

## 'every county had the civill warre, more or lesse within itselfe'<sup>1</sup>: The realities of war in Lucy Hutchinson's Midland Shires.

Martyn Bennett Nottingham Trent University

### Introduction

As an historian of her own times, Lucy Hutchinson was shrewd enough to acknowledge that the warfare which comprises a major part of the memoir of her husband Colonel John Hutchinson was not simply an English Civil War. When she dealt with the first reverberations of the conflict which was then about engulf her family she wrote;

about the yeare 1639 the thunder was heard afarre of ratling in the troubled ayre, and even the most obscured woods were penetrated with some flashes, the forerunners of the dreadfull storme which the next yeare was more apparent.

In writing this Lucy dated the beginning of the fall of the Stuart monarchy to 1639 – the year of the first Bishop's War.<sup>2</sup> No doubt she and John who seem, according to her account of the period some two years later, to have read newsbooks and discussed contemporary affairs together were well aware that the trouble had begun two tumultuous years preceding the almost farcical first war in the four nations. The warning signs had been there even earlier when Charles I stage-managed his belated Scottish coronation in a way which symbolically turned the clock back to before the early fourteenth-century Declaration of Arbroath by openly giving precedence to officials of the Church of England over the men of the Kirk. Serious trouble had begun in 1637 when the attempt to introduce a new prayer book, based upon the English *Book of Common Prayer*, into Scotland had provoked violence. This policy had firstly caused riots and then secondly, inspired the drafting of, and even more importantly, the mass subscription to a National Covenant creating a bond between the Scottish people and God in defence of the Kirk against the king's aggression. The king's provocative reaction in not seeking a compromise and being openly aggressive had pushed the Scots further. By the summer of 1639 the storm Lucy had alluded to had actually been underway for some time: by then Scotland had formed a new political structure and an executive which had not only circumvented the king in church and state but was able to manage a war effort to challenge him militarily. Mutual aggression led to the first war in the British Isles since the Nine Years' War and was later named by the victors after the archbishop of Canterbury, William Laud and his fellow Episcopalians both sides of the border: as the Bishop's War.

Lucy's broad vision was not limited to her understanding that the war which broke out in England in 1642 had origins which lay beyond England's border; like her contemporary fellow historian, the royalist politician Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, she acknowledged that the war was an affair which absorbed the entirety of the British Isles. In her background narrative, Hutchinson spent some space in her text dealing with the three initial conflicts within the archipelagic-wide war which preceded the direct involvement of her husband and herself. The First Bishop's War of 1639 was brief and involved the English forces being chased ignominiously out of Scotland and a more serious fight between Scottish covenanters and anti-covenanters outside Aberdeen at the Bridge of Dee, which ironically occurred during the peace negotiations being held at Berwick upon Tweed. A second Bishop's War in 1640 was a more deadly and involved the Scottish Army of the Covenant invading England, defeating the king's forces and occupying north-east England for a year. The third war in the

sequence sprang from the rebellion in Ireland which began on the night of 22 October 1641 and involved a rapidly developing crisis for the Dublin administration. An alternative national Irish government was established in Kilkenny which managed a structured war-effort that challenged armies sent from England, Wales and Scotland. It was this latter war which more than any other formed the backdrop to the Lucy and John's decision to throw themselves into the coming war against their king. The war in Ireland created an atmosphere of fear in Britain where the newly invigorated press and rapidly spreading rumours inspired a genuine fear that there was an imminent threat of an invasion by Roman Catholic forces from Ireland. It also provided an opportunity for the king to raise forces and financial resources ostensibly for use in Ireland but in reality intended for use in England against parliament or at least for his own self defence. Parliament also claimed itself to be under threat and had likewise begun to raise its own army. Thus as both sides armed themselves, war almost inevitably engulfed England and Wales. It was to be a war which by September 1643 had embraced Scotland in the war being fought in Britain as well as that in Ireland.

Whilst the chief task of Hutchinson's memoir was to foreground her husband John and explain his actions and responses to the vicissitudes of war and political revolution across the British Isles, Hutchinson's text acknowledged the wider role of history and demonstrates awareness of the flaws in studying a period through a single biography. Even though she may have intended the *Memoirs* as a private text for circulation within the family, possibly over an unpredictable time scale she made serious attempts to analyse the characters and motivations of the other people in her account including both the main local protagonists who directly impinged upon John's story and some of the major actors: King Charles I, Queen Henrietta Maria, the leading parliamentarian general, Sir Thomas Fairfax, and Oliver Cromwell are all observed and their motivations as Lucy (and probably John) understood them to be, explained.

Although Lucy Hutchinson's war was depicted on a great canvas, covering four nations or three kingdoms in a series of wars and revolutions, there is nevertheless no denying that the narrative of much of the work is intensively local in focus. One particular reason for this is that Lucy Hutchinson was like then and many since limited by an intensively localist approach to the narrative of the war as well as the fact that John served exclusively in the vicinity of Nottingham. The war generated the writing of some great national perspectives by authors such as the aforementioned Edward Hyde on the royalist side and the great archival analysis of John Rushworth from a parliamentarian perspective, as well as great diarists like Bulstrode Whitelocke and Symonds D'Ewes. There were also many other writers who sought to show and explain or even either play up or play down their role in the great rebellion within a local context, but there was little of a middle way. We therefore can view the picture in large scale and in its minutiae, but rarely can we see the relationship between the two. The history of the civil war in Lucy Hutchinson's region – the North and East Midlands – has been portrayed as episodic right from the *Memoirs* to the mid-twentieth century. The nineteenth-century historian J. F. Hollings and the early twentieth-century historian E. W. Hensman, both of whom made use of Rev. Julius Hutchinson's edited volume of Lucy's memorial in their work, portrayed the war in the region as an affair of skirmishes interspersed with the sudden appearance and equally quick disappearance of central figures and armies.<sup>3</sup> Whilst this in part reflected the way in which Lucy had written of the war, these authors were seemingly inspired in this approach by the episodic diurnals of the day which reported the news in dated sub-sections which did nothing to allow the development of a strong regional narrative. It would be the development of county histories in the twentieth century, both those

which broke through the boundaries of the antiquarian tradition early in the century and those which were developments of the failure of the 'gentry controversy' to answer the questions of the war asked by social, social and economic historians and Marxists, which led to a different approach to studying the war, one which related local perspectives to national perspectives through the lens of the regional experience. This change was to be very noticeable in a single year, 1974, when two very different approaches impacted upon the study of the civil war: on one level this was reflected in the heavily narrative history of R. E. Sherwood's *Civil Strife in the Midlands*, but also in the more structuralist analysis of Clive Holmes in his *Eastern Association in the English Civil War*.<sup>4</sup> In these works, local history was explored with an eye to the national and related ever more closely to a regional aspect.

But without the advantages of this approach which lay over three centuries in the future, the war Lucy recounted remained mostly local: indeed very local for, despite this apparently inclusive context, the focus of the *Memoirs* was English, and Midland English, history. Lucy suffered from the very same problem as later local historians: there was this missing link. Thus when dealing with the national, intra-national and international aspects of the war, Lucy turned to either Thomas May's *History of the Parliament of England* published in 1647 or his 1650 revised version, *A Breviary of the History of the Parliament of England*.<sup>5</sup> It is likely that that Hutchinson used the earlier version principally. Possibly united ideologically to May's interpretation of the course of the civil wars, she relied on this source extensively and in many places uncritically, quoting it wholesale without acknowledging it specifically. This is certainly true of a passage in which Lucy referred to Ireland:

rebellion in Ireland broke out, wherein above 200,000 were massacred in two months space, being surpriz'd, and many of them most inhumanely butcher'd and tormented; and besides the slaine, abundance of poore families stript and sent naked away out of all their possessions[.]:

The figures for the deaths and the reference to two months are lifted straight from May.<sup>6</sup> In reality probably fewer than 5,000 protestants died, many because of their being evicted during winter rather than in deliberate acts of violence and murder. The tales of 200,000 deaths were deliberate scare mongering and combined with other rumours to inspire genuine terror in Britain.

However, she could also use May's text and interpret it differently, as with the utilisation of another passage. In her memoir Lucy wrote:

the Parliament shew'd such a wonderfull respect to the King that they never mention'd him,

as he was, the sole author of all those miscarriages, but imputed them to evill Councillors, and gave him all the submissive language that could have bene us'd to a good prince, fixing all the guilt upon his evill Councillors and Ministers of State

Lucy repeated almost word for word the text May had written, but changed its position in the historical narrative. May had placed these words at the beginning of his discussion of the opening of the Long Parliament:

The Parliament shewed a great and wonderfull respect to the King, and in many expressions gave him humble thanks for calling them together, without any reflection upon his Person for what had passed in former misgovernment; but since no cure

could be made without searching wounds, and that grievances must be recited, they resolved so to name them, as to cast the envy of them upon evill Counsell...<sup>7</sup>

Lucy, on the other hand, in a more directly radical move, placed her version of this text in the narrative dealing with the state of affairs a year later on the eve of the king's journey to Scotland to ratify the Treaty of London. Hutchinson placed the passage so as to underline the king's duplicity in taking advantage of the generosity of spirit shown by parliament: he would not only claim to be personally innocent of misgovernment, but would go on to try and overthrow the Scottish government whilst in Edinburgh with the ultimate aim of regaining power in England and Wales. Whereas May, by contrast, was instead simply demonstrating that in November 1640 that parliament remained as fully respectful of the king as it should have been despite the extraordinary circumstances, and proceeding according to custom.<sup>8</sup>

Thomas May's *Breviary* can be added to the list of contemporary texts which focussed on the general narrative rather than on the local aspects. For whilst the work was a chief source for Lucy Hutchinson when her text strayed from the Nottingham scene to cover national events, May could add nothing to her textual Midland landscape, as his text focused very much on the South Midlands when referring to the broader region at all. May only referred to North Midlands towns infrequently: naturally he mentioned the raising of the king's standard at Nottingham and he referred to Leicester in 1645 when it was seized by the king during the campaign which culminated at Naseby. He also referred to Newark in relation to the third siege in 1645-1646. These were events upon which Lucy could rely upon her own knowledge and that of associates to recount, and therefore did not refer to May when dealing with them.<sup>9</sup>

Without a greater regional perspective or seemingly lacking knowledge of a strategic perspective, the perception of war in Lucy's work is that of Nottingham looking outwards. John Hutchinson, the governor, and his garrison are presented as standing in glorious defiance against the surrounding royalists and duplicitous parliamentarians throughout the first civil war. Nottingham had, ironically from Lucy's perspective, played its most important role in the king's strategy as England mobilised for all-out war during mid-summer 1642 and had gone on to play a significant, if largely symbolic, role in late August when the king chose to declare war on parliament in the precincts of its dilapidated castle. The actual role Nottingham played in the war hardly lived up to the seeming strategic promise of the summer.

There were several strategic angles to the perceived importance of Nottingham in the summer of 1642 and they centred upon the River Trent. The river should have been more important than it seems to be. The Trent was a major waterway in the seventeenth century and the shipping of goods from the near continent and the transport of coal and grain into the Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire and beyond suggested great potential for the town to be recognised as pivotal to holding the region. There was potential to supply, and deny supply to the towns and villages which would house soldiers, garrisons and outlying billets for the armies which were based in the area during the war. Nottingham could control goods being shipped eastwards towards Newark, which would become a royalist garrison, or potentially beyond to the port at Kingston upon Hull which remained in parliament's hands from April 1642 onwards. Likewise Nottingham could have controlled the passage of goods, etc. travelling westwards into south Derbyshire or on to Staffordshire. Yet none of the fighting in the area described by Lucy seems to have related directly to the control of river trade. It may be that the early seizure of Hull by parliament may have rendered the river of less importance

straight away and that the seizure of Newark at the end of 1642 compounded the river's lack of trading importance throughout the war by firmly ensuring a division of control. Where the river remained important was as barrier to troop movements and consequently the crossing points. Newark itself, Muskham Bridge, Trent Bridge, the ferries in south Derbyshire as well as Cavendish Bridge and on to Burton on Trent, did become the focus of military actions aimed at controlling crossings. The importance of bridges, fords and ferries serves to underline the importance of the roads in that respect and Nottingham lost out to Newark in importance as the Great North Road and Fosse Way conjoined at the latter: east-west and north-south travel made Newark a gem for the royalists who based themselves there. Thus it was via Newark, not Nottingham, from where men and supplies could be sent southwards and eastwards into Lincolnshire and on into East Anglia and potentially towards London. Due to this location Newark became a target for the parliamentarians established in the Midlands and East Anglia wishing to interrupt the royalist hold on the Midlands and to open links with the parliamentary garrison at Nottingham, or from the south to the parliamentary stronghold in Hull. For this reason Newark appears in Hutchinson's narrative extensively.

### **Other Authors and the Region – an authorial context**

Lucy Hutchinson was not the only author with Midland connections and who wrote of the war in the area: there are at least five others. Most notable of all was Margaret Lucas, born into the powerful Lucas family from Essex, who, as a result of her marriage to William Cavendish, the Marquis of Newcastle, became associated with his estates at Bolsover, Welbeck and later during the Restoration the massive and dramatic rebuilding on the site of Lucy and John's former garrison at Nottingham. Margaret Cavendish's limited account of the war in this region is contained within the biography of her husband, which focussed on his broader role in the war as a whole. The Earl (and later Marquis and Duke) of Newcastle's command covered the entirety of northern England, the north and east midlands and as far south and east as East Anglia. Given this awesome responsibility, Margaret's husband was only personally present in Lucy's region of the country twice; during the summer of 1642 and again in a protracted stay in the following autumn. These periods elicited a number of references to the area in the biography and there is some correlation between the two women's accounts. Their treatment of the region and its activists was quite different: Lucy's general lack of restraint when naming individuals contrasts completely with Cavendish's more than occasional avoidance of using the personal names of other protagonists. The section of Cavendish's work contained in *The First Book*, which deals with the Midland region, begins with the then Earl of Newcastle's campaign in Lincolnshire during late July 1643. It therefore focusses particularly upon the siege of Gainsborough, when the royalist Earl of Kingstun lost the town to parliamentarians commanded by Lord Willoughby on 28 July, only for Newcastle's army to quickly retake the town two days later. These events gave rise to one of the few incidents that both authors recounted in detail: the singular death of the Earl of Kingstun following his surrender of Gainsborough. In the Duchess's version:

... the town taken by the enemy's forces, who having an intention to convey the said Earl of Kingstun from thence to Hull, in a little pinnace met with some of my Lord's forces by the way, commanded by the Lieutenant of the Army, who being desirous to rescue the Earl of Kingstun, and making some shots with their regiment pieces, to stop the pinnace, unfortunately slew him and one of his servants.<sup>10</sup>

Hutchinson's version of the event is somewhat more detailed and as such acts as a good example of the distinctive narrative differences between Hutchinson's text and other regional accounts from or dealing with these Midland shires.

My Lord professing himselfe to him rather desirous of peace, and fully resolv'd not to act on either side, made a serious imprecation on himself in these words: 'When,' said he, 'I take armes with the King against the Parliament, or with the Parliament against the King, let a Cannon Bullett devide me betweene them;' which God was pleas'd to bring to passe a few months after; for he, going into Gainsborough and there taking armes for the King, was surpriz'd by my Lord Willoughby, and, after a handsome defence of himselfe, yielded, and was put prisoner into a pinnace, and sent down the river to Hull, when my Lord Newcastle's Armie marching allong the shore shot at the pinnace, and being in danger the Earle of Kingston went up upon the decks to shew himselfe, and to prevaile with them to forbear shooting, but assoon as he appear'd a Cannon bullett

flew from the King's Armie and devided him in the middle, being then in the Parliament's pinnace, who perished according to his owne unhappie imprecation. His declaring himselfe for the King, as it enforced the royall, so it weak'ned the other party.<sup>11</sup>

Hutchinson's narrative is much richer and shows the way she tried to establish the motivations of individuals portrayed within the book. It is this factor which in a region so devoid of writers and memorialists, makes Hutchinson's narrative an essential source for exploring the driving force of local royalism and parliamentarianism. She may have gone to such efforts in order to divine for herself the motivations for the actions of her husband's enemies within and outside of the parliamentarian cause, to compare and/or contrast them with the motivation of her husband which she clearly delineated for her children and others in the text. The very singularity of Hutchinson's work leaves readers (and historians) with an important dilemma: very often the *Memoirs* are the only record of some people's specific actions, and that leaves the question of her accuracy regarding motivation very problematic. One saving grace lies in the instances where she is open handed in dealing with several protagonists, such as the king and locally the Earl of Kingston: nevertheless these can be offset against those she clearly established as villains such as the queen or Oliver Cromwell. Nevertheless, her account of Sir John Gell and his actions (with perhaps the exception of her charges of cowardice) do match widely held and expressed views of him held by a spectrum of other commentators.

Following the occupation of Lincoln, Newcastle returned to Yorkshire and embarked upon the siege of Hull, but returned southwards after the battle of Horncastle (in the Duchess's account called Hornby Castle) during October 1643, where the parliamentarian Yorkshire horse regiments under Sir Thomas Fairfax had united with the Eastern Association horse commanded by Oliver Cromwell to defeat Newcastle's lieutenant general Lord Widdrington. The defeat forced a change in Newcastle's strategy: instead of trying to secure the whole of the North-East above the Humber estuary by continuing to besiege Hull, he advanced into the south of his region to secure the route to East Anglia and Oxford. During this period Newcastle made use of his own garrisoned homes at Bolsover and Welbeck but held meetings at Chesterfield. Newcastle redeveloped Colonel General Henry Hastings's forces by authorising the creation of a set of regiments to be raised in Derbyshire and put under his command. Hastings was raised to the rank of lieutenant general at the same time. Hastings was also created Lord Loughborough when Newcastle became a marquis. Yet in this part of

her narrative the Duchess only refers to Hastings as: ‘an honourable person Commander-in-Chief of all the forces of that county [Derbyshire] and of Leicestershire’.<sup>12</sup> In December 1643, Newcastle left the region, leaving the county secure ‘save only an inconsiderable party in the town of Derby, which they had fortified, not worth the labour to reduce it’. Here the Duchess’s account of the region comes to an end because Newcastle’s attention is from that point entirely absorbed with the threat posed to the north of his command by the Scots who had joined the war in England on the side of parliament.<sup>13</sup> The only other royalist account from within the county is Colonel Gervase Holles’s memoir of his family which contains only a small amount of detail concerning the royalist cause in Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire as he focussed on Newark’s role on the war, in particular those events that concerned his regiment of foot’s service at the garrison during the second siege.<sup>14</sup>

The other accounts of the war in the area are, like Hutchinson’s, from a parliamentary perspective. Cavendish’s final section on the region neatly leads into the writings of the only other authors to cover the region, Sir John Gell, his brother Thomas and Sir George Gresley.<sup>15</sup> The major author of these three is Sir John Gell of Hopton, Derbyshire who was a wealthy lead-mine lessee and former High Sheriff of the county who, like John Hutchinson, served as a parliamentary colonel and town governor during the war and had assisted Hutchinson in the seizure of Nottingham Castle in late 1642. Gell was very different to Hutchinson. Unlike John he had held county office - whereas John’s father who was still living at the outbreak of war remained the representative of the family in local government. Gell had a shady background as far as his parliamentarianism was concerned because he was never a popular man. In the 1630s Gell held the sheriff’s office and proved an effective collector of Ship Money. The former coastal county defence tax had been a major source of discontent, particularly in the inland counties but more generally as it became clear that the normally extraordinary tax was becoming an ordinary continual levy. Gell’s success in collecting Charles I’s most hated tax led to his unpopularity when he chose to support parliament: some saw this as an opportunistic means of avoiding the consequences of a looming enquiry into Ship Money collection. Neither was Gell any more popular during the war and in the post-war years he was attacked in the press for alleged financial and political chicanery; thus his account of the war was a justification of his actions.

Lucy Hutchinson’s and John Gell’s accounts do overlap in more substantial ways than Hutchinson’s and Cavendish’s; moreover, Lucy refers to Gell personally and he to her husband. Hutchinson highlighted Gell’s association with Ship Money, indicating that she was one of those who believed that Gell calculated that he would escape censure or worse for his actions in collecting the tax by siding with parliament.<sup>16</sup> Lucy was also convinced that Gell caused as much damage to the county of Nottinghamshire as the royalists did and called him ‘a very bad neighbour to Mr. Hutchinson’s Garrison’ in her 850-word digression devoted to Gell’s life and character.<sup>17</sup> As Lucy knew, Gell was a skilled manipulator of the press during the first civil war although he would lose his grip in the war’s dying days, and she thought he used it in part to mask his shortcomings including his cowardice. Lucy described Gell as ‘not valliant’ and in this vein questioned his role at the Battle of Hopton Heath (20 March 1643) where he was reputed to have fought ‘pike in hand’ whilst leading the parliamentary foot regiments to victory. The battle in mid-Staffordshire was part of the campaign launched initially by parliamentary Lord Brooke to capture the strategic market town of Lichfield. Brooke had established a siege there, but had been killed in the early days by sniper-fire from the cathedral. Command had passed to Gell, arguably at that point the most senior of the parliamentarians in the region and a man in these early stages of the war in England, with a reputation for establishing parliamentary garrisons. Lord Brooke’s royalist rival in his home county of Warwickshire was the Earl of Northampton and it had been he who was sent in

pursuit of Brooke as he initially marched north westwards into Staffordshire. Northampton caught Gell's forces north east of Lichfield at Hopton Heath and attacked. In the battle the royalist horse had defeated the parliamentary horse but had not been able to dislodge the foot. In the fighting Northampton was killed and although command passed quickly to Henry Hastings, the Derbyshire foot regiments had held off the attacks made upon them. Gell had been in charge of the foot that day. He made great play of the incident in the press at the time both to boost his own reputation but also to create a favourable contrast with his rival the Cheshire-based parliamentary Sir William Brereton who had commanded the routed parliamentary horse. By contrast Hutchinson's version of the battle contested the public presentation of Gell's role. Rather than Gell's leading the foot-soldiers' stand against the royalist assaults on them, she claimed, 'his men once held him up among a stand of Pikes while they obtain'd a glorious victory', suggesting that he was faint with fear.<sup>18</sup>

Gell's account *A true relation of what Service hath beene done by Colonell Sir John Gell, Bart. for the Kinge and Parliament*, was not published until the late eighteenth century by Rev. Stebbing-Shaw in his history of Staffordshire and again in the early nineteenth century when it appeared in Stephen Glover's Derbyshire gazetteer. The manuscript remains at Hopton Hall.<sup>19</sup> The *True Relation* takes the form of a narrative account with the apparent aim of justifying Gell's actions and presenting his service in such a way as to attract recognition and reward. By the time it was written, Gell had been deprived of the governorship of Derby following the contentious recruiter elections in Derbyshire which had returned his brother to parliament, and after a string of accusations about Gell's own financial activities during the war. Much is a straightforward relation of the activities of the Derby-based regiments in order to underline the service he had performed for parliament. Gell emphasised that it was Derby-based troops which had secured Nottingham for parliament in late 1642 because Hutchinson had no sufficient forces of his own and ensured that they remained there until the following January whilst local troops were raised. He later referred to his regiment and the Nottingham regiment standing firm during the brief and contentious siege of Newark by Major-General Thomas Ballard in February 1643: two episodes which Hutchinson mirrored in the memoir of John. Hutchinson's account of the initial seizure of Nottingham in the late autumn of 1642 hardly differs from Gell's but her account of the siege of Newark in February 1643 does play up a marked difference. The whole attempt on Newark had been badly executed and even though the town's defences were incomplete, especially towards the east, the parliamentarians were able to make little headway. Both Gell and Hutchinson placed the major share of the blame on Ballard's seeming lack of commitment: Gell even uses the term 'betrayed' when discussing Ballard's failure to support the attack on the town which involved the Derby regiment. Gell's and Hutchinson's men were in both accounts the last to be driven back from the town. However, whereas Gell wrote of both regiments resisting as long as they could and securing the withdrawal of their artillery, Lucy wrote that Gell's own grey-coat regiment retreated from the battlefield outside the town leaving the Nottinghamshire foot regiment to face a royalist counter-attack alone.

The longest section concerning the war in Nottingham within Gell's account related to the major assault made on the town and castle on 18 September 1643. The royalists under Henry Hastings managed to take control of the town and penned Hutchinson's forces into the castle. The royalists then built a fort at Trent Bridge, which was at the time about a mile south of the town. The fort was far enough distant from the castle to be able to guard the southern approach to Nottingham and block the town's links with Leicestershire and London. Gell sent his regiments to Nottingham to assist and with their help Hutchinson was able to reoccupy



the town. Gell's part in finally driving the royalists out is described in some detail and rounded out with this statement:

soe that it will be adjudged by any councell of war, that Nottingham towne and castle had long been long since in the enemy's possession, had they not had the assistance of Sir John Gell in driving the enemy from them at *every* tyme of their neede, as the Colonells and Committee of Nottinghamshire did ever acknowledge.<sup>20</sup>

Colonels and committees may have agreed with Gell, but the colonel's wife did not. Lucy's view of the role played by Gell's men differed more than somewhat. She instead wrote:

Assoone as they were come into the towne Sir John Gell's men, seing the Cavaliers had a mind to be gone, interrupted them not, but being as dextrous at plunder as fight, they presently went to [Alderman] Topladie's house, who had betrey'd the Towne, and plunder'd it and some others, while the Governor's souldiers were busie in clearing the Towne of the enemy; which assoone as they had done, the Governor did what he could, to restreine the plunder: but the truth is, Gell's men were nimble youths at that worke, yett there was not very much mischiefe done by them.<sup>21</sup>

Gell's account refers to Nottingham and Hutchinson just a couple of times more following the relief from the September 1643 siege and in all cases with fairly neutral tones, but he did point out that Hutchinson's forces supported his regiment's attack on Wingfield Manor during the summer of 1644.

Thomas Gell was John Gell's younger brother who like George Hutchinson served as lieutenant colonel to his elder brother throughout the war before controversially being elected an MP in the 'recruiter elections' of 1645. In many ways Thomas's manuscript account, 'A true account of the raising an employing of the forces under Sir John Gell from the beginning of October anno domini 1642 until the end of September 1644' which also remains unpublished at Hopton Hall mirrors John's and is in effect a shortened version of his brother's work which adds little to what Gell senior wrote. However, the second of the longer Derbyshire accounts was compiled by Sir George Gresley of Drakelow, a JP, and former MP, one of Gell's chief supporters on the County Committee during the first civil war, though he had been ironically a ship money refuser. Gresley's account covered just the early period of the war, progressing with its narrative coverage only until autumn 1643. This narrative is in some ways problematic, at least in one place reversing the order of events or perhaps conflating two actions, for no perceptible historical or literary purpose.<sup>22</sup> The account leaps forward from the termination of the narrative history in 1643 to end with a firm rebuttal of the charges of financial irregularities laid at Gell's door at the end of the war. Gresley did not go into any detail about the war in Nottinghamshire for the most part, but did make two pertinent comments regarding the relationship between the two garrisons of Derby and Nottingham. Early in his text Gresley referred to the frantic period in late autumn 1642 when both sides had sought to seize territory in the wake of the failure of either side to win the major battle which had been expected to bring an end to the war. Gresley made it clear that the Derbyshire forces had not only seized Nottingham for the cause, but that later in 1643 their presence was still necessary for the security of the town. In the September 1643 fight for Nottingham over which Lucy had challenged Gell's account of the importance of his men's contribution, Gresley asserted that the subsequent defence of the town was the work of Derbyshire forces who had 'sett out theyre workes and stayed there untyll those works were advanced' in the wake of the royalist attack.<sup>23</sup> In general Gresley was in no doubt about the

contribution the Derbyshire forces made to the safety and security of Nottingham in a way fully supportive of Gell's text, claiming that the Derbyshire forces were essential to the salvation of Nottingham in 1643. In particular the capture of the fort built by the royalists at the Trent Bridge was achieved only because the Derbyshire forces were present:

... the govenour of the castle professed to Major Mollanus that unless our souldyers would stay and take the bridge we would quitt the castle, lett the Parliament doe with him what they would. <sup>24</sup>

Lucy makes no mention of Sir George in her account as she may not have been aware of his role in the Derbyshire Parliamentary cause, and unfortunately nor does she make any reference to John's supposed proposal to throw in the towel. As Gresley's account remained unpublished she may not ever have been aware of the suggestion that he made it.

There are two denunciations of outsiders which unite all three accounts: the Parliamentarians Lord Grey of Groby and Major-General Thomas Ballard are both lambasted by name for their failure to prosecute the war thoroughly, the former on several occasions in early and mid-1643 and the latter particularly for his failure to press the siege of Newark in February 1643, to a firm conclusion. Thomas, Lord Grey of Groby, had been appointed commander of the East Midland counties despite his youth - he was only 19 at the outbreak of the war - because his father the Earl of Stamford - probably the most appropriate regional leader for Parliament - was leading Parliamentary forces in the south west of the country. Grey was thus inexperienced and had held no offices in local or national affairs before the beginning of the war in 1642, and this may have impinged upon his ability to organise and lead a thoroughgoing war effort. He was criticised by Lucy Hutchinson and Oliver Cromwell alike for his shortcomings, particularly his failure to tackle the Queen's army when it passed through the region in summer 1643.

### **The North Midlands at War**

Militarily, in contrast with Margaret Cavendish's account of the war which ranged over a larger geographical area because of the size of her husband's command, and in line with the Gell brothers and their political ally Gresley's accounts, Lucy's war is focussed almost entirely within the counties bordering Nottinghamshire. Indeed for the most part, on the corridor of territory stretching from Derby to Nottingham and onto Newark; a strip of land on either side of the present A52 (Brian Clough Way) and the A612. Outlying parts of Nottinghamshire often provide the only broader context. As this essay is concerned with the military rather than the political aspects of waging war from the castle at Nottingham, there is no space to deal with the forays into debate in London between her husband's supporters and rivals and MPs other than to indicate that it shows the lack of clear social leadership, similar to the situation in Derbyshire where there was no automatic leader to whom deference would be shown in the parliamentary cause.<sup>25</sup>

From Lucy Hutchinson's perspective the Derby-Nottingham-Newark area was an important nexus and indeed in terms of the county, region and even country there is a good deal to justify this focus. Both Nottingham and Newark had become militarised at about the same, by John Hutchinson and John Gell for parliament and the other side by John Henderson a Scottish professional soldier and High Sheriff, and by John Digby.<sup>26</sup> It was clear that the seizure of the two administrative and market centres presaged that an essential role was seen for the area. Nottingham could control inland navigation into the North-West Midlands along

the river, whilst Newark could control both trade into the county along the river and the Great North Road. The administrative focus of both towns could also convey advantages to the holders, for the networks of officials which supported the shrievalty and judiciary in the county resided in Nottingham, but Newark was also a seat for the magistrate's bench which sat there, Nottingham and Retford during each sitting of the county's quarter sessions. Nottingham would become the seat of the county committee, the parliamentary local administration, whilst Newark would be the base for the re-launched royalist administrative organisation, the commission of array.<sup>27</sup> This would mean that support services and custom would allow the military and civil administrations access to the traditional means, officials and people who comprised local government essential to managing the war effort.

In contrast to lingering generally held perceptions, in no small part due to Lucy Hutchinson's account, the war in the North Midlands was from the late autumn of 1642 highly, if not always successfully, organised. With the greatly expected single battle that would end the war in 1642 proving to be a chimera, it was clear that regional resources had to be managed in such a way that would supply and fund a longer war stretching at least over the winter of 1642-1643 and into a second field-campaigning season. To do so, the king reinvigorated the commissions of array originally established in June and July 1642, despite their failure to mobilise the trained bands that summer, and he gave them a far greater remit over material and logistics. Taxation was at the core of their daily business: they were to institute a taxation levy in both cash and kind within their counties. It was the continuous round of collections of this cash and kind payment which was referred to as plunder in the parliamentary and royalist press when referring to each other's fiscal organisation. Parliament created counter-commissions – newly-minted county committees comprising the same sort of men the royalists had mobilised for the commissions. Both sides had intended their administrative and management systems to be in the hands of county elites: men of title and administrative experience; but both administrations were in the end forced to rely upon a much broader social composition than intended, thus involving some degree of social dilution within local government. The county committee for Nottinghamshire included both John Hutchinson and his half-brother George. The primary responsibility for the committee was fiscal; collecting three chief types of levy: the Weekly Tax (which later became the Monthly Pay) like royalist collections these were levied in both cash and goods, sequestrated incomes from royalists' estates and an excise tax: there were also other minor taxes as well as from late 1643 a levy to pay the wage bill for Scottish Army of the Solemn League and Covenant. Parliament grouped its counties under the leadership of major-generals – organisations which would transform into associations and which would find a mirror in the royalist camp as 1642 turned into 1643, where colonel-generals were given authority over regional collections of regiments. Nottinghamshire was initially in the parliamentary Lord Grey's Midland Association, but was later transferred to the Northern Association of Lord Fairfax: it was also under royalist Henry Hastings's command and part of his 'North Midland' county remit. Neither side's administration was to meet with complete success, but nevertheless by the spring of 1643, both had established the manner in which the war was to be organised.

A quantitative study of the administrations is possible using a range of sources, which enables examination/ of the limitations of the rival policies. During the period of the first civil war, for example, twenty-eight men were appointed to the Nottinghamshire county committee alongside Hutchinson - which certainly by 1644 had divided into pro- and anti-Hutchinson factions.<sup>28</sup> Four appointees seemed to have played little or no part in the administration: and indeed one of these, sometime mayor William Drury was expelled for

royalist sympathies. It was, in common with many parliamentary committees, especially that in the southern neighbour county, Leicestershire, a relatively low-born committee: only one baronet, two knights, eleven esquires and between six and nine gentlemen, and perhaps two professionals – one lawyer and a physician can be clearly identified (the other two may also have been urban gentry), as having graced the committee benches; the only scion of a noble house present being the untitled third son of the royalist Earl of Kingston. Several appointees to the committee in its later years were there because they were members of the regiments in the town. In terms of experience this committee was marked by low attainment, just six had held any political or administrative office before the war and the highest position held was that of high sheriff, a post held by just one of the committeemen. Despite the centrality of military matters in committee business, there was just one man with pre-war experience of trained band leadership. Even so there were a couple of magistrates and two men from the town council. On the other hand ten had attended university (eight of them Cambridge) and five had been at one of the Inns of Court long enough to be enrolled.<sup>29</sup>

It must also be said that their opponents sitting on the commission over at Newark were not much more impressive. The king and his advisors of course had had the problem of trying to second-guess the loyalties of their appointees to the commission before the fighting began and so had made mistakes in setting up the commissions as well as making doomed attempts to draw men to their side by appointing them to the commissions. Nevertheless, they largely left the commission membership unchanged from those early days. Just nine men named originally in the summer of 1642 were apparently active in commission work: just one holder of a noble title (which was an Irish title and thus ranked lower than an English one), one baronet, two knights, four esquires and a gentleman. Together they had held just five offices before the war, three had been MPs, one a deputy lieutenant and one a JP: on the other hand the vast majority were already the head of their family, just four however had been to university (all Cambridge) and just one of them seemingly long enough to get a degree.<sup>30</sup>

However, none of these royalists or parliamentarians ranged alongside or against Hutchinson left substantial or indeed, any, account of themselves, their motivations or their war-time record other than the aforementioned Gervase Holles – and even he was not a commissioner of array in Nottinghamshire. Their names can be retrieved through a series of administrative documents, but for the most part there is little else. Fortunately, for a few something of their characters and motivations can be found through Hutchinson's work, rather than in the works of the other local authors. Gresley and Hutchinson all used their narratives to counter-act what they saw as post-war mistreatment, particularly in the press, or opprobrium. The three male authors had set out to clear Gell's name and Hutchinson also felt the need to explain John's actions in the context of his arrest, imprisonment and death in the wake of the Restoration. Whilst only Hutchinson looks at the broader personal picture in any great detail, there are similarities in experience, for both Hutchinson and Gell had to fight against factions within their own county committees and within the broader parliamentary cause. Analysis of Hutchinson's struggles is rendered a much easier task than that of untangling the motives of Gell's rivals only because of Lucy's text.

Yet the richness of the Hutchinson text does not make the exploration of parliamentary administration any clearer or enable judgements to be made about its effectiveness,. John Hutchinson was a central player within the parliamentary administrative system established

at county level, yet very little information about this side of the work is reflected in Lucy's writing, making it difficult for a reader not versed in the nature of the war-time administration to understand how the war in the region functioned by reading this work alone. Lucy mentions the names of members of the county committee which John led and upon which George sat, but does not describe or comment its functions and work, focussing instead, when she does mention the committee at all, upon the rivalries within it. Naturally Lucy focussed even less upon the royalist counterparts and the reader is left very much in the dark about their actions - portrayed in the book as they are as largely committing acts of plunder and theft in and around Nottingham and Newark. Partly because of the Hutchinson narrative, nineteenth- and early twentieth- century accounts of the war in this region perpetuate an image of fragmentary, strategy-free, random acts of violence in and around Nottingham.

With regard to the strategic situation, the war in this region focussed on two related strategies: the first was regional control and the second was communications-related and focussed a great deal upon Newark rather than Nottingham. In the initial stages of the war John Hutchinson and Sir John Gell acted swiftly and seeming outplayed the royalists, seizing two county towns and driving out several embryonic royalist garrisons in their two counties: this was in turn bolstered by Lord Grey of Groby's seizure of Leicester. Yet very quickly Henderson and Digby seized Newark, the major communications hub, and neutralised Nottingham's potential control of river traffic. This initiative was supported by the return of Henry Hastings, the future Lord Loughborough, who brought large numbers of recruits with him and established major garrisons around the region during 1643. Possession of the region's county towns was less important than it might have seemed at the outset of the war, as none of them was fortified sufficiently and alternative market towns, such as Lichfield, Newark and Ashby de la Zouch, were taken over by royalists, who could thus tap into their economic strengths. Coupled with the establishment of strong garrisons in traditional castles and fortified manor houses, such as Ashby de la Zouch, Tutbury, Bolsover and Welbeck, the county towns, like Nottingham and to a lesser extent Derby, could be economically circumvented and overawed. There is no strategic understanding of this in Lucy's work, and it is not easy to piece together from the text either. There is more evidence of the role that Newark played in the war within the work, but readers need to assemble this for themselves, for although Lucy does spend more time discussing Newark in the war it is again in a fragmentary way. The town was the target of several parliamentarian initiatives during the war: there were three established sieges, and other several designs upon the town which failed to develop fully into an attack or a siege but posed dangerous threats. This was true of those attempts between May and July 1643 when forces under Gell, Hutchinson, Grey and Oliver Cromwell set out to seize Newark to prevent the royalists using it as a gateway between from the north and south and blocking the garrison's access to Lincolnshire and the eastern counties. Lucy mentions these incidents and sieges, but as in the case of the first siege of 1643 mentioned above, chiefly to score points against other parliamentarians on behalf of her husband.

## **Conclusion**

It is possible to say two chief things about Hutchinson's work. Firstly, in terms of the course of the fighting the *Memoirs* adds very little to the image of the war as it was presented in the contemporary newsbooks,

with their episodic approach to the war across the nation and especially in the regions. Therefore neither *Memoirs* nor diurnals convey a sense of the regional strategies or the larger scale national strategies into which the region fitted. The centrality of the town and castle of Nottingham in Lucy's view fails to develop any sense of the true place of the town and county in the struggles of both sides to maintain contact between their northern and southern strongholds. Neither does the account cover the failure of Nottingham to play the strategic role that it seemed to promise when the king raised his standard in the castle grounds on 22 August 1642. A prime example of this failure to expand upon an event of great strategic significance is Lucy's coverage of the royalist fort at Trent Bridge which, in her account, seems to be established solely to plague and plunder the vicinity of Nottingham, whereas in reality the fort served to challenge Nottingham Castle's control of that stretch of the river between there and south Derbyshire and allowed the royalists to extend their financial and military control to the north-west bank of the Trent as well as the county westward of Nottinghamshire and eastern Derbyshire. Such a tight focus gives the book something of the tone of the sort of geo-centricity and egocentricity of a Calvinist spiritual diary in which everything happened to heighten the relationship between the author and God. Yet everything recounted by Lucy Hutchinson did not happen because of the seeming orbital attraction of John Hutchinson but because of the tactical potential of the castle and river and the strategic role of the Midlands.

However, secondly, it is important to emphasise the contribution to civil war history made by this account on a number of levels. It is a mark of the work's strength that the historians of the nineteenth century such as J F Hollings, the early twentieth century like E W Hensman and then in the 1970s such as Roy Sherwood, relied heavily on her narrative to add colour to their own. The *Memoirs* are of great importance because of the personal detail included within them and in particular, Lucy's attempt at understanding and giving an account of people's motivations: her own, John's and the other characters great and small who participated in their war. It is possible to create a largely quantitative or prosopographical studies of parliamentarian and royalists in the region to explore the qualities of the rival administrations and war efforts. However, for a qualitative approach the *Memoirs* are essential. Analysis of the internal struggles of the parliamentarian factions within Nottingham would be far more difficult to unpick without this account.

---

<sup>1</sup> Hutchinson, *Memoirs*, 60.

<sup>2</sup> Hutchinson, *Memoirs*, 36.

<sup>3</sup>Hollings, *The History of Leicester During the Great Civil War*; Hensman, *Loughborough During the Great Civil War* and 'Henry Hastings and the Great Civil War'.

<sup>4</sup> Sherwood, *Civil Strife in the Midlands*; Holmes, *The Eastern Association in the English Civil War*.

<sup>5</sup> May, *the History of the Parliament of England, A Breviary of the History of the Parliament of England* ; henceforth, May, *Breviary*.

<sup>6</sup> May, *Breviary*, 37 [I agree this proves case for Breviary at this point since 1647 says one month]; Hutchinson, *Memoirs*, 51 ,correcting Sutherland's 'about' to 'aboue' from the MS, Nottinghamshire Archives DD/HU4, 85.

<sup>7</sup> Hutchinson, *Memoirs*, 51 ; May, *Breviary*, 19.

<sup>8</sup> May, *Breviary*, 31.

<sup>9</sup> May, *Breviary*, 117-9, 134-5.

<sup>10</sup>Cavendish, *The Life of William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle*, p27 (henceforward Cavendish, *Newcastle*).

<sup>11</sup> Hutchinson, *Memoirs* , 80.

<sup>12</sup> Cavendish, *Newcastle*, 32.

<sup>13</sup> Cavendish, *Newcastle*, 32-33.

<sup>14</sup> Holles, *Memorials of the Holles Family*, in general and 188-189 in particular.

<sup>15</sup> There is also a brief and detailed account of the civil war in Newark by John Twentyman. Nottingham University Manuscripts Department Me Lm 11, which restricts itself to coverage of the events in and around the town.

<sup>16</sup> Hutchinson, *Memoirs*, 67.

<sup>17</sup> Hutchinson, *Memoirs*, 67-69.

<sup>18</sup> Hutchinson, *Memoirs*, 68.

<sup>19</sup> The manuscript remains at Hopton Hall. Derbyshire Record Office holds a typed copy, Typescript: D3287/44/9/11, *A true relation of what Service hath beene done by Colonell Sir John Gell, Bart. for the Kinge and the Parliament, in Defence of the Towne and County of Derby, and how aydyng and assisting hee hath beene to the adjacent Countyes, viz. Nottinghamshire, Staffordshire, Cheshire, Lancashire, Lincolnshire and Yorkshire, from October, 1642, till October, 1646*[checked against Glover – are you following Stone here?]. S. Glover, *The History, Gazetteer and Directory of the County of Derby*, (Derby 1829). References here are to the re-printed text in Stone, *Derbyshire in the Civil War*, henceforward, Gell); the page numbers relate to Stone's book.

<sup>20</sup> Gell, 134.

<sup>21</sup> Hutchinson, *Memoirs*, 97.

<sup>22</sup> Gresley, *A true Account*, cited from Stone, *Derbyshire in the Civil War*, (henceforward, Gresley); the page numbers relate to Stone's book.

<sup>23</sup> Gresley, 145.

<sup>24</sup> Gresley, 149.

<sup>25</sup> See Seddon, Colonel Hutchinson and the Disputes between the Nottinghamshire Parliamentarians, 1643-45'.

<sup>26</sup> Gell, 129.

<sup>27</sup> Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, *Newark upon Trent: the Civil War Siegeworks*, contains an account of the garrison and the commissioners and provided biographical details of them.

<sup>29</sup> Bennett, 'The Royalist War Effort in the North Midlands, 1642-1646', 93-96.

<sup>30</sup> Bennett, 'The Royalist War Effort in the North Midlands, 1642-1646', 8-41.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Primary Sources: Unpublished

Derbyshire Record Office; Typescript D3287/44/9/9-10, G. Gresley, *A true Account of the raising and employeing of one foote regiment under Sir John Gell from the beginning of October 1646*

Derbyshire Record Office; Typescript D3287/44/9/11, *A True relation of what service hath beene done by Colonell Sir John Gell, Bart, for the Kinge and Parliament, in defence of the town and county of Derby, and how aydyng and assisting hee hath been to the adjacent counties viz. Nottinghamshire, Staffordshire Cheshire Lancashire Lincolnshire and Yorkshire, from October 1642 to October 1646*

Hopton Hall Manuscripts, @A True Account of the raising and employing of the forces under Sir John gell frthe beginning of October anno domini 1642 until the end of September 1644'.

Nottingham University Manuscripts Department: Me Lm 11, The Mellish Papers; Twentyman Manuscript.

### Primary Sources: Published

Bennett, Martyn. *A Nottinghamshire Village at War and Peace: The Accounts of the Constables of Upton, 1640-1666*. Nottingham: Thoroton Society Record Series 1995.

Cavendish, Margaret. *The Life of William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle*. Second edition. Ed. C. H. Firth. London: Routledge, [1906],

Holles, Gervase. *Memorials of the Holles Family, 1493-1656*, ed. A. C. Wood. London: Camden Society 1937.

Hutchinson, Lucy. *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson*. Ed. James Sutherland. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972.

Hutchinson, Lucy. *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson*. Ed. N. H. Keeble. London: Dent, 1995.

May, Thomas, *The History of the Parliament of England: which began November the Third, MDCXL*. (London, 1647.

---

May, Thomas., *A Breviary of the History of the Parliament of England*. London, 1650.  
 Stone, Brian. *Derbyshire in the Civil War*. Cromford: Scarthin Books, 1992.

### Secondary Sources

- Bennett, Martyn., *Oliver Cromwell*. London: Routledge, 2006.  
 Bennett, Martyn. *The Civil Wars in Britain and Ireland, 1638-1651*. Oxford: Blackwell 1996.  
 Bennett, Martyn. 'The Royalist War Effort in the North Midlands, 1642-1646', unpublished PhD thesis, Loughborough University, 1986.  
 Braddick, Michael. *God's Fury, England's Fire: A New History of the English Civil Wars*. London: Allen Lane, 2008.  
 Donagan, Barbara. *War in England 1642-1649*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.  
 Glover, Stephen. *The History, Gazetteer and Directory of the County of Derby*. 2 vols. Derby: Henry Mozley, 1829.  
 Royal Commission on Historical Monuments. *Newark upon Trent: the Civil War Siegeworks*. London: HMSO, 1964.  
 Hensman, E.W. 'Henry Hastings and the Great Civil War' . In *Memorials of Old Leicestershire*, edited by A. Dryden. London: George Allen, 1911.  
 Hensman, E. W. *Loughborough During the Great Civil War*. Loughborough: Echo Press, 1921.  
 Hollings, J .F. *The History of Leicester During the Great Civil War*. Leicester: Combe and Crossley, 1840.  
 Jennings, S.B. '*These Uncertain Tymes*'; *Newark and the Civilian Experience of the Civil Wars 1640-1660*. Nottingham: Nottinghamshire County Council, 2009.
- Seddon, P. R. 'Colonel Hutchinson and the Disputes between the Nottinghamshire Parliamentarians, 1643-45'. *Transactions of the Thoroton Society* 98 (1994): 71-81.  
 Sherwood, R. E. *Civil Strife in the Midlands 1642-1651*. Chichester: Phillimore, 1974.  
 Stone, Brian. *Derbyshire in the Civil War*. Cromford: Scarthin Books, 1992.