown were ever actually paid, some of the payments sanctioned by Charles II are suggestive. It is especially noteworthy that the widows of two royalist major-generals – Sir Thomas Tyldesley and Gilbert Byron – each received yearly pensions of £200 following the Restoration, whilst the widow of a third, Sir John Urry, received a much smaller annuity of £50. Moreover, despite receiving a gratuity of £100 from the Crown in April 1662, it was not until 1671, ten years after she had first appealed to the Crown for relief, that she received this pension.<sup>96</sup> The apparent disfavour shown towards Sir John's wife after the Restoration may have been influenced by memories of the major-general's conduct during the civil wars. A multiple side-changer, Urry was beheaded by the Scottish Parliament at Edinburgh in 1650, having gained notoriety for his dishonest demeanour. Some royalists also blamed Urry for the defeat at Marston Moor in 1644.<sup>97</sup> His dubious conduct later ensured that he was excluded from William Winstanley's *The Loyall Martyrology* (1665), which listed the 'most eminent' royalists slain during the civil wars.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Gruber von Arni, *Justice to the Maimed Soldier*, p. 72.

<sup>94</sup> TNA, SP 29/62/110 (note on the petition of Jane Penning).

<sup>95</sup> TNA, SP 29/73/90 (note on the petition of Anne Slaughter).

<sup>96</sup> CSPD 1663-1664, p. 133; CSPD 1661-1662, p. 356; CSPD 1671, p. 253; CSPD 1661-1662, p. 365; TNA, SP 29/31/74 (petition of Widow Urry).

<sup>97</sup> B. Donagan, *War in England, 1642-1649* (Oxford, 2008), p. 276; E. Furgol, 'Urry [Hurry], Sir John (d. 1650)', *ODNB*.

<sup>98</sup> Wing/W3066, W. Winstanley, *The Loyall Martyrology, or, Brief Catalogues and Characters of the Most Eminent Persons who Suffered for their Conscience During the Late Times of Rebellion* (London, 1665); A. Hopper, *Turncoats and Renegadoes: Changing Sides during the English Civil Wars* (Oxford, 2012), p. 205.

Whilst Sir John's tarnished reputation may have counted against his widow, payments made elsewhere by the Crown suggest that Charles II had few scruples when it came to rewarding the families of military turncoats. The widow of John Butler, a lieutenant-colonel in the parliamentary army until 1648, was awarded a pension of £100 after the Restoration, whilst in 1661 the widow of a second parliamentary defector, Colonel Mathew Boynton, was awarded a yearly annuity of £200.<sup>99</sup> The younger son of a baronet, Boynton had defected to the royalist cause in 1648, and despite the ignominy of being banished from Charles II's court in Scotland in 1650, died fighting at Wigan Lane the following year.<sup>100</sup> The sums of money awarded to the widows of Butler and Boynton compared favourably with the yearly pensions of £20 awarded to the wife and daughter of Frances Roberts, a royalist major hanged at Norwich in 1650.<sup>101</sup> The fact that both Boynton and Butler outranked Roberts, both in terms of military rank and, in the case of Boynton at least, social standing, suggests that Charles held these factors in higher esteem than military constancy when it came to rewarding the families of former royalist soldiers.

### 2.3.3 A 'humble petition and remonstrance'

The competition amongst former cavaliers for relief and reward following the Restoration inevitably ensured that some failed to receive the recompense that they felt that their loyalties merited.<sup>102</sup> That the disgruntled and overlooked included many war victims is reflected in a remarkable petition submitted to Charles II in 1664 on behalf of 163 widows and orphans of commissioned officers 'who have been slayne in the services of your Ma[jes]tie and Royall ffather'.<sup>103</sup> This petition, which has hitherto been overlooked by historians, offers an intriguing insight into the attitudes of a number of war widows towards the government's welfare strategies during the 1660s. Both the content of this petition and the Crown's response towards it form the focus of this final section.

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<sup>99</sup> Newman, *Royalist Officers*, pp. 51-52; *CSPD 1661-1662*, p. 356; TNA, SP 29/30/38 (warrant of payment to Isabella Boynton).

<sup>100</sup> Newman, *Royalist Officers*, p. 39.

<sup>101</sup> *CSPD 1660-1661*, p. 498; TNA, SP 29/29/197a (petition of Anne Roberts); A. Hopper, 'The civil wars', in C. Rawcliffe and R. Wilson (eds), *Norwich Since 1550* (London, 2004), pp. 112-113.

<sup>102</sup> J. Miller, *After the Civil Wars: English Politics and Government in the Reign of Charles II* (London, 2000), pp. 38-39; Smith, *The Cavaliers in Exile*, p. 193.

<sup>103</sup> TNA, SP 29/109/250 (petition on behalf of 163 royalist widows and orphans).

Regrettably, we know nothing of the provenance of the document, other than the fact that it does not appear to have been printed, and exists only in manuscript form. Nor do we know anything about how these claimants organised themselves. It is therefore impossible to determine whether the petitioners organised themselves, or whether they relied on male backers. The claimants likely included the same women who had petitioned the Cavalier Parliament for relief the previous year. On 13 March 1663 a petition was presented to the Commons on behalf of ‘several’ royalist officers’ widows, who were granted the proceeds of a voluntary collection raised by MPs. The following month ‘divers’ widows petitioned the Lords for similar relief, although this petition does not appear to have met with success.<sup>104</sup> It is also likely that the exclusion of female war victims from the 1662 act for distributing £60,000 among indigent royalist officers was significant in the genesis of the 1664 widows’ petition.<sup>105</sup> The names of the petitioners were subscribed to the bottom of the document in five aligned columns. The order in which these names were listed appears to have been done so arbitrarily, with little regard for the military rank of the petitioners’ husbands or fathers. It is probably no coincidence, however, that the first two names listed in the first column were Lady Spry and Lady Dabridgcourt, two of only three claimants who bore titles.<sup>106</sup> All 163 names were penned by the same hand, suggesting either that the petitioners themselves never signed the document – possibly on account of illiteracy – or that the petition was the final copy of an earlier draft.

Identifying the subscribers is made difficult by the fact that only their names are appended to the document. Without extensive additional research, it is therefore difficult to confirm the identity of these petitioners’ husbands or fathers with complete certainty. Nine of the claimants can be identified on the basis that they also submitted individual petitions to Charles II during the 1660s. They included Anne Cartwright, whose husband, Lieutenant John Cartwright, was slain at Gainsborough in July 1643; Rachel Belcher, wife of Richard Belcher, a royalist captain who was injured during the wars and died in 1650; Katherine Codrington, wife of Nicholas Codrington, a lieutenant-colonel from Dorset who survived the Restoration; Jane Stewart, widow of Captain George Stewart;

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<sup>104</sup> *CJ*, vol. 8, pp. 449-450 (13-14 March, 1663); *LJ*, vol. 11, p. 507 (7 April, 1663).

<sup>105</sup> A number of royalist soldiers unable to secure a portion of the £60,000 also petitioned Parliament for redress. See *CJ*, vol. 8, p. 449 (12 March, 1663); Wing/C6980, R. Croft, *The Plea, Case, and Humble Proposals of the Truly-Loyal and Suffering Officers* (London, 1663); P. Seaward, *The Cavalier Parliament and the Reconstruction of the Old Regime, 1661-1667* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 210-211.

<sup>106</sup> The name of the third, Lady Gower, was subscribed at the top of the fourth column.

Veronica Platt, a Venetian-born woman whose husband Richard was slain at Newbury in 1643; Bridget Zouch, widow of James Zouch, a colonel-of-horse from Woking, Surrey, who served at Brentford, Gloucester and Newbury before succumbing to a fever at the royalist garrison at Reading in 1643; Elizabeth Gainsford, the daughter of John Gainsford and wife of a royalist captain; Katherine Hoffman, the widow of the German mercenary Colonel Augustine Hoffman; and Elizabeth Hudson, wife of Dr Michael Hudson. Of the other notable signatories, Lady Spry may have been a relation of Major Sir John Spry from Dorset, and Lady Dabridgcourt a relation of Sir Thomas Dabridgcourt, a royalist colonel.<sup>107</sup>

Whilst the active services performed by the petitioners' relatives remain obscure, determining their military ranks is made possible by the discovery of a second document discussed below. In total, the petitioners comprised of the widows and orphans of five generals, eight colonels, seven lieutenant-colonels, thirteen majors, fifty-four captains, twenty-three lieutenants and nine quartermasters, with the rest made up of cornets, ensigns, surgeons, chaplains, and those of unknown rank [Figure 2.3]. It is noteworthy that at least two of these women had already received relief from the Crown prior to 1664. Veronica Platt had been awarded a gratuity of £100 in 1663, whilst Elizabeth Hudson had earlier received a yearly pension of £50. The fact that this pension had been revoked by 1663 undoubtedly explains Elizabeth's motivation for signing the document.<sup>108</sup> The petition also includes the names of two males; Adrian Hebditch and Aran Vanzulan, who, based on his surname, may have been the orphan of a Dutch soldier.<sup>109</sup>

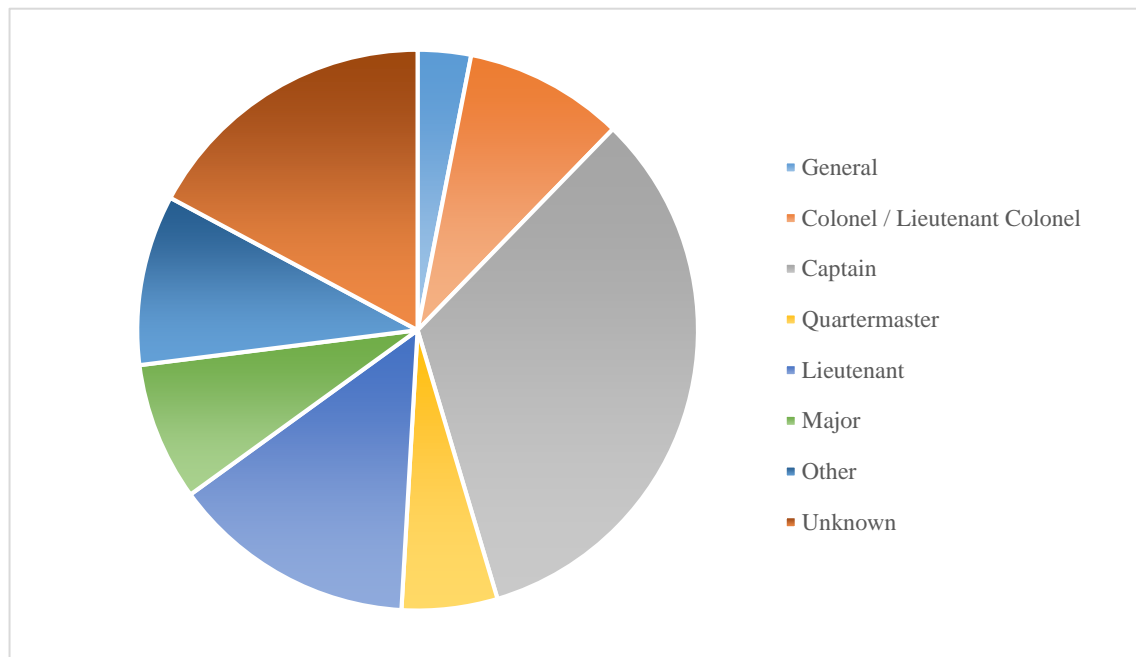
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<sup>107</sup> Newman, *Royalist Officers*, pp. 354, 98.

<sup>108</sup> TNA, SP 29/89/37 (petition of Elizabeth Hudson).

<sup>109</sup> Nobody by the name of Vanzulan appears in the list of foreign soldiers included in Mark Stoyle's *Soldiers and Strangers: An Ethnic History of the English Civil War* (New Haven, 2005), pp. 213-221.

**Figure 2.3 Petitioners according to the military ranks of their husbands or fathers.**



Source: SP 29/249/9.

Although the number of subscribers alone marks this petition as unique, its true significance lies in its thinly-veiled critique of the Crown's policies towards the welfare and maintenance of war widows and orphans. Titled a 'humble peticon and Remonstrance', the document noted that the petitioners had been reduced 'to such extremities' that they remained 'in great danger of perishing'. Acknowledging the two pieces of parliamentary legislation of 1662 intended for the provision of royalist veterans and widows – or, more specifically, the inadequacy of these acts – the petitioners claimed to have received little relief, 'neither of the late Acts of parliament providing for them'.<sup>110</sup> Not content with simply detailing their plight, the petitioners offered a set of proposals to the Crown to help ease their predicaments. In a second document annexed to the petition, the petitioners requested that should they discover the lands of any former parliamentarians and commonwealth-men that had been forfeited to the Crown since the Restoration, then these would be granted to them. The document stated that only the subscribers whose husbands and fathers had 'had a reall comand' in the royalist army would be eligible to receive a share of these estates, which would be divided according to the petitioners 'qualities'. The wording of the document indicates that this proposed

<sup>110</sup> TNA, SP 29/109/250 (petition on behalf of 163 royalist widows and orphans).

initiative was status driven, and intended solely for officers' widows rather than the wives of the rank-and-file. It was not stated whether the quality of each individual was based on their husband's rank or their own social status, which, given the anxieties over quality and rank in early-modern-English society, had the potential to cause serious competition amongst the claimants. Recipients were also expected to have had no share of the £60,000 granted in 1662 for the relief of indigent royalist officers, nor to have received a county pension.

The petitioners' notion that they might profit from the confiscated lands of their wartime adversaries probably stemmed from a similar policy employed by Parliament during the 1640s and 1650s, whereby parliamentary widows were encouraged by sequestration officials to inform on hidden royalist estates for a share of the composition fine.<sup>111</sup> The dissatisfaction of these women at their exclusion from the welfare legislation of the 1660s also suggests that they harboured a sense of entitlement to military welfare. As we will see in Chapter 3, this sense of entitlement had earlier been expressed by parliamentary widows during the 1640s and 1650s. Lastly, the ability of these royalist petitioners and their backers to suggest proposals for their future maintenance demonstrates an initiative in attempting to influence government policy making. These women were not merely quoting legal precedent, but attempting to redirect it for their own gain.<sup>112</sup>

Although the petitioners' proposals were overlooked by the Crown, their requests for relief were not entirely disregarded. A document dated November 1668 lists the names of 316 widows and orphans of royalist officers who were to receive the benefits of a grand plate lottery.<sup>113</sup> Lotteries had been staged sporadically throughout the first half of the seventeenth century, but became increasingly frequent after the Restoration as a means for Charles II to reward his supporters.<sup>114</sup> According to the *London Gazette*, a grand plate lottery was held in the capital in April 1669, and was attended by both Charles II and his brother, James, duke of York. Meanwhile, a pamphlet printed in 1670 noted

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<sup>111</sup> Worthen, 'Supplicants and guardians', p. 529.

<sup>112</sup> This action was not unprecedented. In 1631 the wives of sailors captured by Barbary pirates petitioned Charles I to negotiate a treaty for their release. B. Capp, *When Gossips Meet: Women, Family and Neighbourhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 310-311.

<sup>113</sup> TNA, SP 29/249/9.

<sup>114</sup> J. Pick and M. Anderton, *Building Jerusalem: Art, Industry and the British Millennium* (Amsterdam, 1999), p. 58; C. L'Estrange Ewen, *Lotteries and Sweepstakes: An Historical, Legal, and Ethical Survey of their Introduction, Suppression and Re-Establishment in the British Isles* (London, 1932), pp. 112-114.



that there had been ‘many Plate Lotteryes, in divers places that Year’.<sup>115</sup> Of the 163 widows and orphans whose names appear on the group petition in 1664, all but 28 appeared in the 1668 list. Natural mortality may have accounted for a number of these omissions, although at least one excluded woman, Bridget Zouch, was certainly still alive in 1668.<sup>116</sup> Widows whose names failed to appear on the petition in 1664 but who appeared as beneficiaries of the lottery included Katherine Byron, Anne Cartwright, Elizabeth Pinckney, Elizabeth Wolseley, Katherine de Luke and Katherine Hitchcock. All of these women had earlier petitioned the Crown, although only Katherine Byron and Anne Cartwright were recorded in the State Papers to have been granted relief.<sup>117</sup>

The names of the 316 widows and orphans to be entered into the plate lottery were listed according to the military rank of their husbands or fathers. This was likely done for organisational purposes, although it is also possible that the relatives of higher-ranked soldiers were to receive a greater share of the proceeds. That there was a demand amongst war widows to enjoy the proceeds of the lottery is evident in Anna Shirley’s petition to the Crown in November 1668, in which she requested to be added to ‘the list of those indigent and loyal people who are to partake of the benefit... from the state lottery’.<sup>118</sup> Although it is uncertain how much each claimant could expect to receive from the lottery, the will of Katherine Byron is suggestive. Katherine’s husband, Sir Thomas Byron, was knighted in 1642, and served as a colonel of horse at Edgehill and Hopton Heath.<sup>119</sup> When Katherine died in 1676, she bequeathed to her two maids her yearly pension of £21, ‘arising out of the farme of lotteries being my share of the said farme as an indigent officers widdowe’.<sup>120</sup> Given her husband’s social pedigree and military rank, however, it is probable that the proceeds Katherine collected from the lottery were greater than most.

Despite its reliance on the proceeds raised through the lottery, the Crown continued to issue relief to victims of the civil wars into the 1670s. We have already seen that the widow of Sir John Urry was awarded a pension of £50 in 1671, and in 1679

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<sup>115</sup> W. Hone, *The Everyday Book* (London, 1838), p. 1413; Wing/H496, C. Hammond, *The Loyal Indigent Officer* (London, 1670), pp. 5-6.

<sup>116</sup> Bridget’s will is dated July 1678. TNA, PROB 11/357/195.

<sup>117</sup> TNA, SP 29/14/71 (petition of Katherine Byron); SP 29/78/231 (petition of Anne Cartwright); *CSPD 1673-1675*, p. 26; SP 29/20/31 (petition of Elizabeth Pinckney); SP 29/83/128 (petition of Elizabeth Wolseley); SP 29/17/54 (petition of Katherine de Luke); SP 29/57/243 (petition of Katherine Hitchcock).

<sup>118</sup> TNA, SP 29/249/18 (petition of Anna Shirley). See also SP 29/67/281 (petition of Katherine de Luke).

<sup>119</sup> G. Yerby, ‘Byron, Sir Thomas (c.1610-1644)’, *ODNB*; M. Byron, *The Byron Chronicle: A History of the Byron and Byrom Families, 1066-1800* (Derby, 1965), p. 52.

<sup>120</sup> TNA, PROB 11/350/268.

further pensions of £30 were awarded to both his daughter and granddaughter.<sup>121</sup> Meanwhile, in 1671, Elizabeth Wolseley was awarded a gratuity of £200. This sum had recently been imposed by the king on one John Ferrers as a fine for the reversion of a manor in Derbyshire.<sup>122</sup> Elizabeth's husband, Colonel Devereux Wolseley, had attended Charles I at Nottingham in August 1642, and had served at Edgehill and Brentford. Lastly, when Dorothy Byron died in 1671, her yearly pension of £200 was divided equally amongst her two daughters. In a petition to Charles II after their mother's death, the daughters thanked the king for the 'bounty and favour' he had shown their mother, which had allowed them to receive a 'comfortable subsistence and a liberall education'.<sup>123</sup>

Although an examination of how each woman fared after petitioning Charles II lies beyond the scope of this thesis, two case studies illustrate the varying experiences of royalist widows who successfully obtained relief from the Crown. Colonel Alexander Keynes had served in the royalist army during the First Civil War until the surrender of Weymouth in 1645, after which he left England for the Continent.<sup>124</sup> Returning to England in 1650, Keynes plotted with other royalists to instigate an uprising in the West Country. He was later slain serving as a mercenary in the Venetian army, but not before February 1653, when his wife Sarah was arrested by the Committee for Compounding after her claim that her husband was dead was found to be fictitious. Sarah had sought to pass herself off as a widow in the hope that the Committee would release a property in Radipole, Dorset from sequestration, which, she claimed, had been settled on her as her jointure. Sarah had even obtained counterfeit documentation certifying her husband's death, and skilfully used widowhood as a pretence in an attempt to recover her property. Remarkably, she almost succeeded. In December 1652 the Committee agreed to release the house from sequestration, only to revoke their decision two months later after receiving information that her husband was alive and residing in London.<sup>125</sup> In April 1661 Sarah petitioned the Crown for relief, noting that her six children were 'ready to perish'.<sup>126</sup> Her case was referred to the Lord Treasurer, who recommended that she

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<sup>121</sup> CSPD 1679-1680, p. 148.

<sup>122</sup> TNA, SP 29/289/391 (petition of Elizabeth Wolseley).

<sup>123</sup> CSPD 1671, p. 292; TNA, SP 29/290/147 (petition of Alice and Lucy Byron).

<sup>124</sup> M. Green (ed.), *Calendar for the Committee for Compounding* (London, 1891), vol. 3, p. 1654; Newman, *Royalist Officers*, p. 214.

<sup>125</sup> D. Underdown, *Royalist Conspiracy in England, 1649-1660* (New Haven, 1960), pp. 29-31; Smith, *The Cavaliers in Exile*, pp. 84-85; Green (ed.), *Calendar for the Committee for Compounding*, vol. 3, pp. 1654-1656.

<sup>126</sup> TNA, SP 29/34/45 (petition of Sarah Keynes).

receive payment of £1,000.<sup>127</sup> Although it is uncertain whether this sum was paid in full, at her death in 1682 Sarah was sufficiently wealthy to bequeath £200 to her son, Alexander, and £10 to each of her two daughters. She also bestowed £20 upon her servant, and £10 ‘to twenty poore men and widdowes’. Amongst her personal possessions were a number of items typical of the gentry, including books, portraits, a clock, a watch, and a diamond ring.<sup>128</sup>

Whilst Sarah Keynes appears to have spent her widowhood in relative comfort, at least one widow had incurred such debts during the 1640s that even the assistance of the Crown failed to save her from destitution. We have already touched on the plight of Elizabeth Poyer, whose husband, Colonel John Poyer, had served Parliament as governor of Pembroke during the First Civil War, before defecting to the royalists in 1648. Arrested following the garrison’s surrender to Cromwell in July 1648, Poyer was court-martialled and executed by firing squad at Covent Garden the following year. Two other condemned Welsh royalists, Major-General Rowland Laugharne and Colonel Rice Powell, were spared death at the eleventh hour, having been reprieved by Parliament after lots were drawn between the three prisoners.<sup>129</sup> Evidence suggests that Elizabeth was in London around the time of her husband’s execution. In an undated letter to Laugharne’s wife, Elizabeth thanked her for her ‘unspeakable favors to mee, and spetiallie sence I came to this place [London]’. ‘Next to god’, she continued, ‘you have ben my seporte [support] undoubtedlie elce I had starved... I have not wherew[i]thal to shift mee, nether anie shoues [shoes] to goe forth’. Impoverished and desperately short of money, Elizabeth requested the sum of 5s, adding ‘I am verie much ashamed in regard I have ben troublesome to you’.<sup>130</sup>

Sadly, things do not appear to have improved for Elizabeth following the Restoration. In December 1660 she submitted a petition to the Crown asking for a patent to appoint a baronet, though she did not specify whom she would appoint. The supplication was submitted jointly with Button Miles, a royalist lieutenant-colonel, and

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<sup>127</sup> TNA, SP 29/39/281 (warrant of payment to Sarah Keynes).

<sup>128</sup> TNA, PROB 11/369/186; H. French, *The Middle Sort of People in Provincial England, 1600-1750* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 157-158.

<sup>129</sup> R. Ashton, ‘Poyer, John (d. 1649)’, *ODNB*.

<sup>130</sup> TNA, SP 16/515 Part 2, f. 141. Elizabeth’s undated letter is recorded in the *State Papers Domestic* as being penned in 1647. However, as Robert Matthews notes, it was almost certainly written around the time of her husband’s death in 1649. R. Matthews, *‘A Storme out of Wales’: The Second Civil War in South Wales, 1648* (Newcastle, 2012), pp. 161-162.

his wife Florence, the daughter of Sir Nicholas Kemeys, who had died defending Chepstow Castle for Charles I in May 1648.<sup>131</sup> Along with Rowland Laugharne, Miles was one of five men who later signed a certificate validating Elizabeth's sufferings. This was presented to the Crown in July 1661, along with a second petition for relief.<sup>132</sup> Despite her reduced condition, Elizabeth evidently remained capable of mobilising an impressive network of former royalists across south Wales. In 1663 she was awarded a gratuity of £100, but the following year was forced to petition the Crown for a third time on account that her children remained heavily in debt. In 1665 the Crown agreed to pay Elizabeth the sum of £3,000 over ten years, but it remains unclear whether she received any payments, and Robert Matthews has opined that Elizabeth probably 'ended her life in poverty'.<sup>133</sup> This was despite the fact that her husband had been celebrated as a hero of the royalist cause after the Restoration, featuring in Winstanley's *The Loyall Martyrology* (1665).<sup>134</sup>

## 2.4 Conclusion

The evidence provided in this chapter both supports and challenges the current historiography regarding the treatment of war widows after the Restoration. Certainly, the dearth of female war victims in the Midlands' sessions' records further suggests that provincial magistrates were reluctant to allow widows pensions after 1660. By shifting attention from the localities to the centre, however, the evidence presented in the second half of this chapter allows us to take a more positive outlook towards the government's treatment of royalist widows following the Restoration.

The women who travelled to Charles's court to petition for relief were often officers' widows or the wives of prominent royalists, many of whom were from gentry families. Whilst their poorer counterparts petitioned in the provinces for modest pensions, claimants at Whitehall requested lands, titles and large sums of money. The disparity in the scale and worth of these requests suggest that widows who petitioned the Crown were more concerned with shoring up their family's social standing or recuperating financial

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<sup>131</sup> TNA, SP 29/25/37 (petition of Button Miles, Florence Miles and Elizabeth Poyer); Newman, *Royalist Officers*, p. 52; R. Allen, 'Kemeys family (*per.* c.1570-1747)', *ODNB*.

<sup>132</sup> TNA, SP 29/39/271, 272 (petition and certificate of Elizabeth Poyer).

<sup>133</sup> TNA, SP 29/103/225; SP 29/142B/75 (petitions of Elizabeth Poyer); Matthews, *The Second Civil War in South Wales*, p. 161.

<sup>134</sup> Wing/W3066, Winstanley, *The Loyall Martyrology*, pp. 15-16.

losses sustained during the wars than merely putting bread on the table. Although claimants often had to endure lengthy and costly stays in the capital, the potential rewards were significant.

Not all of the women who flocked to Whitehall were successful in obtaining relief. Indeed, the competition for relief amongst former royalists inevitably ensured that many widows were overlooked by Charles II's government. The group petition submitted in 1664 in particular points towards widespread neglect on behalf of the Crown, whilst some pensions granted during the early years of the Restoration were later revoked.<sup>135</sup> Despite these important caveats, the evidence suggests that Charles and his officials did make efforts to relieve a number of widows, many of whom were granted generous pensions and gratuities. The treatment of these royalist widows stands in marked contrast to their counterparts in the provinces, and suggests that the Restoration regime was more comfortable awarding relief to officers' widows than to the wives of the rank-and-file.

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<sup>135</sup> In 1663 Elizabeth Hudson claimed that her yearly pension of £50 had been rescinded. Her situation does not appear to have been unique; she further noted that her 'allowance being now stopt amongst other pensions'. TNA, SP 29/89/37 (petition of Elizabeth Hudson).

## Chapter 3. Petitioning strategies in war widows' petitions for relief

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter examines petitioning strategies utilised by war widows and their backers as they sought to negotiate for welfare or their husbands' arrears of pay. Drawing from a sample of 186 petitions presented by parliamentarian and royalist women, rich and poor, to various provincial and national authorities, it seeks to assess some of the myriad ways in which women sought to fashion themselves as worthy of relief. Whilst some of these tactics were well established prior to the civil wars, others were more novel, resulting directly from the conflicts and political climate of the mid-seventeenth century. Moreover, whilst some tactics were used by *all* war widows, others were predominantly utilised by officers' widows only.

Previous academic work on this subject has largely focused on the strategies adopted by war widows who petitioned county Quarter Sessions for modest pensions and gratuities.<sup>1</sup> Another study has analysed the petitionary tactics utilised by royalist widows to the parliamentary Committee for Compounding during the 1640s and 1650s.<sup>2</sup> These scholars have shown that war widows often demonstrated knowledge of their legal rights, and skilfully emphasised their own straitened conditions to present themselves as worthy of relief. Whilst insightful, however, each of these studies are somewhat limited by their restricted focus. The women who petitioned Quarter Sessions tended to be the wives of junior officers or rank-and-file soldiers, and thus these studies have ignored the tactics utilised by officers' widows who petitioned Parliament and the Crown. Likewise, the study on widows' petitions to the Committee for Compounding focuses solely on royalists, and even then on a particular *type* of royalist – women whose estates had been confiscated. In order to broaden our understanding of the various petitioning strategies utilised by war widows during this period, and of the ways in which these strategies differed according to petitioners' social status and political allegiance, it is necessary to consider supplications submitted to a broad range of authorities. With this in mind, the

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<sup>1</sup> G. Hudson, 'Negotiating for blood money: war widows and the courts in seventeenth-century England', in J. Kermode and G. Walker (eds), *Women, Crime and the Courts in Early Modern England* (London, 1994), pp. 146-169; D. Appleby, 'Unnecessary persons? Maimed soldiers and war widows in Essex, 1642-62', *Essex Archaeology and History*, 32 (2001), pp. 209-221.

<sup>2</sup> H. Worthen, 'Supplicants and guardians: the petitions of royalist widows during the civil wars and Interregnum, 1642-1660', *Women's History Review*, 26 (2017), pp. 528-540.

sample of 186 petitions on which this chapter is based consists of 23 petitions submitted to parliamentary county committees during the 1640s, 24 to the Staffordshire and Northamptonshire benches, 12 to Parliament between 1643 and 1653, 12 to Oliver Cromwell during the time that he served as Lord Protector, and 115 to Charles II following the Restoration.

This chapter is split into four parts. The first part examines the ways in which widows described themselves, particularly in relation to their poverty and familial responsibilities. The second part focuses on how petitioners described their husbands, focusing especially on descriptions of military service. It also considers how widows narrated their own wartime activism. Here, we begin to see how the civil wars transformed pre-existing petitioning practices. Part three examines petitions submitted by the wives of military defectors, and assesses how women sought to refashion the past by glossing over or omitting details which might have hindered their chances of securing relief. The final section considers the impact of military rank on petitioning strategies, by comparing the tactics utilised by officers' widows to those employed by the wives of the rank-and-file.

### **3.2 Authorship, layout and humble addresses**

First, however, it is necessary to consider the issue of authorship. Widows rarely, if ever, wrote their own petitions. Most women were illiterate during this period, and would have relied on the penmanship of scribes, clergymen, members of the parish elite, and other literate males to draw up their supplications for them.<sup>3</sup> Even women capable of writing tended to rely on the expertise of professional clerks and scribes. Although some widows signed or marked their petitions, the decision of whether to do so or not depended on both their ability to write and the authority that they were petitioning. None of the 24 petitions submitted on behalf of war widows to the Staffordshire and Northamptonshire benches were signed or marked by petitioners. In contrast, 102 of the 167 petitions (61 percent) submitted on behalf of royalist widows to the Committee for Compounding were signed by the supplicant.<sup>4</sup> Since many of these women were from gentry and aristocratic

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<sup>3</sup> Hudson, 'Negotiating for blood money', p. 156. David Cressy has estimated that only ten percent of women in England could sign their name by the mid-seventeenth century. D. Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1980), p. 144.

<sup>4</sup> Worthen, 'Supplicants and guardians', p. 530.

families, they possessed literacy skills which their humbler counterparts lacked. Yet not all literate women chose to sign their petitions. Only five of the 115 petitions submitted to Charles II after 1660 were signed by widows, despite the fact that many would have been able to write their names. Evidently, social and political convention dictated that petitions addressed to the monarch were to be left unsigned.

Rather than containing the ‘authentic’ voice of the supplicant, these petitions therefore contain what Jonathan Healey has described as ‘hybrid voices’: a combination of the petitioner’s experiences and the scribe’s literary flair, shaped by expectations of what the addressee wanted to hear.<sup>5</sup> This is not to suggest that women were excluded from the petitioning process, nor that the statements found in their petitions were entirely fabricated. Scribes would have relied on petitioners’ personal accounts when formulating these documents. Most petitions were written in the third person, and David Appleby has suggested that the occasional slips found in some supplications from the third to the first person might be construed as evidence of inattentive scribes becoming overly engrossed in a war victim’s recounting of their experiences.<sup>6</sup> Here, Elizabeth Newum’s petition to the Nottinghamshire county committee in 1645 is particularly suggestive:

That whereas *her* husband Nathaniell Newum havinge served in the service of kinge and Parliament under the command of Collonell John Hutchinson two yeares or above untill it pleasd god that hee was shoote lame... and soe continued above foure weekes to his and *mine* great expences... *I* not knowing without your honours commiseration how to subsist unlesse *I* bee forced to sell up all that *I* have... *I* hope your honours will consdier your petitioner in that *shee* never received any of his arrears.<sup>7</sup>

Moreover, since petitioners were often required to appear in person to deliver their supplications, and may well have been questioned by the authorities on certain points, they had to contain some credibility.<sup>8</sup> Whether we accept these arguments or not is largely irrelevant, however, for this chapter is less concerned with the actual truth of petitioners’ claims than with the ways in which they and their backers deliberately sought to fashion themselves as worthy of relief. In this regard, it utilises the methodology adopted by Natalie Zemon Davis in her seminal study *Fiction in the Archives* (1987), which analysed

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<sup>5</sup> J. Healey, *The First Century of Welfare: Poverty and Poor Relief in Lancashire, 1620-1730* (Woodbridge, 2014), p. 93.

<sup>6</sup> Appleby, ‘Unnecessary persons?’, p. 212.

<sup>7</sup> TNA, SP 28/241/78 (petition of Elizabeth Newum). Author’s italics.

<sup>8</sup> Hudson, ‘Negotiating for blood money’, p. 156.



the ‘choices of language, detail, and order’ in sixteenth-century French letters of remission, rather than the veracity of their content.<sup>9</sup>

The 1647 parliamentary ordinance and the 1662 act for the relief of maimed soldiers stipulated that in order to be considered eligible for relief, war widows were required to meet two prerequisites; first, that their husbands had served during the wars (either for Parliament or the Crown respectively), and second that they were impoverished.<sup>10</sup> As we shall see, this legislation did much to shape the narratives found in most widows’ petitions. As for the physical layout of these documents, nearly all conformed to the conventions laid out in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century epistolary manuals.<sup>11</sup> They opened with a humble address – ‘to the honourable Committee of Parliament at Nottingham’, or ‘to the King’s most excellent Majesty’, for example – followed by the main body of text outlining the petitioner’s circumstances, and concluded with a final plea for relief. In this regard, they differed little in physical appearance to the petitions submitted by peasant tenants to their landlords during this period, or by paupers to county magistrates for poor relief.<sup>12</sup> Humble addresses appear on almost every petition, and yet despite their highly formulaic nature, even here we begin to see how the political turmoil of the civil wars impacted on petitioning practices. In Staffordshire, for instance, addresses made by parliamentarian war victims to ‘the right worshipful his Majesty’s Justices of the Peace’ during the 1640s were shortened after the regicide to ‘the right worshipful the Justices of the Peace’. Intriguingly, the former practice was not resumed after the Restoration. In 1649, meanwhile, one war widow addressed her petition to the House of Commons ‘To the supream authoritie of England the Com[m]ons in Parliam[en]t assembled’.<sup>13</sup> This was clearly designed to pander to Parliament’s recent constitutional claims, upon which the regicide had been based.

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<sup>9</sup> N. Zemon Davis, *Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and their Tellers in Sixteenth-Century France* (Stanford, 1987), p. 3.

<sup>10</sup> C. Firth and R. Rait (eds), *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642-1660* (London, 1911), pp. 938-940; J. Raithby (ed.), *Statutes of the Realm: Volume 5, 1628-1680* (London, 1819), pp. 389-390.

<sup>11</sup> See for example STC/6404, A. Day, *The English Secretary, Or Method of Writing of Epistles and Letters* (London, 1599), pp. 90-93.

<sup>12</sup> R. Houston, *Peasant Petitions: Social Relations and Economic Life on Landed Estates, 1600-1850* (Basingstoke, 2014), pp. 87-93.

<sup>13</sup> PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/280 (petition of Jane Farrett).

### 3.3 Poverty, motherhood and familial responsibility

In his study of seventeenth-century pauper petitions, Steve Hindle identified a ‘popular discourse of pity’.<sup>14</sup> In an attempt to fashion themselves as worthy of relief, petitioners stressed their pitiable and indigent condition. War widows adopted similar tactics, and expressions such as ‘distressed’, ‘deplorable’, ‘wasted’, ‘low’, ‘destitute’, ‘poor’, and ‘disconsolate’ were commonly deployed by petitioners to describe themselves, regardless of their social status. One of the most evocative ways in which war widows sought to demonstrate their impoverishment was through their lack of material goods, particularly food. In 1657 Joan Pixley and Mary Abell complained to the Staffordshire bench that they and their children ‘are like to starve for want of bread’.<sup>15</sup> This tactic was similarly utilised by women further up the social ladder. In 1663 Elizabeth Hudson, widow to one of Charles I’s former chaplains, claimed to be ‘in a starveing condicon and hath not credit to borrow sixpence to buy [her] selfe bread’, whilst four years later the royalist peeress Elizabeth, Lady Lindores claimed to be ‘reduced to a morsell of bread’.<sup>16</sup> Given her social pedigree, Lady Lindores’s claim suggests that female petitioners across the social spectrum had a vested interest to appear as helpless and destitute as possible.

Tim Stretton has asserted that the word ‘poverty’ was often used by sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Englishmen and women to describe their ‘blighted circumstances or their lack of support as much as... their lack of material resources’.<sup>17</sup> This is something that needs to be considered before dismissing wealthier widows’ claims of impoverishment as mere petitionary rhetoric. For these women, poverty might equate to their diminished social and political status, or declining marriage opportunities for their children, rather than their ability to put bread on the table. That said, officers’ widows were equally as likely as the rank-and-file to stress their lack of material resources. Of the sixteen petitions in our sample (9 percent) that explicitly refer to starvation or lack of

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<sup>14</sup> S. Hindle, *On the Parish? The Micro-Politics of Poor Relief in Rural England, c.1550-1750* (Oxford, 2004), p. 160.

<sup>15</sup> SRO, Q/SR/299/13 (petition of Joan Pixley and Mary Abell).

<sup>16</sup> TNA, SP 29/89/37 (petition of Elizabeth Hudson); SP 29/229/192 (petition of Elizabeth, Lady Lindores). For further references to hunger in war widows’ petitions see TNA, SP 29/9/167 (petition of Mary Thorpe); SP 29/55/152 (petition of Jane Penning); SP 29/66/194 (petition of Isabel Humes); SP 29/78/231 (petition of Ann Cartwright); SP 29/251/155 (petition of Veronica Platt); SP 29/142B/103 (petition of Margaret Stratton).

<sup>17</sup> T. Stretton, ‘Widows at law in Tudor and Stuart England’, in S. Cavallo and L. Warner (eds), *Widowhood in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Harlow, 1999), p. 205.

food, nine were submitted by officers' widows. A further five were submitted by widows of the rank-and-file, and two by women whose husbands' military ranks are unknown.

Other female war victims claimed to have sold their clothes and possessions in order to provide for their families, whilst one widow asserted that she had 'made hard shift to maintain her charge'.<sup>18</sup> As well as emphasising their indigent condition, these women were further demonstrating that they had exhausted all other forms of maintenance before making their appeals for relief.<sup>19</sup> Some widows further sought to emphasise their desperation by insisting that they would be forced to beg for relief unless the addressee intervene on their behalf. Elizabeth Newum complained to the Nottinghamshire county committee that 'without your honours commiseration... I and my poore infant shall bee forced to begg'. Similarly, in her petition to Charles II in 1665, Mary Sansum claimed that 'without yo[u]r Ma[jes]ts releife [I] must unavoydeably turne beggar'.<sup>20</sup> This tactic was intended to shame the authorities into meaningful action, who had thus far neglected the petitioners. In a particularly provocative petition submitted to the House of Commons in 1650 on behalf of 'many poore distressed widdows', the petitioners noted that it 'brings a cankerd staine upon your Honours, that those that have beene serviceable to you in the utmost of their powers, should be constreyned to begge their bread in the streets'.<sup>21</sup> Printed rather than a manuscript petition, this supplication was likely circulated publicly in an attempt to foster wider support for the petitioners' appeals for relief.

Whilst the 'discourse of poverty' identified by Hindle could be utilised by both male and female petitioners during this period, there were additional discursive strategies that were predominantly used by women only. In his study of sixteenth-century female letters of petition, James Daybell found a common rhetorical discourse based around 'negative female gender assumptions'. By utilising tropes such as 'weakness' and 'frailty' to describe themselves, and by alluding to their domestic duties as wives and mothers, female petitioners sought to elicit sympathy from their addressees by skilfully playing on social assumptions of female inferiority and domestic roles.<sup>22</sup> Similarly,

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<sup>18</sup> TNA, SP 29/382/286 (petition of Mary Davenant).

<sup>19</sup> Hudson, 'Negotiating for blood money', p. 155; Hindle, *On the Parish?*, p. 160.

<sup>20</sup> TNA, SP 28/241/78 (petition of Elizabeth Newum); SP 29/186/111 (petition of Mary Sansum).

<sup>21</sup> STC/T1710A, *The Humble Petition of Many Poor Distressed Widdowes* (1650).

<sup>22</sup> J. Daybell, 'Scripting a female voice: women's epistolary rhetoric in sixteenth-century letters of petition', *Women's Writing*, 13 (2006), pp. 3-22.

Alison Thorne has identified ‘a set of shared rhetorical strategies which female suitors drew upon and manipulated for their own ends’.<sup>23</sup> This predominantly centred on appearing as vulnerable and helpless as possible. The language of deference adopted by female petitioners should not necessarily be seen as a self-admission of defencelessness, but as a ploy to appeal to the sympathies of their exclusively male addressees. As Thorne notes, ‘what might be regarded as a confession of weakness could be reinterpreted as a form of self-assertion masquerading as its opposite: self-effacement’.<sup>24</sup>

During the mid-seventeenth century war widows skilfully utilised these rhetorical strategies by stressing their responsibilities as mothers. Geoffrey Hudson has demonstrated that female war victims were more likely than maimed soldiers to mention children in their petitions for relief.<sup>25</sup> This discrepancy was both expected and encouraged by the Committee for Sick and Maimed Soldiers in London, who in their printed letters of recommendation issued to war victims provided a space for widows to note their number of children, but not soldiers.<sup>26</sup> Female petitioners frequently cited the number of children in their care. 60 of the 76 widows (79 percent) who petitioned Charles II after the Restoration mentioned children in their supplications, whilst 45 (59 percent) noted their exact number of infants. Higher still, 20 of the 23 petitions (87 percent) submitted to parliamentary county committees within our sample mentioned children. Petitioners particularly emphasised that their children were young. Jane Barton from Nottingham was described as ‘a most poore destitute and healplesse widdow and one infant at her breasts’, whilst Elizabeth Farmsworth was noted ‘a verie poore woman & sucking child’.<sup>27</sup> As well as emphasising their children’s age, widows also noted if they were sickly. In her petition to the House of Commons in 1645, Sarah Delamain claimed to have ten children – five of which were ‘small’ – and ‘it hath pleased god now at once to afflict the fflower least of them with sicknes’.<sup>28</sup> In 1646 Mary Howlett complained to the Nottinghamshire county committee that ‘one of yo[ur] pet[itioner]s children is lame and goeth uppon

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<sup>23</sup> A. Thorne, ‘Women’s petitionary letters and early seventeenth-century treason trials’, *Women’s Writing*, 13 (2006), p. 37.

<sup>24</sup> A. Thorne, ‘Narratives of female suffering in the petitionary literature of the civil war period and its aftermath’, *Literature Compass*, 10 (2013), p. 135. For a similar argument see M. Suzuki, *Subordinate Subjects: Gender, the Political Nation, and Literary Form in England, 1588-1688* (Aldershot, 2003), p. 145.

<sup>25</sup> Hudson, ‘Negotiating for blood money’, p. 153.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153.

<sup>27</sup> TNA, SP 28/240/731 (petition of Jane Barton); SP 28/241/122 (petition of Elizabeth Farmsworth).

<sup>28</sup> PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/194 (petition of Sarah Delamain).

crutches', whilst in 1673 Ennis Lapworth informed the Northamptonshire bench that two of her four children were 'very sorely afflicted w[i]th the Kings Evill'.<sup>29</sup>

Daybell notes that 'a widow's plight achieved greater moral strength in the case of pregnancy'.<sup>30</sup> It is perhaps to be expected, therefore, that this was a recurring feature of war widows' petitions. Winifred Badge was left with three children and 'one in her belly' after her husband was slain at Wingfield Manor in 1644, whilst Sarah Corne was 'very great w[i]th child & at downe lying' following her spouse's death at Tabley in Cheshire in 1651.<sup>31</sup> Anne Talbott, the widow of the royalist lieutenant-colonel Henry Lilburne, claimed to be 'bigge with childe' when he was slain at Tynemouth Castle in 1648, whilst Jane Lane was left 'with small four children and big with the fifth' when her husband Robert was killed suppressing Venner's Uprising in 1661.<sup>32</sup> Whilst this tactic was predominantly utilised by women, it is important to note that it was on occasion appropriated by men. When Richard Cocambe, a maimed parliamentary soldier from Coleford, Gloucestershire petitioned the governor of Gloucester Sir Edward Massey for relief during the early 1640s, he noted that his wife was 'bigg w[i]th childe & expecteth ev[er]y moment her deliv[er]ye'.<sup>33</sup>

Karen Robertson has contended that imagery of the impoverished widow and her hapless orphans was deployed with such regularity by female petitioners during the early modern period that it became a 'conventional stereotype'.<sup>34</sup> As historians have shown, this was often a deliberate strategy that played on the religious connotations of widowhood.<sup>35</sup> Numerous biblical passages praise those who protect and comfort vulnerable widows, whilst those who cause them to suffer are condemned with equal measure.<sup>36</sup> In one striking example of a contemporary utilising religious imagery to bolster their claims for relief, the Scottish peeress and royalist Lady Margaret Livingstone

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<sup>29</sup> TNA, SP 28/241/1078 (petition of Mary Howlett); NA, QSR 1/70/38 (petition of Ennis Lapworth).

<sup>30</sup> Daybell, 'Scripting a female voice', p. 15.

<sup>31</sup> TNA, SP 28/241/595 (petition of Winifred Badge); SRO, Q/SR/274/16 (petition of Sarah Corne).

<sup>32</sup> TNA, SP 29/13/140 (petition of Anne Talbott); SP 29/102/103 (petition of Jane Lane). See also SP 28/228/358 (petition of Mary Adams); SP 28/228/293 (petition of Elinor Morgan); SP 28/228/344 (petition of Mary Prickett); SP 28/241/547 (petition of Elizabeth Farmer); SP 29/48/61 (petition of Jane Carey); SRO, Q/SR/274/12 (petition of Widow Greensill).

<sup>33</sup> TNA, SP 28/228/376 (petition of Richard Cocambe).

<sup>34</sup> K. Robertson, 'Negotiating favour: the letters of Lady Raleigh', in J. Daybell (ed.), *Women and Politics in Early Modern England, 1450-1700* (Aldershot, 2004), p. 109.

<sup>35</sup> Thorne, 'Women's petitionary letters', pp. 30-32; T. Stretton, *Women Waging War in Elizabethan England* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 186.

<sup>36</sup> See for example Acts 6.1; 1 Timothy 5.3; Isaiah 1.17; Psalm 68.5; Deuteronomy 27.19; Mark 12.40.

(not a war widow) used biblical metaphor to describe her plight to the Council of State in 1655:

my sufferings mak me call to mynd in the second to the kings [2 Kings 8.1-6]... when the prophett gave the shunammite warning of the seven yeare famine schee [sic] went in amongst the philistime a people that was ennimies to god yet schee [found] favor amongst them. I am amongst god his own people and I can nether get food nor rayment [raiment].<sup>37</sup>

Although biblical imagery was rarely used so explicitly by war victims, providential language often featured in the petitions of both parliamentary and royalist widows to appeal for Christian compassion. In 1660, for instance, one widow begged Charles II 'by the mercies of Christe to comiserate this hir suffering distressed conditione'.<sup>38</sup>

N. H. Keeble has shown that royalist female memoirists writing about their experiences of the civil wars after the 1660 often described the 1640s and 1650s in terms of biblical allusion. The Interregnum was thus depicted as an 'Old Testament wilderness', which those loyal to the monarchy were forced to endure until the Restoration, when they were delivered into a promised land.<sup>39</sup> Such imagery was rarely utilised by royalist petitioners, though it did feature on occasion. Describing her hardship during the civil wars, Dorothy Byron noted in her petition to Charles II that 'her onely hopes were placed in the Justice that Heaven & the restauracon of yo[u]r most sacred Ma[jes]ty... w[hi]ch were yo[u]r pet[it]ione]rs prayer'.<sup>40</sup> Meanwhile, John Tinkler, a maimed soldier from Durham, likened the Restoration to a religious deliverance in his 1660 petition to the king: 'the sunn has now againe risen upon these kingdoms whoe all this while hath beene under the region of darkness & tyranny'.<sup>41</sup>

Significantly, religious language was at times used in a more calculating manner to pander to the beliefs of certain individuals. The petitions of two war widows submitted to Edward Massey in the early 1640s and subscribed with the words 'This for Gods sake', might be seen as an attempt to play on Massey's Presbyterian sympathies.<sup>42</sup> More

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<sup>37</sup> TNA, SP 18/94/78 (petition of Margaret, Lady Livingstone).

<sup>38</sup> TNA, SP 29/9/97 (petition of Bridget Cawley alias Clerke). See also PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/194 (petition of Sarah Delamain); NA, QSR 1/25/81 (petition of John Roberts, Arthur Braunson and Joseph Walters).

<sup>39</sup> N. Keeble, 'Obedient subjects? The loyal self in some later seventeenth-century royalist women's memoirs', in G. Maclean (ed.), *Culture and Society in the Stuart Restoration: Literature, Drama, History* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 202-203.

<sup>40</sup> TNA, SP 29/36/69 (petition of Dorothy Byron).

<sup>41</sup> TNA, SP 29/20/52 (petition of John Tinkler).

<sup>42</sup> TNA, SP 28/228/358 (petition of Mary Adams); SP 28/228/667 (petition of Jean Harris); A. Warmington, 'Massey, Sir Edward (1604x9-1674)', *ODNB*.

explicitly, Jane Meldrum concluded her petition to Cromwell in 1655 by invoking the Last Judgement: 'yo[u]r highnes[s] wilbee graciously pleased to Number Her amongst yo[u]r distressed widdowes whom God hath drawne forth of yo[u]r pious heart mercifully to relieve, And Christ will put it to yo[u]r Accompt on the Great day'.<sup>43</sup> Meanwhile, after the Restoration, Elizabeth Pinckney cited the contemporary analogy between the family and the state – in which the king assumed the role of husband and father – when she implored Charles II 'to be a husband to the widdow and a father unto the fatherless'.<sup>44</sup>

Other, less common tactics utilised by war widows also drew upon familial responsibility and their roles as mothers. As well as the need to provide food, shelter and clothing for their children, some women voiced anxieties about their offsprings' education. Although such concerns are predominantly found in the petitions of officers' widows, they occasionally feature in the supplications of the rank-and-file. In her 1651 petition to the Staffordshire bench, Lettice Weldon requested relief so that 'shee may bee inabled to educate & bringe up her children in the ffeare of god & fitted for some imployment'.<sup>45</sup> After the Restoration, meanwhile, at least two royalist widows claimed that their necessity for relief had forced them to separate from their families. Dorothy Byron noted in her 1661 petition to Charles II that she had been forced to send her children 'to some friends for their releife untill yo[u]r Ma[jes]ty would otherwise provide for them'.<sup>46</sup> Likewise, Elizabeth Poyer noted that she was 'forced to be at 200 miles distance from her poore & comfortlesse children' whilst she petitioned the royal court at Whitehall.<sup>47</sup> In alluding to familial separation, these women were emphasising how the failure of Charles II's government to provide for their welfare had forced them to neglect their motherly duties. In much the same way that royalist female memoirists writing after 1660 were more likely than their male counterparts to describe their enforced separations from their families during the civil wars, so to was this petitioning strategy predominantly utilised by women.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> TNA, SP 18/95/180 (petition of Jane Meldrum).

<sup>44</sup> TNA, SP 29/20/31 (petition of Elizabeth Pinckney). For contemporary analogies between the family and the state see S. Amussen, 'Gender, family and the social order, 1560-1725', in A. Fletcher and J. Stevenson (eds), *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 196-217; A. Hughes, *Gender and the English Revolution* (Abingdon, 2012), pp. 22-23.

<sup>45</sup> SRO, Q/SR/274/6 (petition of Lettice Weldon). See also TNA, SP 29/142/88 (petition of Lucy Gerrard); SP 29/178/35 (petition of Hannah Jeffry); SP 29/373/110 (petition of Margaret Herbert); SP 29/382/286 (petition of Mary Davenant).

<sup>46</sup> TNA, SP 29/36/69 (petition of Dorothy Byron).

<sup>47</sup> TNA, SP 29/39/271 (petition of Elizabeth Poyer).

<sup>48</sup> Keeble, 'Obedient subjects?', p. 204.

### 3.4 Military service and female activism

In describing their poverty, vulnerability and familial responsibilities, war widows were largely conforming to pre-existing petitioning strategies utilised by women long before the civil wars.<sup>49</sup> As a precondition for relief, however, widows were required not only to demonstrate their own straitened conditions, but the military services undertaken by their husbands. In some instances, petitioners sought to bolster their claims by stressing their own wartime activism. By examining the ways in which supplicants described their husbands' loyalty, service, and death, as well as their own political sympathies, we begin to see how the civil wars and the political climate of the mid-seventeenth century transformed pre-existing petitioning strategies.

Some widows provided extremely detailed accounts of their husbands' military services.<sup>50</sup> In her 1661 petition to the Crown, Dorothy Byron, widow of Major-General Gilbert Byron, recounted how her husband had waited on Charles I when he attempted to arrest the Five Members in January 1642, followed the king to York in the spring of that year, raised a troop of horse at his own expense, and served as a field officer 'in most Battalls of England'. She further recalled how he had fortified Rhuddlan Castle in north Wales (again at his own expense), where he served as governor until surrendering the garrison in July 1646. Despite royalist defeat in the First Civil War, her husband remained loyal to the cause, 'the ill succeſſe of his affairs nor the failing example of others being not able to deter him in the leaſt from his fidelity to him'. Byron again took up arms for Charles I during the Second Civil War in 1648, and was so severely wounded at Willoughby Field, Nottinghamshire that he was 'taken upp by the enemy for dead'. Returning home from the wars, he died eight years later 'of an impoſture contracted of thoſe wounds'. Dorothy's account of her husband's conduct during the 1640s is exceptional in detail. Her petition runs to more than 700 words in length, half of which is concerned with Byron's military service. Although atypical, many of the themes raised in her petition are found in numerous other widows' supplications. Notions that a petitioner's husband had served faithfully throughout the wars, that they had never wavered in their commitment to one side or the other, that they had expended their own

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<sup>49</sup> Daybell, 'Scripting a female voice', pp. 3-22; Thorne, 'Women's petitionary letters', pp. 23-43.

<sup>50</sup> For what follows see TNA, SP 29/36/69 (petition of Dorothy Byron); P. Newman, *Royalist Officers in England and Wales, 1642-1660: A Biographical Dictionary* (New York, 1981), pp. 53-54.



money during their service, and that they had ultimately died as a result of their loyalty, were used regularly by widows to describe their husbands' military actions.

Dorothy was fortunate in that her husband had returned home from the wars. She would almost certainly have received a first-hand account of his actions, which likely explains her intimate knowledge of his military service. Widows whose husbands failed to return home may never have learnt of their fates, which probably accounts for the vague details found in some petitions.<sup>51</sup> Margaret Davenport's 1651 petition to the Staffordshire bench simply noted that her husband, a parliamentarian soldier, had 'dyed in the said service', and contained no information whatsoever regarding where he had served or whom he had served under.<sup>52</sup> On the whole, however, a significant proportion of women were able to name their husbands' commanding officer or the geographic locations of where their spouses had fought or died, irrespective of whether they had returned from the wars or not. Of the twelve petitions submitted by war widows to the Staffordshire bench during the 1650s, seven (58 percent) noted where their husbands had died, and a further two (17 percent) where they had served. Admittedly some petitioners were more precise than others – 'at the siege at Tutbury Castle'; 'neare to Stockport'; 'in Ireland... at Bradath'; 'in Scotland' – yet the knowledge displayed by these petitioners suggests that even humbler women were able to recount basic details regarding their husbands' military services.<sup>53</sup> Widows rarely specified how they came by such knowledge, although one petitioner remarked that she had 'learned' of her husband's death from the soldiers in his regiment. This was likely true for many wives of the rank-and-file.<sup>54</sup>

How did petitioners describe their husbands' deaths? A number of well-informed women were able to describe not simply when and where their husbands had died, but *how*. Mary Adams from Gloucester recalled that her husband was 'shot in the time of the sledge' of the city in 1643, whilst in 1646 Elizabeth Farmsworth informed the Nottinghamshire county committee that her husband was 'shot into the bodie' following

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<sup>51</sup> This subject is explored more thoroughly in I. Peck, 'The great unknown: the negotiation and narration of death by English war widows, 1647-1660', *Northern History*, 53 (2016), pp. 220-235.

<sup>52</sup> SRO, Q/SR/281/1 (petition of Margaret Davenport).

<sup>53</sup> SRO, Q/SR/274-300. Similarly, nineteen of the twenty-four petitions (79 percent) submitted to the Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Gloucestershire county committees on behalf of war widows during the 1640s cited the geographic locations of where their husbands had died.

<sup>54</sup> TNA, SP 28/241/138 (petition of Elizabeth Glover).

a skirmish at Trent Bridge.<sup>55</sup> Such cases were uncommon, however, and widows tended to resort to generic phrases such as ‘deprived of his life’, ‘dying in the service’, or, most common, ‘slain’. Widows whose husbands had not died in battle proved eager to stress that their deaths had been a direct result of their military service. The widow of Lieutenant-Colonel Blunt blamed his death in Scotland on ‘his hard service and the change of the aire’, by which ‘hee contracted such distempers as sent an end to his dayes’.<sup>56</sup> After the Restoration, meanwhile, Katherine de Luke claimed that her husband had suffered ‘such wounds, hurts & grieffe as shortened his dayes in misery’.<sup>57</sup>

The ways in which royalist veterans described their civil-war opponents in their petitions for relief after the Restoration has been examined by Mark Stoyle.<sup>58</sup> Rather than use insulting or derogatory language, Stoyle argues that petitioners referred to their adversaries using generic phrases such as ‘the enemy’. Parliamentary war victims adhered to similar conventions during the 1640s and 1650s, commonly using neutral terms such as ‘the kings partie’ and ‘enimies’.<sup>59</sup> In most instances, however, details of their opponents were omitted altogether. In one notable exception, the widow of Sergeant William Matthews claimed in her 1644 petition to the House of Commons that her husband ‘was one of the first that declyned Gorings command at Portsmouth ymediately uppon his proving himselfe an apostate’.<sup>60</sup> In August 1642 George Goring became the first MP to defect from the Commons when he declared the town of Portsmouth for Charles I.<sup>61</sup> Although his control of the town proved short-lived, his betrayal ensured that he was vilified in parliamentary newsbooks.<sup>62</sup> In blasting Goring’s infidelity to the parliamentary cause, Matthews’s widow was echoing the language promoted by pro-parliamentary propaganda, in which the word ‘apostate’ was one of a number of insults propagated in print during the 1640s to describe turncoats.<sup>63</sup> At the same time, she was

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<sup>55</sup> TNA, SP 28/228/358 (petition of Mary Adams); SP 28/241/122 (petition of Elizabeth Farmsworth). For details of the skirmish at Trent Bridge see A. Wood, *Nottinghamshire in the Civil War* (Oxford, 1937), pp. 90-91.

<sup>56</sup> TNA, SP 18/131/57 (petition of Anne Blunt).

<sup>57</sup> TNA, SP 29/17/54 (petition of Katherine de Luke).

<sup>58</sup> M. Stoyle, “‘Memories of the maimed’: the testimony of Charles I’s former soldiers, 1660-1730”, *History*, 88 (2003), pp. 221-223.

<sup>59</sup> Only in one petition was the term ‘cavalier’ used. TNA, SP 18/98/92 (petition of Katherine Miller).

<sup>60</sup> PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/177 (petition of Dorothy Matthews).

<sup>61</sup> A. Hopper, *Turncoats and Renegades: Changing Sides during the English Civil Wars* (Oxford, 2012), p. 46; R. Hutton, ‘Goring, George, Baron Goring (1608-1657)’, *ODNB*.

<sup>62</sup> See for example BL, TT E.109[32], *His Maiesties Message to Colonell Goring of Portsmouth* (London, 1642), p. 2. For the siege of Portsmouth see G. Godwin, *The Civil War in Hampshire (1642-1648) and the Story of Basing House* (London, 1882), pp. 37-43.

<sup>63</sup> Hopper, *Turncoats*, pp. 141-143, 147.

extolling her husband's constancy, who despite his lowly rank had proved loyal to the cause in the face of a treacherous superior officer. Matthews's fidelity was therefore exhibited not simply by his military service, nor by his later death in a skirmish at Havant, but by his public defiance of a notorious enemy of Parliament.

The 1647 parliamentary ordinance stipulated that only those who had served Parliament were eligible to receive relief. Similarly, the 1662 act confirmed that only those who had 'continued faithful' to the royalist cause and 'not deserted' were entitled to receive welfare. As a result, female petitioners sought to demonstrate that their husbands had served throughout the wars with constancy and commitment. Phrases such as 'demeaned himselfe honestly', and 'hee p[er]formed with much care & faithfulness' were commonly used by both parliamentarian and royalist widows to describe their husbands' fidelity, whilst expressions such as 'never deserted' and 'from the begining of the warre untill the day of his death', were similarly used by both groups of women to denote the longevity of their husbands' service. Occasionally, widows went beyond these prosaic descriptions of loyalty to describe their husbands' actions in particular engagements. Thomasine Bennett, whose husband Captain William Bennett was slain at Brentford in 1642, noted that her husband was the 'cheife instrument in givinge the kings Armye a check that fight', and described the battle as a 'deliverance I trust never to be forgotten by this nation'. Here, Thomasine was mimicking pro-parliamentarian propaganda, which, due to the royalist army's inability to advance beyond Turnham Green and into the City of London, presented Parliament's defeat at Brentford as an important victory.<sup>64</sup>

Other widows expressed their entitlement to relief by stressing their own wartime activism. In her 1660 petition Elizabeth Cary claimed to have acted as an intelligencer for Charles I by transporting royalist letters and proclamations between Oxford and London, and that for her loyalty and service she:

endured many great and greevous afflictions by persecution, oppression the breaking of her back at Henley upon Thames & a gibbet erected to take away her life with many other cruelties inflicted on her. Besides her severall imprisonments in Windsor Castle, in Newgate, in Bridewell, in the Bishop of Londons house, and lastly her imprisonment in the Mewes.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> TNA, SP 18/76/1 (petition of Thomasine Bennett); S. Porter and S. Marsh, *The Battle for London* (Stroud, 2011), pp. 79-80.

<sup>65</sup> TNA, SP 29/2/35 (petition of Elizabeth Cary).

Elizabeth submitted a further four petitions to the Crown between 1660 and 1662; only in one of these did she mention that her husband had been killed during the wars.<sup>66</sup> Although her actions appear to have escaped the attention of John Ellis in his recent study on military intelligence during the civil wars, Elizabeth evidently deemed her own wartime activism a greater contributing factor to her plea for relief than her husband's service.<sup>67</sup> Another royalist widow who had acted as an intelligencer during the 1640s was Katherine de Luke, who after the Restoration claimed to have transported letters for Charles I 'when none durst adventure for his Ma[jes]tie... although for the same shee was committed to Bridewell, & there whipped every other day, & also burn with light matches, lanced & cruelly tormented to make her betray her trust'.<sup>68</sup> Other petitioners claimed to have acted as nurses during the wars, whilst two widows (both royalist) noted that they had been wounded during military engagements. Bridget Wright, the widow of Robert Wright, noted that she was shot in the shoulder whilst working on the defensive works at Eccleshall Castle in 1643, whilst Elizabeth Reynolds claimed to be 'grievously wounded to the losse of her limbs' during the 1648 Kent uprising.<sup>69</sup> The roles these women played during the civil wars and the hardships they endured undoubtedly served to embolden their claims for relief.

Other widows complained that they had been robbed or plundered during the wars, or else suffered humiliation at the hands of their wartime enemies. Royalist widows in particular complained to have suffered slights during the civil wars, which continued to rankle years later. In her 1661 petition to Charles II, Elizabeth Allanson recounted how after Parliament had taken Shrewsbury in 1645, she:

with her eight small children were barbarously turned out of the towne... her little boyes without hatts on their heads and her litle daughters but with halfe their clothes on their backs their cruelty not being satisfied untill they had seene them publicly and shamefully driven out of the towne.<sup>70</sup>

Elizabeth's public indignity at being forced from the town was compounded by her children's attire; for seventeenth-century men and women to be seen in public improperly

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<sup>66</sup> TNA, SP 29/2/157; SP 29/9/151; SP 29/55/114; SP 29/66/153 (petitions of Elizabeth Cary).

<sup>67</sup> J. Ellis, *To Walk in the Dark: Military Intelligence during the English Civil War, 1642-1646* (Stroud, 2011).

<sup>68</sup> TNA, SP 29/17/54 (petition of Katherine de Luke).

<sup>69</sup> PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/296 (petition of Bridget Wright); HL/PO/JO/10/1/317 (petition of Elizabeth Reynolds).

<sup>70</sup> TNA, SP 29/39/178 (petition of Elizabeth Allanson).

dressed was particularly degrading.<sup>71</sup> Likewise, Bridget Cawley from Weymouth was ‘turned naked out of doores’ by the parliamentarian Colonel William Sydenham, and by his orders was ‘shamfully whipped out of the towne’.<sup>72</sup> Whipping was a punishment traditionally inflicted on vagrants during this period, and it is therefore unsurprising that Bridget viewed Sydenham’s treatment of her as particularly shameful. Whilst it is uncertain whether she or Elizabeth returned to their home towns after the war, their efforts to secure relief from the Crown were likely as much about restoring their tarnished reputations and local standing than they were about survival.

### 3.5 Refashioning the past

The desirability of presenting one’s husband as courageous and constant to a particular cause presented obvious problems to women whose spouses had changed sides during the civil wars, or whose conduct had been less than commendable. In 1645 Colonel Francis Windebank was court martialled and executed for cowardice at Oxford for surrendering Bletchington House to Cromwell. Perhaps for this reason, his daughter Frances presented herself to Charles II in her 1662 petition as the ‘grandchild of Sir Francis Windebancke deceased late principal secretary to Charles I’. Sir Francis had served as Secretary of State from 1632-1640, and as Charles I’s spymaster during the late 1630s. Despite falling from royal favour in 1640, Frances (the petitioner) evidently adjudged that her grandfather’s reputation carried greater weight at the royal court than that of her father.<sup>73</sup> In a second petition submitted that year she cited her father’s ‘untimely death’, and described herself as ‘being descended of grandfather & father, and of grandmother & mother, each of them antient & faithfull servant to the crowne’.<sup>74</sup> Here, Frances sought to utilise her family’s longstanding service to the Crown not simply to

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<sup>71</sup> For the relationship between clothing and honour in early modern England see A. Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2006), p. 145; T. Reinke-Williams, ‘Women’s clothes and female honour in early modern London’, *Continuity and Change*, 26 (2011), pp. 69-88.

<sup>72</sup> TNA, SP 29/9/97 (Bridget Cawley).

<sup>73</sup> TNA, SP 29/66/252 (petition of Frances Windebank); B. Quintrell, ‘Windebank, Sir Francis (*bap.* 1582, *d.* 1646)’, *ODNB*; J. Adamson, *The Noble Revolt: The Overthrow of Charles I* (London, 2007), pp. 20, 105-107, 111; P. Newman, *The Old Service: Royalist Regimental Colonels and the Civil War, 1642-46* (Manchester, 1993), p. 125. For a contemporary account of Windebank’s surrender see BL, TT E.279[7], *An Abstract of a Letter from Lieutenant-Generall Cromwell to Sir Thomas Fairfax* (London, 1645), pp. 3, 6-7.

<sup>74</sup> TNA, SP 29/66/253 (petition of Frances Windebank).

fashion herself as a loyal and obedient subject, but to gloss over her father's conduct during the civil wars, and to push Charles to consider her family as a whole.

One group of war widows who have received scant attention from historians are the wives of military defectors. The ways in which these women sought to present their late husbands' services during the wars is particularly revealing, and demonstrates how petitioners might gloss over or purposefully omit descriptions of loyalty. The wives of high-profile turncoats were at a particular disadvantage, for the actions of their husbands were too notorious for them to deny. Perhaps aware of this, one widow addressed her husband's military inconstancy head-on. The former parliamentarian Colonel John Poyer was executed at Covent Garden in 1648 after betraying Pembroke to the royalists.<sup>75</sup> Petitioning Charles II after the Restoration, his widow Elizabeth extolled her husband's 'faithfull service' to the royalist cause. She further claimed that he had spent £8,000 of his own money in 1648 raising a troop of horse for the king, and supplying the garrison at Pembroke with arms and food.<sup>76</sup> It is noteworthy that Elizabeth's depiction of her husband as a devoted royalist was very much at odds with how Poyer had presented himself during his final days, during which he maintained his fidelity to the parliamentary cause.<sup>77</sup>

Having trumpeted her husband's constancy to Charles I, Elizabeth proceeded to contradict this claim by noting there were 'six yeares arreares due to him upon the parliaments account' for his service during the First Civil War, when he had held Pembroke for Parliament.<sup>78</sup> This was a calculated risk. On the one hand Elizabeth risked antagonising the king and his counsellors by reminding them of her husband's inconstancy. At the same time, she would have recognised that her husband's actions were widely known, whilst the severity of the debt owed her might serve to strengthen her attempts to project herself as a pitiable subject. As we saw in Chapter 2, she was later awarded a gratuity of £100 from the Crown.

The wives of other high-profile royalist turncoats omitted details of their husbands' defections entirely. Instead, they praised their fidelity to the royalist cause, exhibited through the ultimate act of loyalty: death. Since most of these women's

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<sup>75</sup> R. Ashton, 'Poyer, John (d. 1649)', *ODNB*; R. Matthews, '*A Storme out of Wales*': *The Second Civil War in South Wales, 1648* (Newcastle, 2012), pp. 160-161.

<sup>76</sup> TNA, SP 29/25/37 (petition of Elizabeth Poyer).

<sup>77</sup> Hopper, *Turncoats*, p. 200.

<sup>78</sup> TNA, SP 29/25/37 (petition of Elizabeth Poyer).

husbands had suffered public execution during the 1640s and 1650s, it is unsurprising that they emphasised their spouses' grisly demises as symbols of their constancy. The notorious turncoat Sir John Urry changed sides four times during the civil wars, before he was captured and executed by the Scottish Parliament at Edinburgh in 1650.<sup>79</sup> In a petition submitted to Charles II a decade later, his widow commended her husband's loyalty to the royalist cause, noting that he:

did serve his late Majestie (of blessed memorie) in the warres of England... wherein by the good services he performed, in severall occasions, and the wounds he receaved, he gave evident proofs of that fidelitie, and affection, towards his Majestie for which at last he was marthered.<sup>80</sup>

Similarly, the widow of Henry Lilburne noted that her husband was killed defending Tynemouth Castle for Charles I in 1648, and after had 'his head cut of and set upon the castle'.<sup>81</sup> Two women cited Oliver Cromwell in particular as the chief instigator of their husbands' deaths. Elizabeth Poyer noted that her husband had been 'murthered by the hand of a bloody usurper', whilst the widow of Colonel John Butler, another defector, claimed that her spouse had been 'slain by Cromwell'.<sup>82</sup> As we will see in the following chapter, this rhetoric mimicked the language found in the petitions of elite royalist widows who petitioned the Convention Parliament for revenge against their wartime adversaries after the Restoration.

Whilst some women attempted to gloss over their spouses' military services, one petitioner provided false testimony to refashion the manner of her husband's death. The royalist commander Sir Thomas Byron had served at Hopton Heath in March 1643, where he was wounded by a shot in the thigh. Residing in Oxford later that year, Byron was attacked in the street by one of his own soldiers in a dispute over pay, and died of a shot wound to the chest.<sup>83</sup> Following the Restoration, Byron's widow Katherine petitioned Charles II for relief. Concealing the true nature of her husband's death, she claimed that at 'the Battell of Hopton Heath' he 'receaved those wounds where of he dyed'.<sup>84</sup> Here, Katherine offered a more honourable account of her husband's demise: rather than dying in the street at the hands of his own soldier, the subject presented in Katherine's petition

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<sup>79</sup> E. Furgol, 'Urry, Sir John (d. 1650)', *ODNB*.

<sup>80</sup> TNA, SP 29/55/109 (petition of Widow Urry).

<sup>81</sup> TNA, SP 29/ 13/140 (petition of Anne Talbott). See also BL, TT E.459[4], *A Terrible and Bloody and Fight at Tinnmouth Castle* (London, 1648).

<sup>82</sup> TNA, SP 29/39/271 (petition of Elizabeth Poyer); SP 29/53/51 (petition of Anne Butler).

<sup>83</sup> G. Yerby, 'Byron, Sir Thomas (c.1610-1644)', *ODNB*; Newman, *Royalist Officers*, p. 56.

<sup>84</sup> TNA, SP 29/14/71 (petition of Katherine Byron).

had fallen to the enemy in the heat of battle. This might be construed as evidence for the cultural weight afforded those who died on the battlefield during the seventeenth century.

Arguably the most audacious attempt to refashion the past can be found in the petition of Lady Dorothy Grey. Her husband, Thomas, Lord Grey of Groby, had served as commander-in-chief of the parliamentary Midland Association during the First Civil War, and was the only nobleman to sign Charles I's death warrant in 1649.<sup>85</sup> During the 1640s Parliament had rewarded Grey by granting him lands confiscated from royalists, including the estates of William Craven, first earl of Craven. It was from these estates that Dorothy received a jointure of £1,000 per annum following Grey's death in 1657. The widowed Dorothy soon remarried Gustavus Mackworth, by whom she had two children, but the marriage ended prematurely when Mackworth, a nephew of Sir George Booth, was slain in the royalist insurrection led by his uncle in 1659.<sup>86</sup> When the House of Lords began to discuss the restitution of royalist lands following the Restoration, Dorothy feared losing her jointure. In June 1660 she petitioned the Lords requesting that they confirm her jointure, or else that they order an annual payment for the duration of her lifetime in lieu of her lost income. In order to demonstrate her royalist credentials, Dorothy deliberately omitted details of the three children of her first marriage – the eldest of whom was aged only thirteen – and instead emphasised the condition of her youngest two children, 'whose deare father lost his life in attempting the restitucon of that libertie the nation does now by Gods blessing enjoy'. She also noted that she was 'descended of a Noble and Hono[ra]ble family of this nation', a family that included her father-in-law, Henry Grey, first earl of Stamford, a former parliamentarian who had declared for Charles II in 1659. Her case was referred to the Committee for Petitions, though no further orders appear to have survived.<sup>87</sup>

### 3.6 Officers' widows

By emphasising their poverty, hardship, and/or their responsibilities as mothers, *all* female petitioners regardless of their allegiance and social status sought to fashion

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<sup>85</sup> E. Bradley, rev. S. Kelsey, 'Grey, Thomas, Baron Grey of Groby (1622-1657)', *ODNB*.

<sup>86</sup> J. Richards, *Aristocrat and Regicide: The Life and Times of Thomas, Lord Grey of Groby, The Ermine Unicorn (1623-1657)* (London, 2000), pp. 363, 438-440, 443.

<sup>87</sup> PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/285 (petition of Dorothy, Lady Grey); A. Hopper, 'Grey, Henry, first earl of Stamford (c.1599-1673)', *ODNB*; *LJ*, vol. 11, p. 52 (4 June, 1660).



themselves as helpless and pitiable creatures. Most women also stressed their husbands' military services, whilst some went further by describing their own wartime activism. There were, however, some strategies that were typically utilised by officers' widows rather than the wives of the rank-and-file. This final section seeks to examine the varied tactics deployed by these women, and, where possible, to account for their uses.

The most notable difference between these two groups of petitions often concerned issues of wealth. Officers' widows were likelier to complain that their husbands had spent vast sums of money during their military services. 19 of the 76 widows (25 percent) who petitioned Charles II after 1660 noted that their husbands had raised and maintained troops at their own expense during the civil wars. Although the ranks of four of these petitioners' husbands are unknown, at least fifteen had served as officers. A further ten petitioners (13 percent) claimed that their spouses had contributed money to the royalist war effort. By stressing their financial losses, these women were not only emphasising their own straitened conditions, but further demonstrating their husbands' commitment to the cause, that they had invested their fortunes as well as their lives. In one striking example, Veronica Platt, whose husband was slain at Newbury in 1643, claimed that he had 'raysed a troope of horse at his owne charge w[hi]ch cost him 1500li at least'.<sup>88</sup>

A minority of officers' widows further claimed that the money spent by their husbands during the wars had been appropriated from their marriage portions. Five widows (7 percent) who petitioned the Crown after the Restoration complained that their spouses had raised and maintained troops by this means, all of whom had served at the rank of colonel or higher. In contrast, none of the widows considered in this chapter who petitioned county committees or county benches referred to their dowries. Dorothy Byron claimed that her husband had spent £400 of her dowry fortifying Rhuddlan Castle in north Wales for the royalists, and that what remained was later spent treating her husband's wounds.<sup>89</sup> Similarly, the widow of Colonel Francis Cook noted that her husband had spent £1,500 of her marriage portion in the royalist service, whilst Katherine Butler maintained that her husband had 'raised a troope of dragoones for the service of his late

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<sup>88</sup> TNA, SP 18/131/123 (petition of Katherine Cholmley); SP 29/83/127 (petition of Veronica Platt). Peter Gaunt notes that financing a regiment of foot could cost as much as £15,000 a year during the civil wars, and a regiment of horse twice that amount. P. Gaunt, *The English Civil War: A Military History* (London, 2014), p. 237.

<sup>89</sup> TNA, SP 29/36/69 (petition of Dorothy Byron).

Ma[jes]tie of ever blessed memory, the charges whereof amounted to 2000li and upwards, it being yo[ur] pe[titione]rs... porcon w[hi]ch he had with her in marriage.<sup>90</sup> Since these women would have relied on their dowers as a form of subsistence during their widowhood, their losses represented a potentially significant financial blow.<sup>91</sup>

Given the large sums of money expended by some officers during the wars, their widows were also likelier than the rank-and-file to complain of heavy debts. 10 petitions (13 percent) submitted by officers' widows to Charles II referred to debts accrued during the 1640s, often followed by claims that the petitioner feared being cast into prison or forced by creditors from their homes. Elizabeth Wolsely claimed that her husband had spent his entire estate and much of her dowry in the royalist service, accruing such vast debts that she feared being incarcerated in a 'loathsome prison'.<sup>92</sup> Another widow complained that she was 'threatened by her credito[ur]s & daylie in danger to be cast into prison', whilst the widow of Colonel Nicholas Codrington claimed that she 'might dye in prison for want of necessaryes'.<sup>93</sup> Such claims were not restricted to the petitions of royalist widows. In her 1655 petition to Cromwell, Jane Meldrum, widow of Colonel John Meldrum, noted that her creditors 'threaten to put her in prison', whilst the following year the widow of Captain Edmond Phipps complained of the 'many debts which her said husband left upon her account to pay & for which she is very much threatened'.<sup>94</sup> Although narratives of debt occasionally feature in petitions submitted by the rank-and-file, they appear more frequently in the supplications of officers' widows. This is likely because, given the enhanced wealth and social standing enjoyed by most officers compared to common soldiers, they and their wives would have enjoyed greater access to larger amounts of credit.<sup>95</sup> For some officers' widows, the fear of their creditors was often greater than the fear of starvation.

An interesting but less common strategy utilised by officers' widows concerned the burial of their deceased husbands. Three petitions submitted by war widows to Parliament in 1646, 1649 and 1653 respectively requested the arrears of pay owed to their

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<sup>90</sup> TNA, SP 29/13/110 (petition of Priscilla Cook); SP 29/75/189 (petition of Katherine Butler).

<sup>91</sup> A. Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England* (London, 1993), pp. 24-25.

<sup>92</sup> TNA, SP 29/83/128 (petition of Elizabeth Wolsely).

<sup>93</sup> TNA, SP 29/17/57 (petition of Elizabeth Malyn); SP 29/142A/55 (petition of Katherine Codrington). See also SP 29/73/90 (petition of Anne Slaughter).

<sup>94</sup> TNA, SP 18/95/180 (petition of Jane Meldrum); SP 18/130/11 (petition of Margaret Phipps).

<sup>95</sup> C. Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation: The Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, 1998), p. 97.

husbands, in order to cover the costs of their funerals. These women's husbands had all returned home from the wars, but died thereafter. Joan Wilson, widow of Lieutenant James Wilson, noted that she could 'not procure soe much moneye as to bring him to the ground', and requested that 'the corpse of her deceased husband lying unburied th[at] some part of his arreares may be given her for his internment'.<sup>96</sup> Likewise, the widow of Captain Henry Bowen claimed that she had 'not wherew[i]thall to interre his corppes, neither can shee doe it w[i]thout some helpe from yo[ur] hono[ur]s', whilst Jane Farrett, widow of Captain James Farrett, requested relief for 'the burying of her said husband (whose corps lye still above ground)'. Jane's supplication was endorsed by the parish clerk of St Martin-in-the-Fields, who noted that Captain Farrett had 'starved to death'; a reminder that not all assertions of starvation made by petitioners should be dismissed as empty rhetoric.<sup>97</sup>

It is noteworthy that all three of these petitions were submitted by officers' widows to Parliament as leverage for their husbands' arrears of pay: the issue of burial does not appear in any of the petitions presented to county committees or county benches considered in this study. It is uncertain why this was so, although one suspects that the military ranks of these men were significant. Clare Gittings has argued that funeral ceremonies during this period represented important public displays of social standing, reflecting not only the status of the deceased, but also that of their living relatives. Pauper funerals paid for out of the parish stock often provided food and drink for the mourners, and occasionally a coffin to carry the deceased to the grave. Despite these decencies, however, they were reserved for the lowest members of society.<sup>98</sup> During the civil wars captaincies and lieutenancies carried with them expectancies of gentry status, and, whilst the three petitioners noted above were probably drawn from the lower and middling sorts, their husbands' military ranks ensured that each possessed claims to gentility. It is therefore unsurprising that these women wished to avoid the stigma of a pauper burial, despite the fact that they claimed to be penniless.

The imagery deployed by these women regarding their husbands' uninterred corpses was a deliberate strategy intended to shame Parliament by highlighting their neglect of men who had fought and died in their service. According to popular

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<sup>96</sup> PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/201 (petition of Joan Wilson).

<sup>97</sup> PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/282/41 (petition of Anne Bowen); HL/PO/JO/10/1/280 (petition of Jane Farrett).

<sup>98</sup> C. Gittings, *Death, Burial and the Individual in Early Modern England* (London, 1984), pp. 88-89, 61.

contemporary belief, Christian burial was obligatory in allowing the soul of the deceased to progress to heaven.<sup>99</sup> These women were thus imploring Parliament not to deny their husbands this sacred right. The treatment of these soldiers' corpses may have also sat uncomfortably with some Members of Parliament, who had spent lavishly on the funerals of John Pym and the parliamentarian commander the earl of Essex in 1643 and 1646 respectively.<sup>100</sup> Their strategies met with a mixed response. The parliamentary *Journals* contain no further reference to Bowen's widow, though Joan Wilson was awarded £5 on 18 February 1646 – the day after her petition was read in Parliament – 'to be employed' for her husband's burial. Similarly, Jane Farrett was awarded £20 on 26 May 1649, the same day her petition was read.<sup>101</sup>

Parliament's speedy response to these women's demands was presumably to ensure that their husbands' corpses could be buried before they began to decompose. Stephen Porter has argued that most burials took place within 72 hours of death during the seventeenth century, although this period could be prolonged if the corpse was embalmed. The cost of embalming was expensive, however, and given that these women complained to be penniless, it was probably a luxury they could ill afford.<sup>102</sup> Indeed, the burial registers for St Martin-in-the-Fields indicate that James Farrett was interred on the same day that the Commons agreed to award his widow Jane £20 for that purpose.<sup>103</sup> Although the sum awarded to Jane fell far short of the £400 that she claimed was owed to her husband, the payment made to her was still sizable, and represented almost ten times the average expenditure of a yeoman's funeral in Kent during this period.<sup>104</sup>

Officers' widows were also less likely to quote legal precedent in their petitions than the wives of the rank-and-file. Geoffrey Hudson has argued that 'a knowledge of entitlement' existed among widows who petitioned county magistrates for pensions. Widows were often brazen in their appeals for relief, and cited the 1647 or 1662 legislation to argue that military welfare was a legal right rather than an act of charity.

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<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>100</sup> I. Gentles, 'Political funerals during the English Revolution', in S. Porter (ed.), *London and the Civil War* (Basingstoke, 1996), pp. 205-224.

<sup>101</sup> *CJ*, vol. 4, p. 447 (18 February, 1646); *CJ*, vol. 6, p. 217 (26 May, 1649).

<sup>102</sup> S. Porter, 'Death and burial in a London parish: St Mary Woolnoth, 1653-99', *The London Journal*, 8 (1982), p. 77.

<sup>103</sup> CWAC, STM/PR/8/3.

<sup>104</sup> R. Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family in England, 1480-1750* (Oxford, 1998), p. 275. Stephen Porter notes that the typical cost of a pauper funeral during this period 'averaged little more than £1'. S. Porter, 'From death to burial in seventeenth-century England', *The Local Historian*, 23 (1993), p. 201.

Hudson found that 16.5 percent of parliamentary widows who petitioned the Cheshire bench either cited the law or the fact that other widows had obtained pensions.<sup>105</sup> In Staffordshire, three out of the twelve petitions (25 percent) did likewise. Anne Wealer from Stafford requested magistrates ‘to allowe her the contribution that the lawe hath in that case p[re]scribed for widowes’.<sup>106</sup> Another widow pleaded for relief ‘as the lawe alloweth for such widowes and orphans’.<sup>107</sup> Since officers’ widows were more likely to appeal to Parliament or the Crown for relief rather than county magistrates, the absence of references in their petitions to the 1647 and 1662 legislation is wholly unsurprising. This is not to suggest that these women were any less forthright in their demands for welfare. Rather, it is to argue that they expressed their entitlement to relief in other ways, often by emphasising the addressees’ duty of care to war victims, or by comparing their own circumstances to those of other claimants, rather than citing the law. The latter tactic was particularly utilised by the royalist officers’ widows after the Restoration. Katherine Byron claimed that other royalist petitioners were ‘not in the same exigency’ as her. Similarly, Elizabeth Poyer noted that ‘shee may truly cry out noe sorrow nor trouble can be like hers’, and attested that ‘some supplycants like herselfe (lesse miserable shee is sure, perhaps lesse deserving too) have beene abundantly supplied by your Royall bounty’.<sup>108</sup> One suspects that the fierce competition for relief and royal favour after 1660, coupled with rumours and reports of the government’s neglect of former cavaliers, had hardened these women’s attitudes towards other claimants.<sup>109</sup>

Despite the differences outlined above, an important parallel between the tactics utilised by officers’ widows and the wives of the rank-and-file can be found in the supporting documents submitted by petitioners to bolster their claims for relief. The 1647 and 1662 legislation stipulated that petitioners were to obtain a certificate signed by their husbands’ commanding officers confirming their military service. If the said officer was dead or a widow was unable to obtain their signature, they could instead seek the support of ‘persons of credit’. In a particularly striking example, the petition of Frances Whyllie and Katherine Caswell from Tettenhall to the Staffordshire bench in 1657 bore the

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<sup>105</sup> Hudson, ‘Negotiating for blood money’, pp. 148, 149.

<sup>106</sup> SRO, Q/SR/274/14 (petition of Anne Wealer).

<sup>107</sup> SRO, Q/SR/274/15 (petition of Margaret Nicholls).

<sup>108</sup> TNA, SP 29/31/70 (petition of Katherine Byron); SP 29/39/271 (petition of Elizabeth Poyer).

<sup>109</sup> J. Miller, *After the Civil Wars: English Politics and Government in the Reign of Charles II* (London, 2000), pp. 164, 167; D. Appleby, ‘Veteran politics in Restoration England, 1660-1670’, *The Seventeenth Century*, 28 (2013) p. 335.

signatures of eighteen parishioners, including the constable and two churchwardens.<sup>110</sup> David Appleby and Matthew Neufeld have argued that such petitions represented a communal effort to secure relief, and was mutually beneficial to both petitioner and the parish. After all, it served the parish's interests for widows to be maintained by county funds rather than its own stock, whilst a petition endorsed by the parish elite provided a clear indication that the petitioner was a member of the 'deserving' poor.<sup>111</sup>

Although officers' widows petitioning the Crown after 1660 were not legally obliged to submit certificates along with their petitions for relief, at least 26 (31 percent) either submitted supporting documentation, explicitly referred to such documents in their supplications, or had their petitions endorsed by a third-party. Those who did not submit certificates may have considered their husband's service or their own social and political status sufficiently well-known for them to require such documents, or, since there was no legal requirement to do so, may simply have been unwilling to undergo the effort to obtain one. That a significant number of officers' widows did present certificates, however, indicates both the importance some women attached to these documents, and perhaps that this protocol had been firmly established prior to 1660, not just by the parliamentary ordinance of 1647, but by the earlier Elizabethan poor laws. Indeed, some women sought to bolster their claims to relief by submitting more than one certificate. In 1661 the widow of Captain Christopher Pope presented four certificates along with her petition to the Crown, all confirming her husband's loyalty and service to the royalist cause. One certificate was signed by eleven Somerset JPs, another by five officers who, like her husband, had served in Lord Hopton's regiment, and a third by John Stawell, a 'neighbour' of the Popes.<sup>112</sup> Like their humbler counterparts who petitioned in the provinces, officers' widows also relied on the support and backing of others when petitioning for relief, albeit from often wealthier and more prestigious individuals who served to reflect the higher social standing of these women and their husbands.

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<sup>110</sup> SRO, Q/SR/299/12 (petition of Frances Whyllie and Katherine Caswell).

<sup>111</sup> Appleby, 'Unnecessary persons?', pp. 41-42; M. Neufeld, *The Civil Wars After 1660: Public Remembering in Late Stuart England* (Woodbridge, 2013), pp. 74-75.

<sup>112</sup> TNA, SP 29/48/155-159 (certificates of Charity Pope). This may have been Sir John Stawell from Cothelstone, Somerset a royalist who held prominent offices in the county both before and after the Restoration. I. Cassidy, 'Stawell, Sir John (1600-62)', *The History of Parliament Online*, <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org> [date accessed 8 March 2017].

### 3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated some of the myriad strategies utilised by war widows and their backers in their petitions for relief. It has demonstrated that all female war victims had a vested interest to appear as helpless and vulnerable as possible, regardless of their social status or political allegiance. They achieved this by detailing their number of dependents, as well as their lack of food and material resources. If a petitioner's child was young or sickly, or if they themselves were pregnant, these traits were especially emphasised. In this regard, the strategies utilised by English war widows bear similarities to those used by their foreign counterparts during the seventeenth century. In her examination of petitions for financial aid submitted on behalf of Irish émigré widows whose husbands had died in the service of the Spanish Crown during the early 1600s, Marie-Louise Coolahan concluded that 'tropes of female vulnerability are exploited time and again to elicit sympathy and thereby expedite the request'.<sup>113</sup> Similarly, in her analysis of war widows' petitions to the Swedish Crown during the mid-seventeenth century, Mary Ailes notes that petitioners 'used their position as women to create sympathy for their cause'.<sup>114</sup> Although there were important distinctions between these groups of petitioners – widows petitioning the Spanish Crown were required to prove their Catholicism, for example – the rhetoric of female vulnerability as a petitioning strategy evidently enjoyed wide currency throughout Europe during the seventeenth century.<sup>115</sup>

As well as describing their poverty, widows also emphasised their husbands' military services, and, in some instances, their own wartime activism. The latter strategy in particular was novel to the mid-seventeenth century, reflecting the various roles women had been required to play during the civil wars, as nurses, couriers, intelligencers, and defenders of property.<sup>116</sup> The requirement that petitioners provide details of their husbands' military services proved problematic to widows whose spouses had changed sides during the wars, or whose conduct had been less than commendable. As we have seen, however, the women faced with such difficulties proved adept at refashioning their husbands' loyalties, and skilfully recast their military actions in a more positive light.

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<sup>113</sup> M. Coolahan, *Women, Writing, and Language in Early Modern Ireland* (Oxford, 2010), p. 128.

<sup>114</sup> M. Ailes, 'Wars, widows, and state formation in seventeenth-century Sweden', *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 31 (2006), p. 23.

<sup>115</sup> Coolahan, *Women, Writing, and Language*, p. 129.

<sup>116</sup> Hughes, *Gender and the English Revolution*, pp. 35-42.

Finally, this chapter has drawn attention to the ways in which the supplications submitted by officers' widows differed to those of the rank-and-file. The impact of social status and military rank on petitioning strategies during the civil wars has been little considered by historians, and thus this assessment is timely. In particular, the chapter has demonstrated that officers' widows were more likely to mention vast sums of money expended by their husbands during the wars, that their marriage portions had been spent, and that they were burdened by heavy debts. Such claims served to further underline the petitioner's economic hardship, as well as their loyalty to a particular cause.



## Chapter 4. War widows and revenge in Restoration England

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter examines petitions submitted by royalist widows to the House of Lords during the first few months of the Restoration. The husbands of these women had been tried and executed for treason during the 1640s and 1650s for their perceived loyalty to the royalist cause, prompting their spouses to demand retribution against their judges and jurors. As the Convention Parliament deliberated over the Act of Indemnity and Oblivion during the summer of 1660, these aggrieved widows were presented with an opportunity to ensure that the men they held responsible for their husbands' deaths were brought to account. The exploits of these women and the government's response to them – both of which have been largely neglected by historians – invite a further assessment of female petitioning activity at the Restoration, as well as the attitude of the restored monarchy towards private settlement and retribution.

### 4.2 Revenge and the Restoration

By way of introduction it is necessary to consider the political context of the Restoration, as well as the subject of revenge more broadly. Charles II's return to England in May 1660 following nine years of exile was not achieved through force or strength of arms. Rather, he was invited back by Parliament to replace a faltering republican government that by the early months of 1660 lay on the verge of collapse.<sup>1</sup> A month before his entrance into London – when his return to England appeared increasingly likely – Charles had issued a declaration from exile in the Low Countries, in which he promised clemency to all but a minority of men who had opposed the Stuarts during the civil wars. Known as the Declaration of Breda, the proclamation was intended to alleviate tensions regarding a restoration, by insisting that punishment would only be administered upon a select few chosen by Parliament.<sup>2</sup> This caveat was to allow Charles the right to mete out punishment against the regicides: the men who had tried and executed his father. Reassured by his calls for peace, a Convention Parliament met at Westminster on 25 April in order to

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<sup>1</sup> See R. Hutton, *The Restoration: A Political and Religious History of England and Wales, 1658-1667* (Oxford, 1985).

<sup>2</sup> A. Browning (ed.), *English Historical Documents: Volume 8: 1660-1714* (London, 1953), pp. 57-58.

debate a settlement, and on 8 May Charles was pronounced king. The following day, the bill for an Act of Indemnity was entered into Parliament, in order to translate Charles's promise of forgiveness into official legislation.<sup>3</sup> After three months of heated debate over who should and who should not be pardoned, the bill was passed on 29 August. Under the act, clemency was awarded to all but 33 men, of whom ten were executed in October 1660. A further twenty men were barred for life from holding public office.<sup>4</sup>

Charles's monopolization of vengeance and the perceived leniency of the Act of Indemnity towards former parliamentarians infuriated many of his supporters.<sup>5</sup> Some who had expected to be rewarded for their loyalty were left sorely disappointed, whilst others, still nursing grievances from the past two decades, resented the wide-ranging clemency granted under the act. Yet as David Farr has recently argued, Restoration England was a far more vengeful place than contemporary commentators and some academics have allowed. Although relatively few of the regicides were subjected to public execution, many were handed stringent prison sentences, whilst those who fled abroad were hunted relentlessly by government agents.<sup>6</sup> At least one individual, Charles Stanley, eighth earl of Derby, openly defied the Act of Indemnity when he ordered the execution of one of his wartime adversaries on the Isle of Man in 1663.<sup>7</sup> At a more localised level, some royalists exploited the Restoration by harassing and violently confronting former parliamentarians and commonwealth-men.<sup>8</sup> Chief among them were Anglican clergymen, many of whom had been ejected from their livings during the 1640s.<sup>9</sup>

Set within this context of reconciliation and vengeance lay the exploits of at least ten royalist widows who petitioned the House of Lords in the summer of 1660. The Upper

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<sup>3</sup> J. Raithby (ed.), *Statutes of the Realm: Volume 5: 1628-1680* (London, 1819), pp. 226-234.

<sup>4</sup> T. Harris, *Restoration: Charles I and His Kingdoms* (London, 2006), pp. 47-48.

<sup>5</sup> J. Miller, *After the Civil Wars: English Politics and Government in the Reign of Charles II* (Harlow, 2000), p. 161; P. Seaward, *The Restoration, 1660-1688* (Basingstoke, 1991), p. 36.

<sup>6</sup> D. Farr, *Major-General Thomas Harrison: Millenarianism, Fifth Monarchism and the English Revolution, 1616-1660* (Farnham, 2014), pp. 257-258.

<sup>7</sup> J. Callow, 'The limits of indemnity: the earl of Derby, sovereignty and retribution at the trial of William Christian, 1660-1663', *The Seventeenth Century*, 15 (2000), pp. 199-216.

<sup>8</sup> Hutton, *The Restoration*, p. 136; D. Appleby, 'Veteran politics in Restoration England, 1660-1670', *The Seventeenth Century*, 28 (2003), pp. 329-330; A. Hopper, 'The Farnley Wood Plot and the memory of civil war in Yorkshire', *The Historical Journal*, 45 (2002), p. 292; S. Roberts, 'Public or private? Revenge and recovery at the restoration of Charles II', *Historical Research*, 59 (1986), p. 174; W. Scott (ed.), *Original Memoirs, Written During the Great Civil War; Being the Life of Sir Henry Slingsby, and Memoirs of Captain Hodgson* (Edinburgh, 1806), pp. 162-198.

<sup>9</sup> F. McCall, *Baal's Priests: The Loyalist Clergy and the English Revolution* (Farnham, 2013), pp. 248-250.

House had been abolished by the Commons in March 1649, but was restored for the Convention Parliament in April 1660. These petitions, located in the Parliamentary Archives, have not gone entirely unnoticed by historians. Both Maxwell Schoenfeld and James Hart have offered brief assessments of these women's exploits in their analyses of the House of Lords during the seventeenth century, though their cursory overviews largely concern Parliament's responses to these women, rather than female agency.<sup>10</sup> More significantly, Andrea Button has studied the petitioning activities of the widows of those executed in the wake of Penruddock's Rising (1655), who coordinated themselves into a 'pressure group' following the Restoration to appeal to both Parliament and Charles II for redress against those who had instigated their husbands' deaths.<sup>11</sup> Whilst insightful, Button neglected how the 'network' of Penruddock widows was part of a broader context of widows' petitions for judicial vengeance at the Restoration.

The purpose of this chapter is twofold. First, it profiles three female petitioners – Elizabeth Burley, Elizabeth, Lady Capel, and Mary Hewitt – in order to assess their motives for petitioning the Convention Parliament, and examines the strategies adopted to meet this end. In doing so, it illuminates a further facet of the petitioning tactics adopted by war widows during the mid-seventeenth century. As we shall see, the petitions submitted to the Convention Parliament bear similarities with those analysed in the previous chapter, as well as striking differences. The second aim of this chapter is to consider the government's responses towards these widows. Although this has been briefly touched on elsewhere, a more thorough assessment of Parliament's handling of these women's complaints offers a greater insight into the government's attitude towards private settlement at the Restoration. It is argued that whilst the supplicants' demands for retrospective justice were largely unsuccessful, their efforts were neither ignored nor entirely without consequence.

Two points are worth highlighting before we begin. First, the submission of these petitions was carefully planned to coincide with events inside Westminster Palace during the spring and summer of 1660. All of the petitions considered in this chapter (unless otherwise stated) were presented to the House of Lords in late June and early July. Given that the Act of Indemnity was not passed from the Commons to the Upper House until 11

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<sup>10</sup> M. Schoenfeld, *The Restored House of Lords* (The Hague, 1967), pp. 190-191; J. Hart, *Justice Upon Petition: The House of Lords and the Reformation of Justice, 1621-1675* (London, 1991), p. 237.

<sup>11</sup> A. Button, 'Royalist women petitioners in south-west England, 1655-1662', *The Seventeenth Century*, 15 (2000), pp. 53-66.

July, these female supplicants were thus attempting to gain a head start on proceedings by pushing their causes in the Lords *before* they had begun to officially debate the act.<sup>12</sup> As such, their actions demonstrate an acute awareness of the goings on inside Parliament during this period. It is unclear why some of the women discussed in this chapter chose to petition the Lords over the Commons. As we shall see, some supplicants petitioned both houses, whilst others possessed family connections to peers sitting in the Upper House. For those who did not, however, the newly restored House of Lords may have been perceived to be more royalist than the Commons, and thus more sympathetic to their cause. Second, unlike the petitions presented to county Quarter Sessions on behalf of war widows seeking modest pensions, the petitions considered here were mainly submitted by women drawn from the nobility and gentry, rather than the middling and poorer sorts. Judicial revenge – at least in this context – was largely, though by no means exclusively, a privilege reserved for the elite. Despite the high status of these women, doubts remain as to whether they penned their own petitions. To be sure, these women were certainly literate – enough at the very least to sign their own supplications – and yet it remains probable that like their counterparts petitioning in the provinces, they too relied on the advice and penmanship of professional scribes to draw up these documents for them.

### 4.3 Elizabeth Burley

The first of these petitions was submitted on 8 June on behalf of Elizabeth Burley. Her husband, Captain John Burley, had been executed in January 1648 after leading a failed attempt to rescue Charles I during his imprisonment at Carisbrooke Castle on the Isle of Wight [Image 4.1].<sup>13</sup> In her petition Elizabeth retold the chain of events which culminated in her husband's death. She claimed that his actions had been motivated by 'a suddaine and strict restraint [that] was put upon his Ma[jes]ty in the moneth of December 1647, soe high, that none of his chaplaines, or servants, could have accesse to his person'.<sup>14</sup> This referred to the eviction of some of Charles's entourage from Carisbrooke Castle on

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<sup>12</sup> *LJ*, vol. 11, p. 87 (11 July, 1660).

<sup>13</sup> J. Jones, *The Royal Prisoner: Charles I at Carisbrooke* (London, 1965), pp. 54-55; T. Henderson and S. Trombley, 'Burley, John (d. 1648)', *ODNB*; BL, TT E.421[24], *A Designe by Captain Barley, and Others, to Surprize Carisbrook Castle* (London, 1648).

<sup>14</sup> PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/285 (petition of Elizabeth Burley).

the morning of 29 December, following the king's refusal to accept Parliament's proposals for negotiation.<sup>15</sup> On hearing this order against the king, Burley:

fearing some evill might proceed from thence to the person of his Sacred Ma[jes]ty did (as in duty hee was bound) use the utmost of his endeavo[ur]s by beating up of drums in the said Island, thereby to give timely notice to the people, to appeare, & preserve his Ma[jes]ty from that destruction, that afterward fell upon his sacred person.<sup>16</sup>

Unfortunately for both Burley and Charles, the attempted rising was quickly suppressed. Burley was arrested and transported to Winchester, where he was tried for high treason by a commission of oyer and terminer directed by John Wilde, sergeant-at-law. After a trial lasting a 'few houres', Burley was sentenced 'to bee hanged, drawne, and quartered as a traito[u]r'. This was, Elizabeth noted, 'in the most barbarous manner that might bee, put in execution upon him'.<sup>17</sup>

The court's decision to hang, draw and quarter Burley was a serious affront to his status as a gentleman.<sup>18</sup> In her petition, however, Elizabeth appeared less concerned with the manner of her husband's execution than with the legality of his trial. She particularly emphasised the heavy-handedness of the prosecutor, William Steele, who she claimed had subjected her husband to 'violent prosecution'. She also asserted that the jury had been deliberately selected by the commissioners in order to secure a guilty verdict. According to Elizabeth, her husband took particular issue with the presence of one Edward Hayes, who was selected to serve as foreman of the jury. Although she gave no indication as to why her husband opposed Hayes's presence on the jury, Elizabeth noted suggestively that he was elevated to the Hampshire bench soon after the trial.

Predictably, Burley's death was reported and interpreted in contrasting fashions by royalist and parliamentarian polemicists. In February 1648, the parliamentarian newsbook *Perfect Occurrences* felt obliged to deny claims that a spring of blood had appeared at the spot where Burley had been executed, by insisting that 'it is nothing but the blood that ran from him which was not quite dryed the next morning, and gone as

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<sup>15</sup> Jones, *The Royal Prisoner*, pp. 51-53.

<sup>16</sup> PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/285 (petition of Elizabeth Burley).

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Little is known of Burley prior to his death, although in his list of royalist martyrs William Winstanley described him as a 'Gentleman of the Isle of Wight'. Wing/W3066, W. Winstanley, *The Loyall Martyrology* (London, 1665), p. 12.

soone as any other could; there being no ground at all for the report'.<sup>19</sup> This was likely an attempt to combat a number of royalist tracts published soon after Burley's death, which sought to fashion him as a martyr of the royalist cause. One pamphlet in particular, *The Relation of the Unjust Proceedings against Captaine Burley* (1648), contained a lengthy condemnation of Burley's trial. The pamphlet denounced those who had played a part in his execution for spilling 'innocent blood', and praised Burley's virtuous character during the final hours of his life. According to the polemic, Burley impressed upon 'his mournfull wife' that she 'should never seeke revenge of those that were the unjust and cruel instruments of his death', and 'took care for the preventing of all revengefull thoughts that might take fire from the flame of conjugall love towards him in the bosome of his wife that he left behind him'.<sup>20</sup> Intriguingly, the tract offers a further clue as to why Elizabeth may have sought retribution following the Restoration, despite her actions being at odds with the alleged final wishes of her husband. According to the pamphlet, Elizabeth was not only denied her request to retain her husband's estates, but was prevented by Wilde from recovering his dismembered body for burial. Ironically, the pamphlet concluded with a prophetic warning to Wilde, cautioning the judge that his treatment of Elizabeth might one day incite retribution: 'I wish that wicked Serjeant to take heede, that that jeere of a poore distressed widdow, be not one day returned into his bosome in the like punishment'.<sup>21</sup>

Whilst Elizabeth's petition omitted details of Wilde's rebuttals concerning her husband's corpse, it did acknowledge that his estates had been seized after his death. Incensed by a sense of injustice shown towards herself and her spouse, it is unsurprising that Elizabeth saw the Restoration as an opportunity for vengeance. Her petition requested that 'the innocent bloud of her deceased Husband may be inquired after, that justice may bee done upon the Judges, the Jurors, and Prosecutors for the murthering of yo[ur] pet[it]ione]rs husband'.<sup>22</sup> Having laid out a blanket accusation against all of the men involved in her husband's trial, Elizabeth singled out five of the judges by name to

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<sup>19</sup> BL, TT E.520[36], *Perfect Occurrences of Every Daie Iournall in Parliament*, no. 58, 4-11 February (London, 1648), pp. 403-404.

<sup>20</sup> BL, TT E.1182[9], *The Relation of the Unjust Proceedings Against Captaine Burley at Winchester and of his Magnanimous and Christian Suffering* (London, 1648), p. 4.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.

<sup>22</sup> PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/285 (petition of Elizabeth Burley).

be exempted from the Act of Indemnity: John Wilde, Sir Henry Mildmay, John Lisle, Thomas Bowerman and John Hildesley.

Image 4.1. Captain John Burley. Source: University of Leicester Library, Fairclough Collection, EP39.

As well as seeing the perpetrators of her husband's death suffer political punishment, Elizabeth also sought recompense for herself and her family. She further demanded that 'reparation may bee made to yo[u]r pet[it]ione[r] and her children out of the estates of those that were guilty', and, in a draft proviso annexed to the petition, requested permission to prosecute the aforementioned men in 'any of his ma[jes]ties courts of record at Westm[inste]r'.<sup>23</sup> In this regard, retribution clearly had a financial purpose. The lack of surviving evidence prevents us from ascertaining whether Burley died

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

intestate, nor whether Elizabeth received a jointure following his death. However, an entry in the *Lords' Journals* in June 1660 describing her as 'poor' suggests that Elizabeth may have fallen into hardship following her husband's demise.<sup>24</sup> As such, Burley's execution had not only deprived Elizabeth of her spouse and his lands, but perhaps also her wealth and status. In this regard, her demands for retribution were not merely about punishing those who had executed her husband, but restoring her former livelihood and reputation. Elizabeth was well aware that should these men be pardoned under the Act of Indemnity, any chance of securing satisfaction from them would be lost.

In many regards, the rhetoric employed by Elizabeth in her petition was characteristic of conventional early-modern female petitioning norms, in which themes of female suffering, frailty and fatherless children were drawn upon in order to evoke feelings of sympathy within the addressee.<sup>25</sup> By alluding to her 'miserable & distressed condicon'; her 'foure children exposed to great want and miserie'; and that she had 'lost a loving Husband', Elizabeth utilised the petitionary tactics used by all war widows during this period in order to fashion herself as an object of pity. Yet as well as deploying standardised tropes of female petitioning, Elizabeth's petition also drew from the language espoused in royalist martyrology. Within months of the execution of Charles I in January 1649, printed elegies, commemorative literature and sermons had propagated his public image as an innocent and Christ-like martyr, illegally sentenced to death by base rebels.<sup>26</sup> Elizabeth's petition contained references to his 'sacred Ma[jes]ty' Charles I, whilst she also described the 'barbarous manner' of her husband's death, and the spilling of his 'innocent blood'. Whilst her choice of language was deliberately emotive, it also suggests that Elizabeth was aware of the royalist martyr cult that had developed since the late 1640s. This is hardly surprising, since we have already seen that her husband was celebrated in print as a royalist martyr following his death in 1648.<sup>27</sup> Burley would also later appear in at least one royalist martyrology after the Restoration, William Winstanley's *The Loyall Martyrology* (1665).<sup>28</sup> In this regard, her choice of language, if

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<sup>24</sup> *LJ*, vol. 11, p. 84 (7 July, 1660).

<sup>25</sup> J. Daybell, 'Scripting a female voice: women's epistolary rhetoric in sixteenth-century letters of petition', *Women's Writing*, 13 (2006), pp. 3-22; G. Hudson, 'Negotiating for blood money: war widows and the courts in seventeenth-century England', in J. Kermode and G. Walker (eds), *Women, Crime and the Courts in Early Modern England* (London, 1994), p. 153; A. Thorne, 'Women's petitionary letters and early seventeenth-century treason trials', *Women's Writing*, 13 (2006), pp. 27-29.

<sup>26</sup> A. Lacey, *The Cult of King Charles the Martyr* (Woodbridge, 2003), pp. 77, 96.

<sup>27</sup> BL, TT E.1182[9], *Unjust Proceedings*; BL, TT E.426[1], *A True and Brief Relation of the Araignment, Condemnation and Suffering of Captaine John Burleigh* (London, 1648).

<sup>28</sup> Wing/W3066, Winstanley, *The Loyall Martyrology*, pp. 12-13.



not an attempt to draw parallels between the executions of her husband and Charles I, was designed to evoke imagery of royalist loyalty and sacrifice. In doing so, Elizabeth hoped to strengthen her claims for retribution by amplifying the crimes committed by her husband's executioners.

#### 4.4 Elizabeth, Lady Capel

Similar rhetorical strategies were present in the petition of Elizabeth, Lady Capel. Her husband, Lord Arthur Capel, had served as commander-in-chief of the royalist forces in East Anglia during the Second Civil War, and was captured following the royalist surrender at Colchester in August 1648. Parliament initially voted to limit Capel's punishment to banishment, but following Pride's Purge in December 1648 and the death of Charles I the following month, he was soon brought before the High Court of Justice. This was the same court that only six weeks earlier had sanctioned the king's execution.<sup>29</sup> Tried and adjudged guilty of high treason, Capel was beheaded on 9 March outside Westminster Hall along with two other royalist nobles; James, duke of Hamilton and Henry Rich, first earl of Holland.<sup>30</sup>

Styling herself as a 'disconsolate widdow', Elizabeth opened her address by describing her husband's loyalty to Charles I, as well as his 'zeale for the defence of the lawes of the land'. This commitment towards both monarch and common law sat in juxtaposition to her description of the events of 1648, in which her husband:

after the vote of no more Addresses to the King, his ma[jes]tie being shut up prisoner in Carisbrooke Castle, the Lords House violently taken away & all honest & well affected persons of the House of Commons eyther thrust or kept out of the House by force [was] arraigned and condemned to dye by a pretended High Court of Justice.<sup>31</sup>

By discrediting the legitimacy of the court, Elizabeth claimed that the sentence procured against her husband was 'contrary to the knowne lawes of the land [and] the Priviledges of the Peeres of this Realme'. In doing so, Elizabeth undoubtedly sought to remind the Lords of the abhorrent and arbitrary treatment of a fellow peer. This tactic had earlier been utilised by Charlotte, countess dowager of Derby, in her petition to the Lords on 9

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<sup>29</sup> B. Donagan, *War in England, 1642-1649* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 397-398; R. Ashton, *Counter-Revolution: The Second Civil War and its Origins, 1646-1648* (New Haven, 1994), pp. 408-409.

<sup>30</sup> R. Hutton, 'Capel, Arthur, first Baron Capel of Hadham (1604-1649)', *ODNB*.

<sup>31</sup> PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/287/48 (petition of Elizabeth, Lady Capel).

June.<sup>32</sup> Her husband, James Stanley, seventh earl of Derby, had been executed for treason in 1651 for his loyalty to the royalist cause. As John Callow and Katharine Walker have demonstrated, both Charlotte and her son, Charles, eighth earl of Derby, embarked on a campaign after the Restoration to bring Stanley's condemners to trial, and to regain their family's estates that had been confiscated by Parliament during the civil wars.<sup>33</sup>

Elizabeth also maintained that her husband's execution had violated 'the Articles of Agreement interchangeably signed by the Commissioners of the Assaylants & Defendants at the siege of Colchester'.<sup>34</sup> This argument – posited by Capel during his trial, and later recounted by royalist polemicists – concerned the terms by which the royalist commanders had surrendered to the parliamentary general Lord Thomas Fairfax in 1648. Technically, Capel and his fellow commanders had surrendered to Fairfax 'at mercy': a harsh term which did not guarantee the vanquished quarter. As such, Fairfax could subject the royalist prisoners to any punishment he deemed fit, without reneging the terms of surrender or violating the articles of war which governed the treatment of military prisoners.<sup>35</sup> When Fairfax handed the prisoners over to Parliament to be tried by civil rather than military law, however, Capel argued that the terms of surrender had been violated. During his trial, he also (incorrectly) insisted that he had surrendered to Fairfax 'at quarter', a more lenient term that guaranteed the prisoner his life.<sup>36</sup> For their part, Parliament maintained that the terms of surrender agreed at Colchester freed Capel 'from the execution of the sword but not any protection from the judicall proceedings of a civill court'.<sup>37</sup> Eager to make an example of one of the men whom they held accountable for plunging the country into a second civil war, it is little surprise that Parliament proceeded with the trial in spite of Capel's protests. Evidently, one's outlook towards the trial hinged on one's personal interpretation of the terms of surrender, and it is easy to understand why Elizabeth (not to mention royalists in general) viewed her husband's death as a violation of those terms. This, along with her further

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<sup>32</sup> PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/285 (petition of Charlotte, countess dowager of Derby).

<sup>33</sup> Callow, 'The limits of indemnity', p. 201; K. Walker, 'The military activities of Charlotte de la Tremouille, countess of Derby during the civil war and Interregnum', *Northern History*, 38 (2001), pp. 62-63.

<sup>34</sup> PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/287/48 (petition of Elizabeth, Lady Capel).

<sup>35</sup> For a full account of the royalist surrender at Colchester see Donagan, *War in England*, pp. 357-358, 397-398.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 397-398. Details of the trial were reported in the parliamentary newsbook *A Perfect Diurnal of Some Passages in Parliament*, nos. 289-293, 5 February-12 March (London, 1649), BL, TT E.527[19, 22, 25, 33].

<sup>37</sup> BL, TT E.527[22], *A Perfect Diurnall*, no. 290, 12-19 February, p. 2328.

accusation that her husband had been ‘barbarously murdered contrary to the solemn engagement of the Army’, should not, therefore, be viewed as a deliberate attempt to spin the events of her husband’s surrender, nor be mistaken for female ignorance of military codes of conduct.<sup>38</sup> Rather, it should be seen as a steadfast refusal on her behalf to accept that her husband’s execution had been just.

Unlike Elizabeth Burley, the petition of Elizabeth Capel contained no request for monetary recompense. This was likely because Lady Capel was far more financially secure. Following Lord Capel’s death the House of Commons had allowed Elizabeth to retain much of her family’s property, and at her own death in 1661 she was sufficiently wealthy to bequeath £5,000 to each of her two daughters, as well as expensive household and personal items including furniture, portraits and jewellery.<sup>39</sup> Nor did Elizabeth focus her demands for retribution on any one particular individual. Rather, she appealed to the Lords that ‘all those who have had a hand in this notorious wickednesse may for the glory of God, the Honour of the English Nation & for terrour to all such wicked men, be brought to condigne punishment’.<sup>40</sup> In this regard, the enactment of revenge was a necessary action needed to satisfy both God and the nation, as well as to deter others from future acts of disloyalty.

Although Elizabeth’s demand for retribution might be viewed as a rational response of a bereaved widow, her call for vengeance against her husband’s condemners directly defied the wishes of her deceased spouse. Speaking upon the scaffold shortly before his execution, Arthur Capel expressed forgiveness to all those who had sentenced him to death.<sup>41</sup> This is perhaps unsurprising, since public pardoning by the condemned was a convention of the early-modern scaffold speech.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, even Charles I was reported to have expressed forgiveness towards the regicides shortly before his death.<sup>43</sup> Whilst we may therefore question how far this final act of Christian pardoning represented Capel’s true feelings towards his condemners, he does appear to have echoed

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<sup>38</sup> PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/287/48 (petition of Elizabeth, Lady Capel).

<sup>39</sup> TNA, PROB 11/303/317.

<sup>40</sup> PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/287/48 (petition of Elizabeth, Lady Capel).

<sup>41</sup> BL, TT E.546[21], *The Several Speeches of Duke Hamilton Earl of Cambridge, Henry Earl of Holland, and Arthur Lord Capel, Upon the Scaffold and Immediately Before their Execution* (London, 1649), p. 37.

<sup>42</sup> P. Klemp, “‘I have been bred upon the theatre of death, and have learned that part’: the execution ritual during the English Revolution”, *The Seventeenth Century*, 26 (2011), pp. 323-345; J. Sharpe, “‘Last dying speeches’: religion, ideology and public execution in seventeenth-century England”, *Past & Present*, 107 (1985), pp. 144-167.

<sup>43</sup> BL, TT E.545[5], *King Charls His Speech Made upon the Scaffold at Whitehall-Gate* (London, 1649), p. 5.

similar sentiments in private. George Morley had served as chaplain to the peer during his imprisonment, and had witnessed the final visit paid by his wife and eldest son, Arthur, on the morning of his death. According to Morley's account, Capel commanded his wife and son never to revenge his death, but to 'forgive his enemies'.<sup>44</sup>

Arthur Capel went to his grave having both publically and privately forgiven the men responsible for putting him there. Seen in this light, Elizabeth's pleas for revenge during the summer of 1660 require explanation. Although her inability to forgive the republic's judiciary was far from irrational, her desire to seek retribution may also have been shaped by her own wartime experiences. During the siege of Colchester in 1648, Parliament ordered the arrest of her sixteen year old son in an attempt to pressure his father to surrender. According to a royalist newsbook, the boy was 'ravist from his mothers arms', and, being taken to Colchester, was placed 'before the mouth of their Enemies cannon, that so in case any shot was made the Innocent Child might first lead the dance of death'.<sup>45</sup> Whilst the treatment of the child was perhaps exaggerated by royalist propagandists, the episode underlines the exceptionally nasty nature of the siege of Colchester. Elizabeth's trauma at the arrest of her son was heightened by her own pregnancy. According to a further account, the 'sudden & unexpected inhumanity caused her (as is said) to fall into present travail of Child-birth, to the great hazard of her life'.<sup>46</sup> Two days before her husband's execution, Elizabeth had unsuccessfully lobbied Parliament to spare his life. Although the Commons later discharged parts of her family's estate from sequestration, this conciliatory gesture was evidently insufficient to quench her thirst for vengeance.<sup>47</sup>

#### 4.5 Mary Hewitt

On 21 June 1660 the petition of Mary Hewitt, the second wife of the royalist minister and conspirator Doctor John Hewitt, was read in the Lords. Hewitt had been tried by the High Court of Justice in June 1658 after becoming embroiled in an alleged plot to raise a

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<sup>44</sup> T. Howell (ed.), *A Complete Collection of State Trials* (London, 1816), vol. 4, p. 1238.

<sup>45</sup> BL, TT E.458[4], *The Colchester Spie: Truly Informing the Kingdome of the Estate of that Gallant Town, and the Attempts of Fairfax Against It* (1648), p. 4; Donagan, *War in England*, pp. 344-347.

<sup>46</sup> BL, TT E.453[27], *Divers Remarkable Passages Concerning the Originall and Progresse of the Present Great Action in Essex* (London, 1648), p. 10.

<sup>47</sup> A. Hughes, *Gender and the English Revolution* (Abingdon, 2012), p. 48; Donagan, *War in England*, pp. 398-399; *CJ*, vol. 6, pp. 203-204 (7 May, 1649).

royalist force in London.<sup>48</sup> Found guilty of treason, he was beheaded at Tower Hill on 8 June 1658 alongside a second royalist conspirator, Sir Henry Slingsby.<sup>49</sup> Unlike the other royalist widows who have so far been considered, Mary did not wait until the Restoration before seeking justice for her husband's death. On 17 March 1659 she petitioned Parliament requesting retribution against the men who had condemned her husband to die.<sup>50</sup> She may have hoped that the death of Oliver Cromwell in September 1658, followed by the succession of his son Richard, represented a sufficient regime change to attempt a prosecution. Although her claims were dismissed, the restoration of the Stuart monarchy the following year encouraged Mary to chance her luck for a second time.

Rather than style herself as a 'widow' or 'relict', Mary presented herself to the Lords as 'one of the Daughters of the right hon[ourable] Robert late Earle of Lindsey deceased'.<sup>51</sup> She may have hoped that her father's title would have enhanced her standing before the peers, although it is also significant that Lindsey himself was a royalist martyr, who had died at the battle of Edgehill in October 1642. In an attempt to fashion herself as an object of pity, Mary drew from similar tropes utilized by both Burley and Capel, noting her 'unspeakable griefe', 'irreparable loss' and 'fatherles children'. She likewise provided a damning denunciation of the legality of her husband's trial, blasting the High Court of Justice as 'Tyrannicall' and a 'bloody court'. The men who had sentenced her husband were labelled 'presumptuous murderers', who had acted 'contrary to the lawes of this land'. Like Elizabeth Capel, Mary insisted that retribution against her husband's judges, jurors and executioners was not simply just in its own right, but a necessary act to deter 'all men from the like villainies'.<sup>52</sup>

A month before submitting her supplication to the Lords, Mary had petitioned the House of Commons with similar aspirations of revenge.<sup>53</sup> Substantially longer in length and more colourful in language, this petition contained considerable detail later omitted from her petition to the Upper House. Whereas her petition to the Lords failed to name her adversaries (simply labelling all those who had played a role in her husband's death

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<sup>48</sup> T. Howell (ed.), *Cobbett's Complete Collection of State Trials* (London, 1810), vol. 5, pp. 883-908; D. Underdown, *Royalist Conspiracy in England, 1649-1660* (New Haven, 1960), pp. 208, 211-212.

<sup>49</sup> J. Peacey, 'Hewitt, John (d. 1658)', *ODNB*; A. Hast, 'State treason trials during the Puritan Revolution, 1640-1660', *The Historical Journal*, 15 (1972), pp. 37-53.

<sup>50</sup> Peacey, 'Hewitt, John'.

<sup>51</sup> PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/287 (petition of Mary Hewitt).

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *CJ*, vol. 8, p. 27 (15 May, 1660).

as ‘presumptuous murderers’), her petition to the Commons cited Oliver Cromwell – a ‘Bloody Tyrannical pretended Protector’ – as one of the chief instigators of Hewitt’s execution. The petition also demanded that John Lisle, who had presided over the trial, be exempted from the Act of Indemnity, and that recompense be afforded to her from six of the commissioners who had served during the hearing. The punishment of these men was not simply an important act of public justice, she insisted, but an act which bore religious significance. As Mary noted, ‘the effusion of Innocent Christian Blood... cries aloud for vengeance’.<sup>54</sup>

The religious sentiment expressed in Mary’s petition is hardly surprising. Numerous biblical references could be drawn upon to support her cause for vengeance, some of which had been advanced by her husband during his trial in 1658. Having learned that he was to be sentenced to death, for instance, Hewitt cited Joel’s threat to Egypt: ‘Egypt shall be a desolation, and Edom a desolate wilderness, for their violence against the children of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in the land’.<sup>55</sup> As well as utilising religious imagery to bolster her claims for justice, Mary’s insistence that the ‘innocent blood’ of her deceased husband demanded retributive action – a point that had earlier been voiced by Elizabeth Burley – might be viewed as a deliberate attempt to evoke the concept of blood guilt. Patricia Crawford and Stephen Baskerville have persuasively argued that the notion of avenging spilt innocent blood carried strong currency during the civil wars. It was used by supporters of both sides to justify military action during the 1640s, and was later used as a key argument against Charles I during his trial in 1649.<sup>56</sup> Given the centrality of blood guilt in justifying judicial action against the king, it is perhaps unsurprising that these women sought to utilise the same concept against their husbands’ condemners. In doing so, the insinuation was clear; the murder of their spouses in cold blood demanded retrospective retaliation, and it was Parliament’s responsibility to ensure that those culpable were punished accordingly.

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<sup>54</sup> Wing/H1640, *The Humble Petition of Dame Mary Hewytt, Late Wife of John Hewytt, Doctor in Divinity* (London, 1660).

<sup>55</sup> Howell (ed.), *Complete Collection of State Trials*, vol. 5, p. 908; BL, TT E.974[2], W. Prynne, *Beheaded, Dr John Hewytts Ghost Pleading, yea Crying for Exemplarie Justice against the Arbitrarie, Un-examples Injustice of his Late Judges and Executioners in the New High Commission, or Court of Justice, Sitting in Westminster-Hall* (London, 1659), p. 18.

<sup>56</sup> P. Crawford, “Charles Stuart, that Man of Blood”, *Journal of British Studies*, 16 (1977), pp. 41-61; S. Baskerville, ‘Blood guilt in the English Revolution’, *The Seventeenth Century*, 8 (1993), pp. 181-202.

The two petitions submitted by Mary not only differed in content, but also the medium in which they were presented. Whereas her supplication to the Lords was in manuscript form, the petition submitted to the Commons was printed. The format of this petition – printed on a single sheet with few ‘decorative devices’ – suggests that it was likely intended for private circulation amongst MPs, rather than distributed publically to garner popular support for her appeal.<sup>57</sup> That said, news of Mary’s petitioning activity at Westminster soon reached the provinces. In May 1660, the Worcestershire gentleman Henry Townshend recorded in his diary that:

Dr Hewit’s widow petitioned the parliament for justice against the illegal president Lisle and that he may be as a murderer excepted from pardon in the act of oblivion. And that Titchborne, Ireton and Pack, aldermen, Serjeant Cooke, John Barkstead, and John Phelps, and the rest may make her due reparation for her husband’s death.<sup>58</sup>

Townshend’s intimate knowledge of Mary’s petition indicates that he had seen a copy of the document before copying it into his diary. Since Townshend never served as an MP, and, as his recent editors have asserted, regularly received printed news from his friends in London, it seems plausible that he was sent a copy of the document from an acquaintance in the capital.<sup>59</sup> That he felt obliged to copy it into his diary further suggests that the activities of these women aroused public interest.

#### **4.6 Bridget Wright and Martha Hatt**

Having profiled these three women, it is necessary to briefly place their petitioning activities within a broader context of supplications submitted to the House of Lords during the summer of 1660. The widows of executed royalists were not the only petitioners to appeal to the Lords for revenge during the first few months of the Restoration. The Upper House also received supplications on behalf of the children of Henry, earl of Holland (20 June), Sir Henry Slingsby (21 June), and James, duke of

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<sup>57</sup> J. Peacey, *Print and Public Politics in the English Revolution* (Cambridge, 2013), p. 276.

<sup>58</sup> S. Porter, S. Roberts and I. Roy (eds), *The Diary and Papers of Henry Townshend, 1640-1663* (Worcestershire Historical Society, vol. 25, 2014), p. 279.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.* Mary was not the only war widow to utilise the medium of print. On 15 June the petition of Arundel Penruddock, wife of John Penruddock, was read in the Commons. As in the case of Mary Hewitt, this supplication preceded the submission of a manuscript petition presented to the Lords. Wing/P1431, *The Humble Petition of Arundell Penruddock, Widdow, Late Wife of John Penruddock, Esquire, Deceased* (London, 1660); *CJ*, vol. 8, p. 64 (15 June, 1660).

Hamilton (29 June), requesting justice for their fathers' deaths.<sup>60</sup> Petitions were also submitted to the Lords by the siblings of Sir Henry Hyde (21 June), a royalist diplomat beheaded in 1650, and the father and brother of the royalist conspirator John Gerard (27 June), who was executed in 1654.<sup>61</sup>

Nor were demands for retribution solely motivated by the death of a loved one. On 26 July the Lords read the petition of Bridget Wright, widow of Robert Wright, former bishop of Lichfield and Coventry, requesting that the parliamentary commander Sir William Brereton be excluded from the Act of Indemnity. The 82-year-old Robert had garrisoned his episcopal residence at Eccleshall in Staffordshire for Charles I at the outset of the war, but died of natural causes in 1643 during an eight-week siege of the castle by Brereton's forces.<sup>62</sup> With the besieged unable to bury his body, Wright's corpse laid uninterred in the castle for five weeks. It was later removed by royalist soldiers as they attempted to evacuate the castle, but was hastily abandoned in the castle grounds when they were pursued by parliamentary troops.<sup>63</sup>

Bridget's indictment against Brereton was motivated not so much by the fate of her husband, as by the events which followed the surrender of the castle. Having managed to escape from the garrison during the same evacuation in which her husband's corpse was abandoned in the castle grounds, Bridget entrusted its defence to a small force consisting of no more than eleven men.<sup>64</sup> The following day, overwhelmed by Brereton's superior numbers, the garrison capitulated, and the besieged were permitted to march out bearing only their arms. When Brereton's forces entered the castle they discovered 40 barrels of beer, as well as money and plate reputedly amounting to £10,000.<sup>65</sup> To Bridget's dismay, much of this was requisitioned for the parliamentary war effort. Bridget – who claimed to have been shot in the shoulder during the siege whilst working

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<sup>60</sup> PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/287 (petition of the children of Henry, late earl of Holland); HL/PO/JO/10/1/287 (petition of Sir Thomas, Henry and Barbara Slingsby); HL/PO/JO/10/1/293 (petition of Anne, duchess of Hamilton and Lady Susanna Hamilton).

<sup>61</sup> PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/287 (Petition of Thomas and James Hyde); HL/PO/JO/10/1/293 (petition of Colonel Ratcliffe Gerard and Sir Gilbert Gerard).

<sup>62</sup> D. Oldridge, 'Wright, Robert (1560-1643)', *ODNB*; R. Sherwood, *The Civil War in the Midlands, 1642-1651* (Stroud, 1992), p. 63; A. Matthews, *Walker Revised: Being a Revision of John Walker's Sufferings of the Clergy during the Grand Rebellion, 1642-1660* (Oxford, 1948), p. 4.

<sup>63</sup> J. Hall (ed.), *Memorials of the Civil War in Cheshire and the Adjacent Counties by Thomas Malbon of Nantwich, Gent., and Providence Improved by Edward Burghall, Vicar of Acton, near Nantwich* (Lancashire and Cheshire Record Society, 19, 1889), pp. 74-75.

<sup>64</sup> J. McKenna (ed.), *A Journal of the English Civil War: The Letter Book of Sir William Brereton, Spring 1646* (Jefferson, 2012), pp. 68-69.

<sup>65</sup> Hall (ed.), *Memorials*, p. 75.



on the castle's defences – alleged that Brereton's repossession of her belongings transgressed the terms of the garrison's surrender, in which he had agreed to return her goods, plate and money. To add insult to injury, Parliament later awarded Eccleshall Castle to Brereton in 1646 for his loyal service during the war.<sup>66</sup> Desperately short of income, Bridget claimed to have spent five years in prison during the 1650s for debt. She requested satisfaction for her goods, and that Brereton be exempted from the Act of Indemnity.<sup>67</sup>

Nor were appeals for retribution confined to those who resided in England. On 15 June Martha Hatt, alias Arundel, petitioned the Lords concerning the loss of her estates in Ireland during the rebellion of 1641.<sup>68</sup> Her husband, Simon Hatt, had served as a cornet in Sir Charles Coote's regiment until July 1643, when he succumbed to wounds sustained whilst fighting the Irish Confederates. Martha's own wartime ordeals, recounted in two printed petitions presented to the House of Commons and the Grand Committee for Grievances in 1659, read like a series of unfortunate events.<sup>69</sup> Parts of it may have been embellished for dramatic effect, but her tribulations further highlight many of the hardships faced by women in Ireland during the 1640s and 1650s.<sup>70</sup> In 1641 Mary's home was attacked, plundered and torched by 140 rebels. Having fled the carnage, Martha and her four children eked out an existence over the next five years by moving between English garrisons at Castlecoote, Roscommon and Athlone, 'during which time she spent much money towards the supply of those garrisons'. In 1646 she returned to the wreckage of her house in order to recover what salvageable goods she could carry, but was later robbed and stripped on the road to Dublin, from where she had hoped to travel to England. Having reached Dublin, Martha sought to bring legal charges against her accoster, only to discover that he had acted under the protection of Sir Theophilus Jones, an English army officer. To compound her misery, Martha then suffered the death of three of her children. Worse was to follow.

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<sup>66</sup> J. Morrill, 'Brereton, Sir William (1604–1661)', *ODNB*.

<sup>67</sup> PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/296 (petition of Bridget Wright).

<sup>68</sup> PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/287 (petition of Martha Hatt).

<sup>69</sup> For what follows see Wing/H1141c, *The Humble Petition, Appeal, Proposals, and Oppressed Cry for Impartial and Speedy Justice, of Martha Hatt alias Arundel, the Relict and Sole Executrix of Cornet Simon Hatt* (London, 1659); Wing/H1141AB, *The Remonstrance and Case of Martha Arundel* (1659).

<sup>70</sup> M. O'Dowd, 'Women and war in Ireland in the 1640s', in M. MacCurtain and M. O'Dowd (eds), *Women in Early Modern Ireland* (Edinburgh, 1991), pp. 91–111.

In 1652 Martha began an eight-month courtship with one George Arundel, a self-proclaimed bachelor from Launceston in Cornwall, who boasted to be worth £100 per year. Martha's vulnerability appears to have made her easy prey for men like Arundel, and upon their marriage in December 1652, he proceeded to waste her goods, mortgage her leases, and 'abused her person'. It also transpired that Arundel had a wife of thirteen years awaiting his return in Launceston. Fearing that she might be accused of adultery, Martha left Arundel soon after discovering the truth of his previous marriage, but, desperately short of money, was forced to pawn her apparel for food. She was also forced to sell the debentures of her first husband, worth £150, at the reduced rate of 18d per pound. Martha claimed that this practice had become common amongst 'many thousands' of poor soldiers, widows and orphans in Ireland, who, she insisted, were forced 'to sell their Arrears, the price of their blood for a Mess of pottage'.<sup>71</sup>

In 1659 Martha requested that Parliament establish an independent committee to consider her case, and to grant her lands worth the value of her deceased husband's arrears. Her request was seemingly denied, however, prompting her to petition the Lords following the Restoration. Whilst much of the lurid detail contained in her 1659 petitions was omitted in her supplication to the Upper House, Martha requested that Sir Theophilus Jones be excluded from the Act of Indemnity, on account that he had deprived her 'of the benefit of the just laws of the land'.<sup>72</sup> A younger brother of the parliamentarian officer Michael Jones, Sir Theophilus had served as a lieutenant-colonel in Lord Conway's regiment during the early 1640s, and was later appointed temporary governor of Dublin when Cromwell besieged Drogheda in 1649. He was dismissed from the army in the summer of 1659, which may explain the timing of Martha's first petition to Parliament around September that year.<sup>73</sup> Sir Theophilus was restored to favour following the Restoration, however, and Martha's pleas for recrimination were quickly rejected by the Lords. In a second petition addressed to the Upper House on 4 July, Martha instead requested relief to cover her expenses of travelling to Ireland, where she hoped to

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<sup>71</sup> Wing/H1141c, *The Humble Petition of Martha Hatt*, p. 4. For a discussion on debentures during the civil wars see I. Gentles, 'The sales of crown lands during the English Revolution', *Economic History Review*, 26 (1973), pp. 614-635.

<sup>72</sup> PA, HL/PO/JO/10/1/287 (petition of Martha Hatt).

<sup>73</sup> A. Clarke, 'Jones, Sir Theophilus (d. 1685)', *ODNB*; *CJ*, vol. 7, p. 779 (15 September, 1659).

continue her lawsuit.<sup>74</sup> She was still pursuing her case as late as 1663, when she petitioned the duke of Ormond, the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, for relief.<sup>75</sup>

#### 4.7 Parliament's response

Following their readings in the Lords, the petitions of Elizabeth Burley, Mary Hewitt, Bridget Wright and Martha Hatt were passed to the Committee for Petitions for consideration. This Committee met in the Painted Chamber at Westminster Palace. By the time that the Convention Parliament was closed in November 1660 a total of 63 men had been appointed to the Committee, though both its average attendance and regular attendees remain uncertain. The Committee consisted of both former royalists and parliamentarians in more-or-less equal measure and, during the early stages of the Convention Parliament at least, appears to have been chaired by the earl of Pembroke.<sup>76</sup> That the royalist marquis of Dorchester reported from the Committee to the Lords on at least three separate occasions regarding the proceedings in the cases of Elizabeth Burley and Mary Hewitt suggests that he too played a leading role in the adjudication of these disputes.<sup>77</sup>

Counsel was assigned to the petitioners, and witnesses for both the prosecution and defence were summoned to give evidence.<sup>78</sup> Little in the way of direct testimony appears to have survived, though an order book and a book of proceedings for the Committee provides some insight into events inside the Painted Chamber during these months.<sup>79</sup> Witnesses raised to speak on behalf of Elizabeth Burley were ordered to appear before the Committee on 15 June 1660. This date was pushed back a number of times over the following days, presumably on account of the high volume of business handled by the Committee during this period, and perhaps to allow the prosecution additional time to raise witnesses. When proceedings began on 3 July, the Committee appeared pressed to examine three points concerning the nature of Burley's uprising and trial. First, whether the rising on the Isle of Wight had been carried out on behalf of the king; second,

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<sup>74</sup> PA, HL/PO/CO/7/1; HL/PO/JO/10/1/294 (petition of Martha Hatt).

<sup>75</sup> Bod. Lib, MS Carte 159, fol. 135.

<sup>76</sup> PA, HL/PO/CO/7/3; Hart, *Justice Upon Petition*, pp. 223-224.

<sup>77</sup> Dorchester reported from the Committee on 7 July, 19 July and 23 July 1660. *LJ*, vol. 11, pp. 84, 97, 103.

<sup>78</sup> A. Swatland, *The House of Lords in the Reign of Charles II* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 82.

<sup>79</sup> PA, HL/PO/CO/7/1; HL/PO/CO/7/3.

whether the jury selected to try Burley had been deliberately packed; and third, whether it had been designed by the judges to have him executed before a commission had been sent down from Parliament in London.<sup>80</sup>

The first of these points proved easy to demonstrate. One witness, Katherine de Luke – who was herself a war widow – claimed to have been present in Charles I's chamber at the time that his entourage was evicted from Carisbrooke Castle on 29 December 1647, and that the king 'wished his friends should be acquainted with it to come to his relieve'.<sup>81</sup> Meanwhile, Robert Green testified to being in Newport on the morning of the uprising, where he was informed that the king had been confined, and that he had 'asked if his friends would not rise for him'.<sup>82</sup> Whilst it was evident that the uprising had been instigated at Charles's request, demonstrating that Burley had been illegally sentenced to death proved more difficult. Although one witness confirmed that Burley had been denied counsel during his trial, and that he had taken issue with the composition of the jury, evidence regarding the arbitrary proceedings of the judges and jurors proved underwhelming. It is perhaps for this reason that on the same day that witnesses were examined, the Committee reported to the Lords that 'what was done [Burley's execution], was done by Commission from both Houses of Parliament, and in such a judicial way as all Justices of Assize and other persons acted in those times'.<sup>83</sup> Witnesses for the defence were summoned to appear before the Committee on 22 July, though no further testimony from the hearing appears to have survived.<sup>84</sup>

The case of Mary Hewitt opened on 14 July. Twenty-six witnesses were summoned before the Committee to provide evidence on behalf of the widow, whilst the men who had sat at her husband's trial were also obliged to attend. Most appear to have followed the Committee's orders, though both John Biscoe and John Stone were noted for their absence. They were granted a further four days to appear before the Committee, or risk facing the displeasure of the Lords. Although no witness testimony has survived from the hearing, an abridged transcript of the case for the prosecution was recorded in the Committee's summary of proceedings.<sup>85</sup> The case was presented by the royalist judge

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<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> PA, HL/PO/CO/7/3; TNA, SP 29/17/54; SP 29/20/20 (petitions of Katherine de Luke).

<sup>82</sup> PA, HL/PO/CO/7/3.

<sup>83</sup> *LJ*, vol. 11, p. 81 (3 July, 1660).

<sup>84</sup> PA, HL/PO/CO/7/3.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

Sir William Morton, who may have been appointed by the Committee to act on behalf of Mary. The prosecution argued that the High Court of Justice that had sentenced Hewitt to death in 1658 had been erected contrary to common law, and that by serving his king, Hewitt was guilty of nothing more than an act of virtue, rather than treason. In legitimating action against Hewitt's condemners, the prosecution further argued that the punishment of arbitrary judges had historic precedent, noting that 44 judges had been sentenced to death during the reign of King Alfred (871-899) for malpractice. The prosecution concluded that 'persons may not be protected by law who would afford no law to others'.<sup>86</sup>

Despite these initially favourable proceedings, any hopes harboured by these widows of securing a favourable verdict were soon quashed. On 27 July Charles II appeared before the Lords in order to demand a speedy resolution to discussions over the Act of Indemnity. He insisted that the Lords set aside all feelings of retribution towards former parliamentarians and commonwealth-men, 'to make them good subjects to me, and good friends and neighbours to you'. 'Therefore', he continued:

I do earnestly desire and conjure you to depart from all particular animosities and revenge, or memory of past provocations, and that you will pass this Act, without other exceptions, than of those who were immediately guilty of that murder of my father.<sup>87</sup>

Heeding his words, on 3 August the Lords ordered that the Committee for Petitions suspend meeting until after the Act of Indemnity had been passed. Three days later, the peers ordered 'That all Provisos whose Matter is of Private Concernment shall be left out of this Bill'.<sup>88</sup> The cases of Elizabeth Burley and Mary Hewitt were subsequently dropped.

The demands of Lady Capel and the countess of Derby, as well as those of the children of the earl of Holland and the duke of Hamilton, were handled somewhat differently. As former peers, the Lords viewed their deaths as an affront to their own status, and were particularly eager to see those responsible punished. Their cases were referred to the Committee for Privileges, who ordered all those who had signed the peers' death warrants to appear before them. Whilst some such as Edmund Waring and George

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<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> W. Cobbett, *The Parliamentary History of England: From the Norman Conquest, in 1066, to the Year 1803* (London, 1808), vol. 4, pp. 88-90.

<sup>88</sup> *LJ*, vol. 11, pp. 118-119 (6 August, 1660); Hart, *Justice Upon Petition*, p. 237.

Langham readily admitted to signing the warrants, others were more restrained. Sir John Thoroughgood pleaded that he had ‘disented from the sentence of death’, whilst Samuel Moyer claimed that he did ‘nothing maliciously nor wilfully but [was] misled by knowing men of law’.<sup>89</sup> After deliberation, the Lords decided to allow the nearest living relative of each of the dead peers who currently sat in the Upper House to select one individual to be exempted from the Act of Indemnity, as retribution for their losses. Arthur Capel, son and namesake of Lord Capel, selected Edmond Waring, whilst the earl of Derby picked Colonel Thomas Croxton.<sup>90</sup> It is significant that despite the petitioning activities of these women, the decision of selecting an individual to be excluded from the act was – publically, at least – denied them in favour of their male relatives. The subsequent bill was blocked by the Commons, however, who on 21 August noted that since they ‘do not insist upon the shedding of blood upon the account of the death of commoners... they hoped their Lordships would not have the sacrifice of the king's blood to be mingled with any other blood’.<sup>91</sup> The Lower House did, however, agree to perpetually bar from office all those who had sat in any of the High Courts of Justice.

Some of the men singled out for retribution by these widows were exempted from the Act of Indemnity when it was ratified by Charles II on 29 August. John Lisle – who was singled out by Mary Hewitt – fled the country soon after the Restoration, having been denied pardon. He was tracked down and assassinated by royalist agents in Switzerland in 1664.<sup>92</sup> Of the other men mentioned in Mary’s petition, Robert Tichborne narrowly avoided execution, but was sentenced to life imprisonment, whilst John Ireton and Christopher Packe were barred for life from holding office. John Barkstead fled to the Continent after he was exempted from the act, but was later captured in the Netherlands and executed in 1662. Another man who fled, John Phelps, managed to avoid capture, and is presumed to have died in Switzerland.<sup>93</sup> Meanwhile, Sir Henry Mildmay, one of the commissioners at the trial of John Burley, was sentenced to life imprisonment, whilst another, John Hildesley, a Hampshire JP, was removed from the county bench after the Restoration.<sup>94</sup> It should be noted, however, that the punishments meted out to

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<sup>89</sup> PA, HL/PO/DC/CP/1, vol. 1.

<sup>90</sup> Schoenfeld, *The Restored House of Lords*, p. 191.

<sup>91</sup> *LJ*, vol. 11, p. 136 (21 August, 1660).

<sup>92</sup> T. Venning, ‘Lisle, John (d. 1664)’, *ODNB*.

<sup>93</sup> For the government’s treatment of these men at the Restoration see their relevant entries on *ODNB*.

<sup>94</sup> J. Peacey, ‘Mildmay, Henry (c.1594–1664/5?)’, *ODNB*; M. Helms and P. Watson, ‘Hildesley, John (c.1598–1681)’, *ODNB*.

Lisle, Mildmay, Titchborne, and Barkstead – as well as the pursuit of Phelps – was because they had served at the trial of Charles I. It is therefore implausible to link their fates after the Restoration with the actions of these widows. Indeed, it is perhaps more telling that John Wilde, who had served as the head judge during the trial of John Burley, was pardoned in 1660, whilst John Glynne, who had conducted the trial of the rebels of Penruddock's Rising, was knighted and made king's serjeant in November that year.<sup>95</sup>

Although these widows were largely unsuccessful in their pursuit of judicial retribution, their families were, on the whole, generously recompensed by the royalist government. In December 1660, Elizabeth Burley was granted a yearly pension of £50.<sup>96</sup> Meanwhile, in 1661, shortly after her death, Elizabeth Capel's son Arthur – who as a child had been paraded before the walls of Colchester – was created earl of Essex, and in doing so took the title of the former parliamentarian commander-in-chief Robert Devereux, who had died in 1646. As Ronald Hutton has asserted, this in itself was a minor act of retribution, for Devereux had been granted parts of the Capel family's estates after they had been confiscated by Parliament during the 1640s.<sup>97</sup> The following year, a royal pension of £100 was awarded to John Hewitt, son and namesake of the executed royalist chaplain, although in 1665 he complained that this had fallen into arrears.<sup>98</sup> Not all were so fortunate, however, for in 1666 the son of Bridget Wright died a debtor in the King's Bench prison.<sup>99</sup>

Tim Harris has argued that the execution of ten of the regicides in October 1660 'did enough to satisfy the nation's thirst for revenge without instigating the type of bloodbath that might have been counterproductive'.<sup>100</sup> Whether it did enough to satisfy the appetites of the women presented in this chapter, however, remains a moot point. Given that Elizabeth Burley had explicitly requested to be compensated from the estates of her husbands' condemners, a token of recompense in the form of a royal pension may have done enough to appease her. On the other hand, the case of Elizabeth, Lady Capel suggests that some royalists carried their feelings of retribution to the grave. Following her death in 1661, a tombstone erected on behalf of herself and her husband in the parish

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<sup>95</sup> R. Zaller, 'Wilde, John (1590–1669)', *ODNB*; Button, 'Royalist women petitioners', p. 57.

<sup>96</sup> *CSPD 1660-1661*, p. 430.

<sup>97</sup> Hutton, 'Capel, Arthur'.

<sup>98</sup> *CSPD 1660-1661*, p. 523; Peacey, 'Hewitt, John'; TNA, SP 29/113/179 (petition of John Hewitt).

<sup>99</sup> Oldridge, 'Wright, Robert'.

<sup>100</sup> Harris, *Restoration*, p. 48.

church of Little Hadham, Hertfordshire, intended to show for posterity that Lord Arthur Capel had been ‘murdered for his loyalty to King Charles the First’ [Image 4.2].<sup>101</sup>



Image 4.2. Tombstone of Lord and Lady Capel, Little Hadham, Hertfordshire. Source: D. Appleby.

#### 4.8 Conclusion

Despite the largely unsuccessful attempts of these women to bring their husbands' condemners to account, their efforts represent a distinctive and important feature of female petitioning activity during the civil wars. To be sure, parliamentary widows had proved equally vindictive during the 1640s. Two years after the death of the

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<sup>101</sup> D. Appleby, 'The Restoration county community: a post-conflict culture', in J. Eales and A. Hopper (eds), *The County Community in Seventeenth-Century England and Wales* (Hatfield, 2012), p. 106.



parliamentarian Sir Henry Foulis in 1643, for instance, his widow Mary petitioned the Yorkshire Committee requesting the revenues from the estates of the royalist Sir Ingram Hopton, who had been awarded the rents from her Ingleby estate during the royalist occupation of Cleveland earlier in the war.<sup>102</sup> Yet assertive attempts to influence the shape of the Act of Indemnity were unique to these royalist widows.

The women presented in this chapter possessed a striving for vengeance that was inextricably linked to their own extraordinary civil-war experiences. For some, the deaths of their husbands had been compounded by the dispossession of their estates, possessions and wealth. In this regard, revenge was motivated by multiple factors. Whereas Charles II was driven by a thirst for regicidal blood to satisfy the memory of his late father, the actions of some of these women seem as much prompted by a desire for recompense as a longing to unleash the executioner's axe. Public acknowledgement of their husbands' sacrifices and recognition of their own wartime ordeals may also have played their part. For the women whose husbands had been publically executed during the 1640s and 1650s, a gesture of recognition from Parliament and the Crown to repair their tarnished family honour and to vindicate the status of their husbands might have been as equal an incentive as simply bringing their spouses' condemners to account.<sup>103</sup> Revenge was likely motivated by reward, for relief, and for restoration, as much as it was for retribution.

The exploits of these women stand in contrast to the hundreds of war widows who petitioned county Quarter Sessions for relief during the mid-seventeenth century. Their actions demonstrate a deliberate attempt to exploit the political uncertainty caused by the restoration of the Stuart monarchy, and serve to challenge Charles Carlton's assertion that during the civil wars, 'when a relative was killed illegitimately, there was little the survivors could do about it'.<sup>104</sup> Their petitions combined standardised rhetorical descriptions of widowhood and female vulnerability with an aggressive condemnation of the legality of the republic's courts, insistence on the innocence of their husbands, and accusations of cold-blooded murder. The high status of these women and the casting of

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<sup>102</sup> A. Hopper, "'To condole with me on the Commonwealth's loss': the widows and orphans of Parliament's military commanders", in D. Appleby and A. Hopper (eds), *Battle-Scarred: Mortality, Medical Care and Military Welfare in the British Civil Wars* (Manchester, forthcoming).

<sup>103</sup> M. Harrington, 'Transitional justice theory and reconciling civil war division in English society, circa 1660-1670', in E. Charters, E. Rosenhaft and H. Smith (eds), *Civilians and War in Europe, 1618-1815* (Liverpool, 2012), p. 78.

<sup>104</sup> C. Carlton, *Going to the Wars: The Experiences of the British Civil Wars, 1638-1651* (London, 1992), p. 341.

their husbands as royalist martyrs undoubtedly served to enhance their petitioning authority, encouraging them to be bold and forthright in their demands for revenge. Moreover, by drawing from the rhetoric of the royalist martyr cult, these women sought to enhance their demands for vengeance by evoking imagery of royalist loyalty and sacrifice. That most of their demands were ultimately overlooked by the Restoration regime should not detract from their attempts, but further suggests that for the sake of political stability during the summer of 1660, public indemnity and pardoning were more beneficial to Charles II than outright retribution.<sup>105</sup>

Although the passing of the Act of Indemnity in August 1660 curbed demands for retrospective justice, it did not extinguish them altogether. In March 1662 Elizabeth Hudson petitioned Charles II for a lease of land which had formerly belonged to one Major Francis Underwood, a parliamentarian captain who she alleged had ‘butchered’ her husband, Dr Michael Hudson, to death at Woodcroft House in 1648.<sup>106</sup> That same month, Elizabeth submitted a second petition to the king requesting a grant of £500 from Henry Feild, a former chaplain in the earl of Manchester’s regiment, after he had been fined for seditious preaching by the King’s Bench. Elizabeth maintained that Feild had turned her out of doors during the 1640s, and had ‘hyred men and was himselfe at the murdering’ of her husband.<sup>107</sup> Despite transgressing the Act of Indemnity, Elizabeth was awarded a royal pension of £50, though a year later she complained that it had fallen into arrears.<sup>108</sup> Similarly, when the widow of Colonel Hercules Holyland petitioned Charles II for relief in 1663, she claimed that her property in London had been plundered during the early 1640s by Colonel Edmund Harvey and Henry Marten, two ‘notorious traytors’, to the value of £2,000.<sup>109</sup> Both men had been excluded from the Act of Indemnity for their roles in the trial and execution of Charles I, and were handed lengthy prison sentences in 1660 for their perceived crimes.<sup>110</sup>

Nor did the exploits of these female war victims prove to be the last time during the seventeenth century that widows sought to exploit a shift in political power in order

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<sup>105</sup> Hart, *Justice Upon Petition*, p. 238.

<sup>106</sup> TNA, SP 29/52/55 (petition of Elizabeth Hudson).

<sup>107</sup> A. Laurence, *Parliamentary Army Chaplains, 1642-1651* (Woodbridge, 1990), p. 125; TNA, SP 29/52/57 (petition of Elizabeth Hudson).

<sup>108</sup> TNA, SP 29/89/37 (petition of Elizabeth Hudson).

<sup>109</sup> TNA, SP 29/89/36 (petition of Mary Holyland).

<sup>110</sup> I. Roots and S. Wynne, ‘Harvey, Edmund (c.1601-1673)’, *ODNB*; S. Barber, ‘Marten, Henry (1601/2-1680)’, *ODNB*.

to petition for judicial retribution. When William of Orange landed at Torbay in November 1688 he was allegedly greeted by more than fifty women whose husbands had been sentenced to death by George Jeffreys in the wake of Monmouth's rebellion three years previous, demanding retribution against the judge.<sup>111</sup> The following year, a printed petition addressed to Parliament on behalf of 'a Thousand and more' widows and orphans from the counties of Dorset, Somerset and Devon complained against the draconian punishments meted out by Jeffreys. The petition requested that the judge 'may be brought down to the Counties aforesaid, where we the good Women in the West shall be glad to see him; and give him another manner of wellcome than he had there three years since'.<sup>112</sup> Although the petition was likely a mocking piece of propaganda aimed at discrediting Jeffreys rather than a genuine attempt to bring him to account, it nevertheless underlines how the change of political regime could foster opportunities for retrospective justice and the settling of scores. In 1688 as in 1660, widows were quick to exploit such opportunities.

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<sup>111</sup> L. Schwoerer, 'Women and the Glorious Revolution', *Albion*, 18 (1986), pp. 200-201.

<sup>112</sup> Wing/H3585A, *The Humble Petition of the Widdows and Fatherless Children in the West of England, Presented to this Present Convention* (1689).

## Chapter 5. Letters of condolence

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter examines letters of condolence sent to war widows during the civil wars. In doing so, it seeks to assess the various ways in which contemporaries sought to console female war victims following the deaths of their relatives. During the seventeenth century, wifely duties often continued even after the death of a spouse. Widows were expected to wash and prepare their husbands' corpses for burial, or, if they were wealthy, to oversee their household staff undertake these tasks. If they had been appointed their husband's executrix, widows were also expected to ensure that their spouses' instructions regarding their funerals were observed.<sup>1</sup> Custom dictated that widows who remained unmarried stay in a state of mourning for at least one year after their husbands' deaths. During this period they might wear mourning apparel of black or brown cloth, or else a token of remembrance such as a ring.<sup>2</sup> If they could afford it, widows might also sit for a portrait in their mourning apparel. A portrait of Lady Brooke painted shortly after the death of her husband at Lichfield in 1643 shows her in a black gown and veil, and holding a posy of flowers to represent honour, triumph and remembrance.<sup>3</sup> Such portraiture served to commemorate the deceased, although, as Allison Levy points out, they were often commissioned by male relatives rather than widows themselves.<sup>4</sup>

Letters of condolence formed an important part of the mourning process. Their purpose was to honour the memory of the dead, and to help ease the sorrow of the bereaved. That contemporaries found comfort in such letters during this period is apparent by their own words. After receiving a letter from her son Basil after her husband was mortally wounded at Birmingham in April 1643, Lady Denbigh replied that she had been 'much comforted with the receveing of your kind letter in this tyme of my great

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<sup>1</sup> J. Helt, 'Memento mori: death, widowhood and remembering in early modern England', in A. Levy (ed.), *Widowhood and Visual Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot, 2003), pp. 48-49.

<sup>2</sup> R. Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family in England, 1480-1750* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 248, 249, 252.

<sup>3</sup> A. Hopper, "'To condole with me on the Commonwealth's loss': the widows and orphans of Parliament's military commanders", in D. Appleby and A. Hopper (eds), *Battle-Scarred: Mortality, Medical Care and Military Welfare in the British Civil Wars* (Manchester, forthcoming).

<sup>4</sup> A. Levy, 'Good grief: widow portraiture and masculine anxiety in early modern England', in L. Amtower and D. Kehler (eds), *The Single Woman in Medieval and Early Modern England: Her Life and Representation* (Tempe, 2003), pp. 147-164.

sorrow'.<sup>5</sup> This was despite the fact that Basil, a parliamentary officer, was serving in the opposing army to that of his late father. Similarly, when the royalist Sir Christopher Hatton wrote to James Compton, third earl of Northampton, following the death of his father at Hopton Heath in March 1643, Compton replied that the letter was 'one of the greatest comforts which I have received since that unfortunate accident'.<sup>6</sup>

Contemporaries wishing to compose letters of condolence during the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries could turn to letter-writing manuals such as Angel Day's *The English Secretarie* for guidance. First printed in 1586, the manual proved incredibly popular, and was still in print as late as the 1630s. An earlier example, William Fulwood's *The Enemy of Idleness* (1568), had appeared in ten editions by 1621.<sup>7</sup> Drawing on the work of humanist scholars such as Erasmus, these manuals provided readers with a set of conventions for drawing up letters. For Fulwood, the exemplary letter of condolence consisted of three parts: first, the letter writer expressed their sorrow; second, they sought to comfort the recipient; and third, they offered 'to do all things possible' to assist them in the future.<sup>8</sup> Letter-writing manuals often included examples of letters for readers to imitate, and Day's *The English Secretary* even included a mock letter specifically directed at condoling war widows, entitled 'wherein a gentlewoman is comforted of the death of her husband slain in the warres'. The author of this mock letter comforted the 'recipient' for the loss of her spouse, encouraged her to moderate her grief, and insisted that since her husband had died 'in his prince's service, his death was thereby the more honourable'.<sup>9</sup>

James Daybell has argued that letters of condolence written during this period often adhered to the conventions prescribed in letter-writing manuals, and that failure to do so may have been perceived by the recipients of such letters as a 'social affront'.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, Ralph Houlbrooke has noted that seventeenth-century condolence letters were 'of a fairly conventional kind'.<sup>11</sup> Whilst insightful, both Daybell and Houlbrooke were primarily concerned with correspondence regarding non-war related deaths. In contrast,

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<sup>5</sup> *Denbigh MS*, HMC, Fourth Report, Part 1, Report and Appendix (London, 1874), p. 260.

<sup>6</sup> BL, Add. MS 29570, f. 3.

<sup>7</sup> J. Daybell, *The Material Letter in Early Modern England: Manuscript Letters and the Culture and Practices of Letter-Writing, 1512-1635* (Basingstoke, 2012), p. 65.

<sup>8</sup> STC/11483, W. Fulwood, *The Enemy of Idleness* (London, 1621), p. 64.

<sup>9</sup> STC/6404, A. Day, *The English Secretary, Or Method of Writing of Epistles and Letters* (London, 1599), p. 122.

<sup>10</sup> Daybell, *The Material Letter*, p. 69.

<sup>11</sup> Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, p. 246.

this chapter examines letters sent to five gentle- and aristocratic women whose husbands were slain during the 1640s. As we shall see, the letters discussed below often followed the conventions set out in letter-writing manuals such as *The English Secretary* and *The Enemy of Idleness*. Yet they also differed in some respects, revealing contemporary concerns over the nature of soldiers' deaths, burial, and treatment of the dead. After considering each of these issues in turn, this chapter also assesses how letters of condolence addressed to widows differed from those sent to male relatives of slain soldiers.

## 5.2 The 'good' death

Both Lucinda McCray Beier and Ralph Houlbrooke have drawn attention to the importance contemporaries placed on dying a 'good' death during the seventeenth century. In order to make an exemplary end, the dying were expected to complete a number of religious and secular duties. This included being spiritually prepared to meet God, inspiring piety in those gathered around their deathbed through prayer and religious devotion, and, if relevant, ensuring that their spouse and children were provided for. The ideal 'good' death therefore took place at home, in the presence of relatives and friends, and was prolonged long enough for the dying to put their 'spiritual and temporal house in order'.<sup>12</sup> Its purpose was to ensure that the deceased reached heaven, and helped to comfort both the dying and their kin during the final moments of an individual's life. Soldiers dying in the heat of battle were not expected to meet these requirements, and some social commentators argued that death in combat constituted a 'good' death, provided that the deceased had lived piously during their lifetime.<sup>13</sup> As Drew Gilpin Faust has demonstrated with regards to the American Civil War, however, military conflict often posed a threat to traditional perceptions of the 'good' death, especially since so many men were forced to die far from the comfort of their families.<sup>14</sup> Similar anxieties were likely felt by numerous widows during the British civil wars. Reflecting on her

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<sup>12</sup> L. McCray Beier, 'The good death in seventeenth-century England', in R. Houlbrooke (ed.), *Death, Ritual and Bereavement* (London, 1989), pp. 43-61; Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, chapter 7.

<sup>13</sup> STC/13474, R. Hill, *The Pathway to Prayer and Pietie* (London, 1613), pp. 190-191.

<sup>14</sup> D. Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York, 2008), p. 10.

husband's death at Marston Moor in 1644, Margaret Eure lamented that 'it was my misfortune to be from him at his death'.<sup>15</sup>

In times of war, letters of condolence sent from the battlefield to a soldier's family therefore carried particular significance, conveying not only the letter-writer's sympathies, but, more importantly, assurances that the recipient's husband, brother, father or son had died well. As Gilpin Faust notes, such news often constituted 'the ultimate solace' for grieving families.<sup>16</sup> During the British civil wars, letter-writers sought to condole the families of slain soldiers by insisting that their relatives had attained a 'good' death. This was usually achieved by extolling the soldier's courageous and honourable actions on the battlefield, or else their piety before death. Despite her absence from her husband's deathbed, Margaret Eure took comfort from the thought 'that he had time to prepare himself for a better world, which I am confident he will enjoy'.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, when Henry Spencer, first earl of Sunderland, was slain fighting for the king at Newbury in September 1643, his father-in-law, Robert Sidney, second earl of Leicester, wrote to his widowed daughter Dorothy to condole her. He described:

how honourably and how piously her lord [Sunderland] had left this world, having often charged the enemy before that fatall shott befell him, and then with how pious ejaculations he resigned his soule into the hands of God.<sup>18</sup>

Sunderland's demise epitomised the ideal 'good' death; his bravery in battle eclipsed only by his stoicism and religious devotion prior to his death.

In alluding to Sunderland's final utterances, Leicester's letter also illustrates the significance contemporaries placed on last words. According to Beier, dying words were the most important component of the 'good' death ritual, performing 'the dual functions of educating and comforting survivors and establishing the heroism of the dying individual'.<sup>19</sup> They also served to construct a 'persisting tie between the living and the dead'.<sup>20</sup> When Oliver Cromwell wrote to his brother-in-law Colonel Valentine Walton following the death of his son at Marston Moor, he recounted his final conversation with the dying soldier: 'he said, One thing lay upon his spirit. I asked him, What that was? He

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<sup>15</sup> F. Verney (ed.), *Memoirs of the Verney Family during the Civil War* (London, 1892), vol. 1, p. 293.

<sup>16</sup> Gilpin Faust, *Death and the American Civil War*, p. 14.

<sup>17</sup> Verney (ed.), *Memoirs*, vol. 1, p. 293.

<sup>18</sup> HMC, *Reports on the Manuscripts of Lord De L'Isle and Dudley* (London, 1966), vol. 6, p. 435.

<sup>19</sup> Beier, 'The good death', p. 51.

<sup>20</sup> Gilpin Faust, *Death and the American Civil War*, p. 11.

told me it was That God had not suffered him to be any more the executioner of His enemies'.<sup>21</sup> Such was the importance contemporaries attached to last words, the reputed final utterances of prominent soldiers were reported by propagandists during the civil wars in order to inspire further commitment to a particular cause. According to the parliamentary newsbook *The Kingdomes Weekly Intelligencer*, when Sir William Fairfax lay mortally wounded at Montgomery Castle in 1644, he informed those gathered around his deathbed that 'he thought his life well bestowed in the service of the Parliament'.<sup>22</sup>

Other correspondents similarly sought to condole widows by extolling their husbands' courageous actions on the battlefield. Writing to Lady Grenville following the death of her spouse, Sir Bevil, at Lansdowne in July 1643, the royalist Sir John Trelawny noted that her husband had 'died an Honorable Death, which all Enemies will Envy, fighting with Invincible Valour, & Loyalty, the Battle of his God, his King & Country'. Sir John hoped that news of Sir Bevil's heroic death might 'appease' Lady Grenville's 'greate fluxe of Teares'.<sup>23</sup> In a further example, in a letter reputed to be written by James Compton to his mother Mary following the death of his father, the earl of Northampton, at Hopton Heath in 1643, he insisted that 'it was impossible for any to do braver then he did'. 'Pray'e madam' he continued:

be comforted, and think no man could more honourably have ended this life (fighting for his religion, his King, and his Country) to be partaker of heavenly joies. We must certainly follow him, but can hardly hope for so brave a death.<sup>24</sup>

Compton's letter is unique to the others considered in this chapter in that it was printed. Intended for a public rather than a private audience, the correspondence was a piece of royalist propaganda which sought to inspire readers with details of Northampton's heroic final stand, and to incite horror at the manner of his death. Published in a royalist pamphlet detailing events at Hopton Heath, the letter noted that the earl had been 'unhorsed by the multitude' during the battle, but resolutely continued fighting on foot

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<sup>21</sup> T. Carlyle (ed.), *Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches* (Leipzig, 1861), vol. 1, pp. 188-189. For further examples of soldiers' dying words see C. Carlton, *Going to the Wars: The Experiences of the British Civil Wars, 1638-1651* (London, 1992), pp. 217-218.

<sup>22</sup> BL, TT E.10[7], *The Kingdomes Weekly Intelligencer*, no. 73, 17-24 September (London, 1644), p. 588.

<sup>23</sup> D. Kemeys Tynte (ed.), *Some Original Letters of Sir Bevill Grenvile* (Exeter, 1893), p. 15.

<sup>24</sup> BL, TT E.99[18], *The Battaile on Hopton-Heath in Staffordshire, Between His Majesties Forces under the Right Honourable the Earle of Northampton... Together with a Letter from the Lord Compton now Earle of Northampton* (1643), pp. 6-7.



until he was slain.<sup>25</sup> Clarendon later wrote that Northampton had been offered quarter by his attackers, but refused ‘to take quarter from such base rogues and rebels’, and was subsequently killed by a blow to the head with a halberd.<sup>26</sup> The insinuation that a nobleman had been killed by a ‘multitude’ of social inferiors was evidently intended to shock readers, and played on elite contemporary anxieties of the unruly mob.<sup>27</sup> Perhaps to counteract these claims, the description of Northampton’s honourable death was later challenged by parliamentary polemicists, who offered a contrasting account of the earl’s demise. One newsbook claimed that Northampton had died ‘cursing and swearing’, whilst another reported that he had ‘died like a beast, Knockt on the head drunke, with a Crucifixe in his pocket, and another about his necke, and with Damne me in his mouth’.<sup>28</sup> Such reports tapped into a wider parliamentary propaganda campaign, in which polemicists sought to vilify their royalist opponents as drunkards and papists.<sup>29</sup> In this regard, the contest in print over the manner of Northampton’s demise demonstrates the importance not simply of dying a ‘good’ death, but, crucially, having it *reported* as such.

### 5.3 Burial

The contest over the manner of Northampton’s death may have been fuelled by a more serious dispute concerning the treatment of the earl’s corpse. In one of the most infamous episodes of the First Civil War, the parliamentary commander Sir John Gell refused to return Northampton’s body to the royalists after the battle at Hopton Heath, nor to allow royalist surgeons into his camp to embalm it. The episode provoked outrage amongst some contemporaries, and in his letter to his mother James Compton lambasted Gell for transgressing the articles of war.<sup>30</sup> Although we do not know how Lady Northampton reacted to these events, letters elsewhere illustrate the anxieties some widows felt

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>26</sup> E. Hyde, *The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England*, ed. W. Dunn Macray (Oxford, 1992), vol. 2, p. 476.

<sup>27</sup> C. Hill, ‘The many-headed monster in late Tudor and early Stuart political thinking’, in C. Carter (ed.), *From the Renaissance to the Counter-Reformation: Essays in Honour of Garrett Mattingly* (London, 1965), pp. 296-324.

<sup>28</sup> BL, TT E.79[14], *An Answer to Mercurius Aulicus*, no. 49, 3-9 December (1643), p. 7; BL, TT E.79[5], *The Scottish Dove*, no. 10, 15-22 December (London, 1643), p. 78.

<sup>29</sup> I. Roy, ‘Royalist reputations: the cavalier ideal and the reality’, in J. McElligott and D. Smith (eds), *Royalists and Royalism during the English Civil Wars* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 106.

<sup>30</sup> BL, TT E.99[18], *The Battaile on Hopton-Heath*, p. 6; B. Donagan, ‘The casualties of war: treatment of the dead and wounded in the English Civil War’, in I. Gentles, J. Morrill and B. Worden (eds), *Soldiers, Writers and Statesmen of the English Revolution* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 131-132.

regarding the treatment of their husbands' corpses. Four days after the earl of Sunderland was slain at Newbury, his widow Dorothy arranged for a servant to travel from her parents' home at Penshurst, Kent to retrieve his body for burial at the family's estate. She also implored her father, who had been present at Newbury, to safeguard her husband's private papers. These likely contained important information regarding issues such as her children's inheritance, though Dorothy may also have sought them as a source of comfort during her bereavement.<sup>31</sup>

In a further example, after Sir William Campion was reported slain at Colchester in 1648, his widow Grace reputedly sent a servant to the town to acquire confirmation of the news.<sup>32</sup> Sir William had been buried at St Peter's Church, Colchester on 15 June, and reports of his death began circulating in print two days later.<sup>33</sup> A fortnight after his death, the royalist Colonel John Heath wrote to Grace with news of her husband's burial:

Hee was buried with as much decencie & honour as the place & suddainesse could afford to a Gentleman & sould[ou]r of his qualitie & meritt and with as much gen[er]all sorrow of all there as if every one had bin his p[ar]ticular friend.<sup>34</sup>

Although Heath provided few details regarding Campion's funeral, contemporary accounts reported that it was attended by the royalist commanders Lord Goring and Lord Capel, along with 'divers others of quality'.<sup>35</sup> Claire Gittings has convincingly argued that burial was an important marker of social standing in early modern England, reflecting the status both of the deceased and their living family.<sup>36</sup> In condoling Grace in this manner, Heath not only sought to allay any fears that her husband's corpse had been mistreated, but to assure her that he had received a burial befitting his social status.

Elsewhere, at least one royalist widow expressed concerns regarding the preservation of her husband's tomb. When James Young died of plague at Oxford sometime during the First Civil War, he was hastily buried within the city in All Hallows church. In a letter to the rector of the church in September 1649, his widow Mary

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<sup>31</sup> *Manuscripts of Lords De L'Isle and Dudley*, vol. 6, p. 436. In a similar example, Sir John Meldrum sent the widow of Sir William Fairfax her husband's bracelet and ring after he was mortally wounded at Montgomery Castle in 1644. C. Markham, *Life of Robert Fairfax of Steeton: Vice Admiral, Alderman and Member for York, A.D. 1666-1725* (London, 1885), p. 23.

<sup>32</sup> Wing/D1378A, *A Diary of the Siege of Colchester* (1648).

<sup>33</sup> See BL, TT E.448[11], *The Particulars of the Fight at Colchester* (London, 1648); BL, TT E.448[7] *The Severall Fights Neere Colchester in Essex* (London, 1648).

<sup>34</sup> Worcester College, Oxford, MS Clarke 114, f. 53r.

<sup>35</sup> BL, TT E.448[11], *Fight at Colchester*, p. 7; BL, TT E.448[7] *Severall Fights Neere Colchester*, p. 5.

<sup>36</sup> C. Gittings, *Death, Burial and the Individual in Early Modern England* (London, 1984), p. 89. See also A. Brady, *English Funeral Elegy in the Seventeenth Century* (Basingstoke, 2006), p. 71.

confessed that her inability to retrieve her husband's corpse 'did very much add to my affliction'. She offered to pay the parish £5 annually for the relief of the poor, provided that 5s be given to the parish clerk to preserve James's grave 'from all violation'. She also insisted that a commemorative sermon be held each year for her husband on St James's Day, although this request was denied. In a second letter, Mary offered to increase her benefaction to £10 per annum, 'on the condition my husbands grave hath not or shall not bee disturb'.<sup>37</sup> Mary's anxiety regarding the violation of her husband's tomb may have been fuelled by reports of similar acts of destruction committed by parliamentary soldiers during the civil wars. Reported – and undoubtedly exaggerated – by the royalist press, parliamentary soldiers are alleged to have demolished tombs at Canterbury, Exeter, Winchester and Chichester, where, according to the royalist polemicist Bruno Ryves, in December 1642 Sir William Waller's troops 'ran up and downe the Church, with their swords drawne, defacing the monuments of the dead'.<sup>38</sup> Meanwhile, in 1648 parliamentary troops at Colchester are alleged to have desecrated the tombs of members of the royalist Lucas family.<sup>39</sup> Such reports of soldiers violating sacred space was clearly intended to shock readers, and it is doubtful that Mary was the only royalist widow to harbour concerns regarding the preservation of her husband's tomb during the 1640s and Interregnum. In a similar example, Thomas Gourney refused to inter his wife Bridget in Norwich cathedral during the 1650s, on account that he feared her tomb might be desecrated by 'the violations of fanatics'.<sup>40</sup>

## 5.4 Grief and providence

During the seventeenth century excessive grief was widely considered to demonstrate a lack of control, which in extreme circumstances had the potential to impair physical health. Humoral theory asserted that women's bodies were wetter and colder than men's, and as a result women were regarded to be more susceptible to outpourings of emotion.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> OHC, PAR 189/10/2D/38-39.

<sup>38</sup> Wing/R2447, B. Ryves, *Angliae Ruina, Or, England's Ruine* (1647), pp. 206, 223-225, 229-230. See also P. Lindley, *Tomb Destruction and Scholarship: Medieval Monuments in Early Modern England* (Donington, 2007), pp. 115-117; J. Spraggon, *Puritan Iconoclasm during the English Civil War* (Woodbridge, 2003), p. 207.

<sup>39</sup> B. Donagan, *War in England, 1642-1649* (Oxford, 2008), p. 344.

<sup>40</sup> J. Finch, 'The monuments', in I. Atherton, E. Fernie, C. Harper-Bill and H. Smith (eds), *Norwich Cathedral: Church, City and Diocese, 1096-1996* (London, 1996), p. 477.

<sup>41</sup> D. Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death: Ritual, Religion and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford, 1997), p. 393; O. Weissner, *Ill Composed: Sickness, Gender, and Relief in Early Modern England*

This may explain why some letter-writers proved reluctant to disclose graphic information to widows regarding their husbands' deaths. In his letter to Grace Campion, John Heath refused to divulge details of her spouse's demise, 'being nott soe cruell... unlesse you desire itt'. Considering how 'ungentle a worke itt is to breake in uppon such delicate temp[or]s as yo[ur]s with rough & horrid relations', Heath instead entrusted the letter-bearer to inform Grace of the manner of her husband's death.<sup>42</sup> Heath's efforts to shield Grace from the miseries of war stand in stark contrast to the matter-of-fact tone adopted by Cromwell in his letter to Colonel Walton, which dryly stated that his son had been hit 'by a cannon-shot. It brake his leg. We were necessitated to have it cut off, whereof he died'.<sup>43</sup>

Excessive grief was also considered to be offensive to God. In his treatise *The Pathway to Prayer and Pietie* (1613), the clergyman Robert Hill impressed upon his readers the importance of tempering their sorrow following the loss of a loved one. Hill stressed that it was wrong to mourn those 'who by the calling of God' had been 'freed' from the world, and insisted that death did not mark a permanent segregation between the living and the dead, but a temporary separation until the two were reunited in Heaven.<sup>44</sup> Similar themes were echoed in letters of condolence sent to widows during the civil wars, as male correspondents encouraged women to moderate their grief. Although the earl of Leicester conceded to his daughter Dorothy that she may never 'be so happy in this life again', he asserted that her spouse had been 'raised to a degree of happiness far beyond any that he did or could enjoy on earth'.<sup>45</sup> In his letter to Lady Grenville, meanwhile, Sir John Trelawny noted that her husband 'is gone his Journey but a little before us, we must march after when it shall please God'.<sup>46</sup> The fact that moderation and restraint had become increasingly important facets of gentry honour during the first half of the seventeenth century may also explain why letter-writers encouraged widows to demonstrate these characteristics during their bereavement.<sup>47</sup>

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(New Haven, 2015), pp. 20, 81-82, 95-96; S. Pender, 'Rhetoric, grief, and the imagination in early modern England', *Philosophy & Rhetoric*, 43 (2010), p. 54.

<sup>42</sup> Worcester College, Oxford, MS Clarke 114, f. 53r.

<sup>43</sup> Carlyle (ed.), *Cromwell's Letters and Speeches*, vol. 1, p. 188.

<sup>44</sup> STC/13474, Hill, *The Pathway to Prayer*, pp. 190-191.

<sup>45</sup> A. Collins, *Letters and Memorials of State in the Reigns of Queen Mary, Queen Elizabeth, King James, King Charles the First, Part of the Reign of King Charles the Second, and Oliver's Usurpation* (London, 1746), vol. 2, p. 672.

<sup>46</sup> Kemeys Tynte (ed.), *Original Letters*, pp. 15-16.

<sup>47</sup> R. Cust, 'Honour and politics in early Stuart England: the case of Beaumont v. Hastings', *Past & Present*, 149 (1995), pp. 79-80.

Trelawny's remarks regarding Sir Bevil's 'journey' illustrate the importance contemporaries placed on providence during the seventeenth century. Alexandra Walsham has demonstrated that providential language was utilised by individuals across the social and confessional spectrum during this period, often in response to chaos and crisis.<sup>48</sup> It is perhaps to be expected, therefore, that some correspondents sought to console widows by insinuating that their husbands' deaths were part of a God-given plan. Writing to his sister Cary after her husband was slain in a skirmish near Oxford in 1645, Ralph Verney instructed her that 'at God's decree we must not repine'.<sup>49</sup> In his letter to Lady Grenville, meanwhile, Trelawny further noted that 'your La[dyshe]pp knowes that none fall without His Providence, w[hi]ch is as greate in the thickest showre of Bullets; as in the bedd'. He further pressed upon Lady Grenville the importance of maintaining her faith in God during her bereavement:

[He] hath a staff of Consolation for to comfort you in this greate Affliction, & Tryall. Hee will wipe y[ou]r Eies, drie up the flowing springe of y[ou]r Teares, & make y[ou]r Bedd easye, And by y[ou]r Patience overcome Gods Justice, by his retourning Mercie.<sup>50</sup>

Here, Trelawny was echoing seventeenth-century prescriptive texts such as William Page's unpublished tract 'The Widdowe Indeed' (c.1620), which presented widowhood as a trial that women must endure in order to achieve true religious salvation.<sup>51</sup>

One woman who dedicated her widowhood to achieving religious salvation was Lettice Cary, Viscountess Falkland. Her husband, Lucius Cary, second Viscount Falkland, was slain at Newbury in September 1643. According to a contemporary biography written by her chaplain John Duncon shortly after her death, Lettice interpreted her husband's demise as 'a loud call from heaven, to a further proficiency in piety and virtue'.<sup>52</sup> In the short space of time between her husband's death and her own in 1647, Lettice built a school at her home in Oxfordshire where poor young children were 'taught both to read, and to work', and anonymously donated money to the poor, including imprisoned parliamentarian soldiers. When questioned how her generosity towards her

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<sup>48</sup> A. Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 2-3.

<sup>49</sup> F. Verney and M. Verney, *Memoirs of the Verney Family during the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1907), vol. 1, p. 249.

<sup>50</sup> Kemeys Tynte (ed.), *Original Letters*, pp. 15-16.

<sup>51</sup> B. Todd, 'The virtuous widow in Protestant England', in S. Cavallo and L. Warner (eds), *Widowhood in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Harlow, 1999), p. 71.

<sup>52</sup> Wing/D2604, J. Duncon, *The Holy Life and Death of the Lady Letice, Vi-Countess Falkland* (London, 1653), p. 9.

husband's opponents might be perceived by royalists, Lettice reputedly responded 'I had rather be so misunderstood, (if this my secret almes should be known) then that any of mine enemies (the worst of them) should perish for want of it'.<sup>53</sup> By emphasising her generosity to the poor, Duncon sought to posthumously fashion Lettice as a godly and charitable widow, whose benevolent actions, especially towards parliamentary soldiers, were perhaps intended to present her favourably to both a royalist and parliamentary audience.<sup>54</sup> This might have been a ploy to ingratiate Lettice's surviving heirs with the Interregnum regime.

Another way in which correspondents sought to condole widows was by stressing that their grief for their husbands was shared by a wider public beyond that of their family and friends. Thus James Compton informed his widowed mother that her husband's death was 'a generall losse to the Kingdome', whilst a letter sent to Lady Brooke from the puritan clergyman Thomas Spencer following her husband's death at Lichfield in 1643 noted that his demise was the 'great Griefe of all good hearts'.<sup>55</sup> In a more striking example, John Heath implored Grace Champion that 'since soe many had a share' in her husband's death, that she 'ingrosse not all the sorrow' to herself. 'Consider', Heath continued, that 'hee fell with hono[ur] & publique losse & for the publique'.<sup>56</sup> In doing so, correspondents sought to comfort widows by insinuating that their husbands were honourable and revered men, whose deaths were widely mourned. Here, parallels might be drawn with printed elegies, which commemorated the deaths of slain worthies during the civil wars. In an elegy honouring Lord Brooke, for instance, the author John Wallis noted 'Tis not a Lady mourns, not I, alone / I am but Speaker of a Kingdoms mone [sic]'.<sup>57</sup>

In many ways, letters of condolence sent to war widows differed little from those addressed to male relatives of slain soldiers. When Cromwell wrote to his brother-in-law Colonel Walton following the death of his son, he extolled the young man's courage on

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 11, 13-14; E. Allen, 'Cary [*née* Morison], Lettice, Viscountess Falkland (c.1612-1647)', *ODNB*.

<sup>54</sup> Duncon had discussed Lady Falkland's benevolence and piety in an earlier publication. Wing/2606, J. Duncon, *The Returns of Spiritual Comfort and Grief* (London, 1649).

<sup>55</sup> BL, TT E.99[18], *The Battaile on Hopton-Heath*, p. 6; P. Styles (ed.), 'The genealogie, life and death of the right honourable Robert Lorde Brooke', in R. Bearman (ed.), *Miscellany I* (Dugdale Society, 31, 1977), p. 164.

<sup>56</sup> Worcester College, Oxford, MS Clarke 114, f. 53r.

<sup>57</sup> BL, TT E.93[22], J. Wallis, *On the Sad Losse of the Truly Honourable Robert Lord Brooke* (1643). For a discussion on seventeenth-century elegies see P. Sherlock, 'Grief and glory: the commemoration of war in seventeenth-century England', in S. Downes, A. Lynch and K. O'Loughlin (eds), *Emotions and War: Medieval to Romantic Literature* (Basingstoke, 2015), pp. 169-184.

the battlefield, insisted that God had taken him ‘into the happiness we all pant for’, and that his demise was mourned by all that knew him.<sup>58</sup> As we have seen, these themes were similarly drawn upon in correspondence to women. However, the earl of Leicester’s letter to his widowed daughter Dorothy stressing her motherly responsibilities suggests that gender did play a role in the composition of these letters. This is significant, since we have already seen that war widows were more likely than maimed soldiers to stress their parental duties in their petitions for relief.<sup>59</sup> In his letter, Leicester implored Dorothy to channel her sorrow into caring for her four children. The best way of honouring her husband’s memory, he insisted, was by:

taking care of those whom he loved, that is, of yourself and of those pledges of your mutual friendship and affection which he hath left with you, and which, though you would abandon yourself, may justly challenge you the performance of their father’s trust reposed in you, to be careful of them.<sup>60</sup>

‘For their sake’, Leicester continued, with particular reference to Dorothy’s youngest child, who had been born just two weeks after her husband’s death, ‘assuage your griefe; they all have need of you, and one especially, whose life as yet doth absolutely depend on yours’.<sup>61</sup> In attempting to safeguard her husband’s posterity, Dorothy may have drawn inspiration from the example set by the royalist Lady Capel. At a sermon preached at her funeral in 1661, her chaplain Edmund Barker commended Lady Capel for being an obedient wife and a virtuous widow, who had dedicated her widowhood to ensuring that her children – ‘those dear remains and pledges’ of the couple’s ‘conjugal love’ – were well educated and wedded to suitors that befitted the family’s social standing.<sup>62</sup>

## 5.5 Conclusion

Letters of condolence written to widows offer a poignant insight into the grief caused by the death of a loved one during the civil wars, and demonstrate a number of ways in which contemporaries sought to comfort women during their bereavement. This commonly

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<sup>58</sup> Carlyle (ed.), *Cromwell’s Letters and Speeches*, vol. 1, pp. 187-189.

<sup>59</sup> See above, p. 94.

<sup>60</sup> Collins, *Letters and Memorials of State*, vol. 2, p. 672.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 672.

<sup>62</sup> BL, TT E.1046[14], E. Barker, *A Sermon Preached at the Funerall of the Right Honourable and most Excellent Lady, The Lady Capell Dowager* (London, 1661), pp. 30-31. The diarist Thomas Rugg noted that only Lady Capel’s ‘friends and servants’ attended her funeral, and that her corpse ‘was carried but very little in state’. W. Sachse (ed.), *The Diurnal of Thomas Rugg, 1659-1661* (Camden Society, 3<sup>rd</sup> series, 91, 1961), p. 146.

involved describing their husbands' heroic actions on the battlefield, their piety before death, and, occasionally, their final words. In doing so, letter-writers attempted to console women by insisting that their spouse had obtained a 'good' death. In their efforts to console widows, contemporaries also stressed that their husbands' deaths were part of a God-given plan, and that their grief was shared by a wider public. Medical theory and religious practice warned of the dangers of excessive grief, with women in particular viewed as susceptible to outpourings of emotion. In light of this, letter-writers encouraged widows to moderate their sorrow.

By imploring widows to temper their grief, and emphasising the connection between providence and death, the letters discussed in this chapter largely adhered to the conventions set out in contemporary letter-writing manuals. Yet the unique circumstances of the civil wars and the manner in which these women's husbands had died ensured that further topics were also discussed. Whilst most letter-writers failed to disclose graphic information of battlefield wounds, some sought to reassure widows that their husbands had received a proper burial. This undoubtedly reflected wider anxieties regarding the treatment of the dead during the civil wars. Moreover, whilst most of the letters discussed above were intended for private consumption, the printed letter reputedly sent from James Compton to his mother, Lady Northampton, demonstrates that such correspondence carried a public appeal, and might be manipulated by contemporaries for propagandistic purposes.



## Chapter 6. War widows in print and propaganda

### 6.1 Introduction

Much of the sympathy expressed in letters of condolence was echoed in printed literature during the civil wars, as contemporaries took to the printing press in an attempt to pressure the authorities into meaningful action on the behalf of war widows. Yet not everybody during this period expressed pity towards female war victims. In some instances they were mocked and derided, whilst polemicists on both sides utilised their condition as a tool for propaganda.<sup>1</sup> This chapter examines the various ways in which war widows were represented in print during the mid-seventeenth century. First it examines civil-war newsbooks in order to examine how and why royalist and parliamentary propagandists reported the treatment of war victims. It then examines how war widows were depicted in printed ballads, sermons and tracts, and what purposes these depictions served.

### 6.2 War widows in propaganda

Jason Peacey has demonstrated that printed propaganda was utilised by both sides during the civil wars in an attempt to discredit their political and military opponents, and to mobilise and maintain popular support.<sup>2</sup> Numerous pro-parliamentarian periodicals were printed in London during the 1640s, whilst royalist polemicists operated at Oxford between 1642 and 1646, and, after the First Civil War, clandestinely in the capital during the latter half of the decade.<sup>3</sup> Common propagandist techniques involved exaggerating the significance of military victories, downplaying the scale of defeats, and embellishing and fabricating accounts of misconduct by opposing troops. The most significant royalist newsbook during the First Civil War was *Mercurius Aulicus*. Published in Oxford between January 1643 and September 1645, the newsbook formed, in the words of Peter

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<sup>1</sup> For propaganda during the civil wars see J. Peacey, *Politicians and Pamphleteers: Propaganda during the English Civil Wars and Interregnum* (Aldershot, 2004); M. Stoye, *The Black Legend of Prince Rupert's Dog: Witchcraft and Propaganda during the English Civil War* (Exeter, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> Peacey, *Politicians and Pamphleteers*, p. 323.

<sup>3</sup> J. Raymond, *The Invention of the Newspaper: English Newsbooks, 1641-1649* (Oxford, 1996); J. McElligott, *Royalism, Print and Censorship in Revolutionary England* (Woodbridge, 2007).

Thomas, ‘the spearhead of royalist propaganda’ throughout the early 1640s.<sup>4</sup> *Aulicus*’s antithesis during this period was the parliamentary newsbook *Mercurius Britannicus*. First published in August 1643, *Britannicus* quickly established itself as Parliament’s ‘flagship journal’.<sup>5</sup> Under the eye of its editor, Marchamont Nedham, the paper devoted much of its time to rebutting *Aulicus*’s reporting of the news.<sup>6</sup> Both newsbooks circulated relatively widely throughout the early 1640s, and, for the most part, were readily affordable to all but the poorest members of society.<sup>7</sup> Significantly, both *Aulicus* and *Britannicus* were also officially sanctioned by their respective war parties.<sup>8</sup> By examining the ways in which these two newsbooks reported the treatment of war victims during the First Civil War, we can see how both sides sought to exploit the subject for propagandistic purposes.

The editors of both *Aulicus* and *Britannicus* drew on irony, mockery and humour in an attempt to discredit and challenge its rival’s reporting of the news.<sup>9</sup> When *Aulicus* sought to shock its readers by noting that parliamentary troops had stolen money from maimed royalist soldiers in Wiltshire in August 1644, for instance, *Britannicus* rejected the credibility of the report by insisting that since Charles I refused to provide relief for royalist war victims, it was doubtful that his soldiers were carrying money in the first place.<sup>10</sup> Andrew Hopper has argued that both royalist and parliamentary newsbooks sought ‘to stimulate defections by promising better conditions in their service’.<sup>11</sup> Thus when *Aulicus* compared the excellent treatment received by maimed royalist soldiers at Oxford to the starving and neglected condition of their parliamentary counterparts in the capital, *Britannicus* countered by insisting that every parish around Oxford was:

well stored with maimed wretches, which if not quickly curable, then their braines are either beaten out with the Butt-end of a Candle, or at the best, left languishing under the hands of some ignorant Pultice-plotting horseleech, that bears the name of a Chirurgeon.

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<sup>4</sup> P. Thomas, *Sir John Berkenhead, 1617-1679: A Royalist Career in Politics and Polemics* (Oxford, 1969), p. 29.

<sup>5</sup> Peacey, *Politicians and Pamphleteers*, p. 151.

<sup>6</sup> N. Brownlees, ‘Polemic and propaganda in civil war news discourse’, in N. Brownlees (ed.), *News Discourse in Early Modern Britain* (Bern, 2006), p. 27.

<sup>7</sup> McElligott, *Royalism, Print and Censorship*, p. 111; J. Peacey, *Print and Public Politics in the English Revolution* (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 57, 62-63, 73.

<sup>8</sup> Peacey, *Politicians and Pamphleteers*, pp. 189-191.

<sup>9</sup> Brownlees, ‘Polemic and propaganda’, pp. 24-25.

<sup>10</sup> BL, TT E.7[11], *Mercurius Britannicus*, no. 48, 19-26 August (London, 1644), p. 379.

<sup>11</sup> A. Hopper, *Turncoats and Renegades: Changing Sides during the English Civil Wars* (Oxford, 2012), p. 84.

Denied relief, the newsbook further claimed that numerous maimed royalist soldiers had been reduced to begging on the streets of London, whilst their parliamentary counterparts recovered from their wounds in ‘warm lodging... [with] the best Chirurgeons, and Nurses to attend them’.<sup>12</sup>

Similar claims and counterclaims regarding the treatment of war victims extended to widows, as both newsbooks sought to defend their party against accusations of mistreatment, whilst simultaneously charging their opponents with neglect. In October 1644 *Britanicus* accused *Aulicus* of a ‘policy of lying’, after the latter had condemned Parliament for showing more interest in securing ‘some small garrison’ from the royalists than in dispensing money for the relief of widows and orphans.<sup>13</sup> It is perhaps significant that this report was published in *Aulicus* just three months after the royalist defeat at Marston Moor, after which the newsbook’s reporting became more unreliable and its attempts to discredit the parliamentary war effort more farfetched.<sup>14</sup> In his rebuttal of *Aulicus*’s accusations, Nedham pressed upon his readers how seriously Parliament tended to its war victims: ‘for we know here how piously and how really the Parliament have provided for poore widowes and Orphans, whose husbands and fathers have been slaine in the wars’.<sup>15</sup>

Similar insults had been exchanged between the two newsbooks earlier in the war. When *Aulicus* denounced Parliament’s treatment of its war widows in November 1643, for instance, *Britanicus* retaliated by blaming the royalist party for their condition:

and for our widowes and children take you no care, they are or shall be provided for, but who brought them into this condition? Did not your Cavaliers first? They had not been widowes and orphants but for you.<sup>16</sup>

This sentiment was echoed the following year, when Nedham lambasted Charles I in particular for the condition of war widows:

it might work upon a heart of stone to thinke of the vast multitudes of help-lesse widowes and orphans, swarming every where almost; which makes all good men wonder, that his Majesty, who is, or ought to be a common Father to all, should

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<sup>12</sup> BL, TT E.22[5], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 46<sup>th</sup> week, 10-19 November (Oxford, 1644), pp. 1254-1255; BL, TT E.22[4], *Mercurius Britanicus*, no. 62, 16-23 December (London, 1644), p. 492.

<sup>13</sup> BL, TT E.14[12], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 40<sup>th</sup> week, 29 September-5 October (Oxford, 1644), p. 1189.

<sup>14</sup> McElligott, *Royalism, Print and Censorship*, p. 20.

<sup>15</sup> BL, TT E.14[13], *Mercurius Britanicus*, no. 55, 21-28 October (London, 1644), p. 437.

<sup>16</sup> BL, TT E.75[14], *Mercurius Britanicus*, no. 11, 2-9 November (London, 1643), p. 86.

still proceed violently through blood and mischief, not onely to the widowing, but even to the un-peopling of the Kingdom.<sup>17</sup>

*Britanicus* was the subject of parliamentary infighting throughout the early 1640s, as the moderate party aligned to the earl of Essex and the war party associated with John Pym and Lord Saye vied for control of this influential newsbook.<sup>18</sup> It is perhaps significant that at the time that Nedham placed the fate of parliamentarian widows squarely on the shoulders of Charles I, the newsbook was in the hands of the war party. This party opposed a settlement between Parliament and the king, and, as the war progressed, used the paper as a mouthpiece to vehemently discredit the monarch. In this regard, Nedham's reporting on the experiences of war widows and Charles's unfatherly conduct towards his people might be viewed as part of his and his backers' campaign to undermine the king's authority.

Although both newsbooks regularly discussed the treatment and welfare of war victims, they rarely mentioned the experiences of individual widows. In a rare example in August 1644, *Aulicus* reported that parliamentarian soldiers had plundered the estate of the royalist Lady Falkland, whose husband had died at Newbury the previous year. The newsbook accused the soldiers of torching Lady Falkland's crops and stealing her livestock, including 145 sheep:

And to shew they were perfect Robbers (for there were three Scots Captaines among them) they fell upon the labouring Bees, shooke them out of their hives, and carried away their honest labour in pots and dishes, which they plundered out of the House.<sup>19</sup>

In an attempt to accentuate the crimes committed by the soldiers, *Aulicus* further claimed that the plundering had taken place against the orders of the parliamentarian commander the earl of Essex, who had promised Lady Falkland protection 'when last hee went that way'. Although *Aulicus* was evidently attempting to provoke outrage amongst its readership by reporting the unruly behaviour of both parliamentarian and Scottish soldiers, the account was not entirely fabricated. The previous year the parliamentarian newsbook *The Scottish Dove* noted that soldiers had seized a flock of Lady Falkland's sheep after she had refused to contribute to the parliamentarian war effort. In justifying

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<sup>17</sup> BL, TT E.13[15], *Mercurius Britanicus*, no. 54, 14-21 October (London, 1644), p. 426.

<sup>18</sup> J. Peacey, 'The struggle for *Mercurius Britanicus*: factional politics and the parliamentarian press, 1643-1646', *Huntingdon Library Quarterly*, 68 (2005), pp. 517-543.

<sup>19</sup> BL, TT E.9[5], *Mercurius Aulicus*, 34<sup>th</sup> week, 18-24 August (Oxford, 1644), p. 1130.

the attack on the widow, the newsbook noted that her husband had spent his entire estate on a 'Godlesse cause', and had 'left his Lady but 350 pounds per an[num] and yet this Lady is taxed at 400 pounds per an[num] or must be plundered'.<sup>20</sup>

*Aulicus* did not return to the subject of military welfare throughout 1645, although the topic resurfaced sporadically in *Britanicus* during that year. In June the newsbook reported Parliament's intentions to release £400 for the relief of parliamentary widows.<sup>21</sup> This echoed a similar report from three months earlier, when *Britanicus* reported an ordinance recently passed in the House of Commons for the release of £500 for the same purpose.<sup>22</sup> 'This necessary act of piety', the newsbook noted, 'must needs stop the mouths of *Aulicus* and his Malignant friends, who have always most injuriously slandered the Parliament, as if they neglected Widowes, Orphans, and maimed Souldiers'.<sup>23</sup>

Despite *Aulicus*'s silence on the subject after 1644, royalist polemicists returned to the issue of military welfare during the late 1640s in an attempt to further discredit the parliamentary cause. In June 1649 the newsbook *Mercurius Pragmaticus (For King Charles II)* reported that war widows soliciting Parliament for relief were 'catch't up at the door of the House, like hawkes-meat for the members'. The newsbook took particular aim at the regicides and politicians Miles Corbet and Henry Marten, who were reported to demand sexual favours from young widows in return for supporting their requests in Parliament. By this means, the newsbook noted, they 'have kept many a wench at the charges of the publique... for the satisfying of their covetousnesse and lechery'.<sup>24</sup> This particular edition of *Pragmaticus* was edited by the former editor of *Britanicus* Marchamont Nedham, who had switched his allegiance in 1647, perhaps after becoming alarmed by the New Model Army's seizure of London in August that year.<sup>25</sup> Jason McElligott has shown that royalist propagandists during the late 1640s often invented 'blatantly sexualised stories' in an attempt to discredit and ridicule leading

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<sup>20</sup> BL, TT E.79[5], *The Scottish Dove*, no. 10, 15-22 December (London, 1643), p. 76; E. Allen, 'Cary [*née* Morison], Lettice, Viscountess Falkland (c.1612-1647)', *ODNB*.

<sup>21</sup> BL, TT E.288[23], *Mercurius Britanicus*, no. 86, 9-16 June (London, 1645), p. 782.

<sup>22</sup> For the parliamentary ordinance see *CJ*, vol. 4, p. 86 (22 March, 1645).

<sup>23</sup> BL, TT E.274[31], *Mercurius Britanicus*, no. 76, 24-31 March (London, 1645), p. 700.

<sup>24</sup> BL, TT E.559[14], *Mercurius Pragmaticus (For King Charles II)*, no. 8, 5-12 June (London, 1649), p. 67.

<sup>25</sup> J. Peacey, "'The counterfeit silly curr': money, politics, and the forging of royalist newspapers during the English civil war", *Huntingdon Library Quarterly*, 67 (2004), p. 53; McElligott, *Royalism, Print and Censorship*, p. 114.

parliamentarians. Thus Corbet was frequently denounced as a ‘Jew’ and his wife a ‘whore’, whilst Henry Marten was depicted as a whoremonger.<sup>26</sup> By portraying these men as sexual predators exploiting vulnerable women, Nedham sought to utilise the condition of war widows in order to mock his political opponents. As we have seen, this was a tactic that he had earlier employed during his editorship of *Britannicus*.

### 6.3 War widows in print

Having examined how the treatment of war widows was reported in two of the leading contemporary newsbooks, this chapter now considers how female war victims were represented in printed pamphlets, ballads, and sermons during the mid-seventeenth century, and what purposes these representations served. First it examines longstanding cultural stereotypes of widows, and how these were adapted and exploited by contemporaries during the 1640s in order to pursue certain political agendas. It then assesses print material published following the Restoration, demonstrating that whilst some contemporaries were indifferent to the needs of war widows after 1660, others remained sympathetic to their plight well into the second half of the seventeenth century.

In February 1643 the London book collector George Thomason purchased a six-page pamphlet entitled *The Widowes Lamentation*, a mock petition claiming to be written on behalf of a ‘great multitude of poor distressed widdowes’.<sup>27</sup> The pamphlet opened innocuously enough, describing the anguish felt by women due to the loss of their husbands and sons slain during the civil wars. Coupled with their grief were the economic hardships inflicted by the war. Whilst wealthier widows were expected to contribute money to the parliamentary war effort, their poorer counterparts were left bereft of all charity, so that all widows contended themselves ‘among the most wretched of the people’, regardless of their position on the social spectrum. With no end to the conflict in sight, the pamphlet continued, such hardships ‘were likely to augment daily, as long as these dreadfull civil warres run’.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> J. McElligott, ‘The politics of sexual libel: royalist propaganda in the 1640s’, *Huntingdon Library Quarterly*, 67 (2004), pp. 86, 95, 83-84; McElligott, *Royalism, Print and Censorship*, pp. 46-47, 58; S. Barber, *A Revolutionary Rogue: Henry Marten and the English Republic* (Stroud, 2000), chapter 7.

<sup>27</sup> BL, TT E.88[26], *The Widowes Lamentation for the Absence of their Deare Children and Suitors* (London, 1643), p. 3.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

Having outlined these miseries, the pamphlet proceeded to the ‘main cause’ of the widows’ complaint. With so many men away fighting in the wars, the number of suitors available to widows had significantly reduced:

before these warres were thus hot throughout all parts of this Kingdome, there was not a widow amongst us, from the old crooked beldame of fourscore and fifteen, to the young buxome widow of twenty, but had some hopes to put of the garments of her widowhood, and to have her sorrowes wiped away by the succession of a young lusty husband, that might cherish and administer both to the necessities of her body and her soule.<sup>29</sup>

Due to the current shortage of bachelors, however, the tract complained that elderly widows were forced to ‘lye meditating all night alone’, whilst their younger counterparts were left with ‘want of exercise’. The pamphlet concluded by pleading that the wars may be brought to a speedy resolution, so that no more men would be killed, and that widows may have a ‘plurality of suitors and daily hopes of obtaining good and lusty young husbands’.<sup>30</sup>

As Ann Hughes has demonstrated, this mock petition was one of a number of pamphlets printed in early 1643 that depicted sexually obsessed women frustrated by the lack of male suitors due to the civil wars. Printed at a time when Parliament and the king were attempting to broker a peace, these pamphlets were intended to deride supporters of the peace negotiations.<sup>31</sup> The fact that this literature targeted women in particular likely reflected male anxieties regarding female assertiveness and their involvement in political activity, which may have exacerbated over the previous year following a number of high-profile incidents. In January 1642 a petition purported to be written on behalf of ‘many hundreds of distressed women’ was submitted to the House of Commons, requesting the Lower House to expel the bishops from the Lords, and for military intervention in Ireland. Although the petition was welcomed by the Commons, the Lower House was later required to summon the London Trained Bands to dispel the crowd of female petitioners who had gathered outside Westminster Palace.<sup>32</sup> Meanwhile, the following month a group

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 6-8.

<sup>31</sup> A. Hughes, *Gender and the English Revolution* (Abingdon, 2012), p. 127.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 127-128; D. Purkiss, *Literature, Gender and Politics during the English Civil War* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 66-67; BL, TT f.4[57], *The Humble Petition of Many Hundreds of Distressed Women, Tradesmens Wives, and Widdowes* (1642); *CJ*, vol. 2, p. 407 (1 February, 1642).

of women led by Anne Stagg, the wife of a London brewer, petitioned the Commons for similar redresses.<sup>33</sup>

In ridiculing widows as sexually voracious, *The Widowes Lamentation* was tapping into a well-established cultural stereotype. Throughout the sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries widows were often caricatured on stage and in ballads as comical and lustful figures, eager to remarry younger suitors.<sup>34</sup> ‘Young maidens are bashfull, but widowes are bold / They tempt poore yong men with their silver and gold’, noted a typical Carolean ballad.<sup>35</sup> Charles Carlton has argued that such stereotypes were likely symptomatic of a range of male anxieties towards widows. This included a fear of what Carlton terms ‘posthumous cuckoldry’ – that widows provoked anxieties in men that after their deaths their wives would remarry younger suitors. Since widows enjoyed relative autonomy over their households free from patriarchal control, they were also perceived to pose a threat to the established social and familial order.<sup>36</sup> In deriding war widows in this way, the anonymous author of *The Widowes Lamentation* was thus combining a conventional and long-established cultural representation of widows to the volatile political climate of the early 1640s.

Juxtaposed to the popular seventeenth-century image of the shrewd and hypersexual widow was a second enduring cultural representation which drew from biblical depictions of widowhood. Numerous passages from the Bible present widows as worthy of compassion and protection, whilst those who cause them to suffer are condemned in equal measure. ‘Cursed be he that perverteth the judgement of the stranger, fatherless, and widow’, notes Deuteronomy (27.19).<sup>37</sup> Given the centrality of the Bible in the lives of seventeenth-century Englishmen and women, it is perhaps unsurprising that such representations of widows – not to mention the terrible consequences inflicted on those who denied them – were drawn upon by contemporary authors and balladeers.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> P. Lee, ‘Mistress Stagg’s petitioners: February 1642’, *The Historian*, 60 (1998), pp. 241-256.

<sup>34</sup> C. Carlton, ‘The widow’s tale: male myths and female reality in sixteenth and seventeenth-century England’, *Albion*, 10 (1978), pp. 118-121; B. Todd, ‘The remarrying widow’, in M. Prior (ed.), *Women in English Society, 1500–1800* (London, 1985), pp. 54-55; E. Hanson, ‘There’s meat and money too: rich widows and allegories of wealth in Jacobean city comedy’, *English Literary History*, 72 (2005), pp. 219-220; J. Panek, ‘“My naked weapon”: male anxiety and the violent courtship of the Jacobean stage widow’, *Comparative Drama*, 34 (2000), pp. 321-344.

<sup>35</sup> M. Parker, *The Winning Age, Or, A Great Complaint of the Maidens of London* (1627), English Broadside Ballad Archive, <https://ebba.english.ucsb.edu> [date accessed 31 May 2017].

<sup>36</sup> Carlton, ‘The widow’s tale’, pp. 124-126.

<sup>37</sup> See also Acts 6.1; Mark 12.40; 1 Timothy 5.3; Psalm 68.5; Isaiah 1.17.

<sup>38</sup> C. Hill, *The English Bible and the Seventeenth-Century Revolution* (London, 1993), pp. 4, 31-32.



‘The widow and the fatherless defend / So God will bless thee to the end’, noted a mid-seventeenth century ballad.<sup>39</sup> An earlier ballad printed during the reign of James I cautioned ‘And heaven it selfe will still revenge / oppressed widowes moan’.<sup>40</sup>

Costing as little as a penny by the mid-seventeenth century, broadside ballads were often printed in London, and transported to the provinces by pedlars, chapmen and other travelling tradesmen. Posted in public places such as taverns and alehouses, and sung or read aloud, they were enjoyed by socially diverse audiences, including the illiterate.<sup>41</sup> Soldiers and soldiering were popular topics amongst balladeers, especially during times of war. According to Angela McShane, more than 200 broadside ballads printed between 1639 and 1695 bear ‘military’ titles. These ballads often addressed issues of love and separation between soldiers and their lovers, and sought to encourage citizens to enlist in the army.<sup>42</sup> Rarely, however, did war widows feature as the protagonists in such ballads.<sup>43</sup> In a rare example from Charles I’s reign, *A Lanthorne for Landlords* (c.1630), the audience is presented with the familiar themes of a pitiful widow in need of charity, and of providential punishment meted out against those who caused her to suffer.<sup>44</sup>

The ballad tells the story of a Lincolnshire woman whose husband, ‘a labouring man’, was slain whilst campaigning in Ireland. Unwilling to provide for her maintenance, her pitiless landlord turned the widow and her two infant sons out of doors, inciting demands from the ballad’s narrator for divine retribution:

O God reuenge a widdowes wrong,  
That all the world may know,  
How you haue forst a Soldiers wife  
a begging for to goe.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> *A Godly New Ballad, Intituled, A Dozen of Points* (c.1658-1664), English Broadside Ballad Archive, <https://ebba.english.ucsb.edu> [date accessed 27 June 2017].

<sup>40</sup> *A New Ballad, Intituled, A Warning to Youth* (c.1619-1629), English Broadside Ballad Archive, <https://ebba.english.ucsb.edu> [date accessed 27 June 2017].

<sup>41</sup> T. Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550-1640* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 11-12; A. Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England, 1500-1700* (Oxford, 2000), p. 301.

<sup>42</sup> A. McShane, ‘Recruiting citizens for soldiers in seventeenth-century English ballads’, *Journal of Early Modern History*, 15 (2011), pp. 108, 132.

<sup>43</sup> For an example from the late seventeenth century see *The Weeping Lady, Or, The Fortune of War* (1693), English Broadside Ballad Archive, <https://ebba.english.ucsb.edu> [date accessed 27 June 2017].

<sup>44</sup> There are two copies of this ballad on the Early English Books Online database. The first is dated c.1630, and the second c.1640. STC/15225.5, *A Lanthorne for Landlords* (c.1630); STC/15226, *A Lanthorne for Landlords* (c.1640).

<sup>45</sup> STC/15226, *A Lanthorne for Landlords* (c.1640).

Following the death of her children – retold in the second part of the ballad – the widow returned to Lincoln to seek justice against her landlord. She arrived too late. After he had thrown the widow out of doors, God had unleashed a vengeful fury upon the landlord. His barn had been burnt to the ground, his wife executed for witchcraft, and his eldest son hanged for murder. His daughter had been reduced to working as a prostitute in London, whilst his youngest son had been attacked by dogs, who ‘tore his limbs in pieces’. Overcome with grief and dishonour, the landlord had drowned himself. The ballad concluded with a stark warning to those who denied widows: ‘That God is just and will be true / for woeful widowes sake’.<sup>46</sup>

Published sermons varied enormously from broadside ballads in terms of character and readership. When delivered from the pulpit the sermons themselves could be enjoyed by the illiterate, but in printed form they were often consumed by the clergy, gentry and middling sort, rather than a popular audience.<sup>47</sup> Despite these important differences, some of the themes articulated in ballads were echoed in numerous sermons throughout the First Civil War, as preachers and clergymen sought to stimulate their audiences into meaningful action on the behalf of war victims. In a sermon preached before the Lord Mayor of London at St Paul’s Cathedral in November 1644, Elidad Blackwell, minister of St Andrew Undershaft, lamented ‘the many poore, sad, desolate, widdows; and the many fatherlesse children, that this warre hath made!’. Along with ‘swarms of poore, lame, maimed, wounded soldiers’, Blackwell noted that widows and orphans lined the streets of the capital, much to the dishonour of the city. ‘They have ventured their lives for us’, he continued, ‘I beseech you let some course be taken, that they may have a livelihood amongst us’.<sup>48</sup> In his call for action, Blackwell emphasised the obligation of the rich and powerful to protect and provide for the poor and needy. In stressing the necessity of succouring widows and orphans especially, the clergyman cited the parable of Job, who took comfort in providing for widows and fatherless children (Job 29.12-13).

The culmination of the First Civil War in 1646 provoked factional infighting at Westminster, as the Presbyterian party led in the House of Commons by Denzil Holles and Sir Philip Stapleton clashed with Independent MPs over proposals for negotiating

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> J. Rigney, ‘Sermons into print’, in H. Adlington, P. McCullough and E. Rhatigan (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of the Early Modern Sermon* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 207-208.

<sup>48</sup> BL, TT E.290[12], E. Blackwell, *A Caveat for Magistrates* (London, 1645), p. 34.

with the defeated Charles I. The two parties also disagreed over the fate of the New Model Army. Fearful of its growing reputation for religious radicalism and mindful of Parliament's financial debts accrued during the war, Holles and Stapleton were eager to see the New Model Army disbanded as quickly and cheaply as possible, without fully settling the soldiers' arrears of pay. Their hopes of doing so suffered a setback in October 1646, when the Independent faction within Parliament – who were longstanding supporters of the New Model Army – persuaded the Commons to keep it intact for at least a further six months, at the expense of Edward Massey's western brigade. Disbanded soldiers from Massey's brigade soon converged on London to lobby Parliament for their arrears, and Ian Gentles has asserted that their presence in the capital over the following months provided 'a continuing reminder of what many regarded as a disgraceful Independent manoeuvre'.<sup>49</sup> By December, however, Holles's faction had gained a majority in the Commons, setting them on course for a clash with the New Model Army over issues including indemnity, arrears of pay, and military welfare throughout the following year.<sup>50</sup>

As factional infighting intensified at Westminster in late 1646, the subject of military welfare was discussed in at least two fast sermons preached before the Commons.<sup>51</sup> On 30 September, the Presbyterian clergyman Herbert Palmer impressed upon MPs the importance of 'compassionating the poor', especially those who had served Parliament during the wars.<sup>52</sup> Amid the 'loud clamours' of parliamentarian soldiers and widows unable to secure relief from Parliament, Palmer drew parallels between the suffering of civil-war victims and the Book of James, in which a rich landlord procured God's displeasure after withholding the wages owed to poor labourers he had hired to harvest his fields (James 5.4). This, Palmer noted, 'is equally applyed to souldiers that have ventured their lives in the field, and secured your fields, and houses, and cities, and persons, and families, from plunder and violence'.<sup>53</sup> Palmer further insinuated that God

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<sup>49</sup> I. Gentles, *The New Model Army in England, Ireland and Scotland, 1645-1653* (Oxford, 1992), p. 144.

<sup>50</sup> V. Pearl, 'London's counter-revolution', in G. Aylmer (ed.), *The Interregnum: The Quest for Settlement, 1646-1660* (London, 1972), pp. 29-56; J. Morrill, 'The army revolt of 1647', in J. Morrill (ed.), *The Nature of the English Revolution* (London, 1993), pp. 307-331.

<sup>51</sup> For fast sermons see H. Trevor Roper, 'The fast sermons of the Long Parliament', in H. Trevor Roper (ed.), *The Crisis of the Seventeenth Century: Religion, the Reformation and Social Change* (New York, 1967), p. 273; Hill, *The English Bible*, pp. 82-83; J. Wilson, *Pulpit in Parliament: Puritanism during the English Civil Wars, 1640-1648* (Princeton, 1969), p. 137.

<sup>52</sup> BL, TT E.355[22], H. Palmer, *The Duty & Honour of Church-Restorers* (London, 1646), p. 39.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

would hold MPs to account should they neglect war victims. ‘Consider that whatever men do’, he noted:

God records how many dayes such a poor Woman, Widow, or Orphan, such a Souldier or Officer hath waited at your doors, upon this or that Man, or upon any Committees; and what answers they have had, what frowns or checks, or perhaps threatnings, or what fair words or promises, and tedious delayes’.<sup>54</sup>

To reinforce his claim Palmer cited God’s laws from Exodus, that anyone judged guilty of oppressing widows or orphans shall suffer divine punishment: ‘he will hear the cries of such, and his wrath shall wax hot, and he will slay them that oppresse them with the sword, and their wives shall be widowes, and their children fatherlesse (Exod. 22.22-24)’.<sup>55</sup> Palmer also encouraged MPs not to ignore the plight of petitioners, but to ‘count it an honour, rather than a trouble, to be employed as to promote an honest cause’.<sup>56</sup>

Palmer’s sermon was not the first time that he had preached to the Commons on behalf of war victims. In June 1643 he had implored MPs to secure the release of parliamentary soldiers imprisoned at Oxford.<sup>57</sup> Yet the culmination of the First Civil War and Parliament’s apparent indifference towards settling the army’s arrears encouraged him to press the claims of war victims more urgently in late 1646. His emphasis on Parliament’s duty of care towards war widows was echoed the following month in a sermon preached to the Commons by the Independent minister Nicholas Lockyer. Lockyer noted that:

Many a poore widow stands with a Petition in her hand, written with the heart-bloud of her husband, and subscribed with a thousand teares, because she can get no eye to reade it, no hand to preferre it, nor no bowels to dispatch it.<sup>58</sup>

In light of the sacrifices made by war victims for the parliamentary cause, Lockyer stressed the obligation placed on Parliament to ensure that they were provided for:

Alas poore creatures, of which this Kingdome is now but too full, whither should they come but to you? The widow hath no husband but you, the fatherlesse hath no Father but you, the cripple hath no legs but you, the wounded have no money to buy plaisters but from you.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>57</sup> BL, TT E.60[3], H. Palmer, *The Necessity and Encouragement of Utmost Venturing for the Churches Help* (London, 1643), p. 70.

<sup>58</sup> BL, TT E.359[6], N. Lockyer, *A Sermon Preached Before the Honourable House of Commons Assembled in Parliament: at their Late Solemn Fast, Octob. 28. 1646* (London, 1646), pp. 30-31.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

Despite their shared concerns for the plight of war victims, Palmer and Lockyer differed in both religious and political outlook. Palmer was a Presbyterian and an associate of the earl of Manchester, who by 1646 favoured a settlement with the king. Although he did not live to see the regicide, a contemporary biographer later asserted that Palmer would have thoroughly condemned it.<sup>60</sup> In contrast, Lockyer was an Independent minister who opposed a quick settlement with Charles I, and was later appointed one of Cromwell's chaplains during the 1650s.<sup>61</sup> Sympathisers of both factions at Westminster can therefore be seen to be promoting the cause of war victims in late 1646, possibly for political as well as religious reasons.

In order to discern the political motivations behind the creation of civil-war tracts, pamphlets and sermons, historians have begun to pay closer attention to the patrons of texts, as well as simply their authors and content.<sup>62</sup> An assessment of Palmer's and Lockyer's sponsors further suggests that the two men were aligned to opposing political factions at Westminster. Palmer was invited to preach to the Commons by Sir Anthony Irby, a Presbyterian MP who was later excluded from the Lower House following Pride's Purge in December 1648.<sup>63</sup> In contrast, Lockyer was invited to deliver his sermon by the Warwick MP Godfrey Bosvile.<sup>64</sup> The step-brother of the parliamentary commander Lord Brooke, Bosvile had combined his duties at Westminster during the early 1640s with a position on the Warwickshire county committee. According to Ann Hughes, Bosvile sided with the Independent faction at Westminster during the 1640s.<sup>65</sup> Although John Wilson has warned that MPs who sponsored fast sermons did not necessarily share the same political and religious convictions as the clergymen who preached them, the connection between Bosvile and Lockyer suggests that the latter may have had the backing of Independent patrons within Westminster.<sup>66</sup> In this regard, his sermon might be construed as a calculated attack on Holles's and Stapleton's faction, which, as we shall see, received fierce criticism the following year from soldiers and supporters of the New

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<sup>60</sup> J. Eales, 'Palmer, Herbert (1601-1647)', *ODNB*; Wing/C4513, S. Clarke, *A Generall Martyrologie, Containing a Collection of all the Greatest Persecutions which have Befallen the Church of Christ* (London, 1651), p. 438.

<sup>61</sup> E. Vernon, 'Lockyer, Nicholas (1611-1685)', *ODNB*.

<sup>62</sup> Peacey, *Politicians and Pamphleteers*, pp. 1, 16-17, 19.

<sup>63</sup> *CJ*, vol. 4, p. 653 (26 August, 1646); M. Helms and P. Watson, 'Irby, Sir Anthony (1606-1682)', *The History of Parliament Online*, <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1660-1690> [date accessed 14 December 2017].

<sup>64</sup> *CJ*, vol. 4, p. 678 (30 September, 1646).

<sup>65</sup> A. Hughes, *Politics, Society and Civil War in Warwickshire, 1620-1660* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 74, 176, 195, 250.

<sup>66</sup> Wilson, *Pulpit in Parliament*, pp. 100-101.

Model Army. It is noteworthy that on the same day as Lockyer's sermon, 28 October 1646, the Commons passed an order for £10,000 to be granted out of the excise 'to be employed for the payment of the poor widows and wives of soldiers and officers'.<sup>67</sup>

The issue of military welfare appeared more frequently in print in 1647, as tensions between Parliament and the army intensified. Having gained control of the Commons in December 1646, Holles's faction set about their plans to disband the New Model Army. Predictably, their plans provoked outrage amongst the soldiery, who had not yet been granted a legal indemnity for their wartime actions, nor had their arrears settled.<sup>68</sup> Also central to the army's grievances was the issue of military welfare.<sup>69</sup> One pro-army pamphlet published anonymously in 1647 pressed its readers to behold the 'cry of millions of widdowes, fatherlesse, and friendless', who had failed to secure relief from Parliament. The pamphlet also criticised Parliament for neglecting war victims: 'the eares that should heare are deafe, and the eyes that should pittie are blinde'.<sup>70</sup> Similar concerns were expressed by the soldiers themselves in several petitions published that year. In May a petition addressed to the army generals Philip Skippon, Oliver Cromwell, Henry Ireton and Charles Fleetwood on behalf of 240 commissioned officers complained 'that many soldiers who have lost their lives, widowes their husbands, and children their parents, in this service, and thereby are reduced to great poverty, (even to beggary) are not sufficiently provided for a future livelihood'.<sup>71</sup> The following month, demands for parliamentary legislation for the relief of war widows and orphans were printed in the army's manifesto *A Solemn Engagement of the Army* (1647), in which the army pledged not to disband until its grievances had been settled.<sup>72</sup> Geoffrey Hudson has convincingly argued that this campaign was influential in persuading Parliament to pass legislation for rejuvenating the county pension scheme that year.<sup>73</sup>

After the Restoration, contemporaries were quick to predict the imminent rewards that would soon be meted out to Charles II's supporters. One ballad published that year

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<sup>67</sup> *CJ*, vol. 4, p. 707 (28 October, 1646).

<sup>68</sup> A. Woolrych, *Britain in Revolution, 1625-1660* (Oxford, 2002), p. 350-351.

<sup>69</sup> Morrill, 'The army revolt of 1647', p. 319; G. Hudson, 'Ex-servicemen, war widows and the English county pension scheme, 1593-1679', (D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1995), pp. 146-149.

<sup>70</sup> Wing/R1005, *The Remonstrance of the Kingdom of England, to the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge* (1647), p. 2.

<sup>71</sup> BL, TT E.390[3], *A Perfect and True Copy of the Severall Grievances of the Army under his Excellencie, Sir Thomas Fairfax* (London, 1647), p. 3.

<sup>72</sup> Wing/S4436, *A Solemn Engagement of the Army* (London, 1647), p. 12.

<sup>73</sup> Hudson, 'Ex-servicemen, war widows and the English county pension scheme', pp. 146-147.

asserted that the royalist government was to bestow pensions on all former royalists, and that their military services during the 1640s would not be ignored: ‘Your wounds and scars / in Charles his Wars / They shall not be forgotten’.<sup>74</sup> This optimism was quickly tempered by a wave of discontent, as neglected cavaliers took to the printing press over the following years to voice their grievances regarding the government’s inaction towards them.<sup>75</sup> In one such example, *An Humble Representation of the Sad Condition of Many of the King’s Party* (1661), the anonymous author laid out eleven proposals for the government to consider for the relief of former royalists. One proposal suggested that maimed, elderly and unemployed soldiers be cared for in hospitals or awarded pensions, whilst another implored that the orphans of former royalists ‘reap the fruits of their Fathers Martyrdome’, presumably – though this was not stated – in the form of money, titles, or offices.<sup>76</sup> Significantly, however, none of the eleven proposals touched on the condition of royalist widows. Admittedly the first proposal, which suggested that ‘the greatest necessities [be] first relieved’, could equally have referred to female as well as male war victims, yet the fact that the pamphlet failed to explicitly mention widows is striking.<sup>77</sup>

The condition of war widows was certainly discussed less frequently in print during the 1660s than it had been during the 1640s, and, if Margaret Cavendish’s biography of her husband, William Cavendish, duke of Newcastle is to be believed, even prominent royalists proved reluctant to come to their aid. When the widow of one of Newcastle’s former soldiers begged the duke for relief he refused her, noting that ‘he was not able to relieve all that had been loyal to His Majesty; for... my losses are so many, that if I should give away the remainder of my estate, my wife and children would have nothing to live on’.<sup>78</sup> Whilst this may have been a further attempt by Margaret to draw attention to her husband’s vast financial losses sustained during the civil wars, Newcastle had proved himself willing to sign the certificate of at least one royalist widow petitioning

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<sup>74</sup> Wing/H1549aA, *Here is Some Comfort for Poor Cavaleeres* (London, 1660).

<sup>75</sup> See for example Wing/1570A, *The Cavaleers Complaint* (London, 1660); Wing/C6980, R. Croft, *The Plea, Case, and Humble Proposals of the Truly-Loyal and Suffering Officers* (London, 1663); Wing/H498, C. Hammond, *Truth’s Discovery; or the Cavaliers Case Clearly Stated* (London, 1664).

<sup>76</sup> Wing/H3643, *An Humble Representation of the Sad Condition of Many of the King’s Party* (1661), p. 12.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>78</sup> Wing/N853, M. Cavendish, *The Life of the Thrice Noble, High, and Puissant Prince William Cavendish* (London, 1667), p. 184.

for a pension following the Restoration.<sup>79</sup> Evidently, Cavendish was prepared to support the claims of war victims provided their relief was not paid for out of his own pocket. Despite his apparent indifference, however, it would be wrong to suggest that war widows lacked their share of sympathisers after the Restoration. In a sermon preached at Worcester cathedral in 1684 to commemorate the anniversary of the Restoration, the dean George Hicke encouraged listeners to distribute alms to the poor, especially those ‘ruined by the late Successful Rebellion’. Hicke urged his congregation to ‘open your hand liberally’ to soldiers and widows, ‘who yet bear in their Bodies, or in their Distressed Families the Marks of their Loyalty for the King’.<sup>80</sup>

## 6.4 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated a variety of ways in which war widows were depicted in print during the mid-seventeenth century. Drawing on biblical representations of widows as worthy objects of compassion, broadside ballads and published sermons expressed much sympathy towards their plight. Citing passages from the books of Job, Exodus and James, amongst others, sermons in particular stressed the obligation of the rich to provide for the needy, and incited providential retribution against those who caused widows to suffer. Calls for adequate provision for war widows became especially frequent towards the end of the First Civil War, when the issue of military welfare became part of national politics. Parliament’s duty of care to war victims was expressed both by clergymen eager to impress upon MPs the necessity of succouring war victims, and by the army itself during their dispute with Parliament in 1647. Although war widows appeared less frequently in print following the Restoration, some contemporaries continued to champion their cause long after 1660.

Yet not all contemporaries expressed pity towards war widows during this period. At times they were ridiculed as lustful and sexually voracious, whilst in newsbooks they were often reduced to little more than pawns in the paper war waged between royalist and parliamentary propagandists. Both *Aulicus* and *Mercurius* recognised the

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<sup>79</sup> TNA, SP 29/20/3 (certificate of Joan Bellamy). For Margaret’s complaints regarding her husband’s financial losses see L. Walters, *Margaret Cavendish: Gender, Science and Politics* (Cambridge, 2014), pp. 31-32.

<sup>80</sup> Wing/H1867, G. Hicke, *A Sermon Preached at the Cathedral Church of Worcester* (London, 1684), pp. 34-35.



importance of presenting their parties as benevolent towards war victims, whilst at the same time they sought to discredit their opponents by presenting them as uncharitable and neglectful. Significantly, this accusation was later made against Cromwell by Dutch polemicists during the first Anglo-Dutch war in the early 1650s.<sup>81</sup> Although informed readers during this period were able to recognise exaggerated and fictitious reports which appeared in newsbooks, the fact that both *Aulicus* and *Britanicus* strenuously denied claims made by the other regarding their party's treatment of war victims suggests that these were potentially damaging accusations, which needed to be publically repudiated.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> H. Helmers, *The Royalist Republic: Literature, Politics, and Religion in the Anglo-Dutch Public Sphere, 1639-1660* (Cambridge, 2015), p. 221.

<sup>82</sup> Peacey, *Print and Public Politics*, pp. 100-107.

## Conclusion

In her study of female war victims of the Second World War, Joy Damousi argued ‘there cannot be one experience of war widowhood: widowhoods are many and varied’.<sup>1</sup> By investigating the experiences of war widows during the British civil wars, this thesis has demonstrated that this assertion is as equally applicable to the mid-seventeenth century as it is to the twentieth. This concluding chapter briefly summarises the key findings of this thesis, and discusses its wider implications for historical research.

Whilst we might accept that no two women’s experiences of widowhood were exactly alike, the lives of female war victims during the mid-seventeenth century were shaped by their social status and political allegiance. In the provinces, parliamentary widows often drawn from the lower and middling strands of society petitioned county committees for relief during the 1640s, and county benches for pensions and gratuities between 1647 and 1660. In the Midlands, gender appears to have played an important factor in the distribution of military welfare during the civil wars and Interregnum. Widows received smaller average gratuities from county committees than maimed soldiers, and smaller average pensions from most county benches. Although the average worth of pensions fluctuated from county to county, across the region they rarely exceeded more than 50s per annum, and rarely fell below 30s. Royalist widows were denied access to county welfare during the 1640s and 1650s, but were permitted to petition for relief after the Restoration. Similar to war widows elsewhere in the country, however, female war victims were rarely granted county pensions in the Midlands after 1660. An exception to this was in Northamptonshire, where a number of widows received pensions until 1667, when the county bench suspended the payment of all annuities to female war victims.

By focusing on the geographically neglected region of the Midlands, this thesis has contributed to the important work on the county pension scheme conducted by historians including Geoffrey Hudson and David Appleby.<sup>2</sup> However, it has also sought

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<sup>1</sup> J. Damousi, *Living with the Aftermath: Trauma, Nostalgia and Grief in Post-War Australia* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> G. Hudson, ‘Negotiating for blood money: war widows and the courts in seventeenth-century England’, in J. Kermode and G. Walker (eds), *Women, Crime and the Courts in Early Modern England* (London, 1994), pp. 146–169; D. Appleby, ‘Unnecessary persons? Maimed soldiers and war widows in Essex, 1642–62’, *Essex Archaeology and History*, 32 (2001), pp. 209–221.

to move beyond these studies by examining the petitioning activities of war widows at Westminster and Whitehall. It is now apparent that to study war widows solely through the lens of the county pension scheme not only overlooks the important relief administered by the national authorities during this period, but also ignores the experiences of the hundreds of women, both parliamentary and royalist, who flocked to London to petition for relief. Besides the humble women who resided in the capital, many of these claimants were officers' widows who had travelled great distances to petition Parliament or the Crown for relief or their husbands' arrears of pay. Examining the petitioning activities of royalist officers' widows after 1660 in particular has thrown considerable light on an important sub-group of female war victims, and complements Hannah Worthen's study of royalist widows who petitioned the Committee for Compounding during the 1640s and 1650s for their confiscated estates.<sup>3</sup>

The potential rewards distributed at Westminster and Whitehall were significantly greater than those administered in the provinces, but so too were the costs involved. For this reason, the women who travelled to the capital to petition for relief tended to be from gentry families. Unlike the wives of the rank-and-file, officers' widows were often less concerned with staving off destitution than they were with shoring up their family's social standing. This supports Patricia Crawford's argument that gentry and aristocratic families occupied 'a different material world' to that of their social inferiors, and that for wealthy parents in early modern England, the inheritance of their children was a primary concern.<sup>4</sup> In many cases, social status and military rank also influenced the scale of relief afforded to war widows. Whilst the widows of the rank-and-file rarely received more than a few pounds per year from provincial authorities, numerous women at Westminster and Whitehall were granted payments worth hundreds of pounds. Moreover, whilst very few royalist widows received pensions from county magistrates after 1660, numerous women were awarded pensions from the Crown. This suggests that the Restoration regime was more comfortable awarding pensions to officers' widows than to the wives of the rank-and-file. The fact that many of these women's husbands had been prominent figures in the royalist army was likely a significant factor in compelling Charles II to grant this

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<sup>3</sup> H. Worthen, 'Supplicants and guardians: the petitions of royalist widows during the civil wars and Interregnum, 1642-1660', *Women's History Review*, 26 (2017), pp. 528-540.

<sup>4</sup> P. Crawford, *Parents of Poor Children in England, 1580-1800* (Oxford, 2010), p. 244.

relief, who perhaps did not want to be seen to have ignored the plight of his most loyal and distinguished servants.

Social status and military rank also influenced the petitioning strategies utilised by war widows in their supplications for relief. Whilst women across the social spectrum stressed their familial responsibilities and hapless conditions, officers' widows were more likely than the wives of the rank-and-file to mention the debts accrued by their husbands during the civil wars. Yet whilst most of the widows who submitted petitions during this period sought monetary relief, others were motivated by the prospect of revenge against their wartime enemies. This was especially the case after the Restoration, when the parliamentary debate regarding the Act of Indemnity allowed women the opportunity to engage in national politics by attempting to exclude their opponents from the legislation. Although this issue has already been touched on by Andrea Button, this thesis has demonstrated that war widows' demands for vengeance at the Restoration were far more prominent than historians have previously recognised.<sup>5</sup>

This thesis has also considered contemporary attitudes towards war widows. As we might expect, many contemporaries expressed sympathy towards the plight of female war victims during the civil wars. Letters of condolence demonstrate the ways in which relatives and close friends sought to comfort gentry and aristocratic widows during their bereavement, and reveal the anxieties harboured by some women regarding the nature of their spouses' deaths and burials. Meanwhile, clergymen and writers took to the pulpit and the printing press throughout the 1640s to draw attention to the condition of war victims, and to push the authorities into meaningful action on their behalf. Their demands were most vocal following the culmination of the First Civil War in 1646, when the issue of military welfare became part of national politics. Yet not everybody expressed sympathy towards war widows during this period, and throughout the early 1640s their treatment (or mistreatment) became a contested topic amongst propagandists on both sides. In this way, war widows played an important role in civil-war propaganda, which, as Andrew Hopper has argued, both 'fuelled and shaped' the nature of the conflict.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> A. Button, 'Royalist women petitioners in south-west England, 1655-1662', *The Seventeenth Century*, 15 (2000), pp. 53-66.

<sup>6</sup> A. Hopper, *Turncoats and Renegadoes: Changing Sides during the English Civil Wars* (Oxford, 2012), p. 141.

The narratives of distress contained in widows' petitions for relief and redress shed considerable light on female victimhood during the civil wars. As well as the bereavement of losing a spouse, some of the women presented in this thesis were subjected to imprisonment and the plundering of their estates. Much less common, but still noteworthy, some widows were injured during the conflict, or expelled from their homes by wartime opponents for their political allegiance. Meanwhile, in the absence of their husbands, thousands of widows were forced to contend with the reality of raising their children without the support of their family breadwinner. In this regard, the thesis adds to the important work undertaken by Christopher Durston on the impact of the English Revolution on the family. Whilst Durston acknowledged that the civil wars produced 'large numbers of widows and orphans', he concluded that 'the institution of the family may... have emerged strengthened from the maelstrom of revolution'. This was because individuals developed 'a greater awareness of the mutual solace and comfort which could be derived from familial relationships'.<sup>7</sup> Durston's study primarily focused on the nobility and gentry, rather than the middling and lower sorts.<sup>8</sup> In contrast, many of the petitions for relief submitted by war widows offer an insight into the impact of the civil wars on families beneath the level of the gentry. These documents attest less to the strengthening of familial bonds, than to the devastating hardships inflicted on families torn apart by war.

Yet the supplications for relief submitted by war widows are as much records of female agency as they are of female suffering. Many of the petitions considered in this thesis contain narratives of female activism as well as victimhood, and these help to broaden our understanding of the roles women on both sides and at all social levels played during the civil wars. These documents provide further evidence that women participated in the conflict as nurses and intelligencers, whilst others, perhaps unwillingly, forfeited their fortunes and jointures in support of their or their husbands' chosen cause. By examining the experiences of war widows from the middling and lower strands of society, this thesis also adds the important work undertaken by scholars such as Laura Gowing, Bernard Capp and Tim Stretton, who have utilised legal records to cast light on the lives

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<sup>7</sup> C. Durston, *The Family in the English Revolution* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 161, 168.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

of early modern women beneath the level of the gentry.<sup>9</sup> Rather than being passive actors in a patriarchal society, these historians have demonstrated that non-gentry women – whom Capp describes as ‘the silent and unlettered majority’ of the female population – frequently turned to the courts for redress or to defend their reputations from sexual slander.<sup>10</sup> The petitioning activities of war widows during the mid-seventeenth century provide an additional insight into female agency during the early modern period, and further demonstrate how women sought to use the courts to safeguard their livelihoods.

As well as making a contribution to the historical study of women, this thesis also broadens our understanding of seventeenth-century poor relief. The petitions submitted by war widows provide further evidence of how the disadvantaged in early-modern society were able to ‘nudge society’s rulers towards treating them better’.<sup>11</sup> To use James C. Scott’s famous phrase, they were powerful and emotive ‘weapons of the weak’.<sup>12</sup> Thinking more broadly, the parliamentary ordinance of 1647 for the relief of war widows and orphans was a landmark moment in European welfare history. It is striking, therefore, that some of the most influential social historians working on poor relief during the early modern period have paid such little attention to the experiences of civil-war victims. For example, in his authoritative study of pauper petitions in Lancashire during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Jonathan Healey deliberately omitted supplications for military pensions. In fairness to Healey, this omission was to ensure that the primary material that he was working with was ‘manageable’.<sup>13</sup> However, his oversight highlights the apparent divide between social historians on the one hand, and military historians on the other, who, despite the vast number of publications on the British civil wars, have rarely engaged with the experiences of war victims. Following the ground-breaking path set by Geoffrey Hudson, this thesis has further demonstrated how studies into the experiences of veterans and war widows can help to bridge the gap between these two historiographies.

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<sup>9</sup> L. Gowing, *Domestic Dangers: Women, Words and Sex in Early Modern London* (Oxford, 1998); B. Capp, *When Gossips Meet: Women, Family and Neighbourhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2003); T. Stretton, *Women Waging Law in Elizabethan England* (Cambridge, 2005).

<sup>10</sup> Capp, *When Gossips Meet*, p. 2.

<sup>11</sup> J. Healey, *The First Century of Welfare: Poverty and Poor Relief in Lancashire, 1620-1730* (Woodbridge, 2014), p. 97.

<sup>12</sup> J. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, 1985).

<sup>13</sup> Healey, *The First Century of Welfare*, pp. 108-109.

## Further research

With further time, the research presented in this thesis might be expanded in several ways. Whilst there are now a number of important studies on the experiences of maimed soldiers and war widows during the mid-seventeenth century, no concerted attempt has yet been undertaken to examine the experiences of orphans. This is despite the fact that both the 1647 ordinance and the 1662 act for the relief of war victims dictated that orphans, as well as injured veterans and war widows, were entitled to petition county magistrates for relief. Although the scarcity of surviving petitions and orders of payments in the Midlands' sessions' records indicate that orphans both petitioned for, and received relief far less frequently than either maimed soldiers or war widows, this evidence might be combined with evidence from other counties and the State Papers to examine the experiences of orphans during the civil wars.<sup>14</sup>

Now that the relief afforded to war victims at national and provincial level has been assessed, future studies might also consider the welfare granted to maimed soldiers and war widows at parish level. This avenue of research was deliberately avoided in this study due to the shortage of time and space, as well as the difficulty of identifying war victims within overseers' and churchwardens' accounts. Given Tim Wales's assertion that the extent and amount of parish welfare increased during the civil wars, however, a detailed national study of parish records might prove informative.<sup>15</sup> In particular, it would be interesting to determine whether there was a spike in parish relief between 1660 and 1662, when thousands of parliamentary war victims were stripped of their county and national pensions.

Attention might also be given to the experiences of women who lost their husbands in the Anglo-Dutch wars during the mid and latter half of the seventeenth century, as well as to war widows in Scotland and Ireland during the 1640s and 1650s. In this regard, the petitions for relief submitted by royalist widows in Ireland to the duke of Ormond following the Restoration might provide an interesting comparison to those

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<sup>14</sup> For example see TNA, SP 28/226/788 (petition of the orphans of Henry Holl); NA, QSR 1/11/95. A certificate presented to the Yorkshire bench in 1662 on behalf of the orphan of a maimed royalist soldier can be found in P. Young and W. Emberton, *The Cavalier Army: Its Organisation and Everyday Life* (London, 1974), p. 167.

<sup>15</sup> T. Wales, 'The parish and the poor in the English Revolution', in S. Taylor and G. Tapsell (eds), *The Nature of the English Revolution Revisited* (Woodbridge, 2013), pp. 53-80.

submitted by royalist widows in England to Charles II.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, given the studies on war widows in Muscovy, Spain and Sweden during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it might also prove instructive to place the experiences of female war victims in Britain and Ireland during the mid-seventeenth century into a wider European context.<sup>17</sup> Chapter 3 demonstrated how the petitioning strategies utilised by war widows in England bore similarities to those adopted by their counterparts in Sweden and Spain, but more could be done to tease out the cultural and political reasons for these similarities and differences. For instance, religion appears to have played a much more significant factor in the petitions of Irish widows to the Spanish state, who were expected to demonstrate that their husbands had served ‘the Counter Reformation cause’.<sup>18</sup>

### **Beyond the civil wars**

In order to determine how widows’ experiences of war compared and contrasted over time and place, the petitions submitted by women during the British civil wars might also be compared to those of later conflicts. In the fifty years following the outbreak of the American Civil War in 1861, the US federal government spent an estimated \$5 billion on pensions to Union veterans and their dependants. By 1893 the cost of war relief took up more than forty percent of the federal government’s annual budget, and by 1910 an estimated 300,000 widows and orphans were receiving military pensions.<sup>19</sup> Donald Shaffer has demonstrated that there was a racial bias in the distribution of relief, with African-American widows more than twenty percent less likely to be awarded pensions than white widows.<sup>20</sup> As they had done during the British civil wars, officers’ widows were also likelier to receive higher pensions than the wives of their lower-ranked comrades.<sup>21</sup> Tens of thousands of applications for pensions submitted by war widows to

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<sup>16</sup> Bod. Lib, MS Carte 42, f. 43.

<sup>17</sup> J. Martin, ‘Widows, welfare, and the “Pomest’e” system in the sixteenth century’, *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 19 (1995), pp. 375-388; M. Coolahan, *Women, Writing, and Language in Early Modern Ireland* (Oxford, 2010), pp. 128-139; M. Ailes, ‘Wars, widows and state formation in seventeenth-century Sweden’, *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 31 (2009), pp. 17-34.

<sup>18</sup> Coolahan, *Women, Writing, and Language*, p. 129.

<sup>19</sup> A. Holmes, “‘Such is the price we pay’: American widows and the Civil War pensions system”, in M. Vinovskis (ed.), *Toward a Social History of the American Civil War: Exploratory Essays* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 172; D. Shaffer, *After the Glory: The Struggles of Black Civil War Veterans* (Lawrence, 2004), p. 122.

<sup>20</sup> Shaffer, *After the Glory*, p. 122.

<sup>21</sup> R. Johnson, “‘Great injustice’: social status and the distribution of military pensions after the Civil War”, *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*, 10 (2011), pp. 137-160.



the federal government have been digitised by the US National Archives, and are available to view online.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, in 2014 the Military Archives in Dublin began digitising some of the hundreds of thousands of records of the Military Service Pensions Collection, including applications for relief to the Irish government from veterans and widows of the Easter Rising (1916) and the Irish War of Independence (1919-1921).<sup>23</sup> The digitisation of these two major archives has made these documents accessible to a wider public audience, and presented scholars with exciting new opportunities for research. As Diarmaid Ferriter has commented, military welfare records do ‘much to illuminate aspects of the afterlife’ of warfare.<sup>24</sup>

During the Boer War in 1901, the British government passed legislation entitling widows of the rank-and-file to receive state-funded pensions.<sup>25</sup> This was the first time in British history since the lapsing of the act for the relief of war victims in 1679 that the widows of soldiers of *all* military rank were awarded military pensions. Pensions continued to be granted to female war victims during and after the First World War, and by 1936 almost 130,000 war widows in England were receiving annuities.<sup>26</sup> During the Second World War the average weekly pension for the widow of a private soldier was £1. Rather like they had done during the seventeenth century, officers’ widows received higher annuities. The twentieth century also witnessed the emergence of formal associations dedicated to improving the conditions of female war victims. In 1971 the War Widows’ Association of Great Britain was formed, with the aim of pressuring the government to exempt war widows’ pensions from tax. This was achieved in 1979, and since then the Association has continued to campaign on various issues, including the improvement of pensions.<sup>27</sup> Whilst it would be anachronistic to even consider the possibility that war widows during the mid-seventeenth century sought to organise themselves into formal associations comparable to those of the twentieth century, the mass petition submitted to Charles II in 1664 on behalf of 163 royalist widows and

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<sup>22</sup> Civil War Widows’ Pensions, <https://www.fold3.com/title/24/civil-war-widows-pensions> [date accessed 3 November 2017].

<sup>23</sup> Military Service Pensions Collection, <http://www.militaryarchives.ie/en/collections/online-collections/military-service-pensions-collection> [date accessed 3 November 2017].

<sup>24</sup> D. Ferriter, *A Nation and Not a Rabble: The Irish Revolution, 1913-1923* (London, 2015), p. 22.

<sup>25</sup> E. Riedi, ‘British widows of the South African War, and the origins of war widows’ pensions’, *Twentieth Century British History*, doi:10.1093/tcbh/hwx051 (2017), p. 2.

<sup>26</sup> J. Lomas, “‘Delicate duties’: issues of class and respectability in government policy towards the wives and widows of British soldiers in the era of the Great War”, *Women’s History Review*, 9 (2000), p. 38.

<sup>27</sup> *War Widows’ Association of Great Britain*, <https://www.warwidows.org.uk/about-us/our-history/> [date accessed 26 October 2017].

orphans demonstrates that war victims during the civil wars were capable of forming informal pressure groups, with the intention of influencing government policy.

The cost of providing for female war victims continues to pose challenges to modern governments around the world. In April 2015 the British government introduced legislation allowing widows whose husbands were killed in service between 1973 and 2005 to remarry or cohabit and still retain their military pension. This legislation is estimated to cost the government £120 million over the next forty years.<sup>28</sup> In America, meanwhile, statistics from the Department of Veterans Affairs indicate that the United States government has paid more than \$270 billion since the 1970s to veterans and widows of the First and Second World Wars, as well as the Korean, Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq wars.<sup>29</sup> These figures indicate that the issue of war widows remains ever more relevant today as it did during the mid-seventeenth century.

The British civil wars were the bloodiest conflict in British history. Tens of thousands of men were slain, and numerous women across the social spectrum were widowed. The petitions for relief submitted by these women offer an important and unparalleled insight into the hardships inflicted on female war victims during the mid-seventeenth century, and of the various ways in which they sought to overcome them. Examining these documents has allowed us to recapture the experiences of poor and illiterate women, and in the process has cast further light on the social impact of the civil wars, and the nature of seventeenth-century poor relief. Reporting on a petition submitted by parliamentary widows to the House of Commons in November 1645, the parliamentary newsbook *Mercurius Britannicus* implored MPs to ‘remember the... widdow’.<sup>30</sup> Historians ought to do likewise.

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<sup>28</sup> ‘Pensions for life for military spouses who remarry’, *BBC News* (8 November 2014), <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-29956894> [date accessed 26 October 2017].

<sup>29</sup> M. Baker, ‘America is still paying for the civil war’, *Business Insider* (19 March 2013), <http://www.businessinsider.com/the-costs-of-us-wars-have-lingered-for-more-than-100-years-2013-3?IR=T> [date accessed 26 October 2017].

<sup>30</sup> BL, TT E.310[14], *Mercurius Britannicus*, no. 107, 24 November-1 December (London, 1645), p. 951.

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