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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

FACULTY OF LAW, ARTS & SOCIAL SCIENCES

School of Social Sciences

**Military Intelligence Operations during the First English Civil War
1642 – 1646**

by

John Edward Kirkham Ellis

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

12 March 2010

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF LAW, ARTS & SOCIAL SCIENCES

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Doctor of Philosophy

**MILITARY INTELLIGENCE OPERATIONS IN THE FIRST ENGLISH CIVIL WAR
1642 – 1646**

By John Edward Kirkham Ellis

This thesis sets out to correct the current widely held perception that military intelligence operations played a minor part in determining the outcome of the English Civil War. In spite of the warnings of Sir Charles Firth and, more recently, Ronald Hutton, many historical assessments of the role played by intelligence-gathering continue to rely upon the pronouncements made by the great Royalist historian Sir Edward Hyde, earl of Clarendon, in his *History of the Rebellion*. Yet the overwhelming evidence of the contemporary sources shows clearly that intelligence information did, in fact, play a major part in deciding the outcome of the key battles that determined the outcome of the Civil War itself. The present thesis, which is built on a detailed and comprehensive examination of a very wide range of seventeenth century sources, will show the extent to which intelligence-gathering operations developed in both scope and sophistication as the conflict expanded and covered the entire country. It will demonstrate how intelligence information was used to influence the military strategy of each side; and will conclude by showing how the use of intelligence information determined the outcome of the fighting – and hence the war itself. This thesis makes an important contribution to our understanding of the factors which enabled Parliament to defeat the king. It not only challenges the tenaciously held assumption that the intelligence operations conducted during the English Civil War were ineffective and inconsequential, but it also fills in the substantial gap in our understanding of the conduct of the military intelligence operations that were actually conducted during that conflict. The thesis also seeks to demonstrate that the intelligence-gathering expertise developed during the Civil War provided the basis for the intelligence techniques and organisation subsequently used by Thurloe during the Protectorate.

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DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, **John Edward Kirkham Ellis**, declare that the thesis entitled:

Military Intelligence Operations during the First English Civil War 1642 - 1646

and the work presented in the thesis are both my own, and have been generated by me as the result of my own original research. I confirm that:

- this work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
- where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
- where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
- where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
- I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
- where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
- none of this work has been published before submission.

Signed:

Date:

12 March 2010

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Chapter One

Setting the Scene

1 Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to explore the contribution made by military intelligence-gathering operations to the outcome of the English Civil War fought between 1642 and 1646. Whilst much has been written about the Civil War during the past three hundred and fifty years, surprisingly little research has been carried out into the conduct of intelligence operations. Although contemporary accounts of the Civil War have provided an insight into intelligence-gathering,¹ it is only recently that research into a few of the Civil War campaigns has begun to explore the impact made by intelligence information upon the conduct and outcome of some of the key battles.² As this new research has revealed that intelligence information *did* play a significant role in the outcome of many individual battles, it therefore appears to be an appropriate time to attempt to evaluate the broader impact that intelligence operations had upon the entire conflict. Following an extensive exploration of the contemporary accounts of the fighting, this thesis will challenge the long-held perception that intelligence-gathering during the English Civil War was amateurish and imprecise – and contributed little to the final outcome of the conflict.

The claim that military intelligence-gathering was ineffective has often been supported by remarks made in the principal contemporary account of the English Civil War, *The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England*, written by the Royalist, Sir Edward Hyde, later Earl of Clarendon. The most frequently cited criticism appears in Clarendon's account of the Edgehill campaign, when he described the intelligence-gathering conducted before the battle in the following terms:

‘the two armies, though they were but twenty miles asunder when they set forth,
and both marched the same way, they gave not the least disquiet in ten days’

¹ See, for example, T. May, *A Breviary of the History of the Parliament of England* (London, 1655), pp. 250-252, 319, and 343-346; J. Sprigge, *Anglia Rediviva. England's Recovery* (London, 1647, reprinted Oxford 1854), p. 27; and E. Hyde, *The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England, together with an Historical View of the Affairs of Ireland* (sixteen books, London, 1703-4), Book VI, p. 79.

² See, for example, G. Foard, *Naseby: The Decisive Battle* (Kent, 1995), pp. 154-159 and 202; C. Scott, A. Turton and E. Gruber von Arni *Edgehill: The Battle Reinterpreted* (Barnsley, 2004), p.5; J. Day, *Gloucester and Newbury 1643: The Turning Point of the Civil War* (Barnsley, 2007), pp. 142-145 and 217-218; B. Donagan, *War in England: 1642 – 1649* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 100-106, 110 and 113; and J. Whitehead, *Cavalier and Roundhead Spies Intelligence in the Civil War and Commonwealth* (Barnsley, 2009).

march to each other; and in truth, as it appeared afterwards, neither army knew where the other was.’³

Clarendon’s perception of military intelligence operations conducted during the fighting has never been properly challenged. Although his claim is not supported by the evidence of contemporary sources, Clarendon’s longstanding reputation as perhaps the greatest historian of the conflict has given his comments a credibility which has led subsequent scholars to portray the military intelligence-gathering operations as ineffective and of no significance. On the three hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the English Civil War, Alan Marshall published an account of intelligence and espionage in the reign of Charles II, in which he wrote of the conflict that:

‘it was clear that intelligence activities were on a primitive level and that most civil war battles were more often the result of armies meeting accidentally rather than as any intelligence coup’.⁴

Many other scholars continue to take this view.⁵ The present thesis will draw upon contemporary evidence to show that military intelligence-gathering operations during the English Civil War were by no means as ineffectual as has so often been claimed. On the contrary, it will be suggested, intelligence information made a decisive contribution to the outcome of the entire conflict

2 The focus of earlier research

Although a great deal has been written about the English Civil War, most scholars have tended to concentrate on the two great questions of **why** the War was fought and of why people chose to support either Charles I or the Parliament.⁶ Exploring the political and social rationale of the Civil War was considered to be more revealing than conducting re-evaluations of military campaigns. Although, more recently, historians such as Peter Young, Glenn Foard, Malcolm Wanklyn and Jon Day have concentrated their research on the military aspects of the campaigns – seeking to establish exactly **where** these battles were fought and **what** had

³ Clarendon, *History*, Book VI, p.81.

⁴ A. Marshall, *Intelligence and Espionage in the Reign of Charles II, 1660-1685* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 18.

⁵ See, for example, B. Worden, *The English Civil Wars 1640-1660* (London, 2009), p. 69.

⁶ See, for example, R.H. Parry, *The English Civil War and After: 1642-1658* (London, 1970), pp. 22-24; C. Hill, *The Century of Revolution: 1603-1714* (London, 1975), pp.110-114; M. Stoye, *Loyalty and Locality. Popular Allegiance in Devon during the English Civil War* (Exeter, 1994), p. 255; and J. Kenyon, *The Civil Wars of England* (London, 1996), pp. 30-32.

actually happened – even these scholars have spent relatively little time in reviewing the impact made by military intelligence information upon the outcome of the numerous Civil War campaigns.⁷ Most historians have tended simply to echo the opinions of Clarendon when describing the part played by intelligence during the conflict. For example, Eliot Warburton, writing in 1869, claimed that, at Edgehill, ‘such was the scarcity of information, or the want of skill in collecting it, that the two great armies were in total ignorance of each other’s movements’.⁸ Clarendon’s conclusions have also continued to be cited by more recent historians. In 1967, for example, Peter Young quoted Clarendon’s account of Edgehill when he claimed that Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, the overall Parliamentarian commander, was ‘ill-served by his intelligence’.⁹ Yet, as the more recent assessments of Day and Foard show, the contemporary evidence reveals that a great deal of intelligence-gathering was being conducted in all of the key campaigns. The primary sources also show that intelligence operations played a significant role in the outcome of the military campaigns.

The present thesis sets out to build on these insights and to answer the question **‘To what extent was the outcome of the English Civil War influenced by military intelligence operations?’** In answering that question, the thesis sets out to demonstrate, first, that military intelligence information **was** widely used during the conflict and, second, that this intelligence information **did** have a significant impact upon the outcome of the Civil War. Following a chapter on the historiography of Civil War intelligence operations, the thesis will progress to explore the strategic management of intelligence-gathering so as to establish just how effectively each side directed their intelligence-gathering operations and in what ways intelligence information was integrated into each side’s decision-making processes. The wide variety of intelligence sources which were used during the conflict will be described next, and a series of chapters will then explore how the opposing sides gradually developed their intelligence-gathering operations during the years of the Civil War. The concluding chapter of the thesis will assess the impact that these intelligence operations had upon the outcome of the

⁷ See, for example, Austin Woolrych, *Battles of the English Civil War* (London, 1961), pp. 63-80; P. Young and R. Holmes, *The English Civil War: A Military History of the Three Civil Wars 1642 -1651* (London, 1974), pp. 72-83; G. Foard, *Naseby The Decisive Campaign* (Barnsley, 1995), pp. 329-343; S. Reid, *All the King’s Armies: A Military History of the English Civil War 1642 – 1651* (Kent, 1998), pp. 121-149; M. Wanklyn, *Decisive Battles of the English Civil War* (Barnsley, 2006), pp. 35-42, 57-67, 136, 145 and 161-172; and J. Day, *Gloucester and Newbury 1643 The Turning Point of the War* (Barnsley, 2007), pp. 140-145.

⁸ E. G. B. Warburton, *Memoirs of Prince Rupert, and the Cavaliers* (three volumes, London, 1869), Volume II, p. 10.

⁹ P. Young, *Edgehill 1642* (first printed 1967, first re-printed Moreton-in-Marsh, 1995), p.70.

Civil War, and will show that their impact was much more significant than has hitherto been acknowledged.

3 Definitions and Methodology

Any exploration of seventeenth-century intelligence-gathering needs to recognize that the word ‘intelligence’ was used in a number of different ways at that time. In contemporary accounts of the Civil War, the word ‘intelligence’ was used to describe many forms of information. For example, intelligence operations would have included what is now understood to be ‘investigative journalism’ as well as military scouting. During this period, the distinction between information and intelligence was often indistinct and resulted in a situation where the word ‘intelligence’ was used to describe the activities and the people who were engaged in all aspects of intelligence-gathering, ranging from spy to messenger; thus ‘intelligencers were pamphlets as well as people, [and] intelligence was the stuff of both the newshound and the spy’.¹⁰ An example of this ambivalent nomenclature is provided by the fact that some of these early news-pamphlets were called ‘*The Spie*’ and ‘*The Parliament Scout*’. Further potential misunderstandings arise from the fact that contemporaries often used the word ‘advertisements’ to describe specific intelligence reports; for example, on 22 March 1645, the Parliamentarian, Sir William Brereton, wrote to the Scottish commander, General David Leslie, that ‘by several advertisements that came into my hand since I left you, I am further certified that both Princes and their forces are marched away’.¹¹ One final point of clarification of the military terms in use during the seventeenth-century should be included here: the words ‘designes’ and ‘grand designes’ were often used to describe what we would now term strategic plans.¹²

Because intelligence is such a large subject, the present thesis will only explore the impact of intelligence information on the main military actions fought in England between 1642 and 1646. Thus the thesis will consider the collection, assessment and use of information relating to the strengths, location, capability and intentions of the Royalist and Parliamentarian military forces. The gathering of international strategic or political intelligence will therefore not be

¹⁰ M. Nevitt, *Women and the Pamphlet Culture of Revolutionary England, 1640-1660* (Aldershot, 2006), pp. 104-105.

¹¹ R.N. Dore, *The Letter Books of Sir William Brereton* (two volumes, The Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, 1984 and 1990), Volume 1, pp. 106-107.

¹² See, for example, Clarendon, *History*, Book IX, p.11 and R. Bell (ed.), *The Fairfax Correspondence* (two volumes, London, 1849), Volume 1, p. 218.

explored; nor will the gathering of politico-economic intelligence by either side (except insofar as that intelligence had a military application as defined above). However, the content of the growing number of news-pamphlets will be assessed in order to establish the impact that their reports of the military situation had had upon intelligence-gathering during the conflict. As there have been numerous contemporary descriptions of intelligence-gathering during the First English Civil War, the present thesis will concentrate on the major battles only.

Finally, the methodology used throughout this thesis should be explained. The thesis seeks to explore how intelligence information was gathered and used to inform commanding generals during the various campaigns of the First Civil War. The thesis also seeks to demonstrate that intelligence information played a more significant part in determining the outcome of the battles – and hence the war itself – than has been acknowledged by subsequent historians. Therefore, part of this thesis will be devoted to exploring just what has been said about Civil War intelligence-gathering in historical publications. This historiographical review will be conducted in two phases; firstly an overview of the historical accounts written since 1646 will be conducted in order to determine what contribution intelligence is generally considered to have made to the outcome of the fighting, and, secondly, a more focused and detailed exploration will be conducted into what subsequent historians have considered to have been the contribution made by intelligence operations to some of most of the major battles of the Civil War. The thesis will then explore the primary evidence in order to ascertain exactly what intelligence information was available to the respective commanders during each campaign. This exploration will enable a comparison to be made between what information was actually available – and what subsequent historians have suggested was available. The objectivity of each account of events will need to be assessed – as will the personal bias of the authors – in order to assess the accuracy of their account. Whenever possible, the accuracy of evidence will be verified by comparison with other contemporary accounts. Once this task has been completed, the thesis will seek to draw evidence-based conclusions about the extent to which intelligence information actually determined the outcome of the First English Civil War.

4 English experience of intelligence-gathering prior to the Civil War

Before the Civil War, there had been no large-scale internal disturbances in England since the Tudor rebellions of 1535-36, 1549 and 1569. Although parallels with the Civil War are

difficult to draw as these insurrections were not full-blown civil conflicts, nonetheless, contemporary accounts of the rebellions provide evidence that both national and local intelligence-gathering operations played a significant part in their suppression. During the Tudor period, the responsibility for the provision of intelligence lay with the monarch's chief ministers; thus, in 1535-36, Thomas Cromwell, as Henry VIII's chief minister, oversaw an unrivalled intelligence network which enabled him to send spies into the rebel-held areas to gather information. Cromwell also gathered further intelligence from the interception of mail.¹³ During the Pilgrimage of Grace, some of Henry VIII's commanders used their own intelligence-gathering systems; for example, it was recounted how one of the commanders, called Davey, 'had many friends who acted as spies for him'.¹⁴ At the same time, the rebel commanders established a 'scoutwatch' system to ensure continuity of reporting; we are told that the rebel commanders waited 'to hear the reports of the scouts and spies as they came in'.¹⁵

The central provision of intelligence networks continued after the death of Cromwell and Henry VIII, for, whilst commanders relied upon scouts and local informants during the 1549 rebellion, the Privy Council also undertook to keep the local commanders informed of any intelligence information they could get their hands on. For example, in 1549 it was reported that the Lord Privy Seal (Russell) was 'undelayedly (sic) advertised from us [the Privy Council] of all occurrences of importance'.¹⁶ Both sides made full use of spies and scouts to gather intelligence, and 'the rebels freely sent spies into Russell's camp' just as he 'was to send trusting men into theirs'.¹⁷ The rebels also made effective use of local intelligence and were able to use this information to launch a number of delaying attacks on Russell's army as it moved to attack Exeter in the summer of 1549.¹⁸ The importance of intelligence continued to be recognised during Elizabeth's reign; for example, in 1569, one George Bowes was appointed 'to provide intelligence of the [rebel] Earles [Northumberland and Westmoreland] setting out'.¹⁹ Bowes reported that the rebels, too, had established an effective intelligence-gathering system, recording that, although 'I keep as good spyall as I can, but not so good, I

¹³ M. and R. Dodds, *The Pilgrimage of Grace and the Exeter Conspiracy* (two volumes, London, 1915), Volume I, pp. 4, 109, 111 and 214; and Volume II, p. 190.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 256.

¹⁶ F. Rose-Troup, *The Western Rebellion of 1549* (London, 1913), p. 142.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 245-246.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 296-297. See also, A. Fletcher and D. MacCulloch, *Tudor Rebellions* (fourth edition, London, 1997), pp. 55-56.

¹⁹ C. Sharp (ed.), *The Rising in the North: The 1569 Rebellion* (Ilkley, 1975), p. 24.

feare, as they have of me, for I am thereby watched'.²⁰ The rebels proved to be active gatherers of intelligence, intercepting mail so frequently that Bowes requested that senders should tell him of any messages sent 'least some of them be intercepted'.²¹

Contemporary accounts of the rebellions show very clearly that, as intelligence-gathering was recognised as a priority task by the Tudor monarchs, a variety of intelligence networks were established by the ruler's senior ministers. Any possible means of obtaining intelligence was used and the deployment of spies and scouts, and the opening of intercepted letters was commonplace. Locally provided intelligence proved to be both accurate and timely in all of the major rebellions of the Tudor era.²²

5 Experience gained from the Thirty Years' War

Because there had been no fighting on English soil since the Tudor rebellions, the fighting that took place on the Continent during the Thirty Years War provided an ideal opportunity for Englishmen to learn about intelligence-gathering. By authorising 'unofficial' English forces to fight on the Continent, James I established not just a cost-effective and convenient way of satisfying public expectations and providing some support to the Protestant cause, but also a means of allowing the more passionate supporters of English and European Protestantism to participate in the fighting. The experience that those English and Scots soldiers gained during the Thirty Years War varied enormously. For the majority, who were foot soldiers, their experience of fighting was limited to a series of interminable sieges as they became members of Protestant garrisons such as Mannheim and Frankenthal.

Whilst it is evident that the skills and numbers of the veterans returning from the European Wars were used to swell – and train – the ranks of the newly formed Parliamentary and Royalist armies, there is no contemporary evidence that this fresh expertise was used to improve the quality of intelligence-gathering on either side. Even though an estimated 6,000 to 8,000 Scots served with the Swedish army under Gustavus Adolphus, and between 10,000 and 15,000 Englishmen and up to 25,000 Scots fought in the Thirty Years' War, few of them gained any experience at the senior command level.²³ (Patrick Ruthven – who was knighted by

²⁰ Ibid, p. 63.

²¹ Ibid, p. 64.

²² Rose-Troup, *Western Rebellion*, pp. 266-267.

²³ S.D.M. Carpenter, *Military Leadership in the British Civil Wars, 1642-1651* (London & New York, 2005), p. 54.

Gustavus Adolphus and made a full general in the Swedish forces – is an obvious exception.²⁴) For most young soldiers, their experience of continental warfare was limited mainly to the training, forming and deployment of bodies of horse and foot and, whilst this was certainly useful experience, it was not particularly relevant to the full range of military intelligence operations. Subsequent historical accounts of the battle of the White Mountain make no references to intelligence-gathering by either side, as it was the reports of sentries and scouts that provided the intelligence prior to the battle.²⁵ Whilst the few British soldiers who served with the regiments of horse would probably have picked up some experience of military intelligence, this would almost certainly have been limited to the duties of scouting.²⁶ Therefore, despite the relatively large numbers of English and Scottish soldiers who served on the continent during the Thirty Years' War, few would have returned home with any significant expertise of intelligence-gathering.

6 Experience gained from the Bishops' Wars

The so-called Bishops' Wars of 1639-1640 did offer the opportunity for English military intelligence-gathering operations to be updated. The events of the conflict also supply us with an indication of the state of English military intelligence-gathering two years before the start of the Civil War. Although there were no major engagements, these wars saw the deployment of substantial English sea and land forces along the Scottish borders. The complexity of this operation underlined the major difficulties associated with recruiting, training and deploying English soldiers after such a prolonged period of peace.²⁷ However, of particular relevance to the present thesis was the failure of the English intelligence and scouting operations during the Bishops' Wars. The ineptitude of the English scouting had become apparent to all in the first week of June 1639 when the Scottish army was able to deploy, without warning, substantially superior forces against a major English cross-border probe by four thousand horse and foot. So effective was the Scottish deployment that the English commander ordered an ignominious retreat before the Scottish army. This humiliation was so keenly felt by both the king and his army that Charles, in harmony with his army on this issue at least, complained that the Scottish forces had been able to close within striking distance unnoticed and unreported by the English scouts. 'Have not I good intelligence', lamented the king, 'that the rebels can march with their

²⁴ S. Reid, *Patrick Ruthven, earl of Forth and earl of Brentford* (DNB).

²⁵ C.V. Wedgwood, *The Thirty Years War* (London, 1938), pp. 105-107.

²⁶ Wedgwood, *Thirty Years War*, p. 239.

²⁷ *CSPD, 1638-9*, pp. 566 and 593-594.

army and encamp within sight of mine, and I not have a word of it till the Body of their Army give the alarm’?²⁸

Although the military inexperience and ineptitude of the commander of the advanced force, Lord Holland, was clearly a significant factor in this humiliating episode, the scouting organisation was also considered to be much at fault. As the English intelligence-gathering organisation was led by a man named Roger Widdrington who had been appointed as scout-master, it was inevitable this humiliation was believed to have been entirely his fault. The historian John Rushworth was later to summarise the popular view very well when he reported that ‘In conclusion this business was hushed up, but great was the murmuring of the Private Souldiers in the Camp’.²⁹ His view was shared by one of the king’s captains of foot, Sir Edmund Verney, when he wrote ‘the truth is we are betrayed in all our intelligence’.³⁰ These views were shared and reflected in personal diaries and the accounts presented in the State Papers.³¹ Sir Bevil Grenville, one of the English officers (who was later to lead a regiment of Cornish foot soldiers in the Royalist Western army) reflected the prevailing mood in the English camp when he reported that:

‘The Scout-Master was much exclaimed against, and he complained as much of the Souldiers who were sent out as Scouts, and gave him no timely intelligence. But in the Opinion of the Court and Commanders, the Scout-Master General bore the blame; and his Crime was aggravated, because he was a Papist’.³²

But of even greater significance to the present thesis were the comments of the English army’s commander, the Earl of Arundel, as his defence of the scout-master provided some interesting insights into the sort of skills considered to be most relevant when appointing a Scout-master General. The Earl of Arundel opined that the scout-master had been:

²⁸ D. Parsons, *The Diary of Sir Henry Slingsby*, (Longman, London, 1836), pp. 34-36. See also J. Rushworth, *Historical Collections* (London, 1659-99), Volume II, Part 2, pp. 935-945.

²⁹ Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, Volume II, Part II, p. 939.

³⁰ F.P. Verney, *Memoirs of the Verney Family during the Civil War* (London, 1892), p. 53.

³¹ See, for example, Parsons, *Slingsby Diaries*, p.35; and *CSPD, 1639*, pp. 272, and 281-283.

³² Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, Vol. II, Part II, p. 938; See also J. Stucley, *Sir Bevil Grenville and his times* (Sussex, 1983), p. 84. Quite why a Papist would assist the Presbyterian Covenanting Scots army was never satisfactorily explained.

‘the fittest Man in England for the Office of Scout-master, being born in the County of Northumberland, and one of the best acquainted with all the Highlandmen upon the Borders of Scotland, and who was best able, of any man he knew in England, to gain intelligence from thence; and that it was notoriously known, he was a Gentleman who ever bore a perfect hatred to the Scots, and was a stout active man upon Border-Service in the time of Queen Elizabeth; that he was a person of quality, and he doubted not of his Integrity, and that he would justify himself’.³³

The selection of Widdrington as scout-master thus seems a perfectly reasonable choice as he had useful local knowledge as well as relevant and recent experience of operations along the border. It therefore seems rather odd that, despite Widdrington’s evident expertise, his claim that the scouts themselves had failed in their duties appears to have been dismissed and set aside as unworthy of further investigation. Indeed Widdrington’s claim gains credibility when it is recalled that the failure of the scouting parties to detect the approach of an opposing army was to become a feature of the Civil War campaigns between 1642 and 1646.

Despite these humiliating experiences, there is no evidence that any consequent changes were made to improve the effectiveness of English military intelligence-gathering. Thus the evidence of the First Bishops’ War provides a pretty damning indictment of the state of military intelligence at the start of the Civil War, leading to the conclusion that the English intelligence-gathering organisation was largely ineffective and lacked credibility. Although this was a comparatively limited campaign, the events of the First Bishops’ War nevertheless lends some support to Clarendon’s claims about the conduct and effectiveness of English military intelligence operations during the Civil War in England just two years later.

7 Knowledge gained from contemporary military publications

As the humiliating experiences of intelligence-gathering during the Bishops’ Wars had demonstrated, England had been at peace for so long that few men had any experience of conducting effective military operations – let alone of fighting their own people in their own streets and fields. However there were a variety of publications available that described the

³³ Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, p. 939. See also *CSPD, 1639*, pp. 272 and 281-283. There is no relevant source material for the Second Bishops’ War.

theory of seventeenth-century warfare.³⁴ The publication that provided most information about the gathering of intelligence was John Cruso's *Militarie Instructions for the Cavallrie*.³⁵ As the collection of intelligence was traditionally a responsibility of the mounted soldiers – the 'cavalry' or 'horse' of the seventeenth-century army – Cruso's work provided a great deal of practical advice for commanders of horse, especially when he advised them that:

'Every good commander must have these two grounds for his actions, 1. The knowledge of his own forces, and wants ... [and] 2. The assurance of the condition and estate of the enemy, his commodities, and necessities, his councils and designes; thereby begetting divers occasions, which afterward bring forth victories'.³⁶

Cruso's elegant and sophisticated work has been well described by one modern writer as being 'so excellent that it held the field undisputed for nearly thirty years'.³⁷ So it is not surprising that later seventeenth-century works on warfare (for example, Roger Boyle's *A Treatise of the Art of War*, published in 1677, and subsequently Sir James Turner's *Pallas Armata*, published in 1683,³⁸ merely referred their readers to Cruso's work for advice on the conduct of mounted operations, including intelligence-gathering and scouting.

8 Conclusion

Although Thomas Cromwell and Sir Francis Walsingham had developed an extensive intelligence services during the Tudor reigns, as the experience of the Bishops' Wars had proved, the intelligence-gathering organisation established by the Tudors had clearly languished during the reigns of the early Stuart monarchs.³⁹ Thus, when England was engulfed by the turmoil of the Civil War in 1642, the structures for obtaining intelligence had to be resurrected quickly if intelligence-gathering was to make any contribution to the conduct of the war. However, before exploring how military intelligence operations did develop during

³⁴ See, for example, E. Davies, *The Art of War, and Englands Traynings* (London, 1619); Anon, *Instructions for Musters and Armes: and the use thereof* (London, 1631); W. Barriffe, *Military Discipline: or the Yong Artillery Man* (London, 1635); and H. Hexham, *The Principles of the Art Militarie: Practised in the Warres of the United Netherlands* (London, 1637).

³⁵ J. Cruso, *Militarie Instructions for the Cavallrie* (Cambridge, 1632).

³⁶ Cruso, *Militarie Instructions*, Part II, Chapter II, p. 57.

³⁷ T. M. Spaulding, 'Militarie Instructions for the Cavallrie', *Journal of the American Military History Foundation* (Vol.2, No.2, 1938), p.106.

³⁸ R. Boyle, Earl of Orrery, *A treatise on the art of war* (London, 1677); and Sir James Turner, *Pallas Armata* (London, 1683).

³⁹ R. Hutchinson, *Elizabeth's Spy Master* (London, 2006), p. 260.

the period 1642-1646, it will be helpful to review in the next chapter what historians have written about the intelligence-gathering during the First English Civil War.

Chapter Two

The Historiography of English Civil War Military Intelligence

1 Introduction

Previous historians have shown relatively little interest in the part played by military intelligence operations during the English Civil War of 1642-46. Understandably, scholarly attention has been focussed mainly on the causes of the conflict and, as a result, much of the historical research of the past three hundred and fifty years has concentrated on detailed evaluations of this aspect. When compared to the intense analysis that has been conducted into every nook and cranny of the social, economic and political issues, historical interest in the intelligence aspects of the fighting has fluctuated between minimal and occasional. For most of the time, there has been no academic consideration at all of this aspect of the civil war; at other times only local aspects of military intelligence-gathering have been assessed. Yet where historical explorers have shone light on some of the darker and hitherto sparsely illuminated areas of civil war records, their analysis of these contemporary accounts has revealed that, in fact, a great deal of effort during the conflict was devoted to intelligence-gathering. When all the information relating to intelligence-gathering is collectively assessed, it can be much more readily appreciated just how significant an impact these intelligence-gathering operations did have upon the outcome of the Civil War. The aim of the present chapter, therefore, is to conduct a comprehensive review of what has been written by previous scholars not just about military intelligence-gathering in the first Civil War, but also about the impact that this intelligence-gathering had upon both the conduct and the outcome of the conflict.

There are several reasons for the paucity of historical analysis of military intelligence. First, those historians who have examined the subject in any depth have discovered that the amount of 'raw' data is limited, not just because most of the relevant Royalist documentation was burnt before Oxford was surrendered in June 1646,¹ but also because military intelligence-gathering operations are traditionally shrouded in secrecy, and those of the English Civil War

¹ M. Toynbee (ed.), *Official Papers of Captain Henry Stevens, Wagon-master general to King Charles I, November 1643 – December 1644* (Oxfordshire Record Society, 1961), p. 12.

were no exception. Parliamentary records are admittedly more comprehensive, but there can be little doubt that the sheer difficulty of amassing material relevant to intelligence has been one of the factors which has dissuaded previous historians from working in this particular field. Another important factor is that there are relatively few contemporary accounts describing the impact of intelligence-gathering written by the senior military commanders who fought in the Civil War. Those that do exist emphasise the importance of intelligence-gathering. General George Monck, who had formerly served in both the Royalist and Parliamentary armies, stated that a commander 'ought likewise to use the best means he can for intelligence' and to be 'studious in discovering his enemy's designs'.² Sir Thomas Fairfax, the commander of the Parliamentary New Model army, acknowledged from the very beginning the importance of 'having friends enough to direct them and give them intelligence'.³ Similarly Sir Ralph Hopton, the commander of the Royalist armies in the West and South of England, provided numerous examples of how intelligence reports had informed his military decisions.⁴

2 The accounts of Roundhead writers: 1643 -1660

Although accounts of the conflict began to be compiled by contemporary writers almost as soon as the fighting ceased in 1646, these accounts made little mention of intelligence-gathering nor did they assess the impact that intelligence operations had had on the outcome of the war. Writers sympathetic to both sides sought to explain and to justify their actions by commissioning accounts of the conflict which presented the relevant issues and events from their own perspective. Whilst Parliament had emerged as the military victor by 1646, a political settlement with the king was still necessary. The Parliamentarians continued to be regarded as rebels by many people, and this perspective was a major stumbling block which meant that MPs' chances of reaching any sort of political resolution of their differences with the king remained very slim.⁵ It is therefore perfectly understandable that the Parliamentary leaders should have wished to be the first to publish their own account of events: particularly

² G. Monck, *Observations upon Military and Political Affairs* (London, 1671), pp. 7 and 17.

³ T. Fairfax, *Short Memorials of Thomas, Lord Fairfax* (London, 1699), p. 416.

⁴ C. E. H. Chadwyck-Healey (ed.), *Bellum Civile: Hopton's Narrative of His Campaign in the West (1642-44) and Other Papers* (Somerset Record Society, 18, 1902), pp. 18, 27, 29, 36, 38, 40 and 41.

⁵ E. Hyde, *The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England, together with an Historical View of the Affairs in Ireland* (sixteen books, London, 1702-4), Book X, pp.78-79.

as they hoped that such justificatory accounts would win them support for their negotiating position with the king. Accordingly in 1646 Thomas May, one of the official secretaries to the House of Commons, was formally commissioned by Parliament to write an account of the conflict presenting the Parliamentary point of view.

In 1647 May duly published his *History of the Parliament in England*.⁶ May's *History* was largely a summary of Stuart policies before the Civil War: policies which May alleged had first generated the quarrel with Parliament and then led to the outbreak of the Civil War. His account of the subsequent military actions was much briefer and concluded with the first battle of Newbury in 1643. May claimed in his Preface that he had written 'a plain naked narrative' but, in essence, his *History* is an apology and justification for the actions of Parliament. May's historical narrative of the military actions lacked detail and, as he admitted in his Preface, was written from the Parliamentary perspective only. Understandably therefore, May's treatment of intelligence-gathering was extremely limited and, although his *History* contained a few references to the intelligence aspects of the conflict, these comments were all very generalised observations, and did not include any assessment of the impact of these intelligence operations. For example, May wrote how 'intelligence was brought that Prince Rupert had drawne out his horse and foot towards Buckingham, with his cannon also'.⁷

In the same year that May published his *History*, Joshua Sprigge, Sir Thomas Fairfax's former chaplain, published an equally influential book entitled *Anglia Rediviva*. Although it did contain a brief summary of the earlier years of fighting, *Anglia Rediviva* was essentially an account of the actions of the New Model Army under the command of Fairfax himself.⁸ As Sprigge had been appointed by Fairfax to be secretary to the New Model Army, his account understandably provided a rather more detailed narrative of the main political and military events but again from a Parliamentary perspective. Sprigge presented the Civil War as a necessary defence of Parliament, laws and liberty. Sprigge's more detailed historical narrative only commenced towards the end of the First Civil War and concentrated mainly on the

⁶ T. May, *The History of the Parliament of England* (London, 1647).

⁷ Ibid, p. 56. Eight years later, May published a further account of the conflict entitled *A Breviary of the History of the Parliament of England* (London, 1655). This follow-up work made even fewer references to intelligence operations; nor did it make any assessment of their impact on military operations. See May, *Breviary*, pp. 250-252, 319, and 343-346.

⁸ J. Sprigge, *Anglia Rediviva. England's Recovery* (London, 1647, reprinted Oxford 1854).

military campaigns of Sir Thomas Fairfax. However, what is of particular interest for the purpose of the present discussion is that Sprigge's work recognised the significant contribution that intelligence-gathering had made to the outcome of those campaigns. Consequently military intelligence reports were mentioned in substantially more detail than in May's narrative. Of special note is Sprigge's detailed account of the extensive and precise intelligence information received by Fairfax during the weeks preceding the battles of Naseby and Langport.⁹ Sprigge's account was thus the first published work to have acknowledged the important contribution made by intelligence information to the outcome of that campaign.

The next book to include significant amounts of information about intelligence was John Rushworth's *Historical Collections*, first published in 1659 and dedicated to Richard Cromwell. Although Rushworth claimed that he had presented 'a bare narrative of matters of fact', his position both as Cromwell's secretary and as a long-term Parliamentarian civil servant made him vulnerable to Royalist challenges of bias, distortion and suppression. Nonetheless, although Rushworth's account was essentially a historical narrative, his work is of particular relevance to the present thesis as it, too, appears to acknowledge the impact that intelligence information had had upon the eventual outcome of the conflict. The *Collections* contained numerous references to information provided by intelligence-gathering, including the interception of mail, when Rushworth described how a letter from Colonel Goring in Holland to the king's secretary, Sir Edward Nicholas, had been intercepted and read out to Parliament.¹⁰ Rushworth also described the countermeasures which had been introduced to stop intelligence reports from scouts and informants reaching the enemy, in this case Parliamentary warrants authorising travel between Oxford and London.¹¹ It is interesting to contrast the limited presentation of intelligence in May's original work with the fuller accounts contained in Sprigge's *Anglia Rediviva* and Rushworth's *Collections* published just before the Restoration. Sprigge's and Rushworth's more detailed accounts suggest that, by the end of the fighting in 1646, the Parliamentarian commanders were substantially more aware of the significance of military intelligence on the conduct of their campaigns than they had been when May had been gathering information for his book earlier in the war. Sprigge's account of

⁹ Ibid, pp. 26-37 and 59-71.

¹⁰ J. Rushworth, *Historical Collections* (London, 1659-1699), Part III, Volume II, pp. 69-70. Later volumes of Rushworth's work were published in 1699.

¹¹ Ibid, pp.314 and 367.

the intelligence received by Fairfax before the battle at Naseby is a good example of this increased awareness.¹²

3 The accounts of the Earl of Clarendon and other Royalist writers: 1660 – 1704

The Restoration of 1660 finally allowed Royalist accounts of the Civil Wars to be published in England.¹³ As one would expect, these accounts were unashamedly anti-Parliamentarian and discussed the causes and consequences of the war from their own political viewpoint. These early Royalist historical accounts are similar to each other in that they tend to concentrate on the causes of the war rather than providing a detailed analysis of military events. Those military actions which are alluded to tend to be described as part of a series of high-level chronological summaries which do not provide detailed accounts of actual fighting. Interestingly, military intelligence does not appear to have been perceived as an issue which had been of any real significance as it received minimal attention in most Royalist accounts and was not mentioned at all in others. The absence of any apparent Royalist recognition of the role which had been played by intelligence-gathering operations in the conflict is especially striking when one considers the clear awareness of the role played by intelligence that had been displayed by several of the Parliamentarian writers mentioned earlier.

These earlier pro-Royalist works were soon eclipsed by Sir Edward Hyde's *History of the Rebellion* which finally appeared between 1702 and 1704.¹⁴ (Hyde had been made Earl of Clarendon following the Restoration, and it is by this title that he will be referred to from now on.) Clarendon's completed work was a substantial publication of sixteen books bound together in six volumes. It was viewed as historical writing on a grand scale and, as Clarendon had been an active participant in many of the political events he described, the book had a degree of credibility which many of the earlier publications had lacked. Due to Clarendon's descriptive analysis and personal comment, his *History* provided a level of insight that was unmatched by the other contemporary histories of the Civil War. However, as Clarendon had no military background and had not witnessed all that happened during the conflict, he had to

¹² Sprigge, *Anglia Rediviva*, pp. 27- 33.

¹³ See, for example, J. Heath, *Chronicle of the late Intestine War in the Three Kingdoms* (London, 1661); W. Dugdale, *Short View of the Late Troubles in England* (London, 1681); and J. Nalson, *Impartial Collection of the Great Affairs of State from the Beginning of the Scotch Rebellion in the Year 1639 to the Murder of King Charles I* (two volumes, London 1682-3).

¹⁴ Clarendon, *History*, passim.

rely on the accounts of others for much of his commentary on the military side of the conflict. Thus, although his *History* endeavoured to assess the outcome of military operations in a more comprehensive manner than had been attempted by earlier contemporary historians, Clarendon was often merely repeating what he had been told.¹⁵ Nonetheless he did make some general assessments, including, on several occasions, evaluations of the contribution which had been made by intelligence information.¹⁶ Crucially, Clarendon appears to have been most unimpressed by the value of intelligence information and his *History* includes some very dismissive comments about the effectiveness of intelligence-gathering.¹⁷ So, although Clarendon's is the most celebrated Royalist account, and has found great favour with many subsequent historians, his account of military intelligence-gathering is hardly as balanced or as impartial as present-day historians might wish.

The background to Clarendon's *History* is complicated but relevant to an understanding of the shape and scope of the final publication. From the very beginning of the enterprise in March 1646, when Charles I had agreed that Clarendon should write the Royalist historical account of the Civil War, the latter had formed a clear view of the purpose of the work which he was planning. While Charles was seeking to produce a justification of his political and military actions, Clarendon believed that he was required to write a private paper of advice which would be presented to the king for his personal attention.¹⁸ Clarendon made a good start on this paper (which would later be incorporated into the book), writing at some length about the political build-up to the outbreak of war: a series of events in which he had been personally involved. However, his own experience of the subsequent fighting was very limited and so, as has already been observed, he had to seek contributions from the relevant Royalist commanders. Here Clarendon encountered significant problems as neither Prince Rupert nor the Marquis of Newcastle would contribute to his *History*. Clarendon had to stop work while he sought alternative descriptions from other senior Royalists; he eventually received contributions from Sir Edward Walker, who had been the king's secretary; Sir Hugh Cholmley who had been governor of Scarborough; and Sir Ralph Hopton, who had been commander of

¹⁵ See C. H. Firth, 'Clarendon's History of the Rebellion', *English Historical Review* (Volume 19, 1904), pp. 44-46.

¹⁶ See, for example, Clarendon, *History*, Book VI, pp. 78-80; Book VII, pp. 149-154 and 225-226; and Book IX, pp. 36-38.

¹⁷ See, for example, Clarendon, *History*, Book VI, p. 79; and Book IX, p. 38.

¹⁸ Firth, 'Clarendon's History', p. 32.

the Western Army.¹⁹ When the king was executed in 1649, Clarendon temporarily stopped his work on the *History* as the death of the king led him to review his reasons for writing the account. By the time of the king's execution, Clarendon had completed the first seven books; these described the political and military events that had taken place before Prince Rupert's relief of Newark in 1644.

In 1660 Clarendon returned to England with Charles II and was appointed as Chancellor. He did not take up his pen again until some time after 1667 when he was banished to France for a second time as a result of his involvement in the failure of the Second Dutch War. As Clarendon had not taken any of his papers with him when he left England at the start of this banishment, when he returned to his writing in France, he concentrated upon his autobiography: a piece of work which inevitably became a justification of his own personal and political activities. It was only when his son visited him in 1671, bringing with him the unfinished manuscript of his earlier work and associated papers, that Clarendon decided to complete his *History*. As he remained determined to 'earn literary fame as a historian',²⁰ Clarendon decided to combine the manuscript of his autobiography with the manuscript of his earlier work in order to produce an updated and more comprehensive version of his *History*.

Although Clarendon's decision to proceed in this way is perfectly understandable, the consequence of his decision was that the finished *History* became especially vulnerable to accusations of bias and distortion. Of particular relevance to this thesis is the animosity that Clarendon bore towards Prince Rupert and other Royalist military commanders.²¹ This animosity seems very likely to have distorted Clarendon's account of the effectiveness of Royalist military intelligence as Prince Rupert's appointment as Lieutenant-General of Horse gave him key responsibilities in this particular area of military operations. Therefore those aspects of Clarendon's conclusions that reflect upon Prince Rupert and any associated intelligence-gathering operations need to be checked especially carefully to confirm that they are accurate.²² It is particularly important to note that Clarendon's *History* included comments on the quality, as well as the content, of the military intelligence information which had been

¹⁹ Ibid, pp. 44-46.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 465.

²¹ This animosity is made very clear at various different places in his text. See, for example, Clarendon, *History*, Book VI, p. 78.

²² R. Hutton, 'Clarendon's History of the Rebellion', *English Historical Review* (Volume 97, 1982), p. 88.

received and acted upon by Civil War commanders. His comments therefore provide the only Royalist comparison with the similar qualitative assessments which had been made by the Parliamentary historians. Although Clarendon based the factual content of his *History* on the contributions of others, he could not resist the temptation to add comments and summaries of his own. It was thus inevitable that the self-justification that was evident in Clarendon's autobiography would also influence and distort the objectivity of his *History*.²³ It is necessary to make this point because, of all the contemporary published accounts of the English Civil War, Clarendon's *History* has been relied on most heavily by subsequent historians.

Although reservations about the political objectivity of Clarendon's *History* were voiced almost as soon as the book appeared, questions about its historical accuracy only began to be widely posed during the twentieth century. The historians of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, who had often relied upon Clarendon's work as an accurate primary source, tended to ignore the potential weaknesses of his text. This was, perhaps, unsurprising, as many of the contemporary Civil War texts that undermined the accuracy of Clarendon's account had not yet been placed in the public domain. Not all of Clarendon's *History* is suspect, as parts of it were based on the first seven books completed by 1648; these books covered earlier political events in which Clarendon had been closely involved. However, because of Clarendon's personal animosities and aversions, it is prudent to be very sceptical even about some of the statements which appear in the first seven books of his *History*. One needs to be especially wary of any statements made by Clarendon on the military and associated military intelligence-gathering aspects of the Civil Wars. This is particularly pertinent if, for the reasons given above – and as a consequence of Clarendon's statements – there has been a long-standing mis-interpretation of the facts.

4 Accounts published between 1704 and 1860

Writings on the Civil War published during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries again tended to concentrate on the differing political interpretations of the conflict, and thus made little reference to military intelligence. Probably because of the author's connections to Queen Anne, Clarendon's *History* was perceived to be an attempt to present the Civil War in pro-Tory terms; this perception generated a series of political interpretations of the causes of the

²³ Firth, 'Clarendon's History', pp. 24-54, 246-262, and 464-483.

Civil War that dominated the following decades. Civil War history was used as a form of political shuttlecock played between the Whig and Tory parties for the next hundred years and, when the Whig/Tory debate showed signs of exhaustion, the French Revolution gave interpretations of the social and political history of the English Civil War a new twist and fresh impetus. Understandably enough, perhaps, historians of this period showed little interest in the subject of military intelligence operations.²⁴

However, towards the end of the nineteenth century, a number of educational changes enabled fresh light to be brought to bear on the history of the Civil War. In 1871, for example, Oxford University established a separate School of History and Cambridge University followed suit in 1873. But a source of possibly even greater illumination was the increased availability of primary source material which was made possible by more ready access to the resources of the British Museum. The foundation of the Camden Society in 1838 and the Chetham Society in 1843, followed by the publication of the *Calendars of State Papers* and the creation of a new Public Records Office (1862), the Historical Manuscripts Commission (1869) and *The English Historical Review* (1886) all encouraged the growth of more critical analysis of the events of the 1640's. The significance of these changes was that the analysis they facilitated shone yet more light on some of the more specific and local aspects of intelligence-gathering operations during the Civil War.

Possibly reflecting this increased access to primary source material, in the middle of the nineteenth century historians began to expand their analysis of the Civil War by assessing the individual contributions which had been made by the leading political and military commanders. For example, Carlyle published his compilation of Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches in 1845, while Warburton published his *Memoirs of Prince Rupert and the Cavaliers* in 1849 and Bell his edition of the Fairfax Correspondence in the same year.²⁵ All of

²⁴ No references to the role of military intelligence in the Civil War are to be found, for example, in the works of Laurence Echard, John Oldmixon, Thomas Carte and Catherine Macaulay. See L. Echard, *History of England* (London, 1707-18); J. Oldmixon, *Critical History of England* (London, 1724); T. Carte, *General History of England* (London, 1747-55); and C. Macaulay, *History of England from the Accession of James I* (London, 1763-83).

²⁵ T. Carlyle, *Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches*, (three volumes, London, 1845); E. G. B. Warburton, *Memoirs of Prince Rupert and the Cavaliers* (three volumes, London, 1849); R. Bell, *Fairfax Correspondence*, (two volumes, London, 1849). Other editions of original publications relating to the Civil War published around

these publications made a wider variety of contemporary evidence much more readily accessible for public consumption. Understandably these works concentrated on presenting the military aspects of the Civil War from the perspective of their particular subjects. Consequently they made no attempt to evaluate any contribution made to the actions of the individual commanders by intelligence-gathering operations. Nonetheless, the books relating to Fairfax and Rupert did contain several references to the military intelligence information which had been received by them. The publication of this material opened up the possibility of historians adopting a new approach to the subject of Civil War intelligence. But, although a much wider variety of contemporary documents was now available, the main source for the editors' own commentaries on these documents usually tended to be Clarendon's *History*. Their continued reliance on Clarendon meant that their comments on intelligence were also often based on very uncertain ground. Even so, the appearance of these publications permitted historians to begin evaluating the true nature of the fighting during the English Civil War; helping them to appreciate not just *why* the Civil War was fought, but also *where* and *how* it was fought. These insights were to be incorporated into a fresh series of Civil War histories which were published at the end of the nineteenth century.²⁶

5 Late Nineteenth-century writings: 1860 - 1914

Possibly the most important contribution to this new wave of publications was S.R. Gardiner's *History of the Great Civil War* which was published in four volumes from 1893.²⁷ Gardiner produced a large scale and detailed historical account which took what has been termed a 'scientific' approach to its subject and was arranged by strict adherence to chronology.²⁸ Thus Gardiner's work endeavoured to comment on the situation only as it was perceived by the participants at the time in order to avoid both bias and hindsight. He refused to insert summaries of general trends, as he considered that 'nothing less than the truth' was acceptable.²⁹ Gardiner's *History* rarely included any assessment of the contribution that intelligence operations had made to the outcome of the conflict and, apart from an occasional

this time include C. E. Long (ed.), *Richard Symonds: Diary of the Marches kept by the Royal army during the Great Civil War* (Camden Society, 1859), and J. Sprigge, *Anglia Rediviva* (London, 1647) re-published in 1854.

²⁶ See, for example, J. R. Phillips, *Memoirs of the Civil War in Wales and the Marches, 1642-1646* (London, 1874) and G. N. Godwin, *The Civil War in Hampshire (1642 -46) and the siege of Basing House* (London, 1882).

²⁷ S. R. Gardiner, *History of the Great Civil War 1642-1649* (four volumes, London, 1893).

²⁸ R. C. Richardson, *The English Revolution Revisited* (London, 1991), p. 85.

²⁹ R. C. Richardson, *The Debate on the English Revolution* (Manchester, 1998), p. 92.

reference to ‘spies’ or ‘intelligence’, intelligence-gathering does not feature significantly in his book.

A new development towards the end of the nineteenth century – and one which served to illuminate the role of intelligence-gathering from a different perspective – was a greater interest in the impact of the conflict upon particular districts of the country.³⁰ New books on the provincial dimension of the Civil War were produced and several of these contained research into intelligence-gathering but, obviously, they focussed on issues of local interest rather than on the broader evaluation of the military impact of intelligence operations. Although these books were usually county-based, the evidence they uncovered often tended to challenge the widely-held perception that intelligence-gathering had not played a significant role in the outcome of the fighting. Such regional research suggested that intelligence-gathering on a local scale had been far more extensive than had been acknowledged hitherto.³¹ However, there is no evidence to show that this anomaly was spotted either by national historians, or by the local historians themselves: most of whom continued to defer to Clarendon’s work. For example, J.W. Willis-Bund’s account of the action at Powick Bridge incorporated the account of the skirmish provided by Clarendon, even though this account contained a number of statements which were contradicted by other contemporary accounts of the engagement, but Willis Bund made no comment on the discrepancy.³²

6 The early Twentieth Century and the contribution of Sir Charles Firth

Around the beginning of the twentieth century, research into the Civil War began to focus upon more specific aspects of the conflict. Gardiner’s analytical approach to the evaluation of the Civil War had made only passing reference to intelligence reports, but it inspired a number of other historians to embark upon closely detailed studies of local events or of individual military topics. Of particular significance to the present thesis is the work of Sir Charles Firth who, as well as being a friend and supporter of Gardiner, wrote a number of books and articles himself which reveal that he had a particular interest in the military aspects of the conflict.

³⁰ See, for example, Phillips, *Memoirs of the Civil War in Wales*; Godwin, *Civil War in Hampshire*; and J. W. Willis Bund, *The Civil War in Worcestershire* (Birmingham, 1905).

³¹ Godwin’s *Civil War in Hampshire* provides numerous examples of intelligence operations. See, for example, pp. 14, 57, 71, 112, 120, 140-145, and 173-177.

³² See D. Sarkar, *The Battle of Powicke Bridge* (Worcester, 2007). Mr Sarkar highlights the dangers of relying upon Clarendon’s accounts of local military actions (p. 8).

Firth was the first historian to acknowledge the crucial role that intelligence-gathering had played in the English Civil War. Indeed, he concluded his assessment of the New Model Army by stating that ‘one of the [main] causes of the success of Fairfax and Cromwell was the efficiency of their intelligence department’.³³ Firth was thus the first historian to identify military intelligence-gathering as being one of the key factors in the Parliamentary victory.

Regrettably there is no evidence to indicate what triggered Firth’s interest in Civil War intelligence operations. Firth was writing at a time when Rudyard Kipling’s novels on ‘the Great Game’, the intelligence-gathering operations on the North West Frontier of India, were stimulating considerable professional interest as well as attracting a widespread popular readership, and this may well have been a factor in arousing his enthusiasm for the subject.³⁴ Firth first seems to have written on intelligence-related issues in 1896, when he edited the journal of Joachim Hane, a German artillery expert and military engineer who had been sent by Cromwell to investigate French fortifications at Bordeaux and La Rochelle.³⁵ In January 1897, Firth made a further important contribution to the understanding of Civil War military intelligence when he wrote an article for the *English Historical Review* which considered the activities of Thomas Scot: one of Oliver Cromwell’s intelligence agents.³⁶ Although this account concentrated mainly on Scot’s work as an ‘intelligencer’ during the Commonwealth, much of it was relevant to the way that intelligence had developed during the English Civil War itself. Firth also edited the Duchess of Newcastle’s autobiography of her husband.³⁷ As this work contained a number of references to Royalist intelligence-gathering operations, it is possible that Firth’s work on the Cavendishes had also helped to spark his subsequent interest in the subject of intelligence.³⁸

These publications clearly provided much of the inspiration for the key work in the early historiography of English Civil War military intelligence: Firth’s book, *Cromwell’s Army*, which was first published in 1902. The chief focus of this work was on the equipment and

³³ C. H. Firth, *Cromwell’s Army* (London, 1902, 1962 edition), p. 67.

³⁴ Kipling worked as a journalist in India between 1882 and 1889. He wrote *Plain Tales from the Hills* in 1888, *Soldiers Three* in 1892 and *Kim* in 1901.

³⁵ C. H. Firth (ed.), *The Journal of Joachim Hane* (Oxford, 1896).

³⁶ C. H. Firth, ‘Thomas Scot’s Account of his Actions as Intelligencer during the Commonwealth’, *English Historical Review* (Volume 12, No. 45, 1897), p. 116.

³⁷ C.H. Firth (ed.), *The Life of William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle* (London, 1906).

³⁸ See, for example, Firth, *Life of Newcastle*, pp. 29, 32-34, 36, 39, 47-48, 52-53, 56, and 60-62.

administration of the New Model Army, but Firth also specifically identified military intelligence as a factor that had made a unique contribution to the outcome of the war.³⁹ In *Cromwell's Army*, Firth included the first over-arching assessment of the contribution that military intelligence operations had made to the final outcome of the conflict. Firth was also the first historian to write about the Parliamentary soldiers and civilians who had held and developed the post of Scout-master General during the 1640's.⁴⁰ The fact that some Civil War scout-masters had continued their work into the Protectorate – and had established the basis for future national intelligence operations – resulted in Firth's work becoming the effective starting point for historians studying military intelligence after the Civil War period, too.⁴¹

7 Early Twentieth-century writings: 1914 - 1945

Important as Firth's insights were, they were not to be developed very much further by professional historians over the next 50 years: possibly because the political and social philosophy of the Russian Revolution had re-focussed scholars' attention away from military intelligence aspects and back onto the political and socio-economic aspects of the Civil War. However, this period did see many local studies of the Civil War continuing to be produced. Many of these regional studies noted, in passing, that local communities had seen a great deal of intelligence-gathering activity.⁴² This, in turn, suggested that intelligence-gathering might have played a greater part in the conduct of the military operations during the conflict than had previously been thought. However, at the time, the broader implications of these findings do not appear to have been considered by national historians.

Like the earlier generation of regional historians, those writing on the local dimensions of the Civil War during this period were often confronted with primary evidence that tended to contradict the perceptions of intelligence-gathering which had been presented by Clarendon in

³⁹ Firth, *Cromwell's Army*, pp. 63-67. Firth drew on a number of earlier works to support his conclusions, including: B. Rich, *A Pathway to Military Practice* (London, 1587); Sprigge, *Anglia Rediviva*; Rushworth, *Historical Collections*; Sir James Turner, *Pallas Armata* (London, 1683); and Sir Edward Walker, *Historical Discourses upon Several Occasions* (London, 1705).

⁴⁰ Firth, *Cromwell's Army*, p. 65. Firth obviously concentrated on Parliamentary scout-masters and made only passing reference to a few of the Royalist scout-masters. A number of Civil War scout-masters are listed in Appendix 1 of the Annex to the present thesis.

⁴¹ B. A. H. Parritt, *The Intelligencers: The story of British Military Intelligence up to 1914* (Ashford, 1971), p. 4.

⁴² See, for example, M. Coate, *Cornwall in the Great Civil War and Interregnum 1642-1660* (Oxford, 1933), pp. 62, 65, 71, 75-79, 89 and 91.

his *History*. One way of dealing with this factual mismatch was to concentrate upon the local situation without drawing any wider implications. A typical example of how military intelligence operations were reported in these regional studies is provided by Mary Coate's account of the skirmish at Sourton Down (25 April 1643). In this particular passage, Coate recorded how a quarter-master from the Parliamentarian army 'saw three of Hopton's scouts and hurriedly rode back to warn Chudleigh (the Parliamentarian commander) that the enemy (Hopton) was within two miles'. Coate concluded that this 'should have taught both armies the necessity of accurate intelligence', a remark which shows that some regional historians, at least, were beginning to appreciate the potential military advantages of having accurate intelligence information.⁴³ Whilst books like these provided ample evidence of active and widespread intelligence operations being conducted in every community, they seldom, if ever, included any specific analysis of the part that intelligence might have played on the outcome of the Civil War – either in that particular region, or nationally. They did not consider the significance of such intelligence, nor did they assess its impact on the outcome of the Civil War. The need for a broader assessment of Civil War military intelligence was thus often implied, but never satisfied.

8 Changing views of Civil War intelligence: 1945 – 1968

After the Second World War there was a clear change in scholars' evaluation of the contribution which had been made by intelligence operations to the outcome of the Civil War. General awareness of the significance of intelligence had been increased by individual military experiences during the 1940's, as well as by the growing threat which was perceived to be posed by the Soviet Union during the 'Cold War'. It is interesting that the 'James Bond' novels, which first appeared during this period, reflected (and helped to form) a general perception that intelligence-gathering operations could provide commendable (and perhaps even worthwhile) occupations for the first time since Kipling wrote about the 'Great Game'.⁴⁴ Those military historians who had served as military commanders between 1939 and 1945

⁴³ Ibid, p. 65.

⁴⁴ See, for example, I. Fleming, *Casino Royale* (London, 1953), pp. 166-167; I. Fleming, *Moonraker* (London, 1955), p. 249; and I. Fleming, *From Russia with Love* (London, 1957) p. 50. The examples cited refer to Fleming's portrayal of spies as patriotic and dedicated government officers whose daring and dangerous work had won both international and national respect.

fully appreciated the value of intelligence. With this very personal experience to guide them, they were arguably better attuned to the references to intelligence-gathering in the historical sources relating to the Civil War than previous historians had been.

Thus a new understanding of military realities during the mid-twentieth century led to a fresh appreciation of the significance of intelligence-gathering and its role in military operations during the mid-seventeenth century. This coincided with the publication during the 1950's and 1960's of a number of edited collections of original primary material that revealed a great deal about the intelligence information that had been gathered during the Civil War. These collections would prove invaluable to historians as they greatly expanded their understanding of the true extent of Civil War military intelligence-gathering operations. They provided, for the first time, a detailed assessment and description of what intelligence-gathering work had been put in place during the conflict. The publication in 1950 of the journal of Sir Samuel Luke, edited by I.G. Phillip, was followed in 1963 by the publication of Luke's letter books, edited by H.G. Tibbutt.⁴⁵ As Luke was the original Parliamentarian Scout-master General, these publications provided historians with an invaluable insight into the depth and breadth of seventeenth-century intelligence work.

The historian who eventually took up Firth's long discarded baton was Brigadier Peter Young. Before the Second World War, Young was a graduate of Trinity College, Oxford and he had commanded a commando brigade towards the end of that conflict. Young's academic and military background encouraged him to focus on the more military aspects of the Civil War as he sought to examine that conflict through the eyes of the military commanders. Young's meticulous research was evident in a number of books and articles that described the main Civil War battles. His military experience helped him recognise the full impact of battlefield military intelligence on the outcome of individual battles and campaigns.⁴⁶ Although the main priority of Young's work was to establish the size and composition of the Royalist and Parliamentarian armies, he also sought to assess the individual performance of the military commanders and to understand the reasons for their decisions. His detailed analysis of the way

⁴⁵ I. G. Philip (ed.), *The Journal of Sir Samuel Luke* (3 volumes, Oxfordshire Record Society, 1950); and H. G. Tibbutt (ed.), *The Letter Books of Sir Samuel Luke: 1644-45* (Historical Manuscripts Commission JP4, HMSO, 1963).

⁴⁶ See, for example, P. Young, *Edgehill 1642* (Moreton-in-Marsh, 1967); P. Young, *Marston Moor 1644* (Moreton-in-Marsh, 1970); and P. Young, *Naseby 1645* (London, 1985).

that Civil War battles were fought explained not only how the various military skills and arms had been deployed, but also what factors had influenced the outcome of those battles – and ultimately the outcome of the war.

The problem that faced Young was that there was so much Civil War military material to assess that he had to prioritise the subjects he chose for analysis. Establishing how the major Civil War battles had been fought was a clear priority for him. Young's other priority was to determine how each army had been organised and trained. Thus analysis of the impact that military intelligence had had on the outcome of the Civil Wars initially took a much lower priority. Young introduced a military intelligence dimension to the historiography of the English Civil War as he provided useful assessments of the role which had been played by intelligence in each campaign.⁴⁷ Although Young never discussed in any detail how each side had developed their intelligence capability, nonetheless, such operations were never far from his mind, as is evident from the following comment on the battle of Cropredy Bridge:

‘Incidentally, it may be remarked that although the intelligence services on both sides in the Civil War is generally written of as rudimentary, both Charles and Waller do seem to have been apprised pretty quickly of every movement of the enemy during these critical weeks of June 1644’.⁴⁸

This was the first time since Firth's day that a historian had acknowledged that some Civil War intelligence operations were being conducted effectively. Young had discovered that the intelligence provided by both sides during the Cropredy Bridge campaign had been both accurate and timely. He had also found that each side had received regular reports of the enemy position and strength.⁴⁹ Here, as in so many of his other works, Young unearthed a good many examples of intelligence-gathering – albeit with no overview of the subject as a whole. His books therefore provide a useful foundation for a more detailed analysis of Civil War military intelligence.

⁴⁷ See, for example, Young, *Edgehill*, pp. 74-75; Young, *Marston Moor*, pp. 80-84; and Young, *Naseby*, pp. 216-221.

⁴⁸ M. Toynbee and P. Young, *Cropredy Bridge 1644* (Kineton, 1970), p. 73.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p. 68.

During the 1960's and 1970's Young worked either alone or with the help of colleagues to publish a series of military accounts of the Civil War. In 1974, for example, he collaborated with Wilfred Emberton, another historian and a fellow member of The Sealed Knot, on a book entitled *The Cavalier Army*. This work described the Royalist army, its organisation, its commanders and its method of operating - and it also contained a useful section on intelligence operations.⁵⁰ Young and Emberton's account of Civil War intelligence-gathering was the first to have been written since the earlier summary provided by Firth. Their work described the central co-ordinating role of the scout-master and named some of the officers who had held that post on both sides during the Civil War. Young and Emberton's account went on to provide several varied examples of espionage activity, before briefly mentioning some of the roles which had been played by women.⁵¹ Their account concluded with a description of some of the intelligence-gathering tasks that had been performed by garrison commanders, and a very brief consideration of the funding arrangements that had been put in place to pay for intelligence reports and wider operations.⁵² Young also contributed to the overall assessment of the conduct and outcome of key Civil War battles when he worked with Richard Holmes, another military lecturer at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, on a general military history of the Civil War which was published in 1974.⁵³ In historiographical terms, Young's individual and collaborative publications are very similar, as their descriptions of battles and campaigns identify certain examples of how and where military intelligence information had been received.⁵⁴ However, they did not attempt a specific assessment of the overall contribution which had been made by military intelligence to the outcome of the conflict. Another historian who was among the first to comment specifically on the use of tactical military intelligence in the campaigns of the English Civil War was Austin Woolrych. In 1961, Woolrych published a study of the major battles which had been fought during the conflict.⁵⁵ This work, which concentrated on the battles of Marston Moor, Naseby and Preston, provided both a useful summary of the military intelligence information that had been

⁵⁰ P. Young and W. Emberton, *The Cavalier Army - Its Organisation and Everyday Life* (London, 1974), pp. 114-117.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* p. 115.

⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 116-117.

⁵³ P. Young and R. Holmes, *The English Civil War. A Military History of the Three Civil Wars 1642-1651* (London, 1974).

⁵⁴ For example, Young comments in some detail on the intelligence received during the Naseby campaign. See Young and Holmes, *The English Civil War*, pp. 237-239.

⁵⁵ A. Woolrych, *Battles of the English Civil War* (London, 1961), pp. 65, 117 and 159.

available at the time, and an assessment of how that information had been used by the rival commanders. However, Woolrych did not attempt any broader evaluation of the overall impact of military intelligence, nor did he describe how each side had targeted and deployed their intelligence resources.

Post-war analysis of the politico-military conduct of the Second World War understandably inspired contemporary historians to conduct a similar analysis of comparable Civil War activities. During the 1950's, Maurice Ashley published a book which assessed the capabilities of Parliament's military commanders.⁵⁶ The following decade saw the publication of a number of books and articles which assessed how effectively both sides had managed their military intelligence-gathering organisation. Of particular relevance to the present discussion are the assessments contained in Ian Roy's article on 'The Royalist Council of War, 1642-6', first published in 1962, in which Roy described how the Royalist senior commanders had envisaged that their high-level control of military intelligence would be exercised.⁵⁷ This work provided an interesting insight into how the Royalists had intended that their regional command structure would work and how it would integrate intelligence information into their planning process. A similar assessment of the Parliamentary senior command structure was conducted by Lotte Glow in 1965, but this made no assessment of the effectiveness of the military intelligence that the Parliamentary commanders had received during the conflict.⁵⁸ Developing the concepts which had initially been identified by Roy and Glow, Ronald Hutton later went on to assess how Charles and his senior political and military commanders had endeavoured to exercise control over their troops' military activities during the Civil War.⁵⁹ Hutton observed that it had been agreed that all military intelligence should be passed to the Royalist Council of War for evaluation; but like Roy, he did not extend his assessment to include how these regional military intelligence-gathering operations had influenced the outcome of the Civil War.

⁵⁶ M. Ashley, *Cromwell's Generals* (London, 1954). This work is very much a summary of the Roundhead commanders' military effectiveness and does not mention intelligence.

⁵⁷ I. Roy, 'The Royalist Council of War', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* (Volume 35, 1962), pp. 150-168.

⁵⁸ L. Glow, 'The Committee of Safety', *English Historical Review* (Volume 80, No. 315, 1965), p. 289.

⁵⁹ R. Hutton, *The Royalist War Effort* (second edition, London, 1999), pp. 51, 83 and 106; and R. Hutton, 'The Structure of the Royalist Party, 1642-1646', *The Historical Journal* (Volume 24, 1981), pp. 555-557.

9 New directions: 1968 – 2010

From the 1960's onwards, discussion of the English Civil War expanded significantly and explorations of intelligence operations began to appear in a number of different types of historical work, including: studies of individual commanders; studies of individual regions; studies of the conflict's social dimensions; studies of military intelligence in general and new scholarly editions of primary sources. Developments in each of these separate fields will now be considered in turn.

9.1 Studies of individual commanders

Perhaps because historians had been inspired by the spate of autobiographies of senior Second World War military commanders which had been published during the 1950's – many of which had included discussions of how intelligence-gathering operations had influenced the outcome of campaigns and battles – the 1960's saw a resurgence of interest in the overall conduct of military operations during the English Civil War.⁶⁰ This was reflected in the publication of further biographies of the leading Civil War commanders such as Oliver Cromwell and Sir Ralph Hopton.⁶¹ These accounts shed some new light on Civil War intelligence operations as they contained passing references to the ways in which each commander had attempted to gather information. F.T.R. Edgar's biography of Sir Ralph Hopton was one of the first studies specifically to assess a Royalist commander's use of military intelligence – although Edgar concluded that this had been limited to the use of the clergy for carrying messages.⁶²

The chief aim of many of these studies was to assess the military effectiveness of the rival commanders. They therefore evaluated, to varying degrees, the ways in which each commander had used military intelligence to inform his military decisions. During the 1970's, biographers devoted a good deal of attention to the intelligence-gathering activities of Civil War commanders. Prince Rupert was a favourite subject for these accounts. In 1976, for example, Maurice Ashley published a biography of Prince Rupert which devoted special attention to Rupert's methods of intelligence-gathering and the importance he attached to

⁶⁰ See, for example, A. B. Cunningham, *A Sailor's Odyssey* (London, 1951), p. 325; and W. Slim, *Defeat into Victory* (London, 1956), p. 186.

⁶¹ F. T. R. Edgar, *Sir Ralph Hopton. The King's Man in the West (1642-1652)* (Oxford, 1968); and A. Fraser, *Cromwell: Our Chief of Men* (London, 1974).

⁶² Edgar, *Hopton*, pp. 125-126.

intelligence information in general.⁶³ Further biographies by Patrick Morrah and Frank Kitson later followed and these again had a good deal to say about Rupert's attitude towards intelligence.⁶⁴ Kitson's biographies of Rupert and Cromwell are particularly illuminating as he assesses their generalship and the way that they conducted military operations. Kitson's assessment of Cromwell's generalship clearly identified the advantages he had gained from the effective use of military intelligence, a fact which had hitherto been obscured by Cromwell's own tendency to attribute his successes to God rather than to his intelligence-gatherers.⁶⁵ A host of other military biographies of Civil War commanders were published during the 1970's, 1980's and 1990's.⁶⁶ These works all helped to advance historians' understanding of Civil War intelligence-gathering. In his biography of Fairfax, for example, John Wilson devoted considerable attention to military intelligence operations and considered the intelligence information which had been received just before the battle of Naseby in some detail.⁶⁷ But though almost all of the biographies produced during this period made some reference to intelligence information, most of them drew no wider conclusions about the effectiveness of intelligence operations.⁶⁸ More recently, a new perspective has been provided by Stanley Carpenter's assessment of six Royalist and Parliamentary commanders which has shown that the 'grand designs' of the Parliamentary commanders in northern England were heavily dependent on precise intelligence.⁶⁹ The latest assessment of the generalship of the Civil War commanders has recently been published by Malcolm Wanklyn in 2010. Unlike earlier assessments, Wanklyn includes a much fuller evaluation of their use of intelligence information in his consideration of the performance of individual commanders.⁷⁰

9.2 Studies of individual regions

⁶³ M. Ashley, *Rupert of the Rhine* (London, 1976), p. 29.

⁶⁴ P. Morrah, *Prince Rupert of the Rhine* (London, 1976), p. 127; and F. Kitson, *Prince Rupert. Portrait of a Soldier* (London, 1994), pp. 63-65.

⁶⁵ F. Kitson, *Old Ironsides. The Military Biography of Oliver Cromwell* (London, 2004), pp. 219 – 222.

⁶⁶ See, for example, A. C. Miller, *Sir Richard Grenville of the Civil War* (London, 1979); J. Stucley, *Sir Bevil Grenville and his times* (Sussex, 1983); J. Wilson, *Fairfax. A Life of Thomas, Lord Fairfax, Captain-General of all the Parliament's forces in the English Civil War, Creator and Commander of the New Model Army* (London, 1985); and J. Adair, *Roundhead General. The Campaigns of Sir William Waller* (Stroud, 1997).

⁶⁷ Wilson, *Fairfax*, p.70.

⁶⁸ See, for example, Stucley, *Grenville*, p. 134; and Adair, *Waller*, p. 80.

⁶⁹ S. D. M. Carpenter, *Military Leadership in the English Civil Wars, 1642 – 1651: 'The Genius of this Age'* (London, 2005), p. 73.

⁷⁰ M. Wanklyn, *The Warrior Generals. Winning the British Civil Wars 1642-1652* (New Haven and London, 2010), pp. 6, 18- 20, 22- 24, 39, 48- 52, 59- 60, 69, 73, 94, 110- 111, 115- 117, 137, 149, 160- 162, 255 and 273.

Research into the impact that the Civil War had upon local communities has also led to the publication of a number of new regional studies. These local studies have continued to reveal the extent to which provincial communities were involved in the conflict and have placed increased emphasis on the intelligence-gathering support which was provided by local people. Of the most recent local histories, John Wroughton's *An Unhappy Civil War* possibly devotes the most attention to intelligence-gathering, but Tony MacLachlan's accounts of the Civil War in Hampshire and in Wiltshire also contain interesting insights into the conduct of intelligence operations.⁷¹ Roy Sherwood's account of the Civil War in the Midlands is also useful, while David Cooke's book about the fighting in Yorkshire draws heavily on an evaluation of the intelligence operations which were conducted by Fairfax's scout-master general, Leonard Watson.⁷²

9.3 Studies of the conflict's social dimensions

Over the last forty years, many other books and articles about the Civil War have been published which, whilst they have not set out to describe military intelligence matters, have nonetheless improved our understanding of how military intelligence-gathering operations were supported within contemporary society. For example, some of these works have helped us to observe that there had been widespread civilian involvement with intelligence-gathering operations. The research of historians like David Underdown and Mark Stoyle has shown that loyalties were divided right across the country and that even the most humble individuals were often prepared to make a conscious choice of sides.⁷³ These conclusions are very relevant to Civil War intelligence-gathering operations because they show that it was possible for each side to receive active support in every part of the country – even if, at times, that support might have had to be covert rather than overt depending on which party had achieved a current local superiority. Thus it would have been perfectly feasible for 'intelligencers' to have operated throughout the entire kingdom.

⁷¹J. Wroughton, *An Unhappy Civil War. The experiences of Ordinary People in Gloucestershire, Somerset and Wiltshire 1642-1646* (Bath, 1999), pp. 165 and 214-218; T. MacLachlan, *The Civil War in Wiltshire* (Salisbury, 1997), pp. 104, 158 and 198; and T. MacLachlan, *The Civil War in Hampshire* (Salisbury, 2000), pp. 176-177 and 319.

⁷² R. Sherwood, *The Civil War in the Midlands 1642 – 1651* (Stroud, 1992), pp. 44-45 and 140-141; and D. Cooke, *The Civil War in Yorkshire: Fairfax versus Newcastle* (Barnsley, 2004), pp. 129, 132 and 136.

⁷³ D. Underdown, *Revel, Riot and Rebellion* (Oxford, 1985), p. 1; and M. Stoyle, *Loyalty and Locality* (Exeter, 1995), p. 231.

Many recent studies have shown how both sides attracted men and women from across the entire range of English society.⁷⁴ These works also make it clear that both sides could have recruited individuals with the necessary intellectual and financial resources to carry out intelligence-gathering missions.⁷⁵ Over the last 40 years, many other historians have assessed the impact of the Civil War upon English society and these accounts have added to our understanding of the pervasive impact of the conflict as they have often included examples of intelligence-gathering and spying operations.⁷⁶ Although these examples confirm that intelligence work was commonly carried out by both sides in every military campaign of the Civil War, they do not set out specifically to evaluate intelligence operations and so they do not consider how those operations were controlled or co-ordinated. Nor do these descriptions of individual intelligence-gathering initiatives attempt to assess their overall impact on the outcome of the conflict.

Since 1968, the range of intelligence-gathering operations has been progressively revealed in a number of general accounts of the Civil War which have researched the involvement of the civilian population in the conflict. Foremost amongst these accounts is Charles Carlton's *Going to the Wars* in which the author describes the extent to which intelligence operations impacted on the lives of the civilians as well as on the campaigns of the soldiers.⁷⁷ This evaluation of the extent of the involvement of ordinary people in intelligence-gathering has recently been continued by Diane Purkiss.⁷⁸ As well as describing the impact which the fighting had on civilians, all of these works have researched the wide variety of ways in which ordinary people contributed to the intelligence-gathering operations that supported the armies of either side.

Linked with this research has been an increased interest in the role that women played in seventeenth-century society. Consequently, an unexpected insight into Civil War intelligence

⁷⁴ See, for example, B. Manning, *The English People and the English Revolution* (London, 1976), p. 11; and R. Cust and A. Hughes, *The English Civil War* (London, 1997), p. 11.

⁷⁵ Cust, *English Civil War*, pp. 16-18.

⁷⁶ See, for example, R. Ollard, *This War without an Enemy: A History of the English Civil Wars* (London, 1976), pp. 92 – 104; C. Carlton, *Going to the Wars: The Experience of the British Civil War 1638 – 1651* (London, 1992), p. 263; T. Royle, *Civil War: The Wars of the Three Kingdoms 1638 – 1660* (London, 2004), pp. 23 and 326-327; and D. Purkiss, *The English Civil War: A People's History* (London, 2006), pp. 410- 411.

⁷⁷ Carlton, *Going to the Wars*, pp. 263-264.

⁷⁸ Purkiss, *Civil War*, pp. 410-11. See also B. Donagan, *War in England: 1642 – 1649* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 100-106, 110 and 113.

operations has recently been provided by a new examination of the part taken by women during the conflict. Antonia Fraser focussed attention on this aspect of intelligence operations in her book, *The Weaker Vessel* (1984), which described the involvement of Anne, Lady Halkett in Royalist intelligence work.⁷⁹ This theme was continued by Roger Hudson in his book, *The Grand Quarrel*, published in 1993, and Alison Plowden made further pertinent observations in her study of the women of the English Civil Wars published in 1998.⁸⁰ But the most detailed account of the part played by women in Civil War intelligence operations to appear so far has been produced by Marcus Nevitt.⁸¹ In his study of women and pamphlet culture during the English Civil War, Nevitt describes the life and activities of Elizabeth Alkin whose husband had been executed as a spy by the Royalists. Also known as ‘Parliament Joan’, Elizabeth played an active and successful role in a wide range of intelligence operations for several years. Nevitt’s description of how Alkin provided Parliament’s pamphlet editors with some of their information provides much useful background information on the conduct of intelligence operations in the mid-seventeenth century.

In recent years, a good deal more attention has been paid to the way in which the commanders on both sides used the information which was contained in contemporary news-pamphlets. The intelligence-gathering associated with the work of Royalist propagandists was first described in P.W. Thomas’ account of the propaganda work of Sir John Berkenhead, the editor of the Royalist pamphlet, *Mercurius Aulicus*.⁸² More recently, Angela Macadam’s DPhil thesis has provided an interesting comparative insight into *Mercurius Britannicus*, the Parliamentary rival to *Mercurius Aulicus*, which first appeared in 1643. Her account of how *Mercurius Britannicus* reported the Marston Moor campaign is particularly relevant to the present discussion as it describes how the news-pamphlet published ‘accurate’ and ‘excellent’ intelligence during that campaign.⁸³

⁷⁹ A. Fraser, *The Weaker Vessel* (London, 1984), p. 211.

⁸⁰ R. Hudson (ed.), *The Grand Quarrel* (Stroud, 1993); A. Plowden, *Women all on Fire The Women of the English Civil War* (Stroud, 1998).

⁸¹ M. Nevitt, *Women and the Pamphlet Culture of Revolutionary England 1640 – 1660* (Aldershot, 2006), pp. 97-120.

⁸² P. W. Thomas, *Sir John Berkenhead, 1617 – 1679 A Royalist Career in Politics and Polemics* (Oxford, 1969), pp. 45-47.

⁸³ A. Macadam, ‘*Mercurius Britannicus: Journalism and Politics in the English Civil War*’ (unpublished DPhil Thesis, University of Sussex, 2005), pp. 73 and 77.

These studies have all helped to establish that the ordinary people of seventeenth-century England had the desire as well as the capability to support, and actively contribute to, intelligence-gathering operations. They have shown that both civilian and military personnel supported a wide range of spying and scouting tasks, displaying great bravery and innovation whilst engaged in these hazardous operations. It is now clear that intelligence-gathering operations were conducted across the entire country; and that, in all areas, there were people determined to support their own favoured side, notwithstanding the considerable personal risks they thereby ran.

9.4 Studies of military intelligence in general

It is not just historians of the seventeenth century who have recently been paying more attention to the subject of military intelligence in the Civil War. Another group of scholars who have focussed on this topic in recent years are historians of British military intelligence more generally, for example, B.A.H. Parritt and Peter Gudgin. Although these writers have tended to begin their research after the Restoration, they nonetheless offer some interesting insights into the intelligence skills that were developed during the Civil War and continued thereafter.⁸⁴ Other accounts of the international intelligence operations conducted during the Tudor and Stuart period have also provided insights into the conduct of Civil War intelligence-gathering, although they rely very heavily upon Clarendon's work.⁸⁵ A new area of intelligence-gathering has been revealed by historians of codes and cyphers who have shown that there were significant developments in these espionage tools during the Civil War and that Parliament could decipher some Royalist coded messages from 1643. The work of these scholars has suggested that the use of codes and cyphers had an increasing impact upon the conduct of military operations during the conflict.⁸⁶

9.5 New scholarly editions of primary sources

⁸⁴ Parritt, *Intelligencers*, p. 4; P. Gudgin, *Military Intelligence - A History* (Stroud, 1999), pp. 2-6.

⁸⁵ See, for example, P. Aubrey, *Mr Secretary Thurloe, Cromwell's Secretary of State 1652-1660* (London, 1990); A. Marshall, *Intelligence and Espionage in the Reign of Charles II, 1660-1685* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 18-21; and R. Hutchinson, *Elizabeth's Spy Master: Francis Walsingham and the Secret War that saved England* (London, 2006).

⁸⁶ D. Kahn, *The Code-Breakers: The Comprehensive History of Secret Communication from Ancient Times to the Internet* (New York 1967, revised 1996), pp. 166-169, and J. Whitehead, *Cavalier and Roundhead Spies Intelligence in the Civil War and Commonwealth* (Barnsley, 2009), pp. 223-229.

While scholars have continued to take all sorts of new approaches to the subject of military intelligence in the English Civil War over the last forty years, they have also continued to edit and publish new primary sources which shed fresh light on this topic. Especially significant in this respect has been R. N. Dore's edition of the Letter Books of Sir William Brereton, another senior Parliamentarian commander who, like Sir Samuel Luke, had appreciated the need for accurate intelligence.⁸⁷ As the Parliamentarian commander in Cheshire, Brereton had established an efficient intelligence operation that provided invaluable information, particularly at critical stages of the Naseby campaign. Although lacking a military background, Brereton had showed an immediate awareness of the importance of intelligence-gathering and his correspondence contains numerous examples of how the Roundhead intelligence-gathering organisation had provided comprehensive, co-ordinated assessments to the senior Parliamentarian commanders.⁸⁸ Equally important was the fact that Brereton's fellow commanders appreciated the value of the intelligence that he was providing.⁸⁹ Regrettably, the relevance of this rich source of information to the broader subject of military intelligence-gathering during the Civil War was not appreciated by the editor of Brereton's letter books and, as a result, this book has not had the wider effect on the historiography of that topic that it might otherwise have done.

10 Towards a new appreciation of intelligence

Perhaps as a result of the greater awareness of the significance of intelligence matters which has become apparent in the wider world since the end of the Cold War, the most recent historical re-appraisals of the Civil War campaigns and major battles have now begun to explore the subject of intelligence in far more detail than hitherto. This long-overdue research has confirmed the extent of the intelligence-gathering operations which were conducted during the Civil War. For example, Wanklyn and Jones' recent military history of the Civil War has not only emphasised the importance of intelligence information to the rival commanders, but has also begun to explore the impact that intelligence-gathering had upon the major campaigns.⁹⁰ Taking forward this line of research, the most recent accounts of individual Civil

⁸⁷ R. N. Dore (ed.), *The Letter Books of Sir William Brereton* (two volumes, Lancashire and Cheshire Record Society, 1984-90), Volume I, pp. 80 and 172. (The original letters are held in the British Library, Add MSS, 11331-11333).

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 118 and 177.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, p. 233.

⁹⁰ M. Wanklyn and F. Jones, *A Military History of the English Civil War, 1642-1646* (London, 2005), pp. 11- 23.

War battles – such as Glen Foard’s account of Naseby, Christopher Scott, Alan Turton and Eric von Arni’s reinterpretation of the Edgehill campaign, and Jon Day’s re-examination of the Gloucester and Newbury campaign – have, for the first time, identified the full impact that military intelligence had upon the conduct and the outcome of these campaigns.⁹¹

While these books have provided detailed evidence of the role played by intelligence in specific campaigns, Barbara Donagan’s recent monograph on the Civil War in England has made a particularly valuable contribution to the broader evaluation of intelligence operations, and the part that they played in influencing the outcome of the fighting.⁹² Her book not only supplies the most comprehensive summary to date of the full scope of such operations; but also considers in much more detail than any previous work the contributions of the scouts, deserters, messengers and spies who provided intelligence information during the conflict.⁹³ Her monograph includes discussion of the communication and interception of intelligence information and thus provides an invaluable starting point for a further exploration of how intelligence operations materially influenced the campaigns of the English Civil War between 1642 and 1646. Just as the first draft of this thesis was being completed, Julian Whitehead published his account of intelligence operations conducted during the Civil War and Commonwealth. Only about a third of Whitehead’s work discusses the events of the period 1642-1646, and this discussion ‘relied heavily’ on Clarendon’s *History*.⁹⁴ Whilst Whitehead does refer to Luke’s writings,⁹⁵ he relies chiefly on secondary sources.⁹⁶ As a result, his summary of Civil War intelligence operations sadly lacks the penetration facilitated by an exploration of the contemporary accounts.

11 Conclusion

Despite the pioneering work of Firth and Hutton, Clarendon’s dismissive perception that Civil War intelligence-gathering was largely ineffective and irrelevant to the outcome of the conflict has remained a historical commonplace right up to the present day. Consequently, whilst many

⁹¹ G. Foard, *Naseby: The Decisive Battle* (Kent, 1995), pp. 154-159 and 202; C. Scott, A. Turton and E. G. von Arni, *Edgehill: The Battle Reinterpreted* (Barnsley, 2004), p. 5; and J. Day, *Gloucester and Newbury 1643: The Turning Point of the Civil War* (Barnsley, 2007), pp. 142-145 and 217-218.

⁹² Donagan, *War in England*, pp. 100-106, 110 and 113.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 95-114.

⁹⁴ Whitehead, *Cavalier and Roundhead Spies*, p. 235.

⁹⁵ Philip, *Journal of Sir Samuel Luke*; and Tibbutt, *Letter Books of Sir Samuel Luke*.

⁹⁶ Whitehead, *Cavalier and Roundhead Spies*, pp. 235-237.

aspects of the Civil War have been extensively researched, there has been comparatively little evaluation of the impact made by military intelligence operations on the outcome of the fighting. Not even histories of military intelligence have assessed Civil War operations;⁹⁷ for example, John Keegan's recent analysis of military intelligence operations starts with the Napoleonic Wars.⁹⁸ As recently as 2009, indeed, Blair Worden described military intelligence during the English Civil Wars as 'rudimentary'.⁹⁹ It would seem that the relevance of the work of Luke, Watson and Brereton to the outcome of the First Civil War has only just begun to be appreciated. It is, therefore, particularly encouraging to note that several recent studies of the Civil War have placed much more emphasis on the valuable contribution that intelligence information had made to the outcome of the conflict. But much more research on this topic still remains to be done. By considering the existing contemporary sources, and broadening the scope of the most up to date scholarly assessments, the present thesis will explore this aspect of the conflict and reassess the overall contribution made by intelligence information to the outcome of the English Civil War.

⁹⁷ See, for example, T. Fergusson, *British Military Intelligence, 1870 – 1914* (London, 1984); and P. Gudgin, *Military Intelligence a History* (Stroud, 1999).

⁹⁸ J. Keegan, *Intelligence in war: Knowledge of the enemy from Napoleon to Al Qaeda* (New York, 2003).

⁹⁹ B. Worden, *The English Civil Wars 1640-1660* (London, 2009), p. 69.

Chapter Three

The Strategic Direction and Integration of Military Intelligence

1 Introduction

The performance of the English army during the two Bishops' Wars, fought between 1639 and 1640, had revealed that Charles I's military structures had atrophied after years of neglect and that England was not even capable of mustering a militia for effective home defence.¹ From the intelligence-gathering perspective, not only had scouting skills been neglected, but even the critical importance of obtaining accurate military intelligence – and passing it along secure and speedy lines of communication – had been largely forgotten.² Other equally important aspects of intelligence-gathering had been neglected; for example, the Bishops' Wars commanders had not made any attempt to validate their intelligence reports – nor had they shown any aptitude for integrating their intelligence information into the planning of their military operations.³ To make best use of military intelligence-gathering, the opposing commanders not only needed to identify the intelligence information they required, but they also needed to communicate and assess their intelligencers' information quickly so that it could be integrated effectively into their military decision-making processes.⁴ The fighting in 1642 had identified a number of significant weaknesses in the management of intelligence – and the communication of intelligence information – which were steadily corrected during the Civil War.

It is important to explore the strategic direction and integration of military intelligence during the Civil War, because any mis-management of intelligence information would have significantly reduced the contribution made by intelligence-gathering to the outcome of the conflict. Therefore, the aims of this chapter are, first, to explore how well each side directed their intelligence-gathering operations and, second, to assess how effectively intelligence information was subsequently integrated into the planning processes. The chapter will then move on to describe how each side implemented and developed the role of the scout-master before evaluating the importance of this appointment to the strategic direction of intelligence-

¹ C.H. Firth, *Cromwell's Army* (London, 1902), p. 11. See also C.V. Wedgwood, *The King's Peace 1637-1641* (London, 1955), pp. 229-232.

² J. Rushworth, *Historical Collections* (London, 1659-99), Volume II, Part II, p. 938; and F. Kitson, *Prince Rupert: Portrait of a Soldier* (London, 1994), p. 275.

³ See, for example, I. Roy, 'The Royalist Council of War, 1642-6', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* (Vol.35, 1962), pp. 161-162.

⁴ P. Gudgin, *Military Intelligence: A History* (Stroud, 1999), p. 4.

gathering. The indirect contribution made by intelligence-gathering to other military operations, such as deception and counter-intelligence, will also be considered before finally examining how communication methods were improved in order to satisfy the growing demand for the rapid and secure transmission of intelligence information.⁵

2 The High Command's management of intelligence-gathering

The belief that the political differences between Charles I and his Parliamentary opponents would be resolved in just one battle dominated the thinking of both sides during the summer of 1642.⁶ Accordingly, both parties determined that their most immediate military objectives were to recruit, equip, train and deploy their armies. As relatively few of the political or military leaders had any recent experience of warfare, it was hardly surprising that the need to find out what the other side was up to was not recognised immediately as an equally important priority. Although this attitude changed when the commanders had gained more experience, in the summer of 1642 there is no evidence that the gathering of military intelligence was given any priority at all.⁷ Intelligence-gathering was not the only area neglected; the belief in a 'single-battle' war influenced longer term preparations in other critical areas, such as revenue generation, the gathering and distribution of supplies and the manufacture of weapons and munitions. The requirement to provide consistent longer-term funding, along with the uninterrupted supply of suitable arms and munitions and the creation of a nationwide intelligence-gathering organisation, was not recognised as urgent until it became evident that the Edgehill campaign had failed to provide the overwhelming victory needed to resolve the political impasse.⁸

Consequently, none of the opposing military commanders gave any specific consideration to establishing a military intelligence structure in 1642. As in the recent Bishops' Wars, intelligence operations continued to be directed by the Lieutenant General of the Horse who was traditionally responsible for directing army scouting patrols.⁹ Parliament appointed the Earl of Bedford to be their Lord General of the Horse and his Royalist opposite number was

⁵ See, for example, *CSPD 1644-1645*, p. 170 for a detailed description of the schedule of the enhanced Parliamentary message service.

⁶ S. R. Gardiner, *History of the Great Civil War 1642-1649* (four volumes, London, 1893), Volume 1, p. 34.

⁷ P. Young and W. Emberton, *The Royalist Army* (Chatham, 1974), pp. 19-20, 31-33, and 41-42.

⁸ E. Hyde, *The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England* (sixteen books, London, 1702-4), Book VI, p. 164. See also C.V. Wedgwood, *The King's War 1641 – 1647* (London, 1958), p. 146.

⁹ See, for example, Clarendon, *History*, Book VI, p. 44; Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, Part III, Volume II, p. 24; and N. Fiennes, *A Most True and Exact Relation of Both the Battels fought by His Excellency and his Forces against the Bloody Cavelliers* (London, 9 November 1642).

Prince Rupert of the Rhine. Should those officers have required any guidance, Cruso's *Militarie Instructions for the Cavallrie* might well have proved helpful. This work stated that the Lieutenant General of Horse :

‘must always have his thoughts busied about the motions of the enemy, discoursing with himself from what part they might shew themselves, with what numbers of men, whether with Infantrie or not, in how many houres they might come upon him ... and whether they might present themselves in a place of advantage; that so it might be prevented. He must also procure to have spies, not only in the enemies army, but also upon their frontiers, to penetrate their designes and intentions, omitting no inventions which may stand him in stead to avoid inconveniences; knowing that diligence is the mother of good fortune’.¹⁰

Similarly, the lack of any maps sufficiently detailed for military use increased the importance of finding reliable guides who could provide intelligence on the local topography, places and roads. It was, wrote Cruso, the recognised task of the wagon-master:

‘to provide good guides, of the inhabitants of those places where the march is to be, which may be able to give certain and particular information concerning the high-ways and cross-ways, how many there be of them, whether they be even, large, and free or straight, hilly, or impeached with difficult passages’.¹¹

In the early days of the fighting, army commanders had few officers on their staffs to assist them in the ordering of their forces. Initially, therefore, both sides would have been challenged by the management and co-ordination of their intelligence-gathering organisations.¹²

3 The intelligence responsibilities of the Royalist Council of War

Unsurprisingly, Charles followed tradition by establishing a Council of War to provide him with strategic advice on military matters – including the direction and integration of intelligence information. This body had the potential to exert an influential role for, when

¹⁰ Cruso, *Militarie Instructions*, Part III, Chapter III p. 69.

¹¹ Cruso, *Militarie Instructions*, Part II, Chapter I, p. 46.

¹² I. G. Philip (ed.), *The Journal of Sir Samuel Luke* (3 volumes, Oxfordshire Record Society, 1950), Volume I, p. ix.

meeting in full session, it was attended by generals of all arms, senior officials, privy councillors and secretaries of state. In theory at least, the Council was therefore able to generate an overall assessment of the military situation and, as originally constituted in August 1642, it should have been able to exercise effective control over the Royalist war effort.¹³ Of particular significance to the present thesis is the fact that the full Council of War was intended to be ‘a clearing house of information and military intelligence’ as it was originally designed to receive ‘the information of spies and scouts on the movements of the enemy’.¹⁴

However, there is little contemporary evidence to show that the Royalist Council of War was ever effective in its intelligence management role. Whilst few of the minutes of the Council’s meetings have survived, Clarendon provides an account of the Royalist deliberations in his *History*.¹⁵ His account shows that the Council’s discussions took into account the general intelligence information regarding likely Parliamentary aims and objectives when establishing Royalist aims and priorities for the forthcoming campaigns.¹⁶ Certainly the Royalist commanders were provided with information about the location and approximate strength of the Parliamentary army and, as the war continued, they were always made aware of the general position and probable intentions of the main Parliamentary field armies.¹⁷ At the beginning of 1645, the Royalists not only knew where their opponent’s main forces were, but were also aware of the army reforms which Parliament had implemented.¹⁸

However, in practice, the Council of War was not able to realise its theoretical management potential, as Charles I himself was always liable to change his mind in order to reflect the latest suggestions which had been made to him. Inevitably this caused confusion – and the Royalist Council of War never played much of a part in the strategic direction of subsequent military intelligence operations once the Royalist ‘grand design’ for each campaigning season had been decided.¹⁹ The execution of these plans then became the responsibility of the army commanders, and it was they who were expected to provide intelligence of the enemy’s movements and intentions using the traditional scouting methods. This delegation to the local

¹³ BL, Harl. MSS. 6851, ff. 229-30 (Council minutes, 27 November 1643). See also Roy, ‘Royalist Council of War’, p. 161.

¹⁴ Roy, ‘Royalist Council of War’, pp. 150-168.

¹⁵ Clarendon, *History*, Book VI, p. 375.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 295-300.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 355-360; and E. Walker, *Historical Discourses upon Several Occasions* (London, 1705), p. 88.

¹⁸ Clarendon, *History*, Book IX, pp. 5-8.

¹⁹ Roy, ‘The Royalist Council of War’, pp. 150-168.

military commanders was much favoured by Charles but it had several drawbacks. It did not lend itself to effective central control of military objectives, for example; nor did it facilitate effective co-operation between the armies, and it failed to optimise the experience and expertise of the members of the Council of War.²⁰ As the war went on, the increasing fragmentation of the Royalists' overall military command structure, coupled with the steady reduction of support as the number of areas under Cavalier control diminished, increasingly undermined the effectiveness of every aspect of Royalist military field operations, not just their military intelligence-gathering.²¹

Contemporary accounts reveal that the Royalist attitude to intelligence-gathering was often somewhat ambivalent. Clarendon's description of the character of Viscount Falkland, written after his death at Newbury, provides a revealing insight into some Royalists' perceptions of intelligence-gathering. As Charles' Secretary of State, Falkland was not only one of the king's most senior and closest advisers, but was also the man who took overall responsibility for intelligence-gathering for the crown, just as Thomas Cromwell, Cecil and Walsingham had done under the Tudors. According to Clarendon, Falkland considered that, whilst the use of military scouts to obtain information was generally reliable and therefore acceptable, the use of spies to obtain information through deception and other clandestine methods was inherently dishonourable and therefore unacceptable. Clarendon recorded that Falkland would not trust people who 'by dissimulation of manners, wound themselves into such trusts and secrets as enabled them to make discoveries for the benefit of the state', because 'such instruments must be void of all ingenuity and common honesty'.²² Clarendon went on to add that Falkland considered that the 'opening of letters upon a suspicion that they might contain matter of dangerous consequence' was a 'violation of the law of nature, that no qualification by office could justify a single person in the trespass'.²³ Falkland's evident reluctance to employ spies to gather intelligence may help to explain why, at least during his time in office, the Royalist high command took such an ambivalent approach to the gathering of intelligence. Whilst intelligence-gathering by military personnel developed as the war progressed, Falkland's reservations regarding duplicitous behaviour can only have served to discourage spying which was, of course, by its very nature, deceitful.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 165.

²¹ Ibid, p. 166.

²² Clarendon, *History*, Book VII, p. 226.

²³ Ibid, p. 226.

4 The intelligence responsibilities of the Parliamentary committees

The Parliamentary intelligence-gathering network, by contrast, proved to be much more effective and Parliament's intelligence information contributed significantly to its final victory. In many ways, the move to a war footing had been easier for the Parliamentary leaders for they had found it relatively easy to adapt Parliamentary committees to military purposes – while their control of London had avoided the need for any physical relocation. As soon as war had appeared inevitable, Parliament had modified its committee structure in order to exercise control over its military forces and a Committee of Safety was established on 4 July 1642.²⁴ While the deliberations of the Royalist Council of War are generally poorly documented, a very substantial amount of material regarding the decisions of the Parliamentary Committee of Safety (and subsequently the Committee of Both Kingdoms) has survived in the Journals of the Houses of Parliament and the Calendar of State Papers.²⁵ Furthermore, the evidence of the State Papers suggests that, from its very inception, the Committee of Safety had appreciated the need for comprehensive intelligence reports. The committee papers show that the Committee of Safety exercised much more positive control over the provision and dissemination of intelligence to Parliamentary leaders, both military and political, than the Royalist Council of War did.²⁶ Moreover, as the war progressed, an increasing body of evidence confirms that both the national and local military intelligence situation was being presented considerably more clearly to the Parliamentary commanders than it was to their Royalist opposite numbers.²⁷ In the years that followed, the Parliamentary commanders had access to reliable and timely military intelligence information which they used effectively to counter the Royalists' military operations.²⁸

Having studied the contemporary evidence in detail, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the Parliamentary oversight of intelligence information was never matched consistently by the Royalists, and that this relative weakness made it much easier for Parliament to seize the upper

²⁴ CSPD, 1641-43, p. 353.

²⁵ CSPD, 1640-41; 1641-43; 1644, 1644-45; 1645-47; 1648-49; 1649-50; 1650; and 1651, passim.

²⁶ L. Glow, 'The Committee of Safety', *English Historical Review* (Volume 80, No. 315, 1965), pp. 291-292.

²⁷ See, for example, Sprigg, *Anglia Rediviva*, pp. 26-37, and 56-77; R. N. Dore (ed.), *The Letter Books of Sir William Brereton* (two volumes, Lancashire and Cheshire Record Society, 1984-90), Volume I, pp. 65-66; H. G. Tibbutt (ed.), *The Letter Books of Sir Samuel Luke: 1644-45* (Historical Manuscripts Commission JP4, HMSO, 1963), pp. 287, 293, and 296; Walker, *Historical Discourses*, p.129; and T. Fairfax, *Short Memorials of Thomas, Lord Fairfax* (London, 1699), printed as part of Francis Maseres, *Select Tracts relating to the Civil Wars in England* (London, 1815), p. 418.

²⁸ CSPD, 1644, p. 25; Sprigg, *Anglia Rediviva*, pp. 26-37, and 56-77; Dore, *Letter Books*, Vol I, pp. 65-66; and Tibbutt, *Letter Books*, pp. 287, 293, and 296.

hand.²⁹ From the very beginning, Parliamentary leaders were receiving useful intelligence; for example, Charles' attempt to arrest the 'Five Members' in January 1642 was thwarted primarily because John Pym was receiving timely intelligence reports from Lucy Percy, the Countess of Carlisle, a confidante of Queen Henrietta Maria.³⁰ Later, in the spring of 1642, the Parliamentary commanders realised that the Royalists' immediate priority was to take control of military stores and magazines; this intelligence enabled the Committee of Safety to forestall Charles' plans to seize the arms he needed to equip his recruits.³¹ Intelligence information, gleaned from the interception of a letter from Lord Digby, one of the king's advisers, gave Parliament early warning of Charles' intention to enter Hull and to seize the weapons and munitions which had been stored there since the Bishops' Wars.³² This intelligence information enabled Parliament to pre-empt the king's plan by sending Peregrine Pelham, MP for Hull, with reinforcements to strengthen the resolve of Sir John Hotham, the garrison commander, a few days before the king appeared before the walls of the city. The 'Refusal before Hull' had gone on to have a significant nationwide impact because it had strengthened the resolve of those opposing the king. Less obvious had been the fact that it had also given the Parliamentary leaders a salutary lesson of the advantages to be gained from accurate and timely military intelligence. Conversely, the dangers of inadequate intelligence had been forcefully demonstrated to the members of the Committee of Safety after they had been caught completely by surprise on 2 August 1642, when Colonel George Goring, the Governor of Portsmouth, had turned his coat and seized that city, and its important magazine, for the king. The declaration of Portsmouth for the king had been an embarrassing surprise to Parliament and the city's re-capture required a substantial diversion of both sea and land forces at a time when these resources could have been better used elsewhere.³³

The Committee of Safety evidently learnt lessons from these incidents. From its inception, the Committee of Safety was receiving reasonably accurate intelligence reports and invariably it knew where the king was, and what he was trying to achieve. When they had received accurate

²⁹ Clarendon, *History*, Book IX, p. 38.

³⁰ See, for example, T. May, *A Breviary of the History of the Parliament of England* (London, 1655), p. 27; J. T. Rutt (ed.) *The Diary of Thomas Burton* (4 volumes, London, 1828), pp. 91-102 (which cited a speech of Sir Arthur Haselrig in Parliament, 7 February 1659); E. Ludlow, *Memoirs of Edmund Ludlow* (two volumes, Bern, 1698), Volume 1, pp. 24-25; Warburton, *Memoirs*, Volume 1, pp. 220, 348; and D. Purkiss, *The English Civil War: A People's History* (London, 2006), pp. 123-124.

³¹ See, for example, Clarendon, *History*, Book V, pp. 139-140; and *CSPD, 1641-43*, pp. 389-390.

³² T. May, *A History of the Parliament of England* (London, 1647), p. 57; and Clarendon, *History*, Book V, pp. 53 and 89-91.

³³ Clarendon, *History*, Book V, p. 442.

and timely intelligence of the king's intentions, the Parliamentary leaders had been able to out-manoeuvre Charles. The minutes of the Parliamentary Committee of Safety thus reflected a growing appreciation of the benefits of superior intelligence information. The Committee's subsequent instructions to their commanders constantly urged them to exchange intelligence information.³⁴ Indeed, the minutes of both the Committee of Safety, and the Committee of Both Kingdoms, contain numerous references to the importance of collecting and exchanging intelligence information between army commanders and political leaders; particularly after the Scots army had entered the war and crossed into England in January 1644.³⁵ The Committee of Both Kingdoms was also careful to disseminate information in order to ensure that each army commander was aware of how the war was progressing; for example, when the Parliamentary commanders at York were told of the outcome of Waller's encounter with Charles at Cropredy Bridge in June 1644.³⁶ Whilst it is not possible to be certain, there is no evidence to suggest that Charles had informed either Rupert or Newcastle of the outcome of this significant battle – had the Royalist commanders been made aware of the change in the king's circumstances, it is possible that Rupert would not have forced the engagement at Marston Moor.

The Committee of Safety, therefore, played an active role in Parliament's military planning because, right from the beginning of the Civil War, the members of the Committee had recognised that they had a key role to play in supporting Essex's army by providing intelligence, money and equipment.³⁷ As early as May 1642, Parliament had appointed 'a Committee of Both Houses to join with the Committee and Commissioners of Scotland ... as a Committee for managing the war, and keeping good intelligence between the forces of the three kingdoms'.³⁸ In July 1642, the work of this committee had been taken on by the Committee of Safety and, in early 1644, by its successor, the Committee of Both Kingdoms.³⁹ As the committee members had gained experience, and as the war had expanded, so the intelligence structure had been enhanced. For example, in February 1644, a sub-committee had been established to consider intelligence matters.⁴⁰ On 9 March 1644 the Committee had

³⁴ *CSPD, 1642-3*, p. 454.

³⁵ *CSPD, 1644*, pp. 25, 39-40, 75, and 93.

³⁶ *Ibid*, p. 302.

³⁷ Roy, 'The Royalist Council of War', p. 168.

³⁸ *CSPD, 1641-43*, p. 328.

³⁹ *CSPD, 1644*, p. 4.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 25.

allocated £300 per week to cover the incidental costs of running an intelligence service,⁴¹ and two Parliamentary civilian staff, Mr Frost and Mr Weckherlin, had been appointed as 'Intelligence officers' in September 1642 and June 1643 respectively to compile the intelligence reports for the Committee and to assist with the coding and decoding.⁴² The committee had also ensured that Essex received recruits, money, arms, clothes, ammunition, reinforcements and advice.⁴³

As the number of Parliamentary armies had increased, so had the Committee's attempts to provide the same level of support for each army. Given the small size of the Committee and the steady growth of its areas of responsibility, its members inevitably gave priority to what they saw as the most pressing issues. As the conflict had expanded, and as their workload had increased, the Committee members had been criticised for not keeping the House informed of all the details of the military campaign – particularly the intelligence-gathering.⁴⁴ This criticism was particularly significant because the Committee provided the chief liaison channel between the legislative, executive, administrative and military bodies of Parliament. Because their initial remit had been to gather information about the position of their own and the enemy's armies, the committee-men had become increasingly involved in the minute detail of intelligence work. For example, they had become immersed in the interception and decoding of Royalist correspondence and even the interrogation of prisoners. The Committee had thus assumed responsibility for a large workload and, although it had tried hard, the size and complexity of some of the tasks had proved too much for its members. Although, later, it had become increasingly vulnerable to accusations of inefficiency, its members had done well to identify the importance of intelligence-gathering and had provided crucial co-ordination from the very start of the conflict.

Although Parliament had implemented a structure to manage its intelligence-gathering, there is no evidence to show that it had established any special central financial arrangements solely to support intelligence operations. As previous historians have discovered, the numerous contemporary references to the financial arrangements which funded Civil War intelligence-gathering operations contain little detail of the intelligence provided. The Commonwealth

⁴¹ *CSPD, 1644*, p. 42.

⁴² *C.J.* iii, 198. See also, Commonwealth Exchequer Papers, SP. 28/261, paper dated 16 Sept. 1642; and SP 28/264, paper dated 14 June 1643.

⁴³ *C.J.* iii, 59, 102, 108, 189; and SP. 28/261-264.

⁴⁴ *CSPD, 1641-43*, p. 440.

Exchequer Papers and the State Papers contain many examples of payments being made to their field commanders for this purpose, but the descriptions of what the money was for are annoyingly vague; for example, the committee paid Sir Vivian Molyneux on 30 March 1643 for the provision of intelligence information.⁴⁵ Another typical example is a warrant under the Privy Seal to the Exchequer written at the Court in Oxford on 20 February 1644 simply noted 'Pay George, Lord Digby £300 for secret service'.⁴⁶ These entries were typical of many. However, it was clearly accepted that intelligence-gathering needed funding and there are numerous examples of regular payments being made in order to support intelligence services. The haphazard nature of these substantial payments, and the fact that some of the bills were settled by Parliament's committees, has tended to support the view that, throughout the Civil War, the gathering of military intelligence had been considered to be a local responsibility, and thus best managed by the local commanders. Nevertheless, the resulting information had been handled more centrally by Parliament than it had been by the individual regional Royalist commanders.

5 The direction of regional intelligence-gathering

The Royalist Council of War does not appear to have offered any guidance to its regional commanders about how to conduct intelligence-gathering operations. The benefits to be gained from controlling the most territory were recognised and Charles appointed local magnates as military leaders because their status would provide troops, support, respect and obedience.⁴⁷ Similarly, the Royalists sought to appoint local gentry as the garrison commanders of Royalist fortresses.⁴⁸ These garrison commanders were expected to use their local status to establish their own intelligence structures as part of their military responsibilities and some important intelligence came from their personal networks of contacts and informants. Although the Royalist Council of War may have appreciated the need for intelligence information, the actual delivery of that intelligence was hampered by the diffusion of Royalist military responsibilities

⁴⁵ The National Archives, *Commonwealth Exchequer Papers*, SP28/7, ff. 21, 55, 140, 302 and 379; SP28/8, ff. 79-81 and 234-235; SP28/9, ff. 158 and 218-219; SP28/23, ff. 40-41 and 44; SP 28/28, ff. 27, 79, 139 and 188; SP2831, ff. 37, 191 and 662; and SP/130, Part II, ff. 26-27 and 81-89, and Part III, ff. 30-33. See also, Young and Emberton, *Cromwell's Army*, pp. 116-117.

⁴⁶ *CSPD 1644*, p. 22. See also, *CSPD, 1641-43*, p. 87; *CSPD 1644*, pp. 44 and 83; P. Young and W. Emberton, *The Cavalier Army* (London, 1974), p. 116-117; Firth, *Cromwell's Army*, p. 65; and D. Nicholas, *Mr. Secretary Nicholas (1593-1669) His Life and Letters* (London, 1995), p. 206 which reveals how Sir Edward Nicholas was authorised to receive 'divers sums of money disbursed for intelligence and otherwise in the King's service'. D. Nicholas writes that this money was never received.

⁴⁷ J.R. Phillips, *Memorials of the Civil War in Wales and the Marches 1642-49* (2 volumes, London, 1874), Volume II, p. 217.

⁴⁸ Hutton, 'Structure of the Royalist Party', p. 556

among the regional commanders – and the local magnates’ reliance on their tenants and neighbours for intelligence reports.⁴⁹

Thus the success of the regional intelligence teams was mixed. In the north, Newcastle established a sound base of intelligence-gathering in the counties for which he was given responsibility.⁵⁰ Reflecting the higher levels of local support for Parliament, Hertford was significantly less successful in Dorset and Devon.⁵¹ Although other regional royalist leaders, such as Lord Herbert in South Wales, Sir Bevil Grenville in Cornwall and Lord Strange in the northwest, were successful in raising forces,⁵² there is no evidence that any of these men appreciated the need to support their operations with a formal regional intelligence network.⁵³ Consequently, the responsibility for co-ordinating Royalist intelligence-gathering appears to have fallen between the Council of War (which had the strategic responsibility but no resources) and the regional commanders (who had the resources but no strategic responsibility).

The Parliamentary situation was fundamentally different as their intelligence management structure was much more centralised; the Committee of Safety remained based in London and received intelligence reports from a wide variety of sources to identify what was happening around the country. Having considered this intelligence, the Committee was able to co-ordinate the military activities of their commanders in the field. Initially this ‘central’ arrangement worked well, but later in the war, when regional commanders had developed their own intelligence-gathering teams, central control became cumbersome and delayed local military initiatives. For example, during the Naseby campaign, Fairfax, the New Model Army commander, was ordered around the country as the Committee of Both Kingdoms responded to their latest intelligence of the movements of the Royalist army. Eventually the Committee

⁴⁹ Roy, ‘The Royalist Council of War’, p. 168.

⁵⁰ Compare, for example, S. D. M. Carpenter, *Military Leadership in the Civil Wars, 1642 -1651* (Abingdon, 2005), pp. 72-73; and A. Hopper, *Black Tom: Sir Thomas Fairfax and the English Revolution* (Manchester University Press, 2007), pp. 37-43 with F.T.R. Edgar, *Sir Ralph Hopton: The King’s Man in the West, 1642-1652* (Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 29-32.

⁵¹ See M.J. Stoye, *Loyalty and Locality* (Exeter, 1994), pp. 93-110, 245-246 and 251-255.

⁵² See E. 102 [17], *A True Relation of The Proceedings of the Cornish Forces under the command of the Lord Mohune and Sir Ralph Hopton; A Famous Victorie obtained by Sir William Waller against the Lord Herbert* (London, 1643); and Clarendon, *History*, Book VI, p. 271.

⁵³ R. Hutton, *The Royalist War Effort 1642-1646* (London, 1982), p. 83.

delegated the task of engaging the king to Fairfax and provided Major Watson, his Scout-master General, with all their intelligence information to assist him in that task.⁵⁴

Just as the Committee of Safety had found it more practical to delegate the raising of troops to regional level, so too had the provision of Parliamentary intelligence and other military support been delegated to the local county-based management structures using the well-established skills of the MPs and JPs. This practice had worked well because, although Parliament's determination to exercise central control through the hands of a few had made their system more bureaucratic, it had also delegated responsibility within a traditional and proven local structure.⁵⁵ As with the Royalists, the most successful Parliamentary recruiters had been the local magnates, such as Hampden and Holles, who had been able to adapt their existing personal and business networks to provide military intelligence information. Thus, from the earliest stages of the war, the Parliamentary central control had facilitated the provision of co-ordinated national military intelligence assessments, and had thereby achieved focus and consistency.⁵⁶

Regional Parliamentary intelligence-gathering operations developed steadily as the conflict expanded and as their local commanders grew more experienced. Perhaps because many of these commanders had been practical and active business men before the war, they were well aware of the importance of obtaining accurate information before making decisions. Certainly Parliamentary commanders, like Sir Samuel Luke and Sir William Brereton, proved to be resourceful and determined providers of local intelligence whose accurate information was regularly reported to the Parliamentary Committees for wider promulgation.⁵⁷ Based in Newport Pagnell and Nantwich respectively, Luke and Brereton's reports from the frontline provided invaluable intelligence information. During the months before the Naseby campaign, these two commanders would later provide a series of accurate reports of the location, size and forecast movements of the Royalist Army which would prove to be key factors in the campaign that effectively won the war for the Parliament.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ See, for example, Sprigge, *Anglia Rediviva*, pp. 20-21.

⁵⁵ L. Glow, 'The Committee of Safety', *English Historical Review* (Volume 80, No. 315, 1965), p. 290.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 291.

⁵⁷ R.N. Dore (ed.), *The Letter Books of Sir William Brereton* (Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, 1990), pp. 108-109. See also Add. MSS 11331-11333 for the original letters transcribed by Dore.

⁵⁸ Dore, *Letter Books*, Volume I, p. 488.

6 The re-introduction of the Scout-master General

As the fighting expanded, both sides soon re-introduced the post of Scout-master General to oversee their intelligence operations – and it is important to appreciate how this appointment fitted into the Civil War intelligence management structure. The post of Scout-master General had first been introduced in England during the reign of Henry VIII. It was a new position which was intended to direct the gathering of intelligence information and to integrate that information into the military planning process. In 1518 it was observed that:

‘It is the office of the Scoutmaster when he cometh to the field to set and appoint the scourage [scouts], he must appoint some to the high hills to view and see if they can discover anything. Also the said Scoutmaster must appoint one other company of scouragers [scouts] to search, and view every valley thereabouts, that there be no enemies laid privily for the annoyance of the said camp; and if they discover any, they are to advertise the Scoutmaster; and he must either bring or send word to the high marshal of the advertisement with speed’.⁵⁹

In his review of seventeenth-century European military organisation, Sir James Turner was much later to observe that the appointment of the Scout-master General was unique to England as he had ‘known none of them abroad’.⁶⁰ Other contemporary accounts confirm that the Scout-master General was responsible for the provision of scouts who were to ‘be directed into crosse wayes and other places of perrill in everie quarter of the campe’, and was to ensure that the scouts were ‘not to forsake theyr places appointed, till discoverers be put fourth in the morninge to the fieelde’.⁶¹ Perhaps reflecting the recent unhappy experiences of scout-masters appointed during the Bishops’ Wars,⁶² at the beginning of the Civil War in 1642 no appointments of scout-masters were made and so scouting and intelligence gathering remained the responsibility of the Lieutenant General of Horse. This situation changed after the experiences of the fighting in 1642 had been absorbed.

7 The development of the Scout-master’s role during the Civil War

⁵⁹ P. Gudgin, *Military Intelligence. A History* (Stroud, 1999), p. 5.

⁶⁰ J. Turner, *Pallas Armata* (London, 1683), p. 265.

⁶¹ B. Rich, *A Pathway to Military Practice* (London, 1587), p. 40.

⁶² See Chapter 1, above.

No doubt reflecting his experiences of the part played by intelligence in the Edgehill campaign, Essex decided to re-establish the appointment of the scout-master – and to make this office-holder responsible for obtaining information about the location, strength and intentions of the Royalist forces. Accordingly, on 14 January 1643, Sir Samuel Luke was appointed as Scout-master General to Essex's army with the task of setting up an intelligence-gathering organisation.⁶³ Paid £7 a day, Luke was allocated funding for twenty men and horses to undertake this role.⁶⁴ Not every Parliamentary army commander appointed a scout-master, and the performance of those scout-masters that were appointed was inconsistent. Whilst Luke had established a useful intelligence service for Essex, the Major General of the Parliamentary army in the South West, James Chudleigh, was clearly dissatisfied with his intelligence service in April 1643 when he condemned the 'intolerable neglect of our Deputy Scout-master' before the skirmish at Sourton Down.⁶⁵

There is no evidence to suggest that the Royalist commanders perceived any short-comings in their intelligence structure after the Edgehill campaign.⁶⁶ As Lieutenant General of the Horse, Rupert acknowledged the importance of intelligence-gathering and 'took great trouble to gain information about the enemy'.⁶⁷ Contemporary accounts show that he recognised the need to find out what the enemy was doing, even though the stories of his personal intelligence-gathering exploits were probably apocryphal.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, a little later in the same year, there is evidence that Rupert, too, appointed his own scout-master. In February 1643, an account of the action at Cirencester stated that Sir William Neale was acting as Rupert's Scout-master General.⁶⁹ Rupert's enthusiasm for intelligence-gathering does not appear to have been shared by his fellow commanders as few other Royalist army commanders are known to have appointed a scout-master at this time. One important exception was Newcastle, commander of the Royalist Northern Army, who appointed one Mr. Smith as scout-master in 1643.⁷⁰ Although Neale was later described by Anthony Wood as 'the worthy bearer [of

⁶³ TNA, Commonwealth Exchequer Papers, SP 28, f. 127. See also Philip, *Journal of Sir Samuel Luke*, Volume I, p. vi.

⁶⁴ See, for example, Commonwealth Exchequer Papers, SP 28/7, ff. 8, 55, 140 and 302 for examples of payments made to Luke. See also SP28/31, ff. 37, 191 and 662 for payments to Leonard Watson, Scout-master General to Manchester and then the New Model Army.

⁶⁵ E. 100[6], *A Most Miraculous and Happy Victory* (London, 1643).

⁶⁶ Clarendon, *History*, Book VI, pp. 99-100.

⁶⁷ Kitson, *Prince Rupert*, pp. 275-276.

⁶⁸ E. 127[18], *Prince Robert's Disguises* (London, 16 November 1642).

⁶⁹ Anon, *A Particular relation of the action before Cirencester* (Oxford, 1643), p. 8.

⁷⁰ M. Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, *The Lives of William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle and of his wife, Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle* (1667, London, 1872 edition), p. 39.

information]’,⁷¹ no other records have survived to show that he received the same degree of recognition from the Royalist commanders for his intelligence-gathering as Luke did from the Parliamentary generals.

In marked contrast, Luke’s intelligence-gathering operations are reported in substantial detail because so many of his reports and letters have survived.⁷² Luke was a vigilant and painstaking intelligence chief who, appreciating the importance of loyalty, recruited his ‘intelligencers’ initially from soldiers of his own troop of dragoons.⁷³ He used local men as they were more likely to be accepted as having a legitimate reason to travel if stopped by any Royalist patrols or sentries. As Luke’s reports were comprehensive and generally accurate, it is easy to see why his intelligence information was so highly regarded by the Parliamentary leaders.⁷⁴ Luke was later described by Ricraft, the seventeenth-century writer, as the ‘noble commander who watches the enemy so industriously that they eat, sleep, drink not, whisper not, but he can give us an account of their darkest proceedings’.⁷⁵ Significantly, Luke was appointed as governor of Newport Pagnell in October 1643.⁷⁶ This garrison was a key link in a protective chain of strong places providing defence against Royalist forces moving towards London, and he was thus ideally situated to provide important information about local enemy movements. A few of the more far-sighted regional commanders, such as Sir William Brereton in Cheshire, recognised the need to develop and evaluate this local intelligence and to create a more comprehensive intelligence-gathering network.⁷⁷ Indeed, Luke’s intelligence team at Newport Pagnell provided Essex with important information when he led the Parliamentary army to relieve Gloucester later in the year.

The role of the scout-master continued to develop as the war progressed. Clarendon makes it clear that, by 1644, the King’s Oxford army possessed a Scout-master General of its own: Sir Charles Blunt.⁷⁸ When Rupert was appointed to command Royalist forces in the north-west, he had taken his scout-master with him; Neale was appointed as Governor of Hawarden Castle

⁷¹ A. A. Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses* (1721, Oxford, 1813 edition), Vol III, p. 902.

⁷² See H. G. Tibbutt (ed.), *The Letter Books of Sir Samuel Luke 1644-45* (London, 1963); and Philip, *Journal*, which contain numerous examples of these reports to, and from, Luke.

⁷³ Philip, *Journal*, Volume 1, p. xi.

⁷⁴ See, for example, *CSPD, 1641-43*, pp. 473 and 488.

⁷⁵ J. Ricraft, *The Civil Warres of England* (London, 1649), p. 115.

⁷⁶ See S. Kelsey, *Sir Samuel Luke* (DNB).

⁷⁷ See, for example, R. Bell, *Fairfax Correspondence*, (two volumes, London, 1849), Volume I, pp. 27, 44, 46, and 64; and A. Marshall, *Intelligence and Espionage in the reign of Charles II, 1660-1685* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 18-19.

⁷⁸ Clarendon, *History*, Book VIII, p. 38.

in Flintshire during March 1644.⁷⁹ This appointment of a Royalist scout-master to a key border garrison copied the earlier Parliamentary appointment of Sir Samuel Luke as the Governor of Newport Pagnell. The appointment of scout-masters to garrisons in militarily significant areas had some distinct advantages as it allowed the establishment of a stable network of spies and scouts who could monitor military developments with increasing accuracy. Basing intelligence-gathering on garrisons would also facilitate communications, thereby providing a comprehensive intelligence-gathering network, sensitive to the slightest intrusion. The network of Royalist garrisons was extended during the earlier months of 1644, as the Royalists had been fortifying Greenland House as part of the defensive network around Oxford. Luke's spies had been monitoring this development and, on 27 February, they reported that the Royalist scout-master, Sir Charles Blunt, had been appointed Governor of this 'border' garrison.⁸⁰ In May, Blunt had been praised by the Earl of Forth for his 'advertisements' of enemy intelligence and had been described as 'a very good hand'.⁸¹ At that time, Blunt had been the deputy governor of Donnington Castle – another key frontline garrison. Blunt was not to enjoy his appointment for long. In June he was shot by one of his own officers during a scuffle with a Royalist sentry in Oxford. According to the contemporary news-pamphlets, Blunt had objected to being stopped by this sentry and had physically assaulted him.⁸² One of Blunt's own officers, who was supervising the sentries that evening, came upon this scuffle and, not recognising the person assaulting his sentry as his own commander, shot him dead upon the spot. As Blunt appeared to have been a capable scout-master – and as his successor proved to be nothing like as adept – this incident was to have serious repercussions for Royalist intelligence-gathering in the subsequent campaigns.

The introduction of Parliamentary intelligence-gathering networks across the whole kingdom was indicative of an increasingly mature intelligence system. Further evidence of the growth of the regional Parliamentary intelligence network was provided in March 1644, when *Mercurius Aulicus* reported that 'Herrick the Scout-master of Warwicke was taken prisoner'.⁸³ This report indicated that the Parliamentary intelligence-gathering network was being gradually extended to cover individual towns and counties, in addition to the intelligence-

⁷⁹ See I. Roy, *Sir William Neale* (DNB).

⁸⁰ Philip, *Journal*, Volume III, p. 258.

⁸¹ *CSPD, 1644*, p. 163.

⁸² See E. 50[26], *The Kingdomes Weekly Intelligencer* (London, 4-11 June 1644); and E. 50[32], *The Spie* (London, 6-13 June 1644).

⁸³ E. 40[32], *Mercurius Aulicus* (Oxford, 23 March 1644).

gathering teams normally associated with the field armies. The number of Parliamentary scout-masters steadily increased as the war progressed; for example, in May 1644, a certain Richard Terry was identified as being the scout-master in Coventry.⁸⁴ The minutes of the Committee of Both Kingdom's meeting of 28 October 1644 mention a report being received from Lord Warriston 'and the scout-master who brought it'.⁸⁵ The individual is not named, but the fact that scout-masters were mentioned with increasing frequency is a firm indication that, on the Parliamentary side at least, they were becoming increasingly commonplace appointments within a growing organisation.⁸⁶ As might be expected, the pay of those involved in intelligence-gathering varied according to their role and responsibility; for example, as Scout-masters General, Luke and Watson were paid £7 a day, while a county scout-master was paid exactly half that amount. Scouts were paid 5 shillings a day, although they could be paid 'bonuses' for hazardous or arduous duties.⁸⁷ By comparison, a colonel of a regiment was receiving 13 guineas (£13 and 13 shillings), while a quartermaster received 3 guineas (£3 and 3 shillings).⁸⁸

Some contemporary references to scout-masters revealed that their intelligence-gathering duties made them vulnerable to capture. For example, when Theodore Jennings, the Scout-master General to the Parliamentary general, Basil Fielding, Earl of Denbigh, was stopped and searched by a Royalist patrol on 23 August 1644, *Mercurius Aulicus* was delighted to report that the patrol found his scout-master's commission in his pocket. Jennings' capture identified one of the practical difficulties of carrying out intelligence-gathering. In order to facilitate his intelligencer duties, Jennings was also carrying a warrant from the Committee of Both Kingdoms which required:

'all Mayors, Justices of the peace, Bailiffs, Captains and all other officers and Corps de Garde ... all Post-masters, and Constables, and other officers whom it doth concern ... to let him pass and repass without any let or molestation'.⁸⁹

⁸⁴ *CSPD, 1644*, p. 149.

⁸⁵ *CSPD, 1644 - 1645*, p. 76.

⁸⁶ See Annex A for a list of scout-masters identified during research for the present thesis.

⁸⁷ See, for example, *CSPD, 1644-45*, p. 594. On 15 June 1645, £10 was paid 'to Sir Samuel Luke's man for his pains'.

⁸⁸ See *Commonwealth Exchequer Papers*, SP28/31, f. 37; and SP28/130, Part II, ff. 26 and 27.

⁸⁹ E. 9[5], *Mercurius Aulicus* (Oxford, 24 August 1644).

Jennings's competence must be called into some doubt as it is surprising that he did not take more trouble to conceal – or indeed to destroy – a document which made his identification as an intelligencer much easier!

In 1645, the post of Scout-master General to the New Model army was keenly contested by two different candidates; Samuel Bedford, Luke's deputy scout-master, and Major Leonard Watson, Manchester's scout-master. It is clear that Fairfax had referred both their names to the Houses of Parliament for a final decision, for, in a letter to Luke, Bedford reported that Fairfax planned to 'leave it to the House to determine'.⁹⁰ Clearly the competition was ruthless for, a few days later, Bedford was complaining that 'Watson and his agents deal most unworthly with me, and strive by bribing my scouts to get them to him, or else to give their intelligence first to him as they come through Henley'.⁹¹ The House of Commons duly decided that Watson was to be Scout-master General to the New Model Army, whilst Bedford was appointed scout-master to the Committee of Both Kingdoms.⁹²

The death of Sir Charles Blunt in 1644 had left the post of Royalist Scout-master General vacant. Although Neale, Rupert's previous scout-master, could conceivably have been moved from Hawarden House to fill the post, in the end a certain Sir Francis Ruce was appointed as Scout-master General of the Royalist Oxford army.⁹³ Neale remained in Hawarden House until the end of the war – he then vanished into obscurity.⁹⁴ We also know that, in 1645, William Cockayne was appointed Scout-master General to the Royalist Western army.⁹⁵ (A list of Civil War scout-masters may be found in the appendices of this thesis). Contemporary references to the intelligence information provided by Sir Edward Nicholas in Oxford, and John Culpepper in Bristol, indicate that they had assumed the central headquarters intelligence-gathering duties for the two main Royalist armies.⁹⁶ Culpepper's letter of 1 April 1645, which is typical of many, reported that 'Waller was quartered last night at Shaftesbury and Cromwell at

⁹⁰ Tibbutt, *Letter Books*, p. 471.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 476.

⁹² *CSPD, 1645*, p. 583.

⁹³ Unfortunately I have been unable to discover any further information about Francis Ruce (Rous).

⁹⁴ See E. Walker, *Brief Memorials of the Unfortunate Success of His Majesty's Army and Affairs in the Year 1645* (London, 1705), p. 130.

⁹⁵ Cockayne's appointment is listed in the List of Indigent Officers. See Anon, *A List of Officers claiming to the sixty thousand pounds &c. granted by His Sacred Majesty for the relief of his truly loyal and indigent party* (London, 1663), pp. 45 and 128.

⁹⁶ See, for example, Warburton, *Memoirs*, Volume III, pp. 91, and 102.

Stirminster and some of their horse at Wincanton'.⁹⁷ Nicholas's position at Oxford enabled him to provide a central point for intelligence reports from Royalist sympathisers; while his co-location with John Birkenhead, the editor of the *Mercurius Aulicus*, would also have enabled him to share any information which had been reported by the news-pamphleteer's 'intelligencers'. As Oxford was at the centre of the Naseby campaign manoeuvres, Nicholas was well placed to receive timely intelligence reports from all of these Royalist informers. However contemporary accounts indicate that Royalist scouting was often distinctly ineffective. Of particular interest is the fact that, just before the battle of Naseby, Rupert was only able to gain any reliable information by carrying out the scouting in person.⁹⁸

The Parliamentarians were fortunate that, in the spring of 1645, the Royalist advance was initially towards Chester where Sir William Brereton's established intelligence-gathering network provided frequent and accurate reports. After the relief of Chester in May 1645, the Royalists' advance took them towards Newport Pagnell, an area of special interest to Sir Samuel Luke, governor of that garrison and formerly Scout-master General to Essex's army. The intelligence reports of the position of the Royalist army from these two officers was so accurate that they gave Fairfax and his New Model army an incalculable advantage over the Royalists. Significantly, although Luke's appointment had theoretically terminated under the Self Denying Ordinance, his contribution towards Parliamentary intelligence led to his governorship being extended during the Naseby campaign.⁹⁹ It is equally interesting to note that, although Sir William Neale, the former scout-master to Rupert, was governor of Hawarden Castle and was thus well placed to report on the movements of Brereton's army, no intelligence reports from him are mentioned in other contemporary accounts – certainly none appear to have survived.

8 The contribution of intelligence information to Deception operations

Military intelligence operations in the English Civil War consisted of more than just the gathering and disseminating of information. Effective military intelligence not only provided information concerning the position and strength of the enemy, it also provided an insight into the enemy's weaknesses and fears – and thereby allowed the exploitation of those concerns. Throughout history, the chances of military operations being successful have always been

⁹⁷ Bod. L, Tanner MSS 60, ff. 43, 49 and 50.

⁹⁸ Walker, *Historical Discourses*, p. 130, and Warburton, *Memoirs*, Volume III, p. 103.

⁹⁹ Tibbutt, *Letter Books*, p. 549; and G. Foard, *Naseby: The Decisive Campaign* (Barnsley, 1995), p. 159.

markedly increased when they have incorporated tactics designed to deceive or confuse the enemy.¹⁰⁰ Thus Civil War intelligencers set out to identify which confusion and deception measures were most likely to succeed. This important aspect of military intelligence had been recognised by John Cruso when he had written that each commander must know ‘the condition and estate of the enemy, his commodities, and necessities, his councils and designs’.¹⁰¹ The actions of the Royalist commander, Sir Henry Gage, when he set out to resupply Basing House with fresh stores and ammunition in September 1644 provide an excellent example of effective confusion and deception tactics. Operating against considerable odds, Gage’s tactics of planting false reports, disguising his forces and using feints to conceal his true line of advance so confused his opponents that he was able to re-supply Basing House and take a hundred prisoners at the cost of a minimal loss of some eleven dead and about fifty wounded.¹⁰²

Deception plans were not just used to conceal the movements of armies; they were also used to conceal the location and movements of individuals. After Rupert’s initial success at the skirmish at Powick, Royalist commanders noticed the close attention paid by Parliamentary commanders to the location and movements of Rupert himself,¹⁰³ and used the Parliamentary sensitivity about Rupert’s movements in very much the same way that the Second World War Allied leaders used the interest that the German Generals had in the movements of General Patton. Just as the much publicised presence of Patton in East Anglia, coupled with innovative technical deception operations, deceived Hitler as to the true location of the Allied landings in Normandy for some critical weeks,¹⁰⁴ so reports of the presence of Rupert in the Midlands in May 1645 helped to persuade the Parliamentary commanders that military action against Brereton was imminent.¹⁰⁵

A less complicated technique, which was frequently used by both Rupert and Waller, incorporated either the cover of darkness or speed of advance, or feints, or a combination of all three intelligence-based techniques, in order to deceive and confuse their opponents. For example, the march of the Royalist army from Shrewsbury in 1642 was covered by a feint by

¹⁰⁰ Examples of such deception plans abound throughout history. See for example, Hannibal’s deployments before the battles of the Trebbia, Lake Trasimene and Cannae described in J. Peddie, *Hannibal’s War* (Stroud, 1995), pp. 55, 67-71, and 89-96.

¹⁰¹ Cruso, *Militarie Instructions*, Chapter II, p. 57.

¹⁰² E. Walsingham, *The Life of the Most Honourable Knight, Sir Henry Gage, Late Governor of Oxford* (Oxford, 1645), pp. 15-16.

¹⁰³ Warburton, *Memoirs*, Volume II, p. 275.

¹⁰⁴ W. S. Churchill, *The Second World War* (London, 2000), Volume VI, p. 11.

¹⁰⁵ See, for example, Dore, *Letter Books*, Volume I, pp. 110-111, 238 and 261.

Rupert towards Worcester,¹⁰⁶ just as Rupert's attack on Newark in April 1644 used a fast speed of advance to deceive the Parliamentary commander, Sir John Meldrum, who simply refused to believe intelligence reports from his scouts that Rupert's forces were advancing so rapidly and were, consequently, much closer to him than he realised.¹⁰⁷ Similarly Waller's attack on Alton in December 1643 combined a rapid speed of advance, the cover of night and the use of back lanes that were not patrolled in order to avoid the Royalist scouts, and to lull Hopton and Crawford, the Royalist generals, into a state of false security.¹⁰⁸ After successfully relieving Gloucester in 1643, Essex feinted towards the north before doubling back through Cirencester and heading for London.¹⁰⁹ The success of all of these military operations depended upon accurate intelligence of the enemy's position, as well as the commander's willingness to exploit any advantage given him by his intelligence information.¹¹⁰

9 The communication of intelligence information

Commanders on both sides soon realised that speedy and reliable communications were essential as they appreciated that having important intelligence information which they could not communicate swiftly was unacceptable. The effective integration of intelligence reports into the military planning process was clearly dependent upon the timely receipt of accurate information. In the Civil War, most information was carried by mounted messengers, although letters were normally used as messengers could not always be relied upon to recount long or complicated verbal messages. A messenger on a galloping horse was a surprisingly fast method of transmitting information; using pre-positioned relays of horses, messages could be passed more quickly than might be imagined. Although it must have been more difficult to maintain reliable and fast communications between two forces on the march, the rapidity of the messengers providing the routine postal service between fixed points such as towns or cities was, again, surprisingly fast. As early as 1643, the Committee of Safety was recruiting additional riders to carry its messages and this network was steadily enhanced during the war.¹¹¹ In 1645, Sir William Brereton's messages from the Nantwich/Middlewich area were reaching Lord Fairfax in York within two days and Lord Leven with the Scottish Army within

¹⁰⁶ Clarendon, *History*, Book V, p. 76.

¹⁰⁷ E. 38 [10], *Prince Rupert's Raising of the Siege of Newark* (London, 1644).

¹⁰⁸ Adair, *Roundhead General*, pp. 143-144.

¹⁰⁹ Clarendon, *History*, Book VII, pp. 205-206.

¹¹⁰ Kitson, *Prince Rupert*, pp. 275-276.

¹¹¹ *CSPD, 1644*, pp. 28, and 33.

three days.¹¹² When messages were urgent, they were passed very quickly indeed; contemporary accounts show that letters written by Hyde in London ‘on Saturday night at twelve o’clock, were answered by the king at York and the reply was ...[back] in Hyde’s hands by ten o’clock on Monday morning’.¹¹³

Parliament showed a keen appreciation of the resources which were needed to support their military intelligence infrastructure, and provided postal services for both official and private letters. As the Parliamentarian sergeant, Nehemiah Wharton, reported from Essex’s army on 13 September 1642, ‘Every Wensday you may find a post that serveth our army at the Saracen’s Head, in Carter Lane. His name is Thomas Weedon, who is with us once a week constantly’.¹¹⁴ Later in the war, in February 1644, the Committee of Both Kingdoms established a new communications and messenger service to maintain a reliable information exchange with Parliament’s Scottish allies. With its centre in London, there were links to further stations at Preston, Derby, Nottingham, Manchester and Northampton; and from these stations there was a further communications web that covered more remote towns such as Lincoln, Stafford and Nantwich. These communications relays supported a weekly messenger service, although messengers could be despatched more frequently should the need arise. This network was enhanced still further in November 1644 when a regular timetable for message delivery was established. Messengers left London every Saturday morning and rode via St Albans, Newport Pagnell, Northampton, Leicester, Nottingham, Derby and Manchester to Preston where they arrived at noon on the Thursday. Having collected any messages from the Scots, the messenger left Preston at noon on the Friday and retraced his route arriving back in London on the Thursday night – a round trip of fifteen days.¹¹⁵ Express riders were used for more urgent personal despatches. This land-based infrastructure was supplemented by a seaborne equivalent which provided communications ‘betwixt the province of Munster and this kingdom’. Similar arrangements were made in Weymouth where ‘weekly post barks’ (sailed for the Continent).¹¹⁶ A significant advantage of introducing a reliable postal service was that, as more people used it, so it became possible to intercept and read more letters!¹¹⁷

¹¹² R.N. Dore (ed.), *Letter Books of Sir William Brereton* (two volumes, The Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, 1990), pp. 85-87.

¹¹³ *CSPD, 1642*, p. 257.

¹¹⁴ S.L. Ede-Borrett (ed.), *The Letters of Nehemiah Wharton* (Wollaston, 1983), p. 17.

¹¹⁵ *CSPD, 1644*, p. 170.

¹¹⁶ *CSPD, 1643*, pp. 28-29.

¹¹⁷ See, for example, D. Kahn, *The Code Breakers: The Story of Secret Writing* (New York, 1996), p. 155; and B. Donagan, *War in England, 1642-1649* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 3, 94 and 103.

The Royalists also established messenger services to carry letters and intelligence information within individual counties. Lord Digby and Sir Edward Nicholas, as Masters and Comptrollers General of His Majesty's posts, were responsible for establishing the equivalent Royalist postal service.¹¹⁸ However, as the fighting increasingly went against them, the Royalists lost control of more territory to the Parliamentarians and it became more difficult for them to maintain either their intelligence-gathering organisation, or the speed and security of their postal service.¹¹⁹

10 Conclusion

After the Edgehill campaign, the contemporary evidence shows that Essex recognised the urgent need to obtain accurate and timely intelligence. It also reveals that, by 1645, the Parliamentary commanders were generally much more sensitive than most Royalist commanders were to the importance of intelligence information – and that their organisation proved to be much more adept at providing such information. Most significantly of all, the Parliamentarians' intelligence information was more effectively integrated into their military planning process. As Chapter 8 of this thesis will show, the intelligence gained by the Roundheads in June 1645 was immediately acted upon by Fairfax and led to the decisive Parliamentary victory at Naseby.¹²⁰ Parliamentary intelligence operations proved their worth all over the country. For example, it was as a result of Brereton's detailed intelligence reports showing that Rupert was gathering forces and planning to break the siege of Chester, that the Committee of Both Kingdoms decided to reinforce and support the Parliamentary forces in Cheshire in 1645. Lord Fairfax's letter to Brereton dated 24 March 1645 concluded with the remark 'By holding intelligence one with another we shall know better how to bend our forces for the annoyance of the enemy and advancing of the service'.¹²¹ Although Rupert succeeded in relieving Chester in 1645, it is evident from this comment that a sound level of intelligence awareness existed among the senior Parliamentary commanders. Leven's letter to Brereton of 17 March 1645 shows the same thing. As the Scottish commander wrote, 'I thank you for your frequent intelligence and desire the continuance thereof'.¹²² So, for the Parliamentarians at least, not only is there evidence that the value of military intelligence was

¹¹⁸ See, for example, *CSPD, 1644*, p. 6; and G. A. Harrison, *Royalist Organisation in Gloucestershire and Bristol 1642 – 1645* (MA thesis, University of Manchester, 1961), p. 171.

¹¹⁹ Marshall, *Intelligence and Espionage*, p. 20.

¹²⁰ Gardiner, *History*, Volume I, p. 150; Brereton, *Letter Books*, Volume I, p. 36.

¹²¹ Dore, *Letter Books*, Volume I, p. 126.

¹²² Dore, *Letter Books*, Volume I, p. 87.

appreciated, but also that they were making very effective use of it by the end of the Civil War.

By comparison, the direction of Royalist intelligence operations was inconsistent and appears to have lacked support from many senior officers, some of whom do not appear to have appreciated the military advantages bestowed by effective intelligence-gathering. With the exception of Charles I's 1644 campaigns and those operations led by Rupert, the Royalist intelligence-gathering operations lacked focus and the intelligence information was rarely integrated into the Royalist planning process. Even after Sir Edward Walker recognised (somewhat belatedly) the significance of intelligence during the Lostwithiel campaign in 1644, no significant improvements were made to the Royalist management of intelligence-gathering operations. Consequently their intelligence-gathering organisation rarely provided them with any decisive and battle-winning intelligence. Even when the Royalists did obtain useful intelligence, such as the warning they were given of Essex's break-out from Gloucester in 1643, the Cavalier commanders were not always responsive enough to exploit such information.¹²³

Of particular significance to the outcome of the fighting was the steady development of the scout-master role. The contemporary evidence shows that the main changes to that role were initiated by the Roundhead commanders before being imitated by the Royalists. For example, during 1644, the Royalists would have appeared to have copied the practice, introduced by the Parliamentarians during 1643, of stationing scout-masters in front-line garrisons. This combination of a peripatetic scout-master controlling a fixed intelligence network had several advantages; not only could the scout-master establish a more reliable communication system, but he could also bring more consistency to his intelligence reports. It is also interesting to note how early on in the conflict the importance of intelligence-gathering was recognised by the Parliamentarians – and, by comparison, how long it took for the Royalist commanders to follow suit. The Parliamentary network of intelligence operations developed steadily throughout the war. The growth of a county-based intelligence system was confirmed on 24 February 1644, when the Committee of Both Kingdoms established a sub-committee 'for drafting letters to the Scottish army for intelligence, and to those employed to hold intelligence

¹²³ Bod. L, Clarendon MSS, 1738, f. 5.

in the several counties'.¹²⁴ The fact that the Parliamentary network was widened – and was supported by an increasingly efficient communication service which linked the Parliamentary headquarters – is confirmed by a number of contemporary references.¹²⁵ Further evidence of the priority which the Parliamentarians gave to the gathering and exchange of intelligence information is provided by the numerous exhortations from the Committee of Both Kingdoms to exchange intelligence information. The Committee's letter to Lord Fairfax on 5 March was typical of many when it urged him to 'hold a continual intelligence with the Scottish army'.¹²⁶ All of the evidence from the contemporary sources indicates that the Parliamentary commanders had a much better awareness of the military advantages to be gained from integrating intelligence information into their decision-making processes than the Royalists did. The Parliamentary commanders displayed more innovation in developing their intelligence and were prompt to supply the communications and code-breaking support that further improved their intelligence organisations. Finally, and perhaps most significantly of all, the Parliamentary commanders appreciated their intelligencers as the Royalist commanders apparently did not – and gave them the support they needed throughout.¹²⁷ It was a difference in approach which may well have helped the Roundheads to win the Civil War.

¹²⁴ *CSPD, 1644*, p. 25.

¹²⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 28-29.

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 35.

¹²⁷ Dore, *Letter Books*, Volume I, p. 87.

Chapter Four

English Civil War Intelligence Sources and their Military Applications

1 Introduction

The previous chapter has outlined how military intelligence was directed, integrated and exchanged by Civil War commanders. The aim of the present chapter is to explore the broad range of intelligence-gathering sources that were used by each side during the conflict. Unlike a conflict fought overseas where the local population was likely to be unfriendly, in a civil war there was a greater possibility of each army obtaining intelligence information from a variety of sources provided by the local population. Furthermore, the steady improvements in the reliability and speed of the messenger and postal services soon revealed that written reports from sympathisers living around the country were providing another invaluable source of military intelligence. Accordingly, as the fighting spread and the number of marching armies increased, so too did the demand for – and the supply of – more comprehensive and timely military information. This resulted in the development, not only of a growing number of more innovative ways of gathering intelligence, but also of increasingly sophisticated military organisations to verify the wide range of reports. Nor was the growing demand for information restricted to purely military matters for the increasing public desire for information about the conflict led to a dramatic increase in the demand for news-pamphlets. At the start of the Civil War, however, when neither side appeared to appreciate the advantages of seeking military information from the local people, commanders tended to rely more upon the traditional methods for gathering intelligence – such as scouting reports provided by their horse patrols.

2 Scouts and scouting

The most well-established sources of military information, and the ones which commanders had traditionally relied upon to provide them with accurate and timely intelligence about the enemy's position and strength, were the reports received from their own scouting patrols. Cruso recommended that these scouts 'must be choice men, valiant, vigilant and discreet' who must 'see that with their own eyes which they inform'. He evidently considered that scouts had an important role to play and suggested that:

‘An expert officer, with 20 or 25 of the best-mounted and hardiest Harquebusiers (or mix of Cuirassiers and Harquebusiers) with two trumpets are to be employed. These are to carry with them some refreshment for themselves and their horses, to that purpose retiring themselves into some wood, or shadie place, placing good Centinells upon trees’.¹

This advice was certainly taken to heart by the Parliamentarians for, when Sir Samuel Luke was appointed Scout-master-General in early 1643, he was given funding for ‘fouer and twenty men and horses who were imploied daily as spies into the enemyes armyes and garrisons’.² The size of Luke’s scouting team evidently proved to be both practical and successful for it was used as a model throughout the war. When Mr. Samuel Bedford was appointed as scout-master to the Committee of Both Kingdoms on 10 June 1645, he was given Parliamentary approval for the establishment of a spying and scouting team of 28 people.³ The associated requirement to communicate intelligence information was acknowledged as the Committee also approved Bedford’s request for ‘£120 for buying horses, ten men for watching the King’s army at 5s a day, one agent for Lincolnshire, one for Oxford and one for the west; each agent to have one spy and 4 messengers at 3s a day’.⁴

The responsibility for scouting was usually assigned to the Lieutenant-General of the Horse.⁵ Scouting was recognised as a difficult and dangerous job which required each scout to demonstrate courage, initiative and determination. Apart from being able to ride well, and preferably provide his own mount, the scout also needed to be numerate and literate. The role of the scout – or ‘discoverer’ as he was also called in some pre-war publications – was described by Cruso in some detail, who wrote that the scout would need to be brave, quick-thinking and intelligent in order to deliver an accurate and well-judged report that would be accepted as reliable by his commander.⁶ Seventeenth-century commanders realised that to find all these characteristics in one person was always going to be difficult, especially as the need to

¹ J. Cruso, *Militarie Instructions for the Cavallrie* (Cambridge, 1632), Part II, Chapter IV, pp. 58-60.

² The National Archives, Commonwealth Exchequer Papers, SP 28/23, f.8.

³ Bedford had been deputy scout-master to Sir Samuel Luke. See above, p. 57.

⁴ *CSPD, 1645*, p. 583.

⁵ Cruso, *Militarie Instructions*, Part I, Chapter III, p. 6.

⁶ Cruso, *Militarie Instructions*, Part II, Chapter IV, p. 60.

be able to ride narrowed the selection of scouts to the ranks of each side's cavalry; thus the quality of the scout was largely determined by the quality of the cavalry troopers on each side. At the beginning of the Civil War the Royalist horse was probably of a superior quality overall, although the Parliamentary horse did contain some good officers: men such as Edmund Ludlow, Nathaniel Fiennes and Charles Fleetwood.⁷ Later in the war, Parliamentary commanders appreciated the need to counter the enemy's scouting as Colonel Massey from Gloucester informed the Committee how he had been 'lodging my forces in a thicket of the forest, and so preventing the enemy's discovery of us by their scouts'.⁸

Luke had recruited and led a troop of horse in the early part of the war: he obviously knew and trusted these men as he took them with him as the core of his scouting parties when he was appointed to be Essex's scout-master in January 1643. Having to recruit scouts from cavalry of rather lacklustre quality is possibly one of the reasons why Parliamentary scouting was not very effective in the early campaigns.⁹ In the later years, when the professionalism demonstrated by Cromwell's Ironsides had begun to permeate through the ranks of the New Model Army, the quality of the Parliamentary scouts improved dramatically; and so did the quality of the intelligence being received by the Parliamentary commanders. The improved standard of Parliamentary scouting was noticed by the Royalists; in January 1644 a Royalist commander reported to Rupert that the reason for his inactivity was because 'their [Parliamentarian] scouts are so frequent abroad, we might be discovered by them'.¹⁰

Interestingly, the initially higher quality of the Royalist horse did not necessarily mean that their scouts were of a superior quality. Royalist scouting patrols were equally likely to miss detection opportunities, although it is possible that the reasons for their mistakes reflected social, rather than military, considerations.¹¹ Contemporary accounts reveal that, at the beginning of the war, many of the Royalist horse troopers considered themselves to be an elite

⁷ See, for example, T. Carlyle, *Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches* (three volumes, London, 1845), Volume 1, p. 101.

⁸ *CSPD, 1644-45*, p. 17.

⁹ E.126 [39], *A True Relation of the skirmish at Worcester* (London, 1642); J. Rushworth, *Historical Collections* (London, 1659-99), Part III, Volume II, p. 24.

¹⁰ Add. MSS. 18981, f. 9 (J. Cockeran's letter to Prince Rupert dated 16 January 1644).

¹¹ E. Hyde, *The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England, together with an Historical View of the Affairs in Ireland* (sixteen books, London, 1702-4), Book VI, p. 80.

force of volunteers who were superior to the rest of the army.¹² It may well be that, in the view of these Royalist troopers, military victories were more surely to be achieved by charging headlong into battle, where courage would prevail even in the most complex situation, than through the intricacies of intelligence work. As the early engagements of the Civil War proved, many of these young men believed that feats of gallantry far outweighed other military considerations: the skirmish at Powick Bridge served to reinforce this opinion.¹³ The need to acquire military skills that required guile, patience or the slow, and often monotonous, ‘business’ of intelligence gathering was unlikely to be appreciated by these soldiers. It is hard to imagine troopers like these wishing to become scouts, or having anything to do with the mundane routine of intelligence-gathering.¹⁴

In the absence of timely and accurate intelligence reports from either their military scouts or other sources, some senior officers were quite prepared to conduct their own intelligence-gathering operations in order to find out what their enemies were doing. Early examples of the scouting and intelligence-gathering operations carried out personally by Rupert are given in a pamphlet which described the various disguises adopted by the prince when he was spying on his opponents.¹⁵ Although these stories may well be apocryphal, Rupert’s energy and determination to ‘see for himself’ was attracting comment from friend and foe alike.¹⁶ His activity rate was extraordinarily high as his many responsibilities, coupled with a small staff, required him to supervise a large number of activities himself.¹⁷ Rupert’s successful intelligence-gathering forays were attributed by some Parliamentarians to supernatural powers; his energy and rapidity of movement allowed him to visit so many places that, in their view, no-one could carry out so many activities without some form of supernatural help.¹⁸

¹² Ibid, p. 82.

¹³ Ibid, p. 46.

¹⁴ BL, Add. MSS, 18982, f. 18, document dated 16 January 1645.

¹⁵ E.127 [18], *Prince Roberts Disguises* (London, 16 November 1642). Sir Thomas Fairfax provided another example of personal reconnaissance the night before Naseby. See J. Wilson, *Fairfax* (London, 1985), p. 70.

¹⁶ Clarendon, *History*, Book VI, p. 78; and E. 127 [18].

¹⁷ C. H. Firth, ‘The Journal of Prince Rupert’s marches, 5 Sept. 1642 to 4 July 1646’, *English Historical Review* (Volume 13, No. 52, 1898), pp. 729-741.

¹⁸ F. Kitson, *Prince Rupert, Portrait of a Soldier* (London, 1994), p. 87.

3 The practical implications of providing effective scouting

Intelligence information was of little value unless it was received in time to influence the subsequent deployment of forces. Civil War commanders needed a substantial amount of warning of the presence of the enemy so that they could prepare and position their troops prior to any engagement. For example, it took about six hours for the Royalist and Parliamentary armies to prepare for battle at Edgehill even though both forces were on the march for London.¹⁹ Failure to provide timely warning normally resulted in one side being caught at a substantial disadvantage. Because such a warning was best provided by a screen of scouts deployed around a force, scouting was seen by Civil War commanders as being the most responsive form of intelligence-gathering – and one under their direct control – even though commanders often had other sources of intelligence available to them.

The main problem with scouting was that it was difficult for a seventeenth-century army to provide enough scouts to cover the ground. Even a dedicated body of 28 scouts would only be able to offer limited coverage, especially as providing the all-round scouting cover needed to provide reliably adequate warning of the enemy's approach would require the allocation of several hundred troopers.²⁰ The harsh reality was that assigning scouting forces of hundreds of men was not a feasible option for either Royalist or Parliamentary army commanders as they did not have enough horsemen to spare; consequently the assigned scouting forces were often inadequate to cover the area they were assigned to patrol. It seems reasonable to assume that, when assigning smaller than ideal forces to scouting, commanders were accepting the operational risk that they might be disadvantaged by receiving short notice of the enemy's approach. Although targeted scouting patrols increased the chances of a successful interception, this option required the commander to have prior intelligence about the direction from which the enemy was approaching.

From a commander's point of view, the intelligence reports received from scouts had several advantages over reports received from other sources. Because scouts tended to operate

¹⁹ P. Young, *Edgehill 1642* (Moreton-in-Marsh, 1995), p. 76.

²⁰ To provide an all round scouting screen (at a distance of 20 miles around the main body with a pair of scouts every half-mile) would require over 500 scouts to be deployed. Deploying that screen of scouts would take at least two hours and recalling them would take over four hours. Few Civil War commanders had that number of horsemen to deploy as scouts!

relatively close to their own army, their reports were normally of immediate consequence. Equally important was the fact that the reports were received relatively quickly and therefore provided the commander with a better idea of the relative geographic location of his opponent. A further advantage was that the scout's report would usually be more relevant and reliable as the scout's military experience would have made him aware of what he needed to report and how accurately. Cruso recommended that all intelligence-gatherers should have military experience as this would mean that they were more likely to recognise the significance of what they saw, and would thus be able to make some informed estimates of the fighting capability of the forces they were watching. A good example of this form of intelligence was the locating of the Parliamentarian army by Rupert's troopers before Edgehill, as their report was accurate enough to allow the effective deployment of the Royalist Army at first light.²¹

4 Trumpeters

Another traditional form of intelligence-gathering was provided by the trumpeters who, like the medieval heralds they replaced, provided the official communications between opposing army commanders in the seventeenth century. The trumpeters were expected to report on all military activity that they had observed while engaged upon these communication duties. Generals selected their trumpeters carefully for these tasks, again advised by Cruso, who wrote:

‘that the trumpeter must be discreet and judicious; not only to be fit to deliver embassies and messages as they ought, but (at his return) to report what he hath observed concerning the enemies works and guards, and what he hath further gathered and espied’.²²

Commanders on either side were well acquainted with the trumpeter's intelligence-gathering role and sometimes deliberately delayed the return of enemy trumpeters so that any intelligence information they had discovered would be reported too late for it to be of any

²¹ Clarendon, *History*, Book VI, pp. 355-360.

²² Cruso, *Military Instructions*, Chapter XI, p. 14.

immediate value.²³ Trumpeters were often sent into the opposing camp under the pretext of negotiating the exchange of prisoners – a pretext for their main task of bringing back the most recent information about the enemy’s position and strength. Symonds described how Fairfax used trumpeters in this role just before the battle of Naseby, when ‘a trumpet came from Fairfax for exchange of prisoners from Newport Pagnell’.²⁴

5 Deserters

Much important military intelligence information was also divulged by deserters, mainly because the latter were well aware that the warmth of their reception was likely to depend upon the value of the information they possessed. Depending upon the rank of the deserter, these reports could be of major significance; for example, when Sir Richard Grenville deserted to the king in 1644, he provided the Royalists with full details of a plot to betray the garrison of Basing House and Waller’s plans for the invasion of southwest England in the spring.²⁵ On one of the occasions when Sir John Urry changed sides (a fairly regular event during the war), he brought details of a Parliamentarian money shipment which, when Rupert set out to intercept it, led to the skirmish at Chalgrove Field and the mortal wounding of John Hampden.²⁶ Not all of the information received by this means was so important, but an intelligence picture is a jigsaw built up from many pieces of different sizes. The importance of deserters’ reports varied considerably; Symonds described how the Royalists were able to monitor the growing weakness of the surrounded Parliamentarian forces when two of Essex’s men deserted to the Royalists during the Lostwithiel campaign of 1644 ‘and told us that provisions were very scarce with Essex’.²⁷ As the war progressed and the difficulties of recruiting became more widespread, it became much easier to gain access to the enemy’s plans by posing as a deserter and joining the opposite side. As John Hodgson, a Parliamentarian Captain of Horse, recalled in his *Memoirs*: ‘We had spies sent out amongst them into [Sir Marmaduke] Langdale’s party, pretending to run away from us, and they were coming in

²³ For example, Hopton detained Waller’s trumpeter during his retreat to Devizes in 1643. See C. E. H. Chadwyck-Healey (ed.), *Bellum Civile: Hopton’s Narrative of His Campaign in the West (1642-44) and Other Papers* (Somerset Record Society, Volume 18, 1902), p. 55.

²⁴ C.E. Long (ed.), *Richard Symonds: Diary of the Marches kept by the Royal army during the Great Civil War* (Camden Society, 1859), p. 190.

²⁵ Clarendon, *History*, Book VIII, p. 139.

²⁶ S.R. Gardiner, *History of the Great Civil War 1642-1649* (4 volumes, London, 1893), Volume I, p. 150.

²⁷ Long, *Symonds Diary*, p. 55.

continually with intelligence'.²⁸ This became a well-established means of gathering intelligence and continued well into the later phases of the conflict. For example, during the Second Civil War in Cornwall in 1648, a Parliamentary commander suggested that 'a soldier of the Mount... may pretend to run away to them [the Royalists], and to stay with them till he can learne their strength and resolucions'.²⁹ Although deserters were a potentially attractive source of trained manpower as the war went on, commanders became increasingly aware of the danger that enemy spies might be masquerading as deserters in order to gain access to military information.

6 Prisoners

Much useful information was gained from the interrogation of prisoners, for the questioning of such men could provide key military intelligence. It was soon realised that the papers carried by prisoners could reveal intelligence information about the enemy's plans and problems. In May 1643, the Committee of Safety had ordered that all prisoners should be searched and all letters and papers examined for military intelligence.³⁰ Cruso urged the taking of prisoners to supplement intelligence sources, observing that:

'because the commoditie of spies cannot always be had, some of the enemy must be assayed to be taken, from whom there may be drawn a relation of the estate of the adverse part, and this exploit is called, taking of intelligence, a dutie of great importance ... and also of much travail and danger. In the night they must approach the enemies armie, assaying to take some Centinell, or some disbanded souldier in some of the houses there about'.³¹

It was this very method of intelligence gathering that had alerted the Royalists to the presence of Essex immediately before Edgehill when Rupert's troopers had captured the Parliamentary quartermasters.³² Rupert would have been seeking to obtain intelligence of a

²⁸ J. Hodgson, *Memoirs of Captain John Hodgson* (Pontefract, 1994), p. 28.

²⁹ M. J. Stoyale, 'The Gear Rout: The Cornish Rising of 1648 and the Second Civil War', *Albion. A Quarterly Journal concerned with British Studies* (Volume 32, No. 1, 2000), p. 45.

³⁰ *CSPD, 1641-43*, p. 463.

³¹ Cruso, *Militarie Instructions*, Part II, Chapter II, p. 58.

³² Young, *Edgehill*, pp. 75-77.

similar sort when he was alleged to have asked some Parliamentary soldiers captured just before Marston Moor in 1644, 'Is Cromwell there'?³³ Again, caution was needed as prisoners were not always what they seemed. Brereton inserted a spy into Chester to report on the state of the besieged Royalist garrison. His spy was a soldier who was successfully 'captured' and thereby gained entry into Chester. The problem about being a spy masquerading as a captive was that it was difficult to communicate any information securely and regularly – a problem which continued to vex both sides throughout the war.³⁴

Prisoners could be useful in other ways. When the Royalists decided to remove the threat posed by the Parliamentary garrison of Marlborough to their communications between Oxford and the West, Lord Wilmot was sent with a force to capture the town in December 1642. When this Royalist force approached Marlborough and the soldiers 'were near the town, they apprehended a fellow who confessed upon examination that he was a spy, and was sent by the Governor to bring intelligence of their strength and motion'. Wilmot's reaction was unusual as he did not execute the spy. Instead he deployed his whole force for the spy's inspection so that the spy could 'return to the town and tell those that had sent him what he had seen that they should do well to treat with the garrison and give them leave to submit to the king'.³⁵ It would appear that Wilmot was keen to use captured spies to advance his own designs!

7 Garrison commanders

Another important source of information was reports from garrison commanders. In addition to gathering supplies and collecting taxes from the people living inside their area of responsibility, garrison commanders were also responsible for reporting military intelligence.³⁶ The presence of garrison troops extended the area under each side's military control and thus increased the chances of intercepting military messengers. The role of the garrison in the context of intelligence-gathering should not be underestimated, even though the deployment of troops in garrisons, rather than the front line, has often been criticised as being a waste of

³³ Kitson, *Prince Rupert*, p. 191.

³⁴ R. N. Dore (ed.), *The Letter Books of Sir William Brereton* (two volumes, Lancashire and Cheshire Record Society, 1984-90), Volume II, p. 99.

³⁵ Clarendon, *History*, Book VI, pp. 155-157.

³⁶ C. H. Firth (ed.), *The Memoirs of Edmund Ludlow 1625-1672* (two volumes, London, 1698), Volume I, p. 52.

experienced soldiers.³⁷ Evidently the value of garrisons was recognised by contemporaries, for Clarendon records how the Parliamentarians obtained useful intelligence in this way in 1643; noting that they had established ‘many garrisons near all the roads, which the most private messengers travelled with great hazard, three being intercepted for one that escaped’.³⁸ Clearly there were going to be times when troops would be of more value serving in the field armies, but the merit of maintaining a network of garrisons came to be more clearly appreciated as the conflict continued – the combined number of Royalist and Parliamentary garrisons in 1645 totalled between 150 and 160.

Not only did those garrisons facilitate the collection of the taxes and other resources that funded the fighting, but the troop of horse that each garrison normally contained proved to be invaluable by extending the area from which the garrison could gather intelligence from the local people.³⁹ Brereton received invaluable information throughout the war from his garrison commanders. His letter of 26 February 1644 passed on reports he had received from Captain Henry Stone, the Parliamentary garrison commander at Eccleshall, as well as information received from Coventry. ‘Captain Stone advertises me that 1,500 horse are come to Litchfield’ Brereton wrote, ‘and a post from Coventry that there are 2,000 horse and foot on their way from the king’.⁴⁰ The need to extend the area of control around the garrison was quickly appreciated by commanders of both sides; in 1643 the Royalist garrison commander of Donnington Castle sought ‘an allowance of 6 horses to scout, having none but foot in the castle’.⁴¹ The Royalist garrison at Wallingford was also supplemented by a troop of horse in 1644 for the same reason.⁴² The intelligence reports from garrisons made an early contribution to the conduct of the fighting as it had been the Parliamentary garrison at Warwick under Captain Bridges who, by capturing part of the Royalist baggage train in October 1642, had been able to inform the Committee of Safety not only that the king had left Shrewsbury, but also that the Royalist army was within a few miles of Coventry and was marching on

³⁷ P. Young and R. Holmes, *The English Civil War, a Military History of the Three Civil Wars 1642-1651* (London, 1974), p. 71.

³⁸ Clarendon, *History*, Volume III, p. 23.

³⁹ J. Barratt, *Sieges of the English Civil Wars* (Barnsley, 2009), p. 18.

⁴⁰ Dore, *Letter Books*, Volume I, p. 50.

⁴¹ BL, Harleian MSS, 6852, f. 197, document dated 2 September 1643.

⁴² BL, Harleian MSS, 6802, f. 135, document dated 25 April 1644.

London.⁴³ Therefore the greater the area controlled by the garrison, the greater the amount of intelligence that garrison provided. An additional advantage of stationing a troop of horse within the garrison was that it allowed the garrison commander to make very speedy reports of any important or unusual events that had been discovered.

8 Spies and spying

In addition to military reports from scouts, trumpeters, deserters and prisoners, Civil War commanders also received valuable information from other people who were generally described in contemporary accounts as spies (or ‘intelligencers’).⁴⁴ As the war spread, the demand for information – and therefore the sources to provide it – had grown to such an extent that it had become increasingly commonplace to use civilians as well as soldiers for intelligence work.⁴⁵ Generally, soldiers had been employed in scouting work, whilst the civilians largely had been employed as spies.⁴⁶ But the demand for spies (and the messengers who carried their information) allowed for no social distinctions and people increasingly were recruited from all ages and both sexes.⁴⁷

There is evidence that Cruso’s advice to infiltrate spies into the ‘domesticall service of the chief officers of the enemie’ had been followed by the Parliamentarian commanders from the very beginning of the war.⁴⁸ When the Royalist cavalry had captured some of the baggage of the Earl of Essex a few days after the battle of Edgehill, they had discovered a number of intelligence reports written by a Mr Blake.⁴⁹ As Warburton has observed in his *Memoirs of Prince Rupert*, Blake had been well placed to do harm to the Royalist cause as he had been Rupert’s personal secretary and had thus been well acquainted with every movement of the Royal army. It was alleged that Blake ‘immediately transferred intelligence thereof to

⁴³ K. Roberts and J. Tincey, *Edgehill 1642* (Oxford, 2001), p. 46.

⁴⁴ See, for example, Cruso, *Militarie Instructions*, Part III, Chapter IX, p. xv, which discusses the role of ‘spies’.

⁴⁵ H. G. Tibbutt (ed.), *The Letter Book of Sir Samuel Luke* (Historical Manuscripts Commission JP4, HMSO, 1963), pp. 21-22, 42, 45, 53 and 61. These extracts refer to the various persons engaged by Luke to carry out his intelligence-gathering operations.

⁴⁶ Cruso, *Militarie Instructions*, Part III, Chapter XI, p. 81.

⁴⁷ J. Wroughton, *An Unhappy Civil War* (Bath, 1999), p. 165.

⁴⁸ Cruso, *Militarie Instructions*, Part III, Chapter XI, p. 82.

⁴⁹ BL, Add. MSS, 62084B, p. 10 (This refers to an entry in Rupert’s so-called diary dated 24 October 1642).

Parliament: for this service he received the large sum (for that time) of £50 a-week'.⁵⁰ Blake was arrested immediately, and subsequently tried and executed at Oxford. Spies at the most senior levels seem to have presented a number of problems for the Royalists; towards the end of the war, the king's Secretary of State, Sir Edward Nicholas, warned of a 'colonel who is sheriff of some shire that sends intelligence to the rebels'.⁵¹

For many of the more conservative English commanders – a definition which embraced both Royalist and Parliamentary generals – spying was viewed with a disdain bordering on contempt. A frank dislike of espionage was deep-rooted in such men and this fact had an important effect upon the outcome of the conflict. For example, Falkland, Charles' Secretary of State, considered that spies 'must be void of all ingenuity and common honesty, before they could be of use; and afterwards they could never be fit to be credited'.⁵² As Peter Gudgin has well observed, it is only comparatively recently that the aversion to something as untrustworthy and unsporting as spying on one's enemies has been overcome for 'intelligence has always been associated with spies, traitors and informers ... [and is seen as] ... something dishonourable, disloyal and dishonest'.⁵³ Opening somebody else's letters also came into this category and thus made using intelligence information far less palatable to many of the more traditional commanders on either side.⁵⁴

The fact that intelligence-gathering had found favour with the young Prince Rupert had not reassured many of the more conservative English officers who considered Rupert's ruthless determination, and the personal attention he was devoting to intelligence-work, to be profoundly at odds with their own more traditional approach to warfare.⁵⁵ Indeed the military conduct of some of the initial Parliamentary commanders, such as Essex and Manchester, indicates that these sentiments were common to both sides during the early years of the conflict. However, as the war progressed, a new breed of 'amateur' civilian-soldier

⁵⁰ E. G. B. Warburton, *Memoirs of Prince Rupert and the Cavaliers* (three volumes, London, 1849), Volume II, p. 5.

⁵¹ D. Nicholas, *Mr. Secretary Nicholas (1593-1669) His Life and Letters* (London, 1955), p. 209.

⁵² Clarendon, *History*, Book VII, p. 226. Clarendon's description of Falkland's view of the employment of spies provides a perfect example of this deep-rooted disdain for spying.

⁵³ P. Gudgin, *Military Intelligence. A History* (Stroud, 1999), p. 4.

⁵⁴ Clarendon, *History*, Book VII, p. 226.

⁵⁵ See, for example, Clarendon, *History*, Book VI, p. 78; and C. H. Firth (ed.), *The Life of William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle* (London, 1886), pp. 59-61.

commanders such as Cromwell, Fleetwood, Ireton, Brereton and Pride emerged as an integral part of the New Model Army.⁵⁶ These more pragmatic and businesslike Parliamentarians had few pre-conceived ideas about how wars should be conducted and were quick to appreciate that the gathering of intelligence was of critical importance to a successful outcome of the conflict. Learning quickly from their mistakes, and appointed for their military skills rather than for their social standing,⁵⁷ this new breed of Parliamentary leaders soon enjoyed the benefits that superior intelligence had brought to their military operations. It has been more difficult to discern a change of attitude towards intelligence-gathering among the Royalist commanders. Certainly the appointment of more experienced military officers in place of the land-owning gentry as commanders of the Royalist forces had led to some improvement, but these had been isolated examples.⁵⁸

Whatever the social implications of using intelligencers may have been, there were many examples of individual spies being sent into the enemy camps to obtain military information. Thus the Marquis of Winchester (a Royalist commander who seemingly appreciated the merits of intelligence-gathering) ‘sent Tobias Beasely to spy in London, where before the war he had been a porter at the Ram Inn, Smithfield’.⁵⁹ Age was no barrier for intelligence operations. In his *Memoirs*, Ludlow described how the Royalist besiegers of Wardour Castle had despatched a twelve year old boy to obtain some menial work in the castle kitchens as a cover for his real objectives which had been to sabotage the castle’s artillery, ascertain the strength of the garrison, poison the water supply and the beer, and blow up the ammunition.⁶⁰ And all this for a payment of half a crown!

An important contribution towards our understanding of Civil War intelligence was made by William Lilley, the astrologer, who claimed to know the extent of the Parliamentary espionage system in Oxford. An astrologer by profession, Lilley was known to senior

⁵⁶ Firth, *Cromwell’s Army*, p. 49.

⁵⁷ See, for example, Firth, *Cromwell’s Army*, pp. 46-47.

⁵⁸ See, for example, the shrewd use of intelligence-gathering demonstrated by Sir Henry Gage, Governor of Oxford, during his action in September 1644 and Sir Richard Grenville’s use of intelligence during the Lostwithiel campaign in August 1644. E. Walsingham, *The Life of the Most Honourable Knight, Sir Henry Gage* (Oxford, 1645), pp. 13-14; and M. Coate, *Cornwall in the Great Civil War and Interregnum 1642 – 1660* (Oxford, 1933), p. 141.

⁵⁹ C. Carlton, *Going to the Wars* (London, 1992), p. 263.

⁶⁰ Ludlow, *Memoirs*, Volume I, pp. 59-60.

Parliamentarian figures and appears to have contributed to the deliberations of some of the Roundhead commanders during the conflict.⁶¹ When Lilley published his *History of his Life and Times*, his account contained some particularly interesting personal observations on the practical conduct of spying operations in Oxford. For example, he claimed that ‘Parliament had in its continual pay one Colonel of the King’s Council of War’ along with another ten other officers and other ranks.⁶² As we shall see later in this chapter, Lilley’s detailed description of just how intelligence information was transmitted provides a fascinating insight into the development of intelligence-gathering skills and techniques. It is rather surprising, therefore, that his insights into the practicalities of intelligence-gathering in the Civil War have gone largely unnoticed by previous historians.

9 Counter-intelligence

Once again, seventeenth-century commanders could well have referred to Cruso for a basic description of their counter-espionage responsibilities. Cruso suggested that:

‘The best and principal means for a Commander to avoid divers inconveniences, and to effect many worthy designes, are, First to be sure to keep his own deliberations and resolutions secret. Secondly, to penetrate the designes and intentions of the enemie. For which purpose it behoveth him to have good spies, which must be exceeding well rewarded, that so they may be readier to expose themselves to all dangers. The best and most assured spies are ones own soldiers, which (feigning some discontent for want of pay or otherwise) enter into the enemies service, and get themselves into the Cavallrie, as having the best opportunitie (whether in the field or in garrison) to give information.’⁶³

Such was the fear of communal betrayal aroused by accusations of spying that the reaction of the public to anyone suspected of being an intelligencer was often violent. Beasley had been expected to find out about plans for attacking Basing House, but instead he was caught,

⁶¹ W. Lilley, *Special Observations on the Life and Death of King Charles I* (London, 1651).

⁶² W. Lilley, *The Last of the Astrologers. A History of his Life and Times* (First published 1715, second edition Scolar Press, Yorkshire, 1974), p. 77.

⁶³ Cruso, *Militarie Instructions*, Part III, Chapter XI, pp. 57 and 81-83.

condemned as a spy and hanged in Smithfield. Trials were usually conducted under a form of court martial and treatment of suspected spies was harsh; the use of force to extract information was reported with increasing frequency as the war progressed. Indeed, in 1645 the catechism for the Royalist soldiers stated that ‘torments were permissible in interrogation’.⁶⁴ Whilst Parliamentary news-pamphlets contained frequent allegations of the illegal use of force by Royalists⁶⁵ - for example, Bulstrode Whitelocke, the Parliamentary lawyer, reported how another spy ‘taken by the Parliament soldiers at Reading, was tortured into confession by having lighted matches put to his fingers’⁶⁶ – the Cavalier publication, *Mercurius Rusticus*, listed examples of Parliamentary coercion and torture.⁶⁷ As reported by *Mercurius Rusticus*, the use of force included threats to females and children. In May 1643, it was reported that, during a search of Sir John Lucas’s house, Parliamentary soldiers had ‘put a sword to her [Lady Lucas’s] breast, requiring her to tell them where the Armes and Cavaliers were’.⁶⁸ Further reports described how troopers of the earl of Stamford seeking a man in Bridestowe in Devonshire, took his son ‘aged about 10 or 11 years old... hanged him up... [and] pricked him with their swords in the back and thighs’ in order to extract information.⁶⁹ That child survived, but it was reported that Parliamentary soldiers were prepared to ‘seeke after [the hunted man’s] children and threaten to kill them if they can find them’.⁷⁰

Both sides were well aware of the dangers posed by spies and were determined to seek them out and prosecute them.⁷¹ The Parliamentary authorities repeatedly demanded the disruption and interception of Royalist intelligence operations by ordering the deployment of boats to patrol the River Thames to intercept any Royalist scouting or spying missions.⁷² Luke’s agents were either luckier than most, or better prepared, as the contemporary accounts suggest that only one of his spies was executed: one Francis Coles who, in January 1644, was tried and hanged in Oxford. The evidence suggests that Coles had drawn particular attention to himself

⁶⁴ E. 1185 [5], *Soldiers Catechisme* (Oxford, 1645), p.11.

⁶⁵ See, for example, E. 101 [24], *Certaine Informations* (London, 8-15 May 1643); E. 103 [5], *Certaine Informations* (London, 15-22 May 1643); and E. 104 [6], *A Continuation of Certaine Speciall and Remarkable Passages* (London, 18-25 May 1643).

⁶⁶ B. Whitelocke, *Memorials of the English Affairs* (London, 1682), p. 114.

⁶⁷ E. 1099 [1], *Mercurius Rusticus* (Oxford, 1645), pp. 97-98, and 113.

⁶⁸ E. 103 [3], *Mercurius Rusticus* (Oxford, 20 May 1643).

⁶⁹ E. 1099 [1], pp. 71-76.

⁷⁰ E. 106 [12], *Mercurius Rusticus* (Oxford, 10 June 1643).

⁷¹ *CSPD, 1641-43*, p. 440; and Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, Volume II, Part III, p. 314.

⁷² *CSPD, 1643*, p. 314; see also Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, Volume II, Part III, pp. 314 and 367.

by travelling in and out of Oxford on several occasions during the Christmas period in order to report on events in Oxford.⁷³ Understandably, the fear of betrayal from within the community was intense and often resulted in harsh and arbitrary punishments. Seventeenth-century publications contained numerous, almost casual, references to the execution and torture of people condemned as spies; for example, in his account of the movements of the Royalist army, Symons records ‘Nothing of any moment done all this day. A spy hanged’.⁷⁴ The punishments for captured spies clearly varied – and for no discernible reason. When the Parliamentarian City Council in Gloucester considered the case of William Garrett, he ‘was duly fined forty shillings, in October 1643, he being taken for a spy’.⁷⁵ However, most suspected spies met the same fate as Tobias Beasely and were hanged.

The bravery and determination of those who engaged in spying was remarkable. People were clearly strongly committed to their beliefs and were prepared to act in support of them even though the work was dangerous and the rewards minimal. As has already been explained, spying was generally perceived to be an underhand and ungentlemanly occupation, more akin to treachery than to loyalty to the opposite side. Potential spies would have had to have a wide range of skills and a great deal of luck. In order to survive, a successful spy would have needed to possess a remarkable combination of imagination, intellect, numeracy, literacy, powers of observation and courage. As if this was not sufficiently demanding, to be successful, the spy would also have required physical mobility, intellectual persistence and loyalty in abundance.

What sort of people became spies during the 1640’s? It seems probable that potential spies would have had to have received some sort of education in order to acquire not only the necessary numeracy and literacy skills, but also the expertise needed to assess the military significance of their observations. They would have needed a high level of personal commitment to the cause they supported and this would also have required them to possess a degree of political awareness. Most spies would have expected to benefit in some way if their side had achieved a successful outcome – and the illiterate and penniless sections of English

⁷³ See Philip, *Journal*, Volume 1, p. xv; and E. 30[20], *The Spie* (London, 23 -30 January 1644).

⁷⁴ Long, *Symonds’ Diary*, p. 24.

⁷⁵ Wroughton, *Unhappy Civil War*, p. 217.

society would certainly have expected financial reward for their information. Clearly the more well-connected spies would have needed to balance carefully the personal benefit that they obtained against the risks they would have to have taken. The fact that spying was treated with disdain by many honour-conscious gentry would also have tended to deter similar people from becoming intelligencers as they saw the spy's breach of personal and professional honour as an affront to social norms.⁷⁶ Indeed when the Royalist Major Adrian Scrope was suspected of being a spy in 1644, his defence was that, as a gentleman, he could not possibly have been involved with 'a thing soe contrary to the rule of warre or the profession of a gentleman'.⁷⁷ The fact that, even at this stage of the war, Scrope still believed that spying was contrary to the 'profession of a gentleman' tells us much about Royalist attitudes towards intelligence operations.

It would appear, therefore, that the social group most likely to have become actively involved with such covert operations were the members of the 'middle sort' as Brian Manning has described them. Manning estimated that 30-40% of the non-gentry fell into this category which included yeoman farmers, substantial tradesmen, land-holding peasants (husbandmen) and self-employed craftsmen.⁷⁸ These were the sort of people who acted as spies for both sides as they possessed not only a reasonable level of education (they could read, write, count and ride), but also, very often, a whole-hearted sense of commitment to a particular cause. The increasing suspicion that 'neutral' professional people were somehow involved in spying roused widespread resentment as the Civil War progressed. Even the surgeons who moved between the armies tending to wounded and injured soldiers became prey to suspicion and occasionally they were refused permission to perform their duties because they were suspected of using their trade as a cover for spying.⁷⁹ Thus, in 1644, the Royalist Governor of Pontefract Castle, Richard Lowther, refused an offer of a medical support from Lord Fairfax writing:

⁷⁶ Clarendon, *History*, Book VII, p. 226. See also B. Donagan, *War in England 1642-49* (Oxford, 2008), p. 94.

⁷⁷ BL, Add MSS, 18982, f.18, (Letter from Major Adrian Scrope to Prince Rupert, 16 January 1644).

⁷⁸ B. Manning, *The English People and the English Revolution* (London, 1991), pp. 10-11; and B. Manning, 'The Nobles, the People and the Constitution', in T. Ashton (ed.), *Crisis in Europe 1560-1660* (New York, 1967), p. 280.

⁷⁹ W. J. Birken, 'The Royal College of Physicians and its support of the Parliamentary Cause in the English Civil War', *Journal of British Studies* (Volume 23, No. 1, 1983), pp. 47-62. See also J. Marshall, *Intelligence and espionage in the reign of Charles II, 1660-1685* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 20.

for your chirurgion I cannot admit of him; but if the medicaments be sent, I shall join my own surgeons with one of your party, a prisoner here, to use the best of their art in the cure of the poor wounded soldiers'.⁸⁰

A civil war made it easier for many people to take an active and open role in the conflict as it brought the war to their very doorstep. But if they were in a minority, or if they were a member of a social group not normally expected to take a side in any such conflict, then the options open to them to demonstrate their support became more limited. Women, in particular, did not have many opportunities to participate in the conflict in an independent role and so it is hardly surprising that some of them seized on whatever chances presented themselves. Nursing the sick and wounded, and assisting during sieges were important tasks in which many seventeenth-century women actively participated. But the worlds of espionage and intelligence-gathering were new and offered far more challenging roles for intellectual and resourceful people – especially if, for whatever reason, they were not able to play an overtly active role in the conflict.⁸¹

10 Intelligence reports from civilians

It was not just intelligencers who provided sources of information. For example, Luke recounted how 'a woman going milking gave intelligence to Sir William Waller's forces of the strength of Oxford, and the fittest time to come against it'.⁸² Sometimes prominent figures in isolated communities formed *ad hoc* teams which would gather and report intelligence information. The work of the local people in the Forest of Dean in Gloucestershire provides a reminder of how blurred the distinction between soldier and civilian could become in the world of Civil War espionage. Here the Royalist 'Edward Clarke of Newent gathered together a team of messengers and spies, including cloth carriers ... to provide information on the movement of enemy forces and the location of parliamentary sympathisers suitable for plundering'.⁸³ Sir George Gresley, the Derbyshire landowner, similarly provided Brereton

⁸⁰ R. Bell (ed.), *Memorials of the Civil War: The Fairfax Correspondence* (two volumes, London, 1849), Volume I, pp. 185-186.

⁸¹ A. Fraser, *The Weaker Vessel* (London, 1984), pp. 209-213.

⁸² Tibbutt, *Letter Books*, p. 671.

⁸³ G. A. Harrison, 'Royalist Organisation in Gloucestershire and Bristol' (unpublished MA thesis, Manchester University, 1961), pp. 168-171.

with intelligence information while the Dartmouth garrison commander, Colonel Edward Seymour, received regular reports from his friends and neighbours.⁸⁴

In a friendly environment, army commanders could expect intelligence and support from the local people such as Charles I enjoyed when he surrounded Essex at Lostwithiel in Cornwall in 1644. However the opposite case was often experienced when armies deployed into areas which were unfriendly towards them. Royalist forces encountered problems gathering information from the local people in Berkshire in late 1644, just as the Parliamentarians had encountered problems with the Cornish people during the summer of that year. A letter from Essex, written when his army invaded Cornwall in 1644, revealed the extent to which a hostile populace could effectively isolate the intruders. Essex reported that ‘Intelligence we have none, the country people being violently against us, if any of our scouts or soldiers fall into their hands, they are more bloody that the enemy’.⁸⁵ This sort of pro-Royalist activity by the local populace was not confined to Cornwall. ‘Monmouth was retaken by the Royalists in 1644’, according to one observer, ‘largely because some of Lord Herbert’s tenants kept him informed of the movements of the Parliamentary garrison’.⁸⁶ Brereton’s letters contain several similar examples of reports from local people which reveal that, by 1645, Parliamentary commanders were also being provided with regular reports of intelligence activity which influenced military operations in their area.⁸⁷

As has been shown in the work of Mark Stoye and others, there were few totally Royalist or totally Parliamentary towns or villages.⁸⁸ These works indicate that there are very real dangers in believing any part of England to have been completely loyal either to Parliament or to the Royalists. Stoye’s detailed analyses show clearly that every area was likely to contain people who supported both factions; therefore it was perfectly feasible for commanders on either side to receive intelligence information from the local people who supported both

⁸⁴ BL, Add MSS, 11332, f. 112; and Donagan, *War in England*, p. 113.

⁸⁵ *CSPD, 1644*, p. 434; and M. Stoye, *Loyalty and Locality* (Exeter, 1994), p. 234.

⁸⁶ J. R. Phillips, *Memorials of the Civil War in Wales and the Marches 1642-49* (two volumes, London, 1874), Volume II, p. 217.

⁸⁷ Dore, *Letter Books*, Vol. 1, pp. 101 and 108-109.

⁸⁸ Stoye, *Loyalty*, p. 141.

factions.⁸⁹ If the opposing faction was in the ascendancy, the wise man kept his own counsel and waited for the pendulum of fate to bring the faction which he supported to power. Thus in each and every part of the country there were supporters of either side waiting for the wheel of fortune to allow them to declare openly their true loyalty. It was these people who maintained a correspondence with friends in other parts of the country; and who used this correspondence to pass on any information which they thought might be useful. Even this activity could be dangerous as *agents provocateur* were sometimes used to entrap the unwary. Thus a Parliamentary sympathiser in the Royalist West Country, one Edward Laurence, had been trapped by a young boy, Robert Buncombe, who had taken the letters entrusted to him to deliver, not to the Parliamentary garrison of Plymouth as he had agreed with Laurence, but straight to the Royalist authorities in Exeter.⁹⁰ Controlling spies was not without its problems as it was always possible that a spy, however dedicated, might change allegiance if he or she found the grass to be greener on the other side; Bulstrode Whitelocke reported one such example when ‘the Marquis of Argyll sent into the Army of Montrose some scouts and spies who at first dealt faithfully with him, but afterwards betrayed him, and sent him intelligence that Montrose was distant from him whereas they were near his forces’.⁹¹ All these examples confirm that it was possible for Parliamentary supporters to operate in predominantly Royalist areas, such as Cornwall; just as Royalist supporters could operate in predominantly Parliamentary areas such as London. These divided loyalties justify the conclusion that there was no lack of potential spies for either side anywhere in the country.

11 Double agents

Cruso also advocated the use of double agents. However, it was evident that the role of the double agent could not be confined to the ranks of the military. As Cruso observed:

‘There are also spies which are called double, which must be men of great fidelity. These (to gain credit with the enemy) must sometimes give him true information of what passeth to the other side; but of such things, and at such times, as they may do no hurt. But these kinde of spies cannot continue long

⁸⁹ M. J. Stoye, *From Deliverance to Destruction* (Exeter, 1996), p. 67.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 103-104.

⁹¹ Whitelocke, *Memorials*, p. 132.

without being discovered. If it be possible, such spies must be had as are entertained into domesticall service of the chief officers of the enemie, the better to know their intentions and designes'.⁹²

It is difficult to find any specific evidence of the use of double agents, although Sir John Urry changed sides so often that his status in the latter stages of the war came close to that of double agent. Colonel Richard Fielding, who was court-martialled for surrendering the garrison and town of Reading to Essex in May 1643, employed one of his female spies 'to good effect' as a double agent as he considered 'the advantage he received was greater than she could carry to the enemy'.⁹³

12 Messengers

As commercial, legal and social communications continued to be kept up throughout the war, so carriers, merchants and messengers were able to travel about the country despite the fighting. However, the life of a traveller was not easy as there was no clear boundary between military and civilian enterprise and all messengers were searched frequently. The use of inns for messengers to meet and exchange information was soon recognised; for example in his *Journal*, Luke records how 'the Beard at Newbury is an inne that commonly harbours [those who] receive intelligence and carrye it to Oxford'.⁹⁴ The realisation that inns were being used by messengers for this purpose probably led to an incident in July 1643, when a Mr James Butler described how 'the messenger, that carried this letter, having the Prince's pass, was made drunk at Bostal House, this letter was opened, a copy taken, sealed up again and put in his pocket'.⁹⁵ As both sides realised the importance of intercepting their opponents' communications, messengers who were unable to establish their *bona fides* were regarded as spies and were often tortured to reveal their messages. Torture was used regardless of sex or occupation. As the war progressed, the use of force to extract any type of information became more commonplace.⁹⁶ Thus the Parliamentary commander, Colonel Birch, described how a woman suspected of carrying messages during the siege of Lathom House:

⁹² Cruso, *Militarie Instructions*, Part III, Chapter XI, p. 81.

⁹³ Clarendon, *History*, Book VII, p. 42.

⁹⁴ Philip, *Journal*, Volume I, p. 70.

⁹⁵ *CSPD, 1641-43*, p. 473.

⁹⁶ See, for example, E. 103[3], *Mercurius Rusticus* (London, 20 May 1643).

‘was at length taken and put to the torture [by the Parliamentarians], but she would reveal nothing, and suffered three fingers on both hands to be burnt off before her tormentors, tired out by her invincible fortitude, at length desisted’.⁹⁷

Similarly, when Dr William Cox, prebendary of Exeter, was arrested by Parliamentary forces on suspicion of carrying messages; he was so mistreated that he never fully recovered.⁹⁸ The bravery and determination of many of the people engaged in message-carrying reflected the passionate commitment that the Civil Wars aroused. For those who could not play an active military or overt supporting role, message carrying was one of the few alternatives, and the individual courage, particularly of the female participants in this dangerous occupation, proved to be remarkable. Although their commitment was only occasionally recognised in contemporary accounts, the importance of the contribution they made was reflected by the payment they received. In 1644, messengers were being paid £2 a week which compared favourably with the pay of some army officers.⁹⁹ They were clearly worth this level of remuneration, as messengers often coped with extreme difficulty and danger with great courage and faced the same penalties as the spies themselves. As Richard Symonds noted in his diary on 2 August 1644, ‘This day a fellow that was carrying letters for Essex was taken and hanged at the rendezvous’.¹⁰⁰ Often female and alone, with only their wits to protect them from the challenges of hostile sentries, such individuals undertook long and arduous journeys with messages cunningly concealed in the hair of their head or next to their skin.

Some of the methods that were used to conceal messages carried between Raglan and Denbigh Castles included hollow staffs, the heels of shoes, and trusses of linen tied next to the body. ‘Scotch Nan’, who had carried messages between the king and the Marquis of Montrose, used similar devices for hiding messages.¹⁰¹ Concealing missives was important in case of searches by enemy patrols and one Parliamentary messenger, Samuel Taylor, had important papers

⁹⁷ T.W. and J. Webb (eds.), *Military Memoir of Colonel John Birch* (Camden Society, 1873), p. 169.

⁹⁸ Stoye, *Deliverance*, pp. 189-191.

⁹⁹ BL, Add MSS, 11331, f.146. A lieutenant’s pay at that time was £2 2s and an ensign’s pay was £1 1s per week. See also SP28/26, ff. 22, 319, 455, and 486.

¹⁰⁰ Long, *Symonds Diary*, p. 46.

¹⁰¹ Webb, *Military Memoirs*, p. 168.

‘sewn into his sleeves’ in the hope that they would thereby avoid detection.¹⁰² Royalist messengers employed similar ruses; when Goring was besieged in Portsmouth at the start of the conflict, his messages to the Marquis of Hertford were concealed in ‘false heels, coat-linings and even the head of a dummy baby’.¹⁰³ In September 1642, Lord Capel’s messenger, ‘one Bushell’ was found to have ‘letters sowed betweene the garter and stocking’.¹⁰⁴ The rich variety and ingenuity of these methods of concealment suggests that the carrying of confidential messages was a major activity during the conflict. Pamphlets and private messages were also carried covertly in addition to purely military communications. It is therefore hardly surprising that both sides tried their utmost to disrupt this means of communication – and to learn as much as they could from any intercepted messages.

Methods of passing messages through the enemy lines became increasingly sophisticated as the war progressed and experience grew. Lilley describes in fascinating detail how messages from Parliamentary spies in Oxford were passed through the Royalist guards of the city to Luke, the Parliamentary scout-master based at Newport Pagnell. Lilley notes that the spy’s message was ‘posted’ at night through the windows of certain houses in Oxford. The act of ‘posting’ the letter was masked by the spy passing water against the wall of the house. Once ‘posted’, these messages would have then been carried out of Oxford the next morning by messengers ‘in the habit of Town-Gardners’. The difficulty of getting the messages past the city guards had been overcome by using as messengers people who normally came in and out of the city every day upon their lawful occasions, and who would have therefore been familiar to the guards – and less likely to be searched by them. These ‘Town-Gardner’ messengers duly left their missives ‘two miles off’ in previously agreed places outside the city. Messages were normally placed in holes in ditches from whence they were collected and taken to Luke by troopers from his garrison at Newport Pagnell.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² *CSPD, 1644*, p. 93.

¹⁰³ J. Adair, *Roundhead General: The Campaigns of Sir William Waller* (Stroud, 1997), p. 34.

¹⁰⁴ E.118 [45], *Special Passages* (20 September 1642).

¹⁰⁵ Lilley, *Life and Times*, p. 77.

13 The interception of intelligence information

Notwithstanding the precautions which were taken to conceal messages, carrying any letter made the messenger liable to arrest by sentries; thus virtually any documents passed on by messengers were vulnerable to interception and might end up being read by the enemy. Whilst it is not possible to be precise about the number of intercepted letters that were read, as most contemporary accounts make frequent mention of the interception of letters, the amount of intelligence that was thereby derived was clearly considerable.¹⁰⁶ Not all of this information was militarily significant, of course, but most messages would have contained material that was helpful to the interceptors. Brereton learnt a good deal about the conditions inside Chester from intercepted mail.¹⁰⁷ This was partly due to the fact that all important messages were normally copied and therefore the chances of an intercept were higher mathematically. If the intercepted letter could be read, because it was not protected by a code, then much information could be obtained. The most dramatic example of militarily significant information being obtained in such a way must surely be the interception of General Goring's letter to the king by the Parliamentarian Scout-master General Watson just before the battle of Naseby.¹⁰⁸ Military information vital to the Royalist cause was thus made available to Fairfax at a critical moment in the campaign; the outcome of the subsequent battle effectively won the war for Parliament.

At an early stage of the conflict it was realised that, just as reliable military communications were essential to the efficient management of one's own army, so disrupting the enemy's communications and reading his messages would be equally advantageous. Not only would this disruption impede the flow of hostile information, it would also hinder the command and control of the opposing army. In addition, reading intercepted letters would provide useful intelligence about the plans of one's opponents. Capturing enemy correspondence was just as rewarding, as the Parliamentarian commanders found after the battle of Naseby when the

¹⁰⁶ See *CSPD, 1644*, p.76; Clarendon, *History*, Book VI, p. 489; Gardiner, *History*, Volume I, p. 64 ; Warburton, *Memoirs*, Volume I, p. 492; A. Wicks (ed.), *Bellum Civile: Sir Ralph Hopton's Memoirs of the Campaign in the West, 1642-1644* (Partizan Press, 1988), p. 27; Dore, *Letter Books*, Volume II, p.28; I.G. Philip (ed.), *The Journal of Sir Samuel Luke* (three volumes, The Oxfordshire Record Society, 1947), Volume 1, p. 27; Wilson, *Fairfax*, p. 195; Coate, *Cornwall in the Great Civil War*, p. 201; and Tibbutt, *Letter Books*, p. 694.

¹⁰⁷ BL, Add MSS, 11331, f. 18; and Add MSS, 11332, ff. 80-85. See also Brereton, *Letter Books*, Volume II, p. 128.

¹⁰⁸ E.262 [10], *Perfect Occurrences of Parliament* (13-20 June 1645).

king's cabinet was captured and opened for all to read. But the interception of messages and the capturing of mail also allowed the captor to identify (and then capitalize upon) the true allegiance of local worthies. For example, after the skirmish at Sourton Down, when Sir Ralph Hopton's papers were captured, the Parliamentary commander, the earl of Stamford, declared that 'the sequestrations to be levied on such evidence would be worth £40,000 to the Roundhead cause'.¹⁰⁹

Both sides recognised the need to capture enemy spies and messengers in order to prevent them from passing on their information. This was reflected in the periodic instructions from the Parliamentary Committee of Safety emphasising the importance of detaining spies and messengers. For example, in January 1643, the Lord Mayor of London was tasked to search water traffic on the Thames bound for Reading in order to ensure that 'no victuals, arms, powder, ammunition or letters of intelligence may be conveyed to the King's army'.¹¹⁰ Attempts to capture messengers were not always successful. Luke reported how, on 31 May 1644, order was given to all the sentinels near Newport Pagnell to allow no woman or others to come out of the town, but to interrogate them and send them in again. Yet, as Luke went on ruefully to admit, 'a woman that came to sell provision at the Town, being well horsed, rode full gallop into the City, and the guards shot at her but missed her'.¹¹¹

Nobody was safe from the risk of having their letters intercepted and the fact that mail was being tampered with soon became common knowledge. For example, in January 1643, Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia and sister to the king, wrote to Sir Thomas Roe, the ambassador in the Low Countries, explaining that 'when you think how subject's letters are to be opened, you will not wonder you hear no oftener from me'.¹¹² A month later, on 23 February 1643, Lord Saville wrote a letter to Lady Temple in which he said that 'all letters are now opened, so I am glad to disguise my hand, neither with superscription nor subscription. The bearer will know to whom to deliver it and you will easily guess from whom it comes'.¹¹³ Whilst using

¹⁰⁹ J. Stucley, *Sir Bevill Grenville and his times 1596 – 1643* (Chichester, 1983), p. 135.

¹¹⁰ *CSPD, 1641-43*, p. 440. A certain John Taylor carried out this task with 11 men, a pinnace and a two-oared wherry at a monthly cost of £27 2s.

¹¹¹ Tibbutt, *Letter Books*, p. 664.

¹¹² *CSPD, 1641-43*, p. 436.

¹¹³ *CSPD 1642-43*, p. 445.

servants to deliver messages personally may well have provided security for those who could afford the staff, for the majority of people whose only means of communication was the postal services, their letters were increasingly vulnerable to interception and analysis. References to this form of intelligence-gathering appeared with increasing frequency in contemporary sources; for example, a letter from the Committee to the earl of Essex described how the Parliamentarians ‘had obtained a packet of intercepted letters from Exeter to Oxford wherein the condition of Lyme and the state of the West is fully discovered’.¹¹⁴ The increasing risk of mail interception led to the use of verbal messages for passing information securely; for example, Sir John Meldrum wrote to the Earl of Denbigh that ‘some things concerning the state of this county not fit to be committed to paper for fear of interception, I have communicated to the bearer, whom you may credit’.¹¹⁵ One cannot help but feel nervous for the safety of any messenger apprehended with that particular message in their possession! The interception of mail was followed by attempts to de-cypher the contents; contemporary accounts contain increasing references to ‘intercepted coded letters which shall be sent if they can be got decyphered’,¹¹⁶ and to the increasing use of cyphers to protect information.¹¹⁷ On 19 February, Parliament appointed one George Weckherlin, secretary for Foreign Affairs, to be preparer of cyphers and to administer an oath of secrecy for those with access to intelligence information.¹¹⁸

4.13 Breaking the enemy’s codes and cyphers

Intercepting the letter was only the first part of the process of extracting intelligence. Frequently all – or at least part – of the letter would be protected by some form of code. Both sides used codes and cyphers to protect their written communications; these codes had to be broken if any intelligence was to be obtained from an intercepted letter. Codes and cyphers had been available since Roman times so their use was a widely understood process, albeit a lengthy and painstaking one. The codes used were numerical substitutions for words most often used with individual alphabetical-numerical substitutions available as a last resort. Examination of surviving codes has revealed that they must have been cumbersome to use as

¹¹⁴ *CSPD, 1644*, p. 182.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 180.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 255 and 333.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 106.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 19.

their vocabulary was surprisingly limited and of little relevance to the average military commander.¹¹⁹ It is therefore hardly surprising that they were unpopular to use because encoding and decoding would have been such a time-consuming and tedious business. The effective use of codes required a degree of self-discipline that was not always maintained. Richard Cave's complaint to Rupert that 'I have not time to write in cypher, if I had I would say more', was a common problem for busy senior commanders and their hard-pressed staffs.¹²⁰ Coding (and de-coding) was very rudimentary and this led to delays and frustration. Sometimes messages could not be de-cyphered by their intended recipients, moreover some commanders (most noticeably the Royalist General Goring) considered that the urgency and importance of such messages should not be delayed by the encoding process. In 1644 Goring was clearly unable to determine what he was required to do when he received a message from the Marquis of Newcastle in an unknown code.¹²¹ As Sir William Brereton also complained that 'the cypher sent by the last express I cannot understand or make any use thereof', it would appear that these difficulties were experienced by both sides.¹²² It is therefore hardly surprising that the encoding of messages was inconsistent.

In the early stages of the war these codes were normally adequate to ensure the protection of sensitive material. However, one evening in late 1642, Dr John Wallis, the chaplain to Lady Vere, a prominent Parliamentary supporter, had been shown a coded letter 'found after the capture of Chichester' from the Royalists. Working on it casually after supper, Wallis had managed to decode it within a couple of hours. So began the formation of the Parliamentary code-breaking team which, by 1643, was being used regularly to decode Royalist letters. In June 1644, the Committee of Both Kingdoms sent intercepted mail to the code-breaking team to see 'if they can be got deciphered'.¹²³ Soon afterwards an intercepted letter to Rupert from Sir Fulke Huncks was successfully 'unciphered'.¹²⁴ Understandably Wallis's skill as a code

¹¹⁹ An example of one such cypher can be found in BL, Harleian MSS. 6802, f. 203 (undated). Manuscript 94 of the Clarendon Papers in the Bodleian Library also contains 16 cyphers that were used by the Royalists. These codes are not 'user-friendly' to operate!

¹²⁰ BL, Add MSS, 18981, f. 40 (Letter from Richard Cave to Rupert, 15 February 1644).

¹²¹ BL, Add MSS, 18891, f. 189. In a letter to Rupert, dated 11 June 1644, Goring recounted his problems with the codes in use observing that it was uncertain 'whether My Lord Marquis's letter can be de-cyphered or not'.

¹²² *CSPD, 1644-45*, p. 92 (Sir William Brereton's letter dated 2 November 1644 to the Committee of Both Kingdoms).

¹²³ *CSPD, 1644*, p. 253.

¹²⁴ *Ibid*, p. 332.

breaker was kept a closely guarded secret, both during and after the conflict. Wallis was a mathematician by inclination and his work *Arithmetica Infinitorum* introduced concepts and ideas that Newton subsequently developed. Even after the Restoration, Wallis was retained as a code breaker by Charles II and later by William and Mary.¹²⁵ Yet today the name of John Wallis remains largely unknown.¹²⁶ Wallis's talents greatly assisted Parliament from late 1642 onwards and allowed Royalist messages to be decoded and read much more easily. Whilst it is difficult to assess with any degree of precision just how much decoded information was thereby made available to Parliamentary commanders, the experience gained during the Civil War evidently made its mark on Cromwell because, when he was Protector, he authorised his Secretary of State, John Thurloe, to systematically open letters placed in the 'Generall Post Office'. In an adjoining office sat Isaac Dorislaus, an advocate to the Parliamentary army during the Civil War, of whom it was said that 'scarcely a letter be brought him but he knew the hand that wrote it'.¹²⁷

15 News-pamphlets

A new source of potential intelligence information was provided by news-pamphlets. Public demand for accurate information about the political and military situation grew rapidly as the Civil War spread throughout the land. In January 1643, Charles decided to establish a Royalist news pamphlet, *Mercurius Aulicus*, to promulgate information from a Royalist perspective. This decision did benefit Royalist intelligence-gathering because the pamphlet's 'intelligencers' provided valuable military information.¹²⁸ Consequently the editors of the news-pamphlets – of whom the Royalist Sir John Berkenhead and the Parliamentary Nedham Marchmont were probably the best known – established their own intelligence-gathering organisations to satisfy the public demand. Berkenhead was a most successful publisher and his *Mercurius Aulicus* combined the sharpest wit with the latest news to such good effect that it became widely believed by both sides.¹²⁹ Luke used to read it and made several references in

¹²⁵ D. Kahn, *The Code Breakers* (New York, 1996), pp. 166-169.

¹²⁶ Although a portrait of John Wallis is displayed in the Long Gallery of the Uffizi Palace in Florence.

¹²⁷ C. H. Firth, 'Thomas Scot's Account of his actions as Intelligencer during the Commonwealth', *English Historical Review* (Volume 13, No. 51, 1897), p. 527. See also Rawlinson Mss, A477, f. 10.

¹²⁸ C.V. Wedgwood, *The Great Rebellion: The King's War 1641-1647* (London, 1958), pp. 163-164.

¹²⁹ P. W. Thomas, *Sir John Berkenhead 1617 – 1679* (Oxford, 1969), pp. 43-46.

his letters that showed how valuable an asset *Mercurius Aulicus* was to the king.¹³⁰ Parliament soon recognised the need for their own ‘official’ news pamphlet to counter the popular demand for *Aulicus* and so *Mercurius Britannicus* began to be published in early 1643.

It was quickly appreciated by the Royalists that the information Berkenhead’s team of ‘intelligencers’ had obtained for *Aulicus* was of equal interest to the military intelligence-gatherers. Berkenhead was therefore appointed as a member of the Royalist Council of War in order that his information could be used to best effect by the King’s commanders. Both sides had realised that the ‘integrity of their reporting was critical to their reputation’ and, just as Berkenhead attended the Royalist Council of War, so too were Captain Audley and Nedham Marchmont, the first editors of the *Mercurius Britannicus*, invited to attend meetings of the Parliamentary equivalent, the Committee of Both Kingdoms, ‘where he [Captain Audley] took notes’.¹³¹ To the soldiers and civilians on either side, Marchmont and Berkenhead’s ‘intelligencers’ were indistinguishable from their military counterparts. Similarly no real distinction can be made between the spies who brought Berkenhead and Marchmont their information and the messengers, normally women, who carried copies of either *Mercurius Aulicus* or *Mercurius Britannicus* to London or Oxford for sale. All were viewed as spies and treated as such.

16 The evaluation and exchange of intelligence information

In order to derive the maximum benefit from any intelligence information that was received, it was essential that all new reports should be evaluated to check their accuracy and their consistency with all other available information. It has been difficult to find much evidence that the evaluation of information was carried out thoroughly, by either side, during the early stages of the Civil War; even though the proven dangers of reacting to deliberately placed misinformation were generally recognised.¹³² But, as the war progressed, the evaluation and cross-checking of information became more thorough, at least by the Parliamentarians. The letters of Luke and Brereton reveal that these two senior Parliamentary commanders not only

¹³⁰ Philip, *Journal*, pp. 21, 158, 505, 696 and 736.

¹³¹ A. Macadam, ‘*Mercurius Britannicus*: Journalism and Politics in the English Civil War’ (unpublished D Phil thesis, University of Sussex, 2005), pp. 42-45.

¹³² BL, Add MSS, 11333, f. 47.

appreciated the importance of accurate intelligence, but also attempted to analyse and validate the information that they received in order to construct a more comprehensive picture that forecast the Royalists' military intentions.¹³³ Indeed, during 1644 and 1645, Brereton's letters contain some notable examples of well-reasoned and factually-sound analysis of Royalist movements and intentions in his area of interest around Cheshire. For example, in 1645 Brereton not only identified the growing threat posed to Chester by the Royalist army as it moved north, but also co-ordinated the local Parliamentary defensive posture. Following the relief of Chester, the Royalist army directed its march towards the east – and to the field of Naseby.¹³⁴

Later in the war, there is evidence that the members of the Committee of Both Kingdoms also analysed and co-related the intelligence that they had received; there are numerous intelligence summaries contained in the Calendar of State Papers Domestic,¹³⁵ in addition to Brereton's letters.¹³⁶ The Naseby campaign provides a particularly good example of this co-ordination of intelligence and military operations as the Parliamentary intelligence organisation had been accurately tracking, reporting and predicting the movements of the Royalist army for a month before the battle. The accuracy of these reports allowed Fairfax to lead his entire army undetected to within a day's march of the Royalist forces before they realised where his forces were.¹³⁷ The Committee of Both Kingdom's assessments had the advantage of bringing together intelligence from all local and national sources. Although this provided a large amount of information, the wide scope of these varied reports meant that a great deal of correlation was necessary in order to resolve the inevitable degree of contradiction contained in the reports.

Possessing accurate intelligence was valueless unless that information could be regularly exchanged with the commanders who needed to act upon it. Thus intelligence information was passed upwards to the senior leaders as well as downwards to the relevant subordinate

¹³³ BL, Add MSS, 11331-11333. These manuscripts contain numerous examples of the intelligence reports and summaries made by, or sent to, Sir William Brereton. Some of these are also contained in Dore, *Letter Books*, pp. 128-129; Philip, *Journal*, p. 81; and Tibbutt, *Letter Books*, p. 307.

¹³⁴ BL, Add MSS, 11331-11333, Volume I, ff. 83-89.

¹³⁵ *CSPD, 1643*, p. 30.

¹³⁶ Dore, *Letter Books*, Volume I, pp. 108-109

¹³⁷ Clarendon, *History*, Book IX, pp. 43-45.

commanders. Parliament's committees appear to have been well supplied by their subordinate commanders for, just as Luke had been thanked for his intelligence support before the battle of Cropredy Bridge, so Brereton was commended for his weekly reports of intelligence activity to the Committee of Both Kingdoms in 1644.¹³⁸ Brereton also wrote regularly to the other Parliamentary army commanders and to his subordinates: not only to keep them informed of developments, but also to recommend concerted military action of the sort which the available intelligence information suggested might be possible. The Parliamentary commanders also received regular appraisals of the intelligence situation in their area from the centre – initially from the Committee of Safety, later from the Committee of Both Kingdoms. These reports came mainly in the form of forecasts of troop movements along with any other information which might be relevant to their decisions.¹³⁹

17 Conclusion

The evidence of this chapter has indicated that, contrary to the belief of many subsequent historians, there was an abundance of sources of intelligence available to each side during the English Civil War.¹⁴⁰ Whilst intelligence information was being collected from both traditional and new kinds of sources, more secure means of communication were being put in place to ensure a rapid exchange of intelligence between commanders. Considerable imagination and commendable bravery was demonstrated by the seventeenth-century intelligence-gatherers and messengers who faced the severest penalties if caught. Analysis of these sources has indicated that there were a number of significant intelligence operations conducted by each side, with varying degrees of skill and sophistication, throughout the war. A great deal of evidence has also been uncovered to suggest that both sides grew to appreciate the benefits of an effective intelligence organisation and accordingly made increasing use of intelligence-gathering. Whilst these intelligence operations may have been not very effective when the conflict began, there is much evidence to show how significantly intelligence-gathering improved during the war. The research for this chapter has revealed that when the intelligence-gathering organisation of one side was less effective than that of the other, the military consequences

¹³⁸ *CSPD, 1644*, p. 294.

¹³⁹ BL, Add MSS, 11331-11333; and Dore, *Letter Books*, Volume I, p. 50, citing a letter from Committee of Both Kingdoms dated 11 March 1645.

¹⁴⁰ Clarendon, *History*, Book VI, pp. 79-80; and Marshall, *Intelligence and Espionage*, p. 18.

were immediately damaging for the less well-informed party – sometimes seriously so. Having summarised the available sources, the succeeding chapters will now consider how these intelligence-gathering operations developed as the war progressed and how the outcome of these operations influenced, in their turn, the military operations conducted between 1642 and 1646.

Chapter Five

Establishing the Role of Intelligence - the Edgehill Campaign - 1642

1 Introduction

Historians have frequently cited the gathering of intelligence during the Edgehill campaign to support their contention that Civil War military intelligence operations were ineffective.¹ The aim of this chapter is to explore in depth the conduct of intelligence-gathering operations during this campaign. The chapter will begin by setting out the sequence of military events. It will then consider what other historians have written about the role of intelligence in the Edgehill campaign. Finally, it will turn to discuss what the evidence of contemporary documents suggests was the real story. This third section of the chapter will not only establish precisely what intelligence information was available to the Parliamentary and Royalist commanders, but will also assess how effectively each side used that military intelligence information. Some alternative interpretations of the contemporary accounts will then be considered. In conclusion, it will be argued that the judgements of previous historians are too harsh, and that the intelligence operations conducted during the Edgehill campaign, whilst far from perfect, were not as ineffective as has hitherto been suggested.

2 The sequence of military events

The Civil War developed relatively slowly because the recruiting and the deploying of the armies of both sides took time. The reversals which the Royalists had suffered before Hull in April and again later in July 1642 had so weakened their credibility that few men joined the king when he raised his standard at Nottingham on 22 August. However as the king moved west towards Wales and the Marches, Royalist recruiting rapidly improved. Charles arrived in Shrewsbury on 20 September and established his administrative as well as his military headquarters in that town whilst he continued to recruit and train his army. Whilst the Royalist forces gathered at Shrewsbury, Essex moved his army from Northampton to Worcester which he reached on 24 September. One significant military action occurred during the Royalist redeployment to the west when Prince Rupert skirmished with the advancing Parliamentary horse at Powick Bridge outside Worcester on 23 September. This short action, which resulted

¹ See, for example, Edward, Earl of Clarendon, *The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England, together with an Historical View of the Affairs in Ireland* (sixteen books, London, 1702-4), Book VI, p. 79; E. G. B. Warburton, *Memoirs of Prince Rupert and the Cavaliers* (three volumes, London, 1849), Volume II, p. 10; A. Marshall, *Intelligence and Espionage in the reign of Charles II, 1660-1685* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 18; P. Young, *Edgehill 1642* (first printed 1967, first re-printed, Moreton-in-Marsh, 1995), p.70; and C. L. Scott, A. Turton and E. G. von Arni, *Edgehill The Battle Revisited* (Barnsley, 2004), p. 5.

in a decisive victory for the Royalist horse, had an impact out of all proportion to its military significance. Whilst it established the reputation of Prince Rupert as an intuitive and daring cavalry commander, it also seriously weakened the Parliamentarians' confidence in the performance of their own horse. As the city of Worcester covered the direct approaches to the possible Royalist reinforcements forming up in the south west and was close to the road to London, Worcester was garrisoned by Essex and the city became his headquarters. Essex settled his forces around Worcester, and also garrisoned Hereford, Coventry, Northampton, Banbury and Warwick castle. This ring of fortified towns and cities covered all the possible routes to London, thereby allowing the Parliamentary troops stationed in these places to provide intelligence of any Royalist move towards London.

The Edgehill campaign effectively began when the Royalist army left Shrewsbury on 12 October and marched south along the River Severn to Bridgnorth where it remained until 15 October. Between 12 and 14 October, Essex issued a series of instructions to Lord Wharton, one of his senior commanders, to deploy a force (which eventually totalled up to 6,000 men) to the north of Worcester to reinforce the Parliamentary forces at Kidderminster and Bewdley. As the Royalist army left Bridgnorth, it changed direction to the south east and marched by way of Wolverhampton and Birmingham towards London. The Royalists paused again for a review by Charles I on Meriden Heath near Coventry on 18 October where it was joined by regiments from Lancashire. The review completed, the army continued its march via Kenilworth, Chesford and Southam before reaching the Edgeworth/Edgecote area on the afternoon of 22 October. Essex, however, did not leave Worcester until 19 October at which time Charles was reported to be about 25 miles away at Meriden.² Following instructions from Parliament to respond to the reported movements of the Royalist army,³ Essex led the Parliamentary army out of Worcester and marched eastwards through Stratford-upon-Avon. On 21 October, a scouting party from the Warwick garrison intercepted part of the Royalist baggage train, thereby providing useful intelligence information that the king was on the march to London. The Parliamentary army reached Kineton on 22 October. When the Royalist army arrived at Edgecote, the king decided to rest the army next day, except for Sir Nicholas Byron and 4,000 men of his brigade who were to take four guns and assault Banbury Castle.

² E. 240 [45], *England's Memorable Accidents* (17-24 October 1642).

³ T. May, *History of the Parliament of England* (London, 1647), Volume II, p. 70.

At some time on 22 October, Rupert despatched a party of 400 troopers under Lord Digby, now serving as a Royalist horse commander, to scout the surrounding area. The scouting party returned having found no sign of the Parliamentary army. However, that evening, a party of Rupert's horse captured a party of Parliamentary quartermasters at the village of Wormleighton. Having questioned the captives, Rupert sent a patrol of 24 troopers under a certain Lieutenant Martin to Kineton to confirm the prisoners' report that the Parliamentary army was in that area. When Martin confirmed the location of the Parliamentary army, Rupert sent a message to the king suggesting that, in view of the immediate proximity of Essex's forces, the Royalist army should cancel their previous plans and concentrate without delay at the top of Edgehill as this was seen as a safe assembly point for regiments quartered in twenty square miles of country to the east and a place from which Essex's movements could be observed.

Charles accepted his nephew's recommendation and, without calling a Council of War, issued orders to this effect at about 3 o'clock in the morning of Sunday 23 October. The Royalist army concentrated between 12 o'clock and 1 o'clock that same afternoon. The Parliamentary commanders were first informed of the presence of the Royalist army mustering on the top of Edgehill at about 8 a.m. on 23 October. Essex and his commanders were reported to have been on their way to church when they received this information.⁴ The best estimate of the strength of the Royalist army is that it numbered 14,300 men in all: 2,800 horse, 1,000 dragoons, 10,500 foot and 20 guns.⁵ The best estimate of the strength of the Parliamentary army that fought at Edgehill is that it numbered 14,870 men: 2,150 horse, 720 dragoons, 12,000 foot and 30 guns.⁶ The numbers of the Parliamentary army at Kineton had been reduced by delays in finding transport and horses for all of their artillery pieces. Consequently several guns of their artillery train, escorted by two regiments of foot and a regiment of horse, were about a day's march behind the main body and did not join Essex until the evening of the battle.

The battle was a bloody and savage affair which ended inconclusively. The Royalists' dashing cavalry charge swept away many of the Parliamentary horse and foot, but was carried too far. By the time the Royalist horse had returned to the battle-field, the remaining Parliamentary horse and foot had brought the Royalist infantry to the edge of defeat.

⁴ E. 124 [26], *An Exact and True Relation of the Dangerous and bloody Fight, Between His Majesties Army, and the Parliaments Forces, neer Kineton in the County of Warwick, the 23 of this instant October* (London, 1642).

⁵ Young, *Edgehill*, pp. 82-90.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 92-102.

Although both armies deployed again the next day, there was no full-scale engagement. Towards the end of the day, Essex withdrew his army to Warwick. His withdrawal was harassed by Prince Rupert's cavalry who captured Essex's personal papers. Once Essex had withdrawn towards Warwick, the Royalist army captured Banbury before regrouping around Oxford. Charles was reluctant to move until he had received definite intelligence of the Parliamentary army's position and intentions. As Essex was also waiting for the same intelligence information about the Royalist army, there was a period of mutual indecision before the intelligence reports from Prince Rupert's scouts describing the weakness of the garrison of Reading proved too tempting for the Royalists to ignore and the king was persuaded to continue his advance.⁷ When Essex received intelligence that the Royalist army had left Oxford for Reading, he moved swiftly towards London which he reached on 8 November. The Royalist advance was halted at Turnham Green by the combined weight of Essex's army and the London Trained Bands which had been deployed at the western edge of London. A day later, the campaign ended when Charles withdrew his army to Oxford.

3 The role of military intelligence in the Edgehill campaign: The views of subsequent historians.

The earliest historical accounts of the battle of Edgehill concentrated upon providing a brief chronological description of the military action, and only occasionally did these accounts provide a description of what had actually happened during the battle itself. As it is only in the last fifty years that historians have carried out any detailed re-constructions of the battle of Edgehill, the impact that intelligence information had upon the conduct and the eventual outcome of the battle of Edgehill has received relatively little attention. Although there is a great deal of contemporary evidence to suggest that intelligence-gathering played a more significant role in the campaign than has hitherto been acknowledged, no single account of the battle appears to have taken all of these contemporary sources into account. It is therefore necessary to establish just what sources of contemporary information about the military intelligence-gathering operations have been considered by subsequent historians in their accounts of the campaign and the battle of Edgehill.

The first histories of the conflict were those written by the Parliamentary historians May and Rushworth during the Interregnum.⁸ Both of these historians set the pattern for subsequent

⁷ Clarendon, *History*, Book VI, pp. 97-98.

⁸ T. May, *The History of the Parliament of England* (London, 1647), Book III, pp. 10-18; and J. Rushworth, *Historical Collections* (London, 1659-99), Part III, Volume II, pp. 33-36.

seventeenth-century and eighteenth-century accounts by providing only a brief description of the Edgehill campaign. Intelligence-gathering was not mentioned in any of the seventeenth-century accounts of the campaign; although May's account did include an important insight into the plan of the Parliamentary commander when he wrote that Essex intended to 'follow his [the king's] March neere at hand, and by the help of those forces which the City of London would pour forth upon him, utterly ruine his inclosed army.'⁹

Clarendon's *History* was the first near-contemporary account that explored the Edgehill campaign in any detail. It is from this account that we learn how the king received intelligence reporting the movements of the Parliamentary army, although Clarendon considered these reports to be of limited value because they were contradictory. For example, he noted that 'some reported that [Essex's army] remained still at Worcester; others, that they were marched the direct way from thence towards London'. Clarendon described how intelligence reports about the disposition of Essex's army led to 'some difference of opinion which way he [the king] should take'. Clarendon's *History* described the support that the Royalist army expected to receive from local people along their proposed route of march and the Royalist perception that Essex was bound to move to 'put himself in their way'.¹⁰ Clarendon also provided the only account of the intelligence about the movements of the Parliamentary army which had been received before the battle by the Royalist commanders. Notwithstanding the references he had made to intelligence reports, evidently Clarendon did not consider intelligence-gathering to have been effective and his summary of the Edgehill intelligence operations was dismissive. He observed, as we have seen, that:

'The two armies, though they were but twenty miles asunder when they first set forth, and both marched the same way ... gave not the least disquiet in ten days march to each other; and in truth, as it appeared afterwards, neither army knew where the other was.'¹¹

It is this comment on the conduct of intelligence-gathering by both sides which has been most often quoted by later historians. Despite contradictory contemporary evidence, for many years Clarendon's dismissive assessment of the impact that intelligence-gathering operations had had

⁹ May, *History*, Book III, p.15. May repeated this suggestion in his *Breviary*, p. 55 which was published in 1655. See also Wanklyn and Jones, *Military History*, p. 47.

¹⁰ Clarendon, *History*, Book VI, pp. 75-76.

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 79.

upon the Edgehill campaign was simply accepted by scholars. In the absence of any comprehensive evaluation of all of the contemporary accounts to counter this conclusion, his words remained largely unchallenged. Furthermore, because subsequent historians were more interested in exploring the politico-economic and social aspects of the conflict, Clarendon's description of the conduct of intelligence operations during the campaign gained further credibility due to its sheer longevity.

It was not until the mid-nineteenth century that historians began to clarify the military details of the battle of Edgehill; exploring such questions as where, exactly, it was fought, how many soldiers took part and what actually happened. Because contemporary accounts of the size and deployment of the armies were inevitably contradictory, the priority for the nineteenth-century historians was to compile a comprehensive and clear description of events. Warburton's *Memoirs* provided one of the first reconstructions of the battle.¹² This reconstruction relied principally upon Clarendon's account, albeit supplemented by some other contemporary accounts, such as the memoirs of the Royalist, Sir Richard Bulstrode.¹³ Warburton's account contained one important new source as it referred to a manuscript that he had discovered while working on the papers of Prince Rupert, and which is now referred to as 'Prince Rupert's Diary'.¹⁴ This manuscript, which was probably written just after the war by one of Rupert's personal staff, showed that Essex had been receiving regular reports of the Royalist plans before the battle. As we have seen, the day after the battle of Edgehill, Rupert's horsemen captured Essex's 'cabinet of letters', amongst which were a number of letters from a certain Mr Blake, who was Rupert's secretary (or 'privy chamberlain').¹⁵ These letters showed that Blake had 'betrayed all his Majesty's Counsell's' and had given Essex high level information about the Royalist intentions and plans. Gardiner's reconstruction of the Edgehill campaign in his great *History* of 1893 also referred to the contemporary accounts written by Clarendon and Bulstrode, but it did not examine the role played by intelligence during the campaign, and did not mention Blake at all.¹⁶

Thus Clarendon's depiction of the Edgehill campaign intelligence operations as deeply flawed continued to be widely accepted until Sir Charles Firth began to question the accuracy of

¹² Warburton, *Memoirs*, Volume II, pp. 4 -36.

¹³ Ibid, pp. 12- 30; and R. Bulstrode, *Memoirs and Reflections* (London, 1721), p. 79.

¹⁴ BL, Add MSS, 62084B. I am grateful to Professor Wanklyn for pointing out that the 'Diary' was compiled by Bennet, the prince's secretary, in the year or so before Rupert's death which helps explain why it is no more than a rough draft.

¹⁵ Warburton, *Memoirs*, Volume II, p. 4.

¹⁶ S. R. Gardiner, *History of the Great Civil War 1642-1649* (four volumes, London, 1893), Vol. I, pp. 38-51.

Clarendon's assessments in 1904. In that year, Firth published a detailed analysis of Clarendon's *History of the Rebellion*. In this analysis, Firth identified a number of areas where Clarendon's statements had not been supported by subsequent research.¹⁷ However, although Firth had been concerned that Clarendon's *History* had lacked impartiality, his analysis of Clarendon's work did not include any assessment of the description of the Edgehill campaign.

Despite Firth's warnings about Clarendon's objectivity, no further research was conducted into the role played by intelligence in the Edgehill campaign until the 1970's when Peter Young became the first historian to study the events leading up to the battle in any detail. Although Young paid comparatively little attention to intelligence-gathering, he did research the events preceding the battle and, as a result, he was able to describe the rationale which had under-pinned the military decisions made by the rival commanders. As part of that rationalisation, Young identified what intelligence information had been available to the commanders when they were making those decisions.¹⁸ For example, Young drew attention to the apparent lack of Parliamentary scouting when he wrote that 'the news of the king's advance does not seem to have reached Essex very quickly', and commented that Essex was 'so ill-served by his intelligence that it was not until 18 October that he could make the decision to move'.¹⁹ Young also identified those aspects of Essex's manoeuvres that remained puzzling when he wrote that 'commentators have failed to discern any reasonable motive for [Essex] placing himself at Worcester'.²⁰

Although Young extended substantially the exploration of contemporary accounts as part of his research, he did not complete a full analysis of all of the available evidence. Young explored Clarendon's account of the Royalist Council of War's deliberations prior to their decision to march on London; he also repeated Clarendon's comments about the alleged inefficiency of the Royalist scouting, and about the impact that inaccurate intelligence had allegedly had upon the Royalist decisions the day before the battle. Young drew attention to Clarendon's statement that the king had had 'no intelligence that the earl of Essex was within any distance' before ordering the army to rest while Sir Nicholas Byron took a brigade to capture Banbury.²¹ More interestingly, he re-introduced into the debate the contents of the so-

¹⁷ C. H. Firth, 'Clarendon's History of the Rebellion', *English Historical Review* (Volume 20, 1904), pp. 26-54, 246-262, and 464-483.

¹⁸ Young, *Edgehill*, pp. 70-76.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 70.

²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 71.

²¹ Clarendon, *History*, Book VI, p. 80; and Young, *Edgehill*, p. 74.

called 'Prince Rupert's Diary', initially introduced by Warburton in his *Memoirs*, which Young had located in the Wiltshire Record Office after they had been lost from sight since Warburton consulted them during the 1840's. As Young observed, the 'Diary' not only described the role played by Mr Blake, the Parliamentarian spy, but also described how Lord Digby had led a Royalist scouting patrol to locate Essex's army the day before the battle.²² Finally, Young made reference to the capture of part of the Royalist baggage train by the garrison of Warwick Castle, noting that this interception had also provided the Parliamentarians with intelligence of the position of the Royalist army.²³ Although Young's work had focussed primarily on establishing how the battle had been fought, his analysis served to draw attention, for the first time, to the contribution which had been made by intelligence operations to the Edgehill campaign. His evaluation of a larger number of contemporary sources (in addition to Clarendon's account) had enabled him to establish that intelligence reports had played a part in the movements of both armies prior to the battle itself.²⁴ However, although Young's research had identified some of the contribution which had been made by intelligence-gathering operations, his book did not include any analysis of the significance that these operations had had upon the outcome of the campaign.

Since Young's book on Edgehill was published, historians have begun to pay a good deal more attention, not only to the accuracy of earlier accounts of the battle, but also to the part played by intelligence-gathering during the campaign. For example, Young and Holmes' subsequent study of the Civil War, first published in 1974, pursued Young's initial research into intelligence-gathering operations.²⁵ In their joint account, some of the issues which had been raised by Young in his earlier work on the battle were explored in more detail and the role of the cavalry in providing scouting intelligence during the campaign was evaluated. Young and Holmes continued to quote Clarendon's statement that 'neither army knew where the other was', ascribing this ignorance to 'poor intelligence and insufficient cavalry reconnaissance'. Young and Holmes attributed the 'poor intelligence' to the fact that 'Essex had no scout-master', and 'the insufficient cavalry reconnaissance' to the inadequate training and ill-defined role of the Parliamentarian horse.²⁶ Blake's intelligence reports were not

²² Young, *Edgehill*, p. 76.

²³ Ibid, p. 73. Young cited *CSPD 1645-7*, p. 552 as the source of this report. However, the capture of the 'King's carriages' was first mentioned in a news pamphlet published the week of the battle. See E. 124 [14], *Speciall Passages* (London, 18-25 October 1642) for a report dated 22 October from Warwick.

²⁴ Young, *Edgehill*, pp. 74-76.

²⁵ P. Young and R. Holmes, *The English Civil War: A Military History of the Three Civil Wars 1642 – 1651* (London, 1974), pp. 71-73.

²⁶ Clarendon, *History*, Book VI, p. 79; and Young and Holmes, *Civil War*, p. 72.

mentioned in this joint account. Indeed, Blake's intelligence reports appear to have been set aside by Young and Holmes for these documents were not identified as a possible rationale for their conclusion that Essex 'appears to have thought that the King was still intending to attack Banbury'.²⁷ Although Young and Holmes discussed some of the intelligence issues, they did not evaluate all of the intelligence information identified in the contemporary sources.

A more recent account of the Edgehill campaign – the detailed study by Alan Turton and others, published in 2004 – does include comments on the intelligence information which had been available to each side.²⁸ However, once again, Turton's account of the intelligence-gathering operations makes no reference to the reports of Mr. Blake; although it does mention Lord Digby's patrol the day before the battle. Turton's account states that Essex obtained intelligence of the king's plan to attack Banbury when part of the Royalist baggage train was captured by the garrison of Warwick Castle. This book also suggests that the Royalists planned to deceive Essex into thinking that they were marching on Worcester rather than London. Despite Ronald Hutton's suggestion that Clarendon's *History* 'ought to be the last, not the first, source to be consulted on a question, after all the contemporary evidence has been reviewed',²⁹ Turton and his co-authors continued to cite Clarendon's *History* as the principle contemporary source for their assessment of the contribution made by intelligence. Their conclusion that intelligence-gathering on both sides was ineffective inevitably reflected Clarendon's perception when they concluded that Essex divided his army, even though he 'had no idea where his enemy actually was', and that the king's plan to attack Banbury confirmed that he was 'lacking any intelligence of the route of Essex's march'.³⁰

A more recent account of the Edgehill campaign can be found in Malcolm Wanklyn and Frank Jones' *Military History of the English Civil War*, published in 2005.³¹ Their account focuses on the movements of both armies before the battle and argues that the commanders had intelligence information of their opponent's movements, as 'at first the direction of the king's march suggested that he was advancing on Worcester'.³² Wanklyn and Jones also noted that it was 'not until the royal army reunited at Meriden Heath ... on 19 October ... [that] Essex decided it was time to leave Worcester' and, as a possible explanation for Essex's slow

²⁷ Young and Holmes, *English Civil War*, p. 73.

²⁸ Scott, Turton and von Arni, *Edgehill*, pp. 5-8.

²⁹ R. Hutton, 'Clarendon's History of the Rebellion', *English Historical Review* (Volume 97, 1982), pp. 70-88.

³⁰ Scott, Turton and von Arni, *Edgehill*, p. 5.

³¹ M. Wanklyn and F. Jones, *A Military History of the English Civil War, 1642-1646* (London, 2005).

³² Wanklyn and Jones, *Military History*, pp. 46-47.

reaction to the movement of the Royalist army, they were the first historians to suggest that the Parliamentarian general had been unable to respond more positively because he believed that the Royalists might have been marching towards Worcester. Wanklyn and Jones appreciated that a Royalist feint towards Worcester would have served several purposes. It would have confused Essex about London being the Royalists' true objective, it would have delayed the departure of Essex's army from Worcester, and it would have increased the chances of the Royalist army avoiding the Roundhead army altogether. Wanklyn and Jones were also the first historians since May to note that Essex had intended to follow (rather than to intercept) the Royalist army as it marched towards London and to trap it before the fortifications of the capital and the forces of the Earl of Warwick. In a later account of the battle of Edgehill, Wanklyn rightly observes that 'Charles managed to confuse Essex as to his intentions, with the result that when it became clear that Charles was advancing towards London rather than down the Severn valley ... the Parliamentary army was a day's march behind'.³³ In the latest account of the Edgehill campaign, contained in Wanklyn's *The Warrior Generals* published in 2010, the 'excellent intelligence' provided by Blake is acknowledged, before Wanklyn goes on to describe, in more detail than his earlier works, the impact of Prince Rupert's feint towards Bridgnorth as Charles led his army towards London, and Digby's patrol the day before the battle.³⁴

Thus, although there has been a recent upsurge in the amount of research into the intelligence-gathering operations supporting the Edgehill campaign, no comprehensive assessment has yet been made of all of the contemporary information which was available to the commanders. Research for the present thesis reveals that, not only is there sufficient evidence to suggest that, even at the beginning of the fighting, intelligence activities were producing some useful information, but also that intelligence information was regularly being used to inform and direct the movements of the armies. Accordingly, the accuracy of the conclusions reached by subsequent historians about the Edgehill campaign is clearly open to challenge.

4 The role of military intelligence in the Edgehill campaign: The evidence of the primary sources

Before exploring the evidence of intelligence-gathering that was reported in the contemporary accounts of the Edgehill campaign, it is necessary to examine the reliability of these primary

³³ M. Wanklyn, *Decisive Battles of the English Civil* (Barnsley, 2006), p. 36.

³⁴ M. Wanklyn, *The Warrior Generals. Winning the British Civil Wars 1642-1652* (New Haven and London, 2010), pp. 21- 24.

sources. Clearly any letters or memoirs written by eyewitnesses of the events leading up to the battle will reflect the political views and personal experiences of the writer, and due allowance must be made for this when weighing the accuracy of such accounts. However, the accounts written by the military commanders are particularly relevant to the present thesis as they provide an insight into how intelligence information influenced their subsequent decisions.³⁵ Interestingly, even junior officer's accounts of the campaign contain references to intelligence operations; for example, Captain Nathaniel Fiennes described how the Royalists advanced to take up position on Edgehill 'having, no doubt, got Intelligence ... of our army'.³⁶

In addition to the eyewitness accounts, a number of documents describing events relating to the campaign were printed either during, or shortly after, the campaign. As many of these printed accounts were partisan news-pamphlets, their content again needs to be treated with caution. Clearly most of these pamphlets had propagandist intent, and thus their information may not be accurate; this may have dissuaded previous historians from relying on the information they contain. However, comparison of the pamphlet reports of events with the report of those same events in the journals of both the House of Commons and the House of Lords shows that information about military events and the movement of forces was generally reported accurately in the pamphlets.³⁷ Independent confirmation of the fact that letters from Essex were received on a number of occasions during this period is provided by the journals of both the House of Commons and the House of Lords, although, because these letters were referred unopened to the Committee of Safety, the journals do not reveal their precise content.³⁸

It is interesting to note that, for months, the London pamphlets had been reporting the position of both armies. From September 1642 onwards, news-pamphlets published in London had contained a substantial amount of detailed intelligence information about the stationing of both

³⁵ See, for example, E. 124[26], *An Exact and True Relation of the Dangerous and Bloody Fight, Between His Majesties Army and the Parliaments forces*. Published on 28 October, this account was written by six of the Parliamentarian commanders - Hollis, Stapleton, Ballard, Balfour, Meldrum and Charles Pym.

³⁶ E. 126[38], *A Most True and an Exact Relation of both the Battels fought by His Excellency and His Forces against the bloody Cavaliers* (London, 9 November 1642).

³⁷ For example, the report of the escape of Captain Legge contained in the *Journal of the House of Lords 1642-43*, p. 400 is accurately recounted in the news-pamphlets *Speciall Passages* (E. 240[38] and E. 123[5]) and *England's Memorable Accidents* (E. 240[45]).

³⁸ See, for example, *Journal of the House of Commons 1640-42*, 15 October 1642, p. 811. The same letter duly appeared in *The Journal of the House of Lords 1642-43*, Volume 5, p. 401 on 18 October 1642.

forces.³⁹ The pamphleteers were quick to report that Essex had placed a number of garrisons in towns covering the possible approach roads to London, such as Coventry, Warwick and Banbury in order to obtain intelligence of any Royalist movement towards the capital. In early October, further reports were published about the garrisoning of Hereford with '1,000 foot, 400 horse and 2 guns',⁴⁰ and about the fact that, whilst Essex was stationed at Worcester, he 'had placed Garrisons in severall townes of consequence, as Bewdley and Kitterminster [Kidderminster]'.⁴¹ The subsequent increases in the size of the Kidderminster garrison in response to Rupert's cavalry deployment had also been reported promptly in news-pamphlets.⁴² This information had been confirmed by another report, published on 13 October, that Essex 'had made strong Fortifications about Worcester, and had placed garrisons in ... Bewdly and Kidderminster'. This pamphlet had also amplified the earlier report that the Earl of Stamford was in Hereford with 'a regiment of foot and 500 horse'.⁴³ It seems reasonable to conclude that these pamphlet reports could have provided the Royalists with a pretty good idea about how Essex had deployed his army.

During September and October 1642, hardly a day went by without the London news-pamphlets also reporting the composition and strength of the Royalist army. For example, at the beginning of October, it was reported that 'Prince Robert [Rupert] with about ten Troops of horse was at Bridgenorth, the Kings Majesty being for the most part at Shrewsbury'.⁴⁴ The pamphleteers claimed that their reports were trustworthy as they were quoting information contained in letters that Essex had sent to Parliament. As early as 3 October, one news-writer claimed that the Royalist army had grown to such a size that a move on Worcester was imminent.⁴⁵ On 10 October it was reported that the Royalist army was '12,000 foot and 4,000 horse' strong.⁴⁶ On 11 October it was reported that the Royalist army was '9,000 foot, 2,500 horse and 1,500 dragoons'.⁴⁷ Clearly some of these reports were contradictory for, on 12 October, a London pamphleteer had made a substantially smaller estimate reporting that the Royalist army comprised 'six thousand foot, three thousand horse and fifteen hundred

³⁹ See, for example, *CSPD, 1641-43*, p. 389; E.121 [31], *Special Passages, A Continuation of Certain Special and Remarkable Passages* (London, 1642); and E.121 [14], *Special and Remarkable Passages* (London, 6 October 1642).

⁴⁰ E. 240[37], *Memorable Accidents* (London, 3-10 October 1642).

⁴¹ E. 121[41], *A Continuation of Certain Speciall and Remarkable Passages* (London, 8-13 October 1642).

⁴² E. 240[40], *A Perfect Diurnal of the Passages in Parliament* (London, 10-17 October 1642).

⁴³ E. 121[41].

⁴⁴ E. 121[24], *A Continuation of Certain Speciall and Remarkable Passages from both Houses of Parliament* (London, 3-8 October 1642).

⁴⁵ E. 240[37], *England's Memorable Accidents* (London, 3-10 October 1642).

⁴⁶ E. 240[42], *England's Memorable Accidents* (London, 10-17 October 1642).

⁴⁷ E. 240[40], *A Perfect Diurnal of the Passages in Parliament* (London, 10-17 October 1642).

dragoons'.⁴⁸ These inconsistencies reflected Parliamentary uncertainty about the actual size of the Royalist army. Essex knew that Royalist recruiting had been slow and that the king was seeking to 'make an addition to his ... army'.⁴⁹ Essex was also aware of the forces being recruited by the Royalist magnate, Lord Herbert, in Wales.⁵⁰

In addition to reporting the size of the Royalist army, the news-pamphlets also printed letters from Essex which had informed Parliament of the senior appointments within the Royalist army. For example, on 11 October it was reported that 'Lord Ruthven is come out of Scotland' to join the king's army.⁵¹ Later reports outlined how the Royalist army was organised. For example, on 15 October both editions of the *Perfect Diurnall* reported that Parliament knew that the king 'hath divided (his army) into two parts, one part which Prince Robert [Rupert] hath the command of, and in the nature of a flying army marceth [sic] before, the king with the other part marceth after'.⁵² Thus, when the Parliamentary army eventually left Worcester, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that Essex knew the king was marching on London with an army of some 14,000 to 15,000 men. Essex also knew that Rupert was sweeping ahead of the main body of the Royalist army with a force of mounted troops.

The news-pamphlets also reflected contemporary speculation about the Royalists' 'grand designe' to regain London; for example, on 8 October, it was reported that 'the King is yet at Shrewsbury, but an honest man of that Towne saith some of the prime Officers of the Army gave out confidently that the King will go towards London next Wednesday'.⁵³ This report predicted that the Royalists would leave Shrewsbury for London on 12 October which was the very date that Charles did actually lead his army into the field. This was the first report of several to appear in the London press announcing the imminent departure of the Royalist army for the capital.⁵⁴ Subsequently, pamphlets reported the king's movements after the Royalist army had left Shrewsbury, as predicted, on 12 October.⁵⁵ The evidence of the news-pamphlet

⁴⁸ E. 122[15], *A Continuation of certain Special and Remarkable Passages* (London, 10-14 October 1642).

⁴⁹ E. 121[31].

⁵⁰ E. 124[26], *An Exact and True Relation of the Dangerous and Bloody Fight* (London, 1642).

⁵¹ E. 121[41].

⁵² E. 240[40], *Perfect Diurnall* (Editor - S. Pecke) and E. 240[41], *Perfect Diurnall* (Editor - J. Grismond).

⁵³ E. 121[41].

⁵⁴ See also E. 122[15], *A Continuation of Certaine special and Remarkable Passages from both Houses of Parliament* (London, 10-14 October 1642); and E. 123[5], *Special Passages and Certain Informations collected from Severall Places* (London, 11-18 October 1642). E. 240[40] included a report dated 11 October – a similar report of the same date was printed in E. 240[41].

⁵⁵ See, for example, E.121 [24], *A Continuation of Certaine special and Remarkable Passages from both Houses of Parliament* (London, 3-8 October 1642); E. 121[41]; E. 123[5], *Special Passages* (London, 11-18 October 1642); E.240 [40]; and E. 240[42].

reports – and of a number of other contemporary sources – shows that Essex knew within a few days that the Royalist army had left Shrewsbury and was marching towards Kidderminster.⁵⁶

As these initial reports did not reveal the destination of the Royalist army, Essex needed more information before he could order his army to move. On 11 October, it was reported in London that ‘forty troops’ of Rupert’s cavalry had moved south towards Worcester ‘to plunder and pillage’.⁵⁷ As this deployment of Rupert’s cavalry might have presaged the move of Royalist army to the south west to collect more reinforcements, Essex moved to counter the reported activities of Rupert and to reduce the extent and damage of the Royalist foraging. He ordered the progressive deployment of Wharton and about 6,000 men north to Kidderminster between 12 and 14 October ‘to discover the state of the King’s Army’.⁵⁸ This deployment was immediately reported by the pamphleteers who published Essex’s letter to Parliament in which he stated that he had ‘sent Lord Wharton with 7 troops of horse to Kidderminster to discover the state of the King’s army and to prevent the Cavaliers in their plundering of the country’.⁵⁹ At this stage of the campaign, it is evident from the contemporary sources that Essex was deploying his forces to counter a Royalist advance southwards towards Worcester.

Whilst Wharton’s force deployed against Rupert’s cavalry, Essex appears to have needed more reports of the main Royalist army before he could form a clear idea of the Cavaliers’ intentions. Although the pamphleteers were quick to report that Charles had ‘departed on Tuesday last [11 October] from Shrewsbury to Bridgnorth’,⁶⁰ a few days more had elapsed before Essex reported his initial interpretation of Charles’ movements to Parliament on 14 October.⁶¹ Essex does not seem to have grasped the Royalist intentions until 15 October, when a further pamphlet report included a letter from Essex in which he appeared to appreciate, for the first time, the purpose of the Royalist manoeuvres. In this letter, Essex reported the withdrawal of Rupert’s cavalry force to rejoin the Royalist army near Birmingham, stating that:

⁵⁶ See, for example, a report dated 11 October 1642 in E. 123[5].

⁵⁷ E. 124[4], *Exceeding Joyfull Newes from the Earl of Stamford, the Lord Wharton, and the Lord Kymbolton* (London, 21 October 1642).

⁵⁸ See, for example, reports of this deployment in the news-pamphlets E. 123[5]; E. 240[42]; and E. 240[41].

⁵⁹ E. 240[40].

⁶⁰ E. 240[42]. See also E. 240[40].

⁶¹ E. 240[45], *England’s Memorable Accidents* (London, 17-24 October 1642).

‘intelligence was brought that they [i.e. Rupert’s cavalry] were retreated back another way, and were marched to Wolverhampton, and that the Kings army being divided into two parts, Prince Robert with about 8 troops of horse, at the same time when the other army appeared, marched to Birmingham’.⁶²

In a later edition, the *Perfect Diurnall* reported that Essex had informed Parliament that ‘he intendeth to advance with his army and follow close after his Majestie’. Perhaps in an attempt to reassure MPs that their army was reacting to the Royalist manoeuvres, Essex reported that, whilst the king was at Wolverhampton, some elements of the Parliamentary army were ‘within seven miles of His Majesty’s Army’.⁶³ As Essex did not leave Worcester until 19 October, any suggestion that his entire army was within seven miles of the king was certainly not accurate as, at that time, the bulk of the Parliamentary Army was still in camp some 25 miles away from the Royalist army’s reported position. Roundhead pamphleteers predicted an early confrontation when they reported that ‘Essex with his main army are now upon their march to Bridgenorth ... it is very probable they will have another battle very shortly’.⁶⁴ News of the skirmish between a Royalist force led by Lord Digby and a Parliamentary force commanded by Denzil Holles just outside Wolverhampton also provided Essex with the intelligence that the Royalist army was on the move.⁶⁵ All the news-pamphlets cited Essex’s reports to Parliament as the basis of their reports about his movements and those of his Royalist opponents.

Essex was clearly uncertain about the immediate destination of the Royalist army and his perplexity continued until the Royalist army had left Bridgnorth. Evidence of this is provided by the Parliamentary army commanders, who, in their subsequent account of the battle of Edgehill, published on 28 October, stated that ‘we marched from Worcester, Wednesday the 19, upon intelligence that their [i.e. the Royalists’] army was moved from Shrewsbury and Bridgnorth’.⁶⁶ Because Bridgnorth lay on both the route to London as well as on the route to the south west, the reference to ‘Shrewsbury and Bridgnorth’ confirms that the destination of the Royalist army was not known for certain until the Royalist army had left Bridgnorth. Only then could Essex be sure that the Royalist army was heading for London, and thus order his

⁶² E. 240[41], *A Perfect Diurnall of the Passages in Parliament* (London, 10-17 October 1642). See also E. 240[40].

⁶³ E. 240[40].

⁶⁴ See, for example, E.121 [24]; BL, E. 240[41]; and E. 240[46].

⁶⁵ Warburton, *Memoirs*, Vol. II, p. 9.

⁶⁶ E. 124[26].

army to march from Worcester. Thus, on 19 October, Essex recalled Lord Wharton's force from marking Rupert and set off from Worcester. Another pamphlet reported that, on the same day that Wharton's reinforced force was ordered to rejoin Essex and the main army, Rupert 'having information that more Forces were coming to aid the Lord Wharton ... immediately marched away with all his forces'.⁶⁷ By now, the pamphleteers were reporting that MPs had received a letter from Essex informing them that the king's army had reached Wolverhampton, whilst Rupert was approaching Birmingham and was 12 miles from Coventry.⁶⁸ It appears reasonable to conclude from the pamphlet reports of Essex's letters to Parliament that he now knew approximately where the Royalist army was located, and that he now had a degree of confidence in his intelligence assessments.⁶⁹ The fact that the MPs had ordered Essex to leave Worcester probably reflected their increasing concerns that Charles was marching on London.⁷⁰

So, if Essex knew the King was on the march, why did the Parliamentary army not leave Worcester at once? A number of the London news-pamphlets refer to the Parliamentary army 'following' the Royalist army.⁷¹ These reports strongly support May's contention that Essex had been planning to 'follow his [the king's] March neere at hand, and by the help of those forces which the City of London would pour forth upon him, utterly ruine his inclosed army'.⁷² Thus the delayed deployment of the Parliamentary army from Worcester was perfectly consistent with Essex's decision to trap the Royalist army between his army and the defences of London. Co-ordinating his attack on the Royalist army with other Parliamentary forces would have given Essex an overwhelming numerical advantage.

This would explain, not only why Essex delayed his departure from Worcester, but also why he urged Parliament to reinforce the Trained Bands of London with those from Middlesex and Essex under the command of the Earl of Warwick. A news-pamphlet report, published in mid October, confirms that the Committee of Safety had ordered that the Earl of Warwick be removed temporarily from the command of the Fleet so that he could take charge of the defences of London, and lead the Trained Bands of Essex, Hereford, London and Middlesex

⁶⁷ E. 124[4].

⁶⁸ E. 240[46], *A Perfect Diurnall of the Passages in Parliament* (London, 17-24 October 1642).

⁶⁹ E. 123[5].

⁷⁰ See, for example, May, *History*, p. 70; and Bulstrode Whitelocke, *Memorials of the English Affairs* (London, 1682), p. 61.

⁷¹ See, for example, E. 240[40]; and E. 240 [42]. Wanklyn and Jones, *Military History*, p. 47 also states that it was Essex's intention 'to follow the Royalist army, not to intercept it'.

⁷² May, *History*, Book III, p.15. May repeated this suggestion in his *Breviary*, p. 55, published in 1655. See also Wanklyn and Jones, *Military History*, p. 47.

against the Royalist army.⁷³ Subsequent news-pamphlets also reported that the Earl of Warwick was reinforcing the garrison of London.⁷⁴ Meanwhile, the Common Council of London had met on 18 October in order to discuss the defence of the city.⁷⁵ Some contemporary reports suggested that Essex hoped Charles would attack one of his garrisons on his way to London as this would also have allowed him an earlier opportunity to trap the Royalist army between that garrison and his own pursuing Parliamentary army.⁷⁶ As early as 5 October, intelligence reports suggested that Charles might attack Coventry, and that Essex had ordered that city to prepare for a possible Royalist assault.⁷⁷ Thus the contemporary evidence supports the conclusion that Essex's allegedly dilatory reaction was not due to poor intelligence information.

Although the Parliamentary pamphleteers were reasonably discreet when discussing the strength of their own forces, they certainly said enough to provide the Royalist commanders with some reasonable intelligence about the strength of the army opposing them. In addition, the Royalist commanders were receiving information from local sympathisers. As Rupert was despatching scouting patrols the day before the battle specifically to find Essex's army, it is reasonable to conclude that, he knew there was a strong possibility that Essex had left Worcester in pursuit of the Royalist forces.⁷⁸ All in all, it does not seem fanciful to conclude that the regular bulletins which appeared in the London news-pamphlets provided a rich source of military intelligence for the commanders of both sides.

It is clear that the Parliamentarians were also receiving intelligence from another source during the Edgehill campaign.⁷⁹ There is good evidence to suggest that Essex had been kept well informed of the Royalist army's plans whilst he was on the march. For example, the intelligence that, on the afternoon of 22 October, the Royalist Council of War had decided to send Sir Nicholas Byron's brigade and four guns to attack Banbury⁸⁰ was known by the Parliamentary commanders that same evening,⁸¹ and was published in a London news

⁷³ E. 123[5].

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ E. 240[45]. Clarendon also reported the work undertaken to improve the defences of London in his *History*, Volume II, p. 7.

⁷⁶ E. 240[45].

⁷⁷ E. 240[37].

⁷⁸ Clarendon, *History*, Book VI, p. 76.

⁷⁹ BL, Add MSS, 62084B.

⁸⁰ Clarendon, *Memoirs*, Volume II, p. 379.

⁸¹ See E. 124[26]; and E. 124[32].

pamphlet on 23 October.⁸² This was indeed rapid dissemination of intelligence because it shows that Essex knew of the Royalist plans to attack Banbury within a few hours of that decision being taken. The Royalist attack on Banbury was only cancelled when definite intelligence of the location of Essex's army was provided either very late on 22 October or very early in the morning of 23 October. The source of this intelligence of the Royalist attack on Banbury has never been confirmed but it must have come from someone who knew all about the deliberations of the Royalist Council of War. Whilst it is impossible to be certain, it seems most likely that the spy, Blake, was the source of this intelligence as only he was privy to the deliberations of the Council of War and possessed of the means of communicating that intelligence quickly to Essex. Thus it may be seen that Essex was receiving intelligence on the intentions of the Royalist army right up to a few hours before the battle.

5 Conclusion

Detailed analysis of the primary sources has revealed that, in fact, a substantial amount of intelligence-gathering was conducted during the Edgehill campaign. There is strong contemporary evidence of a great deal of intelligence information circulating about the position and size of the two armies. Even Clarendon's account confirms that the Royalist commanders were aware of the position of Essex's field army and of the main Parliamentary garrisons. The Royalists' plan to march on London also capitalised on the military concerns that dominated Essex's planning and showed that Royalist intelligence reports had, in fact, provided them with accurate information of the Parliamentary army's weaknesses. The Royalist scouts were the first to establish the position of their enemy, and they were able to do so in such a timely manner as to allow the deployment of their full force onto an unassailable position unhindered by their opponents. The regular accounts of army movements and troop numbers which appeared in the news-pamphlets were broadly accurate and their accounts were consistent with other contemporary sources, such as the journals of the Houses of Commons and Lords.

The contemporary evidence shows that Essex deliberately held back from marching to intercept the Royalists after they had left Shrewsbury. Far from condemning Essex for not immediately pursuing the king, the evidence which has been discussed above supports the conclusion that Essex always intended that the Parliamentary army should follow the Royalist forces, and trap them against the fortifications of London where they would be

⁸² E. 240[46], *A Perfect Diurnall of the passages in Parliament* (London, 17-24 October 1642).

heavily out-numbered and deep inside hostile territory. Previous accounts have not acknowledged that Essex could not have ordered his army to move until he was certain of the Royalist army's true destination: that destination was not clear until after Charles I had left Bridgnorth. The contemporary evidence indicates that Essex was well aware of the Royalists' movements and intentions, while Wharton's actions to contain Prince Rupert's horse show that Essex had, in fact, responded promptly to intelligence of Royalist cavalry probes. Notwithstanding all of these contemporary intelligence reports, it has frequently been claimed by subsequent historians that Parliamentary intelligencers failed to provide Essex with accurate information that the Royalist army had left Shrewsbury.⁸³ This suggestion was repeated in Young's account of the Edgehill campaign when he stated that Essex was 'so ill-served by his intelligence that it was not until 18 October that he could make the decision to move'.⁸⁴ However, the contemporary sources suggest that, not only that Essex was fully aware of the movements of the Royalist army, but also that he delayed the deployment of his army in order to follow his 'grand design' – a plan which reflected the intelligence he was receiving.

Interestingly, sources produced at the time also contain circumstantial evidence of another reason for Essex's delayed departure from Worcester. The reported movements of the Parliamentary army indicate that Essex may have been deliberately misled by a Royalist deception plan. According to Clarendon's *History*, the Royalist commanders knew that Essex could not be sure of the destination of Charles' army until it had left Bridgnorth.⁸⁵ The news-pamphlets' reports of the movements of both armies provide a *prima facie* case that the Royalist army had feinted to the south west before heading for London. However, although Clarendon's account shows that intelligence reports had alerted the Royalist commanders to the advantages of such a manoeuvre, and although the primary evidence suggests that Rupert and his horse were deployed to provoke a reaction from the Parliamentary army, there is no definite contemporary evidence that such a deception had been planned by the Royalists. Even if such a deception had not been planned, the Royalist manoeuvres certainly caused the Parliamentary commanders to react as if it had been.

The contemporary evidence does not support the perception of some subsequent historians that the two armies met 'by accident'.⁸⁶ Nor do the reports of the news-pamphlets support

⁸³ See, for example, Clarendon, *History*, Book VI, p. 79; Warburton, *Memoirs*, Volume II, p.5; Young, *Edgehill*, p.70; F. Kitson, *Prince Rupert*, (London, 1994), pp. 94-95; and Turton, *Edgehill*, p. 5.

⁸⁴ Young, *Edgehill*, p. 70.

⁸⁵ Clarendon, *History*, Book VI, pp. 75-76.

⁸⁶ Marshall, *Intelligence and Espionage*, p. 18.

Clarendon's comment that 'neither army knew where the other was'.⁸⁷ Clarendon's criticism of the Royalists' failure to establish the exact position of the Parliamentary army is not supported by the evidence. Contemporary accounts reveal that Rupert had sent out scouts to detect the Parliamentary army. This action was of such a routine nature that it was usually neither recorded nor reported. Most unusually, Rupert's so-called 'Diary' records that, on the afternoon or evening of 22 October, the day before the battle of Edgehill, and some hours before the advanced quartermasters of Essex's army were captured, Digby was despatched 'with a party of 400 horse to have found the enemy'.⁸⁸ In the event, the scouting patrol found nothing. The undulating and wooded nature of the local terrain may well explain their failure to detect the approaching Parliamentary army. Yet the fact that such a large patrol was despatched – and that Rupert himself recorded the results – is unusual and therefore of interest. The very fact that this patrol was ordered indicates that the Royalist commanders were shortly expecting to come into contact with the Parliamentary army. Indeed the size of the patrol, and the seniority of the officer leading it, were definite indications that Rupert was not only expecting to find the main body of the Parliamentary army during this mission, but also that he was anxious that the patrol would be strong enough to be able to return safely with such important information. Similarly, as Lord Wharton's speech to Parliament on 27 October 1642 reveals, there is evidence that Essex was receiving accurate and timely intelligence information about the Royalist movements from Blake, his spy in the Royalist Council of War.⁸⁹ The contemporary accounts reveal that all available intelligence information was being taken into account when the movements of the rival armies were planned and that Clarendon's judgement of intelligence-gathering during the Edgehill campaign is neither fair nor accurate.

It is clear that Essex did not plan to engage the Royalist army until it had reached London. Essex's 'designe' to follow the Royalist army and trap it before London was jeopardised when the Parliamentary quartermasters were captured by Rupert's troops and the close proximity of the Parliamentary army thereby revealed to the Royalist commanders. Essex might yet have redeemed the situation had his scouts detected the Royalist patrol sent to verify this intelligence information, and he was also let down when his patrols failed to detect the redeployment of the Royalist army during the early hours of 23 October. As Captain Fiennes wrote to his father (a member of the Committee of Safety) 'his Excellency [Essex] had not

⁸⁷ Clarendon, *History*, p. 80.

⁸⁸ BL, Add. MSS, 62084B, *Prince Rupert's Diary*, p. 9. This text was later quoted in Warburton, *Memoirs*, Vol II, p. 10; and Young, *Edgehill*, p. 273.

⁸⁹ E. 124[32].

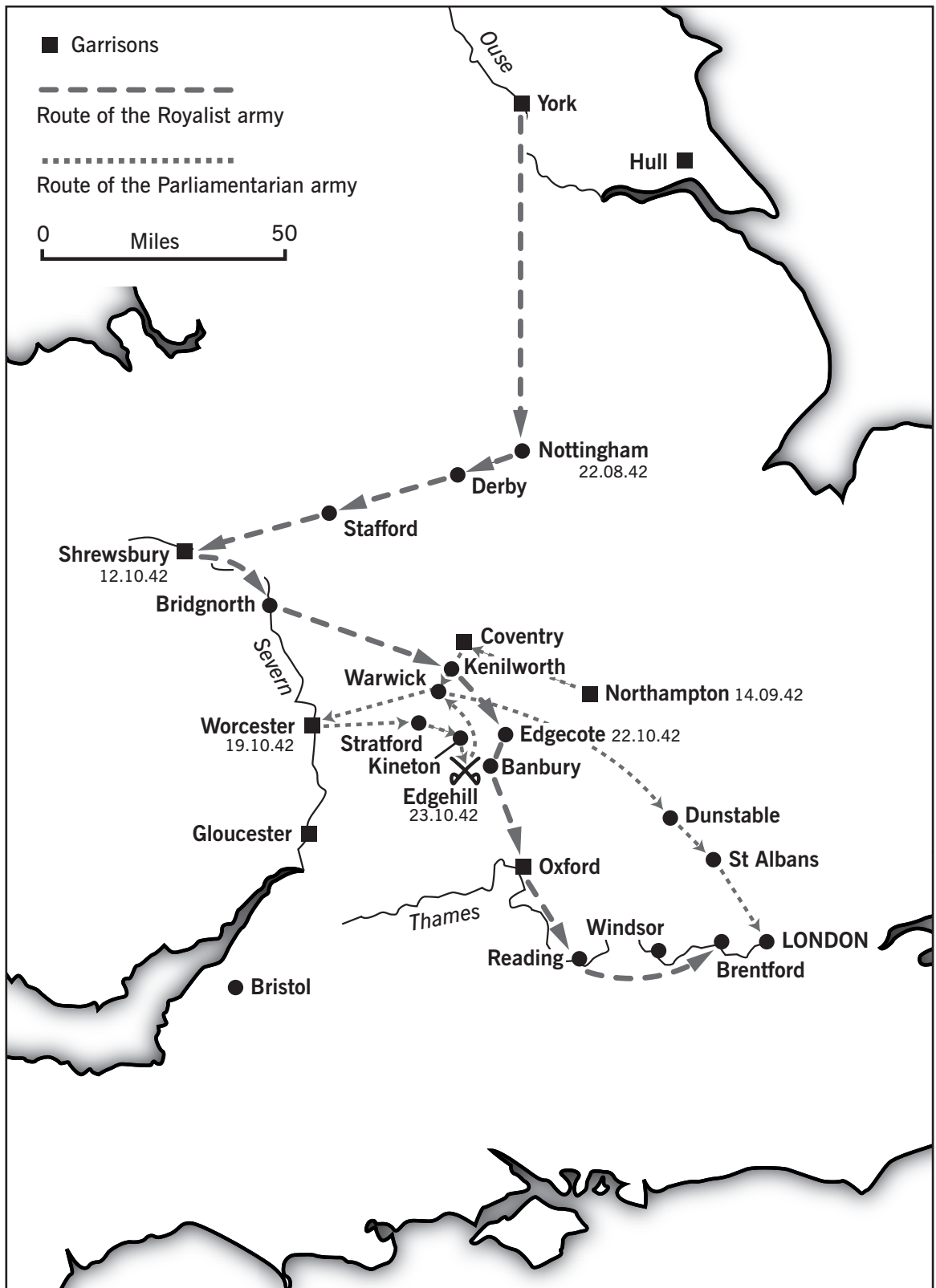
timely intelligence of their [the Royalists] design' because Essex's scouts did not inform him of the Royalist army's concentration on Edgehill.⁹⁰ As we have seen, Essex was being kept informed of the deliberations of the Royalist Council of War and therefore knew that the Cavaliers had been planning to attack Banbury. What Essex was **not** aware of was that, as Rupert's scouts had found his army, the Royalist plans to attack Banbury had been changed overnight. In this respect, Wanklyn is correct to criticise Essex for being 'less well informed' of this last minute change to the Royalist plans. Essex was indeed surprised to find the Royalist army lining up on Edgehill – not because he had no idea where the Royalists were, but because the last information he had received (only a few hours before) informed him that at least part of that army should have been miles away attacking Banbury!

Clarendon's uneasy relationship with military commanders – Rupert in particular – explains the misleading nature of his account. A more accurate assessment of the Edgehill campaign would be that both sides received generally accurate intelligence assessments, and that any subsequent description that 'intelligence activities were on a primitive level and that most civil war battles were more often the result of armies meeting accidentally'⁹¹ is not supported by the contemporary accounts of the battle of Edgehill. As had been the case during the Bishops' Wars, in fact, the main intelligence short-comings on both sides were the result of inexperienced scouting, which had failed to detect enemy movements at key moments during the campaign.

⁹⁰ E. 126[38].

⁹¹ Marshall, *Intelligence and Espionage*, p. 18.

Map 1: The Edgehill Campaign – 1642



Chapter Six

Intelligence Operations in 1643 – The War Expands

1 Introduction

As the battle at Edgehill had failed to provide the expected resolution of the political impasse, both sides used the winter months of 1642-43 to prepare for the resumption of the conflict.¹ An immediate consequence was a marked expansion of the fighting throughout England during 1643 as regional commanders raised powerful forces. The aim of the present chapter is to conduct an extensive evaluation of the impact that intelligence-gathering operations had upon the principal military campaigns of 1643. Initially, this exploration will summarise the main military events of 1643, before considering what subsequent historians have said about the intelligence-gathering which was conducted in support of those operations. The chapter will then go on to undertake a comprehensive exploration of what the contemporary sources reveal about intelligence operations during the principal campaigns of 1643. In conclusion, the overall contribution which was made by intelligence-gathering to the conduct of the war during 1643 will be assessed. For simplicity's sake, this chapter will explore the conduct of military intelligence operations by considering the actions in three main theatres of action: the North, the Central Thames Valley area and the South of England.

2 The principal military events of 1643

2.1 The Northern campaign

The Royalist commanders in the north achieved considerable success during the first quarter of 1643 as their forces heavily outnumbered their Parliamentary opponents. Although Sir Thomas Fairfax captured Leeds on 23 January, Lord Goring, who had recently been appointed as Lieutenant-General to the Earl of Newcastle, defeated him at the battle of Seacroft Moor on 30 March. Demonstrating the resilience that was to become the hallmark of the northern Parliamentarians, Fairfax recovered and stormed Wakefield, but this victory did not overturn the Royalists' numerical superiority and, shortly afterwards, the Earl of Newcastle defeated the Fairfaxes comprehensively at Adwalton Moor on 30 June. Taking advantage of his opponents' disarray, Newcastle advanced into Lincolnshire before demands from his local Yorkshire supporters required him to return north and capture Hull. Despite the need for Newcastle to

¹ E. Hyde, *The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England, together with an Historical View of the Affairs in Ireland* (sixteen books, London, 1702-4), Book VI, p. 142.

march south to assist the king,² the Royalist northern army remained before Hull until October before heading north to contain the Scots invasion at the end of the year.

2.2 The Central Thames Valley campaign

The main Parliamentary campaign of 1643 in the Central Thames Valley area began with an attack on Reading. As Royalist scouting failed to provide any timely intelligence of the Parliamentary movements, Essex achieved a degree of surprise when he laid siege to that city on 15 April. In the absence of Rupert, the Royalist response was ill-co-ordinated and hesitant; consequently Reading surrendered on 27 April. Although the Royalists feared a further Parliamentary advance towards Oxford, their enemies' plans were thrown into disarray by an outbreak of fever in Essex's army. After capturing Lichfield on 21 April, Rupert mounted a series of raids on the largely immobile Parliamentary army. These raids led to the skirmish at Chalgrove Field on 18 June when John Hampden was mortally wounded. Later in the year, the capture of Bristol marked the nadir of the Parliamentary cause. However, Newcastle was unable to march south as his army had become embroiled in the siege of Hull. This caused the Royalist Council of War to decide not to advance on London, preferring to consolidate their recent territorial gains in the south west instead by capturing Gloucester: a task which, they hoped, would be achieved quickly.³ Essex marched to relieve Gloucester on 6 August, before evading the Royalist army and heading back towards London. The Royalists forced Essex to fight at Newbury, but Charles was worsted in the ensuing battle on 20 September. The Royalists were successful, however, in re-occupying Reading.⁴

2.3 The Southern campaign

In the south west, 1643 began well for the Royalists when Sir Ralph Hopton defeated the Parliamentary forces, led by General Ruthin, at Braddock Down on 19 January. Yet, elsewhere, Sir William Waller inflicted several defeats on the Royalists in the Severn valley; most notably, by capturing the Welsh army raised by Lord Herbert at Highnam, near Gloucester, in March. Recovering from a reverse at Sourton Down in Devon, on 25 April, the Western Royalists, well supplied with local intelligence about the Parliamentarians' movements and strength, won a decisive victory at Stratton on 16 May which cleared all of

² S.R. Gardiner, *History of the Great Civil War 1642-49* (four volumes, London, 1893), Volume 2, p. 195.

³ *Ibid*, pp. 197-198. See also, J. Day, *Gloucester and Newbury 1643, The Turning Point of the Civil War* (Barnsley, 2007), p.42.

⁴ Gardiner, *History*, Volume 2, pp. 243-244.

their enemies from Cornwall.⁵ Soon afterwards, Hopton's Cornishmen joined up with other troops led by the Marquis of Hertford and Prince Maurice and advanced into Somerset and Wiltshire. The combined Royalist army subsequently went on to defeat Waller at the battles of Lansdown (5 July) and Roundway Down (13 July). The Royalist Western army then combined with Charles' Oxford army to capture Bristol on 26 July. After Bristol fell, Maurice led the Western army against Exeter – which surrendered on 4 September – before marching west to besiege Plymouth. In the meantime, Charles besieged Gloucester. In December, Waller defeated Hopton's forces at Alton in Hampshire before recapturing Chichester and Arundel Castle. Thus the year ended with the Royalist advance on London from the South-West effectively checked.

3 The role of intelligence in the Northern campaigns of 1643: The views of subsequent historians

Having summarised the course of the military campaigns of 1643, this chapter will now go on to discuss what historians have said about the use of intelligence in those campaigns. As most seventeenth-century historians writing in the decades immediately after the Civil War paid little attention to the northern fighting during 1643, they had even less to say about the intelligence-gathering which had been conducted during those campaigns. Thomas May recounted the main military actions that had taken place in the north during 1643, but did not provide any detail of how the campaigns had been conducted. He made only one reference to intelligence-gathering when he reported that Parliamentary intelligence had estimated the size of Newcastle's army to be 'about eight thousand horse and foot'.⁶ Rushworth's later account provided more relevant information as it contained more detail about the fighting in the north, as well as providing several illuminating references to the use of intelligence by both Lord Fairfax and his son, Sir Thomas. For example, Rushworth described how both Royalist and Parliamentary intelligence reports had been used to inform the military actions of the Parliamentary commanders when they had attacked Wakefield.⁷ Finally, Rushworth recounted how intelligence information had allowed the smaller Parliamentary forces to attack the weakest Royalist garrisons.⁸ Clarendon did not witness any of the northern fighting

⁵ C. E. H. Chadwyck-Healey (ed.), *Bellum Civile: Hopton's Narrative of His Campaign in the West (1642-44) and Other Papers* (Somerset Record Society, Volume 18, 1902), p. 41.

⁶ T. May, *The History of the Parliament of England* (London, 1647), p. 61.

⁷ J. Rushworth, *Historical Collections* (London, 1659-99), Part III, Volume II, pp. 263-265, 268-271, 275 and 279-281.

⁸ Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, Part III, Volume II, pp. 126-127.

and could not persuade the Duke of Newcastle to contribute to this part of his *History*.⁹ Although he received some assistance from Sir Hugh Cholmley, the former Governor of Scarborough, Clarendon's *History* was notably ill-informed about northern matters and he was unable to comment on the impact which intelligence operations had had upon the Royalists' northern campaigns of 1643. He made few references to Newcastle's victories, did not mention the Battle of Adwalton Moor at all, and wrote only a little about the siege of Hull while describing the reasons why Newcastle was unable to march south to join the King later that year.¹⁰

Accounts of the northern fighting written during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries proved little more illuminating.¹¹ Although Gardiner's *History* contained comprehensive and detailed summaries of the chief military actions, it did not mention the impact of any intelligence-gathering operations conducted during the northern campaigns.¹² Apart from meeting the Queen and her munitions convoy, Rupert played little part in the northern campaigns of 1643 and so Warburton only made a passing reference to those campaigns in his *Memoirs*.¹³ Even Markham's detailed biography of Sir Thomas Fairfax contained no account of any significant contribution made by intelligence to his military success.¹⁴ Sir Charles Firth made no substantial reference to intelligence-gathering activities in the north during 1643 in his edition of the Duchess of Newcastle's autobiography.¹⁵

Since the Second World War, historians have begun to explore the northern campaigns of 1643 in much more detail.¹⁶ However, although their accounts provide a much clearer insight into the various battles, few of them describe the part played by intelligence. Indeed, the

⁹ C. H. Firth, 'Clarendon's History of the Rebellion', *English Historical Review* (Volume 19, 1904), pp. 34, 44, and 47-48.

¹⁰ Clarendon, *History*, Book VII, pp. 177-178.

¹¹ See L. Echard, *History of England* (London, 1707-18); J. Oldmixon, *Critical History of England* (London, 1724); T. Carte, *General History of England* (London, 1747-55); and C. Macaulay, *History of England from the Accession of James I* (London, 1763-83).

¹² S. R. Gardiner, *History of the Great Civil War 1642-1649* (four volumes, London, 1893).

¹³ See, for example, E. G. B. Warburton, *Memoirs of Prince Rupert and the Cavaliers* (three volumes, London, 1849), Volume II, p. 183.

¹⁴ C. R. Markham, *A Life of the Great Lord Fairfax* (London, 1870).

¹⁵ C. H. Firth (ed.), *The Lives of William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle and of his wife Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle* (London, 1907).

¹⁶ See, for example, A. Woolrych, *Battles of the English Civil War* (London, 1961), pp. 43-44; P. Young and R. Holmes, *The English Civil War. A Military History of the Three Civil Wars 1642-1651* (London, 1974), pp. 98-114 and 151-158; S. Reid, *All the King's Armies. A Military History of the English Civil War 1642 – 1651* (Kent, 1998), pp. 66-80; T. Royle, *Civil War: The Wars of the Three Kingdoms 1638-1660* (London, 2004), pp. 250-265; and M. Wanklyn and F. Jones, *A Military History of the English Civil War, 1642-1646* (London, 2005), pp. 75-80.

intelligence operations of 1643 were hardly explored at all until, in 2004, David Cooke cited references to the intelligence information which appears in Sir Thomas Fairfax's letters describing his campaigns.¹⁷ Only the more recent biographies of the northern commanders have included a few references to intelligence operations. For example, in his biography of Fairfax, John Wilson described the action at Wakefield and acknowledged the impact that intelligence had had upon the outcome of the Parliamentary campaigns in the north.¹⁸ Similarly, Stanley Carpenter's account of Civil War generalship described how the Fairfax's 'grand design' had relied upon receiving accurate intelligence about the position and strength of Royalist forces. Carpenter's *Leadership* thereby implicitly acknowledged the impact of intelligence-gathering upon the 1643 campaign.¹⁹ Carpenter argued that it was the interception of letters from Sir Thomas Fairfax to his father that had given the Royalists a decisive advantage in the opening months of the 1643 campaign because these letters had described the Parliamentarians' military plans.²⁰ Most recently, Malcolm Wanklyn's account of Civil War generalship mentions the part played by intelligence during the engagements at Wakefield and at Adwalton Moor.²¹

4 The role of intelligence in the Central Thames Valley campaigns: The views of subsequent historians

Although historians have had little to say about intelligence-gathering operations in the North during 1643, the position is rather better when it comes to their treatment of intelligence-gathering operations in the Thames Valley theatre during the same year. As the Central Thames Valley campaign was the one which involved the largest armies, it was also the one which attracted most comment from seventeenth-century historians. May's account of the actions of Essex's army described in some detail the fall of Reading and the subsequent fever that debilitated the Parliamentary army but, apart from an occasional reference to Rupert's movements, May made no significant mention of any intelligence operations conducted during this Reading campaign.²² However, he did describe intelligence operations in more detail in his later account of the Gloucester and Newbury campaign. The use that Essex had made of

¹⁷ D. Cooke, *The Civil War in Yorkshire: Fairfax versus Newcastle* (Barnsley, 2004), pp. 29, 48-49 and 55.

¹⁸ J. Wilson, *Fairfax. A Life of Thomas, Lord Fairfax, Captain-General of all the Parliament's forces in the English Civil War, Creator and Commander of the New Model Army* (London, 1985), pp. 23, 26, 29 and 31-32.

¹⁹ S. D. M. Carpenter, *Military Leadership in the English Civil Wars, 1642-1651: 'The Genius of this Age'* (London, 2005), pp. 23 and 73.

²⁰ See Carpenter, *Leadership*, p. 73; and Wilson, *Fairfax*, p. 195.

²¹ M. Wanklyn, *The Warrior Generals. Winning the British Civil Wars 1642-1652* (New Haven and London, 2010), pp. 59-60.

²² Clarendon, *History*, Book VIII, p. 56.

intelligence information during his march to lift the siege of Gloucester was covered in detail; and May's account went on to describe how Essex had used his intelligence about the Royalist dispositions to break away cleanly from the Royalist forces around Gloucester and start his march back to London.²³ Rushworth's *Historical Collections* described the capture of Reading and the Chalgrove Field skirmish, but made no mention of the intelligence obtained by Rupert that had informed his raids on Essex's forces. Rushworth's account of the relief of Gloucester and battle of Newbury was very detailed. After describing the relief of Gloucester, Rushworth described how the intelligence which Essex had received about the Royalist dispositions had allowed him to evade Charles' army and to gain an initial advantage on the race back to London.²⁴

Because he had been based at Oxford in 1643, Clarendon was especially well placed to write about the events that had occurred in the central Thames Valley area. His account of the loss of Reading included a description of one particular intelligence-gathering technique which had involved the Royalist garrison commander, Colonel Fielding, knowingly using a double agent to obtain information. Clarendon's account described how some very useful Royalist intelligence was obtained during this period, not only from the Royalist scouts who penetrated far behind the enemy lines, but also from deserters, such as John Urry, who 'acquainted [the Royalist commanders] where the parliament horse lay, and how loose they were in their quarters'.²⁵ Similarly, Clarendon's account of the Gloucester and Newbury campaign described several examples of intelligence information which the Royalists had possessed about Gloucester's garrison commander and the position of Essex's relief force during that campaign.²⁶ Clarendon noted the existence of a key Royalist intelligence report which had declared that Colonel Massey, the Governor of Gloucester, would surrender the city 'if the king himself came with his army and summoned it'.²⁷ As Clarendon reported that this intelligence had 'turned the scale', it was clearly a major reverse to the Royalist plans when representatives of the city gave an 'insolent and seditious' response to the king's demand. Clarendon recorded that the intelligence considered by the Royalist Council of War had led them to estimate that the city would fall within ten days. He also observed that this estimate of

²³ May, *History*, pp. 104-107.

²⁴ Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, Part III, Volume II, pp. 292-294.

²⁵ Clarendon, *History*, Book VII, p. 75. See also E. 249[5], *A Perfect Diurnall of the Passages in Parliament* (London, 8-15 May 1643); E. 56[11], *Mercurius Aulicus* (Oxford, 10-18 June 1643); and E. 59[12], *The Parliament Scout* (London, 29 June- 6 July 1643)

²⁶ See, for example, Clarendon, *History*, Book VII, pp. 176-177, 203-204 and 206.

²⁷ Clarendon, *History*, Book VII, p.158

how long Gloucester could withstand a siege had been over-optimistic, as had been the Royalist assessment of the chances of Parliament being able to mount a rescue operation. Clarendon stated that Royalist intelligence had ‘alleged that the enemy had no army; nor, by all intelligence, was like to form any soon enough to be able to relieve it [i.e. Gloucester]; and if they had an army, that it were much better for his majesty to force them to that distance from London, and to fight there where he could...choose his own ground’.²⁸ Clarendon’s *History* did not explain why the Royalists failed to respond to the intelligence of Essex’s withdrawal from Gloucester; indeed, his account of the Royalist reaction to Essex’s escape blamed the cavalry for being ‘less vigilant towards the motion of the enemy’ and the garrison at Cirencester for ‘the negligence of the officers’.²⁹ Clarendon wrote that the Royalists believed the Parliamentary army would take the northerly route back to London.

Clarendon’s *History* described the impact that intelligence-gathering had had upon the outcome of the Battle of Newbury in some detail. For example, he recounted how the Parliamentary scouts had recovered the initiative for Essex during the hours before the battle at Newbury by carrying out a more effective reconnaissance of the ground and of the Royalists’ overnight deployments. By enabling Essex to deploy relatively advantageously, Clarendon considered that the intelligence provided by the Parliamentary scouts had given Essex a potentially decisive advantage in the forthcoming battle. For example, because the reconnaissance by his scouts had provided him with intelligence on the topography of the likely battlefield, Essex was able to secure the high ground of Biggs Hill and Trundle Hill from whence the Parliamentarians were able to dominate the enclosed land from which the Royalist attack would be launched.³⁰

Historians of the nineteenth century also had a good deal to say about intelligence operations during the Thames Valley campaigns of 1643. Warburton’s *Memoirs* described these campaigns in some detail and included several examples of Royalist commanders reporting intelligence of enemy movements to Rupert’.³¹ Of particular interest to the present thesis are Warburton’s descriptions of how Rupert used his intelligence information during the raids on Essex’s army after the fall of Reading; and of how Essex used the scouting reports of the

²⁸ Clarendon, *History*, Book VII, pp. 161-164.

²⁹ Gardiner, *History*, Volume II, pp. 208-209.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 210.

³¹ See, for example, Warburton, *Memoirs*, Volume II, pp. 96, 101, 106, 132, 151 and 184.

Royalist dispositions to evade Charles' army around Gloucester.³² Warburton's account described how Hurry had 'proved his sincerity ... by giving important information and furnishing a chart of the enemy's country'.³³ Gardiner's *History* described the actions on the central front in detail, and made two specific references to intelligence-gathering. First, he described the information provided by Hurry which had led to the Chalgrove Field skirmish.³⁴ Second, he described how the Royalist scouts had reported Essex's manoeuvres as he doubled-back towards Cirencester, but noted that the Royalist commanders had not reacted in time.³⁵

The twentieth-century and twenty-first-century accounts of the central Thames Valley campaigns of 1643 have presented a more comprehensive description of the intelligence-gathering operations than hitherto. Whilst the campaigns to relieve Gloucester and the first battle of Newbury have been covered frequently,³⁶ Young and Holmes' account of the skirmish at Chalgrove, and of Rupert's subsequent raids upon Essex's fever-ridden forces, demonstrated the immediate benefits which had been gained from superior intelligence.³⁷ Wanklyn and Jones described the failure of Parliamentary intelligence to report the movement of the Queen's reinforcements from York to Oxford in May.³⁸ Of all the accounts of the Gloucester and Newbury campaigns, Jon Day's description is perhaps the first to provide contemporary evidence of the full extent of intelligence information being provided to the commanders on both sides.³⁹ Day reveals that, whilst Essex had been receiving intelligence from the spies run by Luke, the Parliamentary Scout-master General, the Royalists had been getting reports from their spies operating with the besiegers of Gloucester.⁴⁰ Day also described how Essex's withdrawal from Gloucester had been made possible by the intelligence he had received about the dispositions of the Royalist forces. He argued, not only that this intelligence had allowed Essex to march swiftly away from the main Royalist army, but also that it had enabled him to capture an important supply column at Cirencester. Thus, Day concluded, in part as a result of

³² See Warburton, *Memoirs*, Volume II, pp. 203-204 and 287-288.

³³ See Warburton, *Memoirs*, Volume II, p. 204.

³⁴ Gardiner, *History*, Volume I, pp. 150-151

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

³⁶ See, for example, A. Woolrych, *Battles of the English Civil War* (London, 1961), pp. 46-49; P. Young and R. Holmes, *The English Civil War. A Military History of the Three Civil Wars 1642-1651* (London, 1974), pp. 142-150; S. Reid, *All the King's Armies. A Military History of the English Civil War 1642-1651* (Staplehurst, 1998), pp. 59-65; T. Royle, *Civil War; The Wars of the Three Kingdoms 1638 – 1660* (London, 2004), pp. 266-273; and M. Wanklyn and F. Jones, *A Military History of the English Civil War, 1642-1646* (Harlow, 2005), pp. 142-150.

³⁷ Young and Holmes, *English Civil War*, p. 123. See also F. Kitson, *Prince Rupert. Portrait of a Soldier* (London, 1994), pp. 126-127.

³⁸ Wanklyn and Jones, *Military History*, p. 89.

³⁹ J. Day, *Gloucester and Newbury 1643. The Turning Point of the Civil War* (Barnsley, 2007).

⁴⁰ Day, *Gloucester and Newbury*, pp. 61, 76 and 97.

the superior Parliamentary intelligence, the Royalists lost the opportunity to attack Essex when he was isolated and miles away from London.⁴¹

Possibly due to the proximity to London, historical accounts of the Central Thames Valley campaigns of 1643, unlike those of the campaigns in the North, have made more references to intelligence-gathering. In the last twenty years, scholars have begun to review the full extent of the intelligence operations which were conducted in 1643 and to show that they provided key information to the commanders on both sides.⁴² We may now turn to explore how historians have treated the role of military intelligence in the campaigns which were conducted in the South of England during that same year.

5 The role of intelligence in the Southern campaigns of 1643: The views of subsequent historians

Late seventeenth-century historians' accounts of the impact of intelligence operations in the South contain more detail than do their accounts of the campaigns which were fought further to the North. For example, May's *History* reported how intelligence operations had several times enhanced the Parliamentary cause in the South, through the discovery of the plot to betray Bristol, for example, as well as through Waller's success at Highnam in the Severn Valley.⁴³ Similarly, Rushworth's *Historical Collections* made a number of references to the contribution made by intelligence and, in particular, to the reports of Parliamentary scouts in the actions at Highnam, Sourton Down and Lansdown.⁴⁴ Clarendon also contributed a very full account of the war in the West as he received substantial information from Hopton and Lieutenant-Colonel (later Colonel) Walter Slingsby, another Royalist officer who had fought under Hopton's command.⁴⁵ In his *History*, Clarendon included a significant number of accounts of the intelligence which had been obtained by both Hopton and Waller during their confrontation and of how scouting reports had influenced the outcome of the battles at Stratton, Lansdown and Roundway Down.⁴⁶ He also described how intelligence information gathered about the

⁴¹ Day, *Gloucester and Newbury*, pp. 120-123 and 125-126.

⁴² See, for example, Wanklyn, *The Warrior Generals*, pp. 48, 50-52, 55, 66 and 73.

⁴³ See May, *History*, pp. 40, 56 and 73.

⁴⁴ See, for example, Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, Part III, Volume II, pp. 263, 267-268 and 285.

⁴⁵ Firth, 'Clarendon's History', pp. 50-51. Hopton's manuscripts are Bod. L., Clarendon MSS, 1738, ff. 1, 4, and 6; and Slingsby's manuscripts are Bod. L., Clarendon MSS, 1738, ff. 2, 3 and 7. See also Chadwyck Healey, *Bellum Civile*.

⁴⁶ See, for example, Clarendon, *History*, Book VII, pp. 87, 98, 100, 103, 109, 113 and 116.

position of Royalist patrols had been used by Waller to defeat Hopton's forces at Alton later that year.⁴⁷

Although, later on in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, both Warburton and Gardiner described the south western military campaigns, neither of them mentioned intelligence-gathering operations in any detail. They did, however, provide accounts of the failed Royalist plot to secure Bristol in March 1643 when Rupert, having received intelligence of the plot, had provided military support outside the city.⁴⁸ Warburton also described how Rupert had attempted to remedy the failure among the Royalist senior commanders to react to the intelligence of Essex's withdrawal from Gloucester, noting that there had been no Royalist reaction until Rupert had personally sought out the king, interrupted his card game with Percy and Forth, and demanded that immediate action be taken to pursue the Parliamentary army.⁴⁹

The twentieth-century and twenty-first-century's accounts witnessed the rise of more detailed local histories of the Civil War. Whilst the Somerset Record Society published Charles Chadwyck Healey's edition of the Hopton and Slingsby's manuscripts in 1902,⁵⁰ it was the local historian, Mary Coate, writing in 1933, who first drew attention to the impact that intelligence-gathering had had upon the outcome of the fighting in the south west. In her account of the Cornish involvement in the Civil War, Coate described how the Parliamentary commander, John Chudleigh, had cursed his inefficient scout-master before the skirmish at Sourton Down,⁵¹ and how the local people had provided useful information to the Royalist commanders about Parliamentary dispositions before the battle of Stratton.⁵² Coate's research into Sourton Down revealed the advantages that had been gained by those Civil War commanders who obtained accurate military intelligence, and her conclusions were developed in subsequent historical accounts of the 1643 south west campaign. For example, in his book on Hopton, published in 1968, F.T.R. Edgar briefly commented on intelligence operations in the Royalist Western army.⁵³ Edgar stated that Hopton had assumed the scout-master's intelligence duties and claimed that much intelligence information about the position and size of the Parliamentary army had come from his Cornish regimental commanders, such as Sir

⁴⁷ Clarendon, *History*, Book VIII, p. 9.

⁴⁸ Warburton, *Memoirs*, Volume II, p. 140; and Gardner, *History*, Volume I, p. 99.

⁴⁹ Warburton, *Memoirs*, Volume II, p. 288.

⁵⁰ Chadwyck Healey, *Bellum Civile*, p. xvii.

⁵¹ M. Coate, *Cornwall in the Great Civil War and Interregnum 1642 – 1660* (Oxford, 1933), p. 62.

⁵² Coate, *Cornwall*, p. 65.

⁵³ Edgar, *Hopton*, p. 125.

Bevill Grenville.⁵⁴ Subsequently, the intelligence operations which had been carried out during the south west campaign were described briefly by Young and Holmes in their military history of the Civil War, although the impact of these operations on the outcome of the campaign was not considered.⁵⁵

Significantly, John Adair's biography of Sir William Waller contained a great deal more information on intelligence-gathering and its impact on the south west campaign. Adair noted that Waller was acknowledged by his opponents to be a skilful general who achieved a number of military successes for Parliament. Adair acknowledged that Waller's achievements had reflected his skilful use of the ground and his awareness of his opponents' intentions – advantages which he had derived from the intelligence provided by his scouts. For example, Adair described how Waller had used his intelligence of his opponents' dispositions at Highnam to destroy the Royalist army raised by Lord Herbert. However, although Adair drew attention to the military skills which had led to Waller's success in battle, he did not emphasise the significance of intelligence-gathering by Waller's scouts amongst those skills, nor did he note that it had been more accurate intelligence information which had underpinned Waller's military achievements.⁵⁶

Recently, local historians have also acknowledged the part played by intelligence in their accounts of regional campaigns. For example, in his accounts of the Civil War in Wiltshire and Hampshire, Tony MacLachlan has referred to the use of intelligence-gathering by both sides and has described how Waller's extensive use of scouts provided him with the timely intelligence which allowed him to gain a significant advantage in the run up to the battles of Lansdown and Roundway Down and at the capture of Alton.⁵⁷ More general references to intelligence-gathering are contained in his account of the siege of Wardour Castle.⁵⁸ Later historical accounts of the fighting in the south west provided only general references to intelligence-gathering, and did not assess its impact on the outcome of the campaign.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ See, for example, Stucley, *Sir Bevill Grenville*, pp. 120, 122-123, 126, and 134-137.

⁵⁵ See, for example, Young and Holmes, *Civil War*, pp. 91, and 94.

⁵⁶ See, for example, Adair, *Roundhead General*, pp. 56, 58-60, 68, 81, 87, 91 and 93.

⁵⁷ See, for example, T. MacLachlan, *The Civil War in Wiltshire* (Salisbury, 1997), pp. 95-96, 104 and 108-109; and T. MacLachlan, *The Civil War in Hampshire* (Salisbury, 2000), pp. 176-177.

⁵⁸ See, for example, J. Wroughton, *An Unhappy Civil War. The experiences of Ordinary People in Gloucestershire, Somerset and Wiltshire, 1642- 1646* (Bath, 1999), pp. 165 and 214-216; and MacLachlan, *Civil War in Wiltshire*, pp. 158-159.

⁵⁹ See, for example, S. Reid, *All the King's Armies. A Military History of the English Civil War 1642-1651* (Staplehurst, 1998), pp. 45, 48, 50 and 55.

However, Mark Stoye's more recent publications have provided revealing insights into the contribution made towards the gathering of intelligence by local people during 1643.⁶⁰ In a later account of the conflict, by Malcolm Wanklyn and Frank Jones, has also made full acknowledgement of the part played by intelligence-gathering in Waller's military successes;⁶¹ whilst Wanklyn's latest work, *The Warrior Generals*, describes the role played by intelligence in determining the outcome of the battles at Stratton and Alton.⁶²

It can be seen, therefore, that the latest historical accounts of the military campaigns of 1643 have begun to acknowledge the impact of intelligence-gathering upon the outcome of the battles, earlier historians do not appear to have explored intelligence operations in any detail – although the central and southern campaigns have attracted more detailed attention than those further north. The next part of this chapter will seek to shed new light on the military intelligence-gathering operations that were carried out during 1643, by examining the evidence of the primary sources in depth.

6 The role of military intelligence in the Northern campaigns of 1643: The evidence of the primary sources

The evidence of the primary sources shows that, although most previous historians have failed to notice this, a great deal of important intelligence information was provided to the northern commanders. The reports of eye-witnesses and the contemporary news-pamphlets contain detailed evidence of the extent to which the majority of northern military actions were informed by intelligence information. Whilst the aim of this part of the present chapter is to explore the impact of intelligence-gathering on all of the main actions of the northern campaigns, it seems sensible to start by considering the testimony of the two leading military antagonists in the northern campaigns of 1643, the Duke of Newcastle and Sir Thomas Fairfax.⁶³ The correspondence of the Fairfax family contains numerous references to the problems which were presented to them by the intelligence about their movements which the

⁶⁰ See, for example, M. J. Stoye, 'Pagans or Paragons? Images of the Cornish during the English Civil War', *English Historical Review* (Volume III, No. 441, 1996), pp. 299-323; and M. J. Stoye, *Loyalty and Locality*, (Exeter, 1994), p. 65.

⁶¹ Wanklyn and Jones, *Military History*, p. 72.

⁶² Wanklyn, *The Warrior Generals*, pp. 54-55, 85 and 90.

⁶³ M. Cavendish, *The Life of William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle, to which is added the true relation of my birth, breeding and life* (London, 1667), pp. 29, 32, 33, 36 and 43.; and F. Maseres (ed.), *Select Tracts relating to the Civil Wars in England in the reign of King Charles the First* (London, 1815), pp. 411-451.

Royalists were able to obtain from intercepted letters and local supporters.⁶⁴ Sir Thomas criticised the intelligence provided by the Parliamentary army, writing that ‘our scouts could get no notice of them’.⁶⁵ Nonetheless, Parliamentary commanders did receive intelligence of some Royalist movements, once receiving an accurate report that ‘the earl of Newcastle, with his whole force, intended to fall upon our quarter at Tadcaster’.⁶⁶ The Fairfaxes were not alone in expressing early concerns about the state of Parliamentary intelligence; Sir John Hotham, the Governor of Hull, wrote to Fairfax that ‘our misery is we know not where his force lies, nor in what condition he is’.⁶⁷

Fairfax’s account of the Parliamentary intelligence operations was written just after the war. His account contained not only eye-witness descriptions of some of the northern actions, but also numerous references to the ways in which intelligence information had informed Parliamentary decisions. For example, Fairfax described how the Parliamentary operations around Bradford had been dictated by intelligence reports when ‘upon better intelligence of how the enemy lay, I marched in the night by several towns where they lay’.⁶⁸ Fairfax went on to describe how his scouts had so harassed the Royalists ‘till at last our few men grew so bold, and theirs so disheartened, that they durst not stir a mile from their garrisons’.⁶⁹ Fairfax drew his opponent into the West Riding and the woollen industry towns such as Leeds, Halifax and Bradford where the Parliamentarians enjoyed the support of the local people and ‘from whence our chief supplies came’.⁷⁰ Once the Royalists had entered this comparatively ‘unfriendly’ territory, Fairfax had received the intelligence that his smaller forces needed to determine when they could attack at an advantage or avoid an engagement when at a disadvantage. Fairfax acknowledged that his opponents had also been obtaining intelligence from local sources as the Royalists had had ‘friends enough to direct them, and give them intelligence’.⁷¹

Fairfax conceded that Parliamentary reports had not always been accurate and had sometimes ‘made us doubt our intelligence’, as when he had attacked Wakefield and found the Royalist

⁶⁴ E. 245[32], *A Continuation of certaine Special and Remarkable Passages from both Houses of Parliament*, 26 January-2 February (London, 1643).

⁶⁵ R. Bell (ed.), *Memorials of the Civil War: The Fairfax Correspondence* (two volumes, London, 1849), Volume 1, p. 34.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, Volume 1, p. 27

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, Volume 1, p. 45.

⁶⁸ Maseres, *Short Memorials*, p. 418.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 419.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 416.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 416.

garrison larger than he had expected.⁷² Nonetheless, as his *Memorials* contained so many references to the intelligence information he had received, it is surely reasonable to draw the conclusion that intelligence-gathering had played a significant role in the 1643 Parliamentary northern campaign. Fairfax was clearly aware of the impact that intelligence had had on the operations of both sides for he acknowledged that the Royalists had also benefited from accurate reports about their enemies. For example, Fairfax described how the Royalists had had ‘present intelligence of our march’ before the battle of Seacroft Moor, and how ‘they had notice of our coming’ before his attack on Wakefield.⁷³ Fairfax also recounted how the initial Parliamentary operations had been impeded by his own inefficient scouts who had ‘had no effect or notice of them, and no alarm was given’.⁷⁴ Fairfax was not the only person to comment on the inefficiency of the Parliamentary scouting in the north during the early days of 1643. In February a Roundhead pamphleteer reported how ‘the enemy approached ... within a mile of Bolton ... before there was any certain intelligence brought into those within ... for the enemy was in view before they were aware’.⁷⁵

Fairfax wanted accurate intelligence and specifically sought local information when he eventually led Parliamentary forces into Lincolnshire some three months after his defeat at Adwalton Moor. The Parliamentary intelligence organisation in that county was unreliable and their information about the Royalist movements was erratic. Fairfax did receive some reports however, as, for example, when the local Parliamentarians were given the ‘intelligence the [Royalist] army would march the next day to Bolingbroke for the relief of the castle’.⁷⁶ This information enabled a Parliamentary force to defeat the Royalists at the battle of Winceby on 11 October. Similarly in December 1643, when Fairfax was ordered by the Committee of Both Kingdoms to move to the west and assist Brereton to defeat the recently reinforced Royalist forces at Nantwich, Fairfax sought further information when he asked Brereton ‘what your intelligence is concerning the interposition of the enemy’s forces’.⁷⁷

The significance of intelligence to the northern operations of the Royalist army is demonstrated by the Duchess of Newcastle’s description of the intelligence which had been received by her

⁷² Ibid, pp. 423.

⁷³ Ibid, pp. 421- 423.

⁷⁴ Ibid, p. 416.

⁷⁵ E. 90[12], *Speciall Passages and Certain Information from Severall Places* (London, 14-21 February 1643).

⁷⁶ Bell, *Fairfax Correspondence*, Volume I, p. 64.

⁷⁷ Bell, *Fairfax Correspondence*, Volume III, pp. 67-75.

husband. For example, she recounted how intelligence information was dependant upon the sympathies of the local people noting that:

‘By reason the whole county was of their [Parliamentarian] party ... my Lord could not possibly have any constant intelligence of their designes and motions’.⁷⁸

Even so, the Duchess acknowledged that intelligence from friendly sources had led to the Royalist success at the battle of Seacroft Moor on 30 March when the Duchess described how ‘My Lord received intelligence that the enemies General of the Horse had designed to march with a party from Cawood Castle’ which prompted Newcastle to order Goring ‘to attend the enemy in their march’ in order to intercept him – a clear example of a battle initiated by an intelligence report.⁷⁹ Her account reveals that Newcastle’s decision had been informed by further intelligence information that the main Parliamentarian army ‘was still at Tadcaster, and had fortified that place’.⁸⁰ This intelligence led to Goring’s successful interception and the Royalist victory at Seacroft Moor. Newcastle also received ‘intelligence that the enemy in the garrisons near Wakefield had united themselves’ for a surprise attack on Wakefield; consequently, Fairfax found the Royalist fortifications manned and the hedges along his line of approach lined by musketeers.⁸¹ But, as we discussed earlier, intelligence-gathering was more difficult when the Royalists entered those parts of Yorkshire that favoured the Parliament.

Both parties derived much intelligence from reading the other side’s letters. For example, the Royalist commander, Sir John Bellasis noted, in May 1643, that ‘from the intercepting of some letters, the Earl of Newcastle ... had discovered a plan for the surprising of the Queen as she travelled through Yorkshire’.⁸² Letters from Sir Thomas Fairfax describing the Parliamentarian ‘designe for Yorkshire’ were also intercepted by Belasis and passed on to Prince Rupert.⁸³ The interception of Parliamentarian letters informed Newcastle ‘that the Lord Fairfax by quitting

⁷⁸ Cavendish, *Life of Newcastle*, p. 39.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁸² See, for example, E. 245[36], *Mercurius Aulicus* (Oxford, 15-21 January 1643); E. 266[9], *Mercurius Aulicus* (Oxford, 22-28 January 1643); E. 100[18], *Mercurius Aulicus* (Oxford, 16- 23 April 1643); and E. 56[11], *Mercurius Aulicus* (Oxford, 10 -17 June 1643). See also, Wilson, *Fairfax*, p. 195. Letter from Belasis dated 17 May 1643.

⁸³ Bod. L, Firth MSS, C6 (2), f. 148. Letter dated 17 March 1644.

Selby, Cawood and other places on the river, had put himself out of all possibility of being supplied with forces, arms or ammunition by the way of Hull'.⁸⁴

More evidence of intelligence-gathering by both sides is provided in the printed reports of military activity in the North which appeared in both Royalist and Parliamentary news-pamphlets. For example, in January and February various pamphlets reported the return of the Queen 'with an incredible quantity of powder and other ammunition'.⁸⁵ Throughout the year, the intelligence obtained from the interception of letters was regularly reported in London. During the last week of January 1643, there were reports in several pamphlets of the interception of mail. For example, it was noted on one occasion that 'there was intercepted this week letters going to the Lord Newcastle from His Majesty and Secretary Nicholas'.⁸⁶ One Roundhead pamphleteer raised doubts about the loyalty of Hull's Governor, Sir John Hotham, when he reported that he 'had intelligence of the danger the town [Hull] was in by Sir John Hotham's unfaithfulness'.⁸⁷ Other reports gave details of changes to the Royalist command structure and descriptions of senior Royalist prisoners after the storming of Wakefield.⁸⁸ The printed reports gave some interesting insights into the breadth of the intelligence information which was available to each side. For example, they reported a plot to betray Lincoln to the Royalists, as well as news of 'papist plots' which was based on intercepted 'letters from the King to the Queen ... to acquaint her that he would make some new officers of state'.⁸⁹

The contemporary evidence provides very strong evidence that intelligence-gathering made a substantial contribution to the outcome of the 1643 northern campaigns. It shows not only that both Royalist and Parliamentary operations relied upon intelligence reports of the enemy's position and strength, but also that their information came from a wide variety of different sources. Although both sides received intelligence from their local supporters, the fact that,

⁸⁴ E. 100[18], *Mercurius Aulicus* (Oxford, 16- 22 April 1643).

⁸⁵ See, for example, E. 245[32], *A Continuation of certaine Speciall and Remarkable Passages from both Houses of Parliament, and other parts of the Kingdome* (London, 26 January- 2 February 1643); and E. 90[12].

⁸⁶ See, for example, E. 86[39], *Speciall Passages and certain Informations from Severall places* (London, 24- 31 January 1643); E. 245[32]; BL, E. 101[24], *Certaine Informations from Severall Parts of the Kingdome* (London, 8- 15 May 1643); E. 249[7], *A Continuation of certaine Speciall and Remarkable Passages from both Houses of Parliament and other Parts of the Kingdome* (London, 11- 18 May 1643); and CSPD, 1641- 43, p. 489.

⁸⁷ See, for example, E. 61[16], *Certaine Informations from Severall Parts of the Kingdome* (London, 17-24 July 1643); and E. 104[18], *The Kingdomes Weekly Intelligencer* (London, 23- 30 May 1643).

⁸⁸ See, for example, E. 102[1], *Mercurius Aulicus* (Oxford, 1- 8 May 1643); and E. 249[11], *A Perfect Diurnall of the Passages in Parliament* (London, 22 - 29 May 1643).

⁸⁹ See, for example, E. 59 [22], *The Kingdomes Weekly Intelligencer* (London, 4 - 11 July 1643) for a report on the plot to betray Lincoln; and E. 104[24], *Certain Informations from Severall Parts of the Kingdome* (London, 8 - 15 May 1643).

initially, Royalist supporters were in the majority gave Newcastle the advantage upon which Fairfax had commented.⁹⁰ The territorial and numerical advantages enjoyed by the Royalists also enabled them to intercept Parliamentary messengers more easily.⁹¹ Do contemporary accounts of the more southerly campaigns provide similar evidence of effective intelligence-gathering operations? The following sections of this thesis will attempt to find out.

7 The role of military intelligence in the Central Thames Valley campaigns of 1643:

The evidence of the primary sources.

The primary sources describing the Central Thames Valley campaigns reveal that a great deal of intelligence information was being reported in 1643 and that the actions of the Thames Valley commanders were frequently informed by this information. Well aware of the progress of the peace discussions which had been conducted during the winter months, Essex had been preparing his forces to march against Oxford. He was therefore well placed to move quickly and, on 16 April 1643, he besieged Reading. His advance had caught the Royalists by surprise and their response was slow and hesitant. Evidence of Parliamentary intelligence-gathering is provided by a printed report which notes that Essex's troops 'intercepted a servant of Sir Lewis Dyves' who informed them of the Royalists' shortage of powder and of how 'the supply was prevented by some troops of horse'.⁹² Although a relief force was on the way, the Royalist commander of Reading surrendered the town on 27 April.

Further evidence of the range of intelligence operations which were being conducted in the Central Thames Valley area during this period is provided by the accounts of the killing of the Roundhead Captain George Bulmer (or Bullman). Variousy described as a 'scout' or, by Royalist sources, as 'one of the Scout-masters of the Rebel army', Bulmer was waylaid by a party of Royalist scouts led by Lord Taafe.⁹³ Bulmer, who led a team of '16 associates', had attracted a reputation as a successful scout-master who had 'robbed more passengers, rifled more carriers and intercepted more letters than all the villains in the pack'. On 8 May, the Royalist Journal, *Mercurius Aulicus*, reported that traffic to London was:

⁹⁰ Fairfax, *Short Memorials*, p. 416.

⁹¹ E. 100[18], *Mercurius Aulicus* (Oxford, 15-22 April 1643).

⁹² E. 100[5], *The last Intelligence from his Excellency his Quarters at Reading, since the surrendering of the town* (London, 27 April 1643).

⁹³ E. 249[2], *A Perfect Diurnall of the Passages in Parliament* (London, 30 April-6 May 1643).

‘being continually hindered by one Bullman [sic], one of the enemies scouts, who doth watch us on all sides, that hardly any intelligence to or from London can escape him, in so much that we have thought sometime to send out a party to take him, or otherwise to prevent him.’⁹⁴

Bulmer was reportedly engaged upon ‘a design to give an alarm to His Majesty’s quarters’ when he was intercepted and shot at Whateley Bridge.⁹⁵ A Parliamentary news pamphlet suggested that Taafe had set out to entrap Bulmer by pretending to be ‘for the King and Parliament’ and that ‘Lord Taafe and Bulmer were on a Parley’ when Taafe ‘very treacherously drew a pistol out of his pocket and shot him’.⁹⁶

Intelligence-gathering played an important part in a number of the Royalist campaigns in the Thames Valley. After the Royalist failure to anticipate Essex’s advance on Reading, Cavalier intelligence operations improved which allowed a series of raids to be mounted against local Parliamentary positions. By comparison, Parliamentary intelligence was not effective at this time and appears to have given little warning of the planned Royalist raids until it was too late. After the fall of Bristol, there was some speculation about what the Royalists would do next. Reports in the Parliamentary press provide evidence that Gloucester was swiftly identified as an obvious target for the Royalist army for several London pamphleteers reported that ‘since the surrender of Bristol their fears ... [at Gloucester] are very great, as the next attempt of the enemy will be against them, and they do expect to be besieged daily, but ... [they] are resolved to stand it out to the very last man’.⁹⁷

The London news-pamphlets contained reports that relief forces were being sent to assist the beleaguered Parliamentary forces in the west. Even before Bristol fell, one writer claimed that there was ‘a considerable party forthwith designed to march into the west to relieve the siege before Bristol’.⁹⁸ The next week, the same pamphleteer reported that

⁹⁴ E. 102[1], *Mercurius Aulicus* (Oxford, 1- 8 May 1643).

⁹⁵ E. 102[1]. See also, Philip, *Journal*, Volume 1, p. 68; E. 101[4], *Speciall Passages and certain Information from Severall places* (London, 2-9 May 1643); and E. 249[2], *A Perfect Diurnall of the Passages in Parliament* (London, 2-9 May 1643).

⁹⁶ E. 249[2], *A Perfect Diurnall of the Passages in Parliament* (London, 2-9 May 1643).

⁹⁷ E. 249[31], *A Perfect Diurnall of some Passages in Parliament* (London, 31 July- 7 August 1643).

⁹⁸ E. 249[30], *A Perfect Diurnall of some Passages in Parliament* (London, 24 -31 July 1643).

‘Sir William Waller is to be speedily sent forth towards the west and to relieve Gloucester, from whence we have intelligence this day that they are in good condition ... there is no doubt but Gloucester will endure a longer siege than Bristol did’.⁹⁹

The belief that Gloucester would hold out if besieged was widespread. For example, during the week that Gloucester was invested, a London news-pamphlet reported that ‘On Sunday last the Cavaliers began to besiege the City of Gloucester, with an army of 6000 men, but the inhabitants thereof are so well provided ... they can hold out this three months’.¹⁰⁰ A further report that ‘5000 horse [are] to be sent down to the city of Gloucester for the strengthening of that city in case Prince Rupert ... should come against it to besiege it’ was published at the same time.¹⁰¹ Parliament was clearly being kept informed by Colonel Massey, the Gloucester garrison commander, of the state of his garrison and of the reported intentions of the Royalist army after the fall of Bristol.¹⁰² The evidence of the pamphlets was confirmed by similar reports from Sir Samuel Luke’s agents. On 29 July, Luke reported that ‘the King’s forces have taken Bristol and that Prince Rupert is now before Gloucester’, and this was followed two days later by a report that the Royalists ‘intend to go speedily against Gloucester’. Finally, on 2 August, Luke reported that ‘the King went to Bristol and intends to stay there till Gloucester be taken and afterwards they resolve to go against London’.¹⁰³ Clearly, Parliamentary intelligence about the Royalists’ intentions and capabilities was broadly correct.

The Royalists were confident of their intelligence that the battles of the preceding three months had left the Parliamentary forces in some disarray. At the end of July, *Mercurius Aulicus* reported that ‘the Rebel Army under the command of the Earl of Essex is growne very weake, and able to do nothing to the hindrance of His Majesty’s Service’.¹⁰⁴ Contemporary evidence shows that the Royalists were also well aware of the tensions between Essex and Waller and of the ‘designe on foot of raising a new armie under the command of Sir William Waller’.¹⁰⁵ The

⁹⁹ E. 249[31].

¹⁰⁰ E. 65[8], *Certain Informations from Severall parts of the Kingdom* (London, 7-14 August 1643).

¹⁰¹ E. 63[4], *Speciall Passages* (London, 31 July- 7 August 1643).

¹⁰² Bod. L, Tanner MSS, 62, f. 197.

¹⁰³ I.G. Philip (ed.), *The Journal of Sir Samuel Luke* (three volumes, Oxfordshire Record Society, 1947), pp. 126 and 128.

¹⁰⁴ E. 64[11], *Mercurius Aulicus* (Oxford, 30 July 1643).

¹⁰⁵ E. 65[26], *Mercurius Aulicus* (Oxford, 12 August 1643).

Royalists reported that the Parliamentarians had ‘given up Exeter for as good as lost’, and they also boasted that:

‘Unless supplies be sent [to Gloucester] of Men, Armes and Money (neither of which the pretended Houses can afford ... at the present time) they are not able to hold out against His Majesty’s forces but of necessity must give up the towne on the first assault’.¹⁰⁶

More evidence of the intelligence information reaching the Royalist commanders came from the same report in *Aulicus* which described the tensions between the two Houses and claimed that there was ‘a Civil Warre between them’. Clearly there was a difference of opinion between the Royalist and Parliamentary pamphleteers about the determination of the Gloucester garrison to resist a Royalist assault – and of the ability of the Parliamentary commanders to provide a relief force. The Royalist decision to besiege rather than storm Gloucester thus appears to have been partly based on flawed intelligence about the preparedness of the garrison and the personal commitment of the garrison commander.

Royalist intelligencers were slow to discern the formation of a relief force for Gloucester. But, as the relief force marched westwards, some reports of its progress were published; for example, *Mercurius Aulicus* reported that ‘Essex was at Aylesbury on Monday night, last night at Bicester’.¹⁰⁷ This report reflected the intelligence being provided by General Wilmot, who had been left behind to protect Oxford and monitor Parliamentary movements. On 3 August 1643, he wrote to Rupert that Essex ‘[has] his foot at Chilton and his horse at Wotton; this day, I am informed, his rendezvous is near Bicester’.¹⁰⁸ Despite the intelligence of the strength of the resistance from the Gloucester garrison, and the reports of the approach of the relief force, the Royalist plan was not adjusted. Contemporary evidence confirms that the Parliamentary commanders were receiving regular intelligence from Luke about the increasing mood of frustration within the Royalist camp. As early as 11 August, Luke’s agent reported that:

¹⁰⁶ E. 65[26], *Mercurius Aulicus* (Oxford, 12 August 1643).

¹⁰⁷ E. 67[2], *Mercurius Aulicus* (Oxford, 2 September 1643).

¹⁰⁸ BL, Addl. MSS, 18980, f.139.

‘because they [the Royalists] have small hope of taking it [Gloucester] he hears they intend to leave the siege and go presently against London for they say themselves that the Roundheads will die every man before they yield it up’.¹⁰⁹

Similar reports continued to come in; on 17 August, for example, Luke was reporting that ‘there was a small probability of taking the city’, and, on 20 August, that the Royalists ‘wish they had never set [their forces] upon Gloucester’.¹¹⁰ Meanwhile, Parliamentary pamphlets were reporting the advance of Essex’s army to relieve Gloucester. In mid August the author of *Certain Informations* observed ‘it is hoped that the Lord General of the Parliamentary army will send some aid to them [the Gloucester garrison] because he yesterday [14 August] mustered his horse at Kingston upon Thames and found them to amount to the number of 4000’.¹¹¹ Later pamphlets gave details of the Parliamentary advance on a day-by-day basis, reporting ‘how farre his Excellency the Parliament’s Lord General was advanced to the relief of Gloucester’ until the report concluded that ‘news was brought to London that ... the siege was raised from below Gloucester’.¹¹²

Although the relief of Gloucester was an important victory for the Parliamentarians, Essex was acutely aware that he was now isolated from his base and vulnerable to attack from a Royalist army which was now effectively back under the operational command of Prince Rupert. Essex appreciated that he had two options for his return to London – he could either move to the north and return via the Midlands, or he could march back along the Thames Valley corridor. Essex elected initially to move north to Tewkesbury as this allowed him to concentrate his army and move clear of Gloucester. Tewkesbury was an ideal location for it offered either a northerly or a southerly route for the march back to London. It was at this moment that Essex reaped the benefit of Luke’s intelligence-gathering organisation. Luke’s journal shows that, on 13 September, Essex received vital intelligence reports that ‘the King and his army were this morning at Pershore and marching towards Worcester’.¹¹³ Luke’s agent also reported that there was a large Royalist food convoy in ‘Cirencester and thereabouts, 40 carts ... laden with beer, bread, cheese and other provisions’.¹¹⁴ These reports allowed Essex to side-step the Royalist

¹⁰⁹ Philip, *Journal*, Volume II, p. 133.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 136 and 138.

¹¹¹ E. 65[24], *Certain Informations from Severall parts of the Kingdom* (London, 14-21 August 1643).

¹¹² E. 67[3], *Certain Informations from Severall parts of the Kingdom* (London, 4-11 September 1643).

¹¹³ Philip, *Journal*, Volume II, p. 152.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 149.

army during the night of 14/15 September when he acted on his intelligence and ordered the rapid counter-march of the Parliamentary army towards Cirencester. As was reported at the time by a Parliamentary soldier, ‘we caused a bridge to be made over the Severn, and sent some forces to Upton Bridge, as if we intended to march to Worcester, and caused the enemy to draw all his forces together for the defence of that place’.¹¹⁵ This rapid march, ‘when we went cleane another way marcht all day and the greatest part of the night from Tewkesbury to Cirencester’, not only allowed Essex to escape from the encircling Royalist forces, it also allowed him to capture provisions which were urgently needed by his army for their return march to London.¹¹⁶ On 16 September, Luke’s men reported from Evesham that ‘the King was there and intended not to stir all this day’.¹¹⁷

Sir John Byron, one of Charles’ commanders, had reported the change of direction of Essex’s army and later blamed Rupert for failing to ‘credit my intelligence’, adding that, if the prince had heeded him, ‘the advantage Essex gained might have been prevented’.¹¹⁸ Similarly Rupert claimed that he had told the king of the change but the king ‘believed himself better informed’ and did not act upon the reports.¹¹⁹ Digby wrote that:

‘we were quickly hurried by the newes that Essex had faced about, and had in the night, with great silence secrecy, and strange diligence, almost gained Cirencester, and surprised two new raised Regiments of ours there, before we could get any certain notice of this’.¹²⁰

To his credit, Charles recognised the magnitude of the mistake and did his best to redeem the situation by personally urging on the flagging Royalist foot during the rain-swept pursuit that followed.¹²¹

Once the two armies were on the move, the task of reporting their position was a relatively straight-forward scouting task for both sides. As one of the Parliamentary scouts reported

¹¹⁵ E. 69[2], *A True Relation of the late Battell neere Newbery* (London, 26 September 1643).

¹¹⁶ E. 69[2], *A True Relation of the late Battell neere Newbery*. See also, Philip, *Journal*, Volume II, pp. 150-154.

¹¹⁷ Philip, *Journal*, Volume II, pp. 153.

¹¹⁸ Bod. L, Clarendon MSS, 1738, f. 5.

¹¹⁹ BL, Addl. MSS, 62084B.

¹²⁰ E. 69[10], *A True and impartiall relation of the battaile betwixt, His Majesties Army, and that of the rebels neare Newbery in Berk-shire, Sept. 20, 1643* (Oxford, 1643).

¹²¹ Clarendon, *History*, Book VII, p. 207.

‘the enemy was coming upon us with a great body of horse, which caused the Lord General to make a stand’.¹²² This stand allowed the Royalists to get to Newbury before Essex, but it did not prevent the Parliamentarian scouts from advising Essex about the position of the Royalist forces that night, nor the best positions to occupy. For, as Digby reported:

‘by break of day, (instead of the flight which upon all their former proceedings, we had reason to expect) we discovered them settled in the most advantageous way imaginable of receiving us ... there we found them, their foot, their horse and their cannon planted with much skill’.¹²³

Superior intelligence about the Royalist dispositions had allowed the Parliamentarian forces to seize the advantage in this critically important battle, and this reflected the contribution made by intelligence information throughout the central Thames Valley campaigns during 1643. The evidence of the contemporary accounts shows that both sides had obtained military advantages from the full range of intelligence sources, ranging from scouting reports to information from deserters.

8 The role of military intelligence in the Southern campaigns of 1643: The evidence of the primary sources.

In the South of England, just as in the North and in the Thames Valley, it is clear from the primary evidence that the chief military actions were informed by accurate and timely intelligence information. This section sets out to examine how intelligence reports influenced these campaigns. One of the main sources of contemporary evidence about the south western campaigns is provided by Sir Ralph Hopton’s own manuscript account of events.¹²⁴ Hopton made numerous references to the intelligence information that he had been constantly receiving whilst his army was deployed in Cornwall. For example, Hopton’s advance on Okehampton had been encouraged by intelligence from ‘a friend in [that town] who assured [him] that the enemy in Okehampton were in very great disquiet and fear’.¹²⁵ Hopton’s evidence is supplemented by that of Walter Slingsby, an officer in Hopton’s army, and further

¹²² E. 69[15], *A True and Exact Relation of the Marchings of the Two Regiments of Trained Bands of the City of London, being the Red and the Blew Regiments* (London, 2 October 1643).

¹²³ E. 69[10], *A relation of the battaile neare Newbery, Sept. 20, 1643.*

¹²⁴ C. E. H. Chadwyck-Healey (ed.), *Bellum Civile: Hopton’s Narrative of His Campaign in the West (1642-44) and Other Papers* (Somerset Record Society, 18, 1902).

¹²⁵ See, for example, Chadwyck-Healey, *Bellum Civile*, pp. 27, 29, 34, 36, 38-39, 41, 47 and 55.

contemporary evidence is provided by a Royalist captain of horse, Richard Atkins, who was attached to the army of Prince Maurice as the adjutant-general.¹²⁶ A Parliamentary perspective is given by Sir William Waller in his *Vindication*, which was written as an explanation of his actions just after the war, although not published until 1793.¹²⁷

Although Slingsby wrote that ‘meale and intelligence were two necessary things for an army’, there is no evidence that Hopton ever appointed a scout-master.¹²⁸ Nonetheless, it is clear that Hopton received accurate and timely intelligence from the local population who reported news of Parliamentary movements to their ‘local’ regimental commanders, such as Sir Bevil Grenville. For example, when Stamford’s forces marched onto land owned by the Grenvilles, the Royalists immediately received intelligence from the local people of the Parliamentarians’ position.¹²⁹ On one occasion, Hopton ‘retreated into Cornwall’ having received intelligence ‘that the enemy was advanced as far as Okehampton, and that their numbers far exceeded those of the Cornish army’.¹³⁰ Subsequently, ‘intelligence was brought of the Enemyes advancing into the north part of Cornwall, and that they had made their head quarter att Stratton’.¹³¹ In addition to receiving intelligence information from his scouts and from local sympathisers, Hopton also obtained intelligence from intercepted letters. For example, he subsequently noted that ‘in the first days of March they intercepted a letter from General Ruthven to the Mayor of Barnstable’.¹³²

There is little evidence that Hopton made specific use of spies, although some records exist of men apparently appointed by Hopton to act as ‘intelligencers’ – a description that embraced spies, messengers and scouts.¹³³ Hopton certainly used clergymen as messengers, hoping that their clerical status would protect them. However, this did not prevent one of his messengers, named Dr Coxe, from being subjected to a savage interrogation by the defeated Parliamentarians as an alleged spy after Stratton.¹³⁴ Hopton’s scouts provided him with intelligence of the Parliamentary positions which he used to defeat Ruthven at Braddock

¹²⁶ P. Young (ed.), *The Vindication of Richard Atkyns* (London, 1967), pp. 11, 13, and 21.

¹²⁷ Bod. L, Don MSS, f. 57, *Vindication of the Character and conduct of Sir William Waller, Knight, written by himself*. Waller also wrote a manuscript entitled ‘*Experiences*’ which is preserved in the Wadham College Library, Oxford.

¹²⁸ Chadwyck-Healey, *Bellum Civile*, p. 97.

¹²⁹ See, for example, Chadwyck-Healey, *Bellum Civile*, pp. 14, 19, 22, 26, and 29.

¹³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 41.

¹³¹ *Ibid*, p. 41.

¹³² *Ibid*, p. 27.

¹³³ *Calendar for the Committee for the Advancement of Money*, 6 August 1649, pp. 980-981

¹³⁴ Chadwyck-Healey, *Bellum Civile*, p. 45.

Down.¹³⁵ But Royalist scouts were not always effective for they did not detect Chudleigh's ambush at Sourton Down. On the eve of that engagement, Hopton wrote that the Royalists were 'never ... in better order ... nor ever (which had like to have spoyled all) in lesser apprehension of the enemy'.¹³⁶ Had Hopton been able to obtain any of the enemy newspapers, he may have been able to have gained useful intelligence as these contained much information of military significance. For example, the movements of the Roundhead commanders were regularly reported,¹³⁷ as were Parliamentary accounts of the outcome of various battles and skirmishes.¹³⁸

Like Hopton, Sir William Waller was keenly aware of the importance of being well informed. Waller's adroit use of intelligence showed that he had not only learnt the importance of finding where the enemy was positioned, but also the considerable tactical advantages to be gained from denying the enemy any intelligence about his own movements. Waller had swiftly established a reputation for carrying out key manoeuvres under the cover of darkness in order to deny his opponents' scouts any useful intelligence. Even his enemies acknowledged that Waller employed 'good intelligence' to gain positions of military advantage,¹³⁹ and Colonel Walter Slingsby stated that Waller was 'the best shifter and chooser of ground when he was not master of the field that I ever saw'.¹⁴⁰ Contemporary accounts of Waller's defeat of Lord Herbert's Welsh forces at Highnam on 24 March provide excellent evidence of how superior intelligence enabled Waller to eliminate a large Royalist force.¹⁴¹ Herbert's army had occupied Highnam House, owned by Sir Robert Cooke, a Parliamentary sympathiser. As a result Waller had accurate intelligence of the strengths and weaknesses of the Royalist position. Profiting from this intelligence, and using the cover of darkness to conceal his movements

¹³⁵ Ibid, pp. 28-29.

¹³⁶ E.100 [17].

¹³⁷ See, for example, E. 245[6], *A Continuation of certaine Speciall and Remarkable Passages from both Houses of Parliament* (London, 5-12 January 1643); E. 245[20], *A Continuation of certaine Speciall and Remarkable Passages from both Houses of Parliament* (London, 19-26 January 1643); E. 245[32], *A Continuation of certaine Speciall and Remarkable Passages from both Houses of Parliament* (London, 26 January- 2 February 1643); and E. 249[4], *A Continuation of certaine Speciall and Remarkable Passages from both Houses of Parliament* (London, 4-11 May 1643).

¹³⁸ See, for example, E. 101[24], *Certaine Informations from Severall parts of the Kingdome* (London, 8-15 May 1643) for an account of the skirmish at Sourton Down; and E. 60[9], *Mercurius Civicus* (London, 6-13 July 1643) for the account of the battle at Lansdown.

¹³⁹ E.247 [26].

¹⁴⁰ Chadwyck Healy, *Bellum Civile*, p. 91.

¹⁴¹ E. 97[2], *The Victorious and Fortunate Proceedings of Sir William Waller and his Forces in Wales* (London, 1643); E. 247[18], *A Perfect Diurnall of the Passages in Parliament* (London, 27 March-3 April 1643); E. 95[2], *The Kingdome Weekly Intelligencer* (London, 28 March-4 April 1643); and E. 94[29], *Certaine Informations from Severall Parts of the Kingdome* (London, 27 March-3 April 1643).

from any Royalist scouts, Waller was able to launch a co-ordinated attack on the rear of the Royalists. He crossed the Severn on a bridge of boats floated down from Gloucester, and was guided into position by Cooke himself. Whilst his forces were moving into position around Highnam, Waller's intelligence information enabled him to personally intercept some 'seven hundred pounds' which had been raised for the Royalist cause by impersonating the officer sent to collect it.¹⁴²

For his manoeuvres to succeed, it was essential that Waller had precise intelligence of his opponent's positions and intended movements. Scouting was therefore a key element of Waller's generalship and evidence of the effectiveness of his intelligence organisation was provided by Hopton in his account of the south western campaign. For example, he notes that 'Waller, having intelligence of the blowing up of the ammunition' after the battle of Lansdown, 'lost noe time' in pursuing the withdrawing Royalist forces.¹⁴³ After the Royalist reverse at Sourton Down, a letter from the king to Hopton was captured. As this letter ordered Hopton to 'use your best diligence to horse all your foot, both musketeers and pikes, as dragoons that they may march to us with the more ease, speed and safety', it provides evidence that the Parliamentarians thereby obtained intelligence of the movements of the Royalist army.¹⁴⁴

During Hopton's advance towards Bath, Waller used his intelligence of Hopton's movements, and his knowledge of the local topography, to anticipate and forestall him. Unnoticed by Hopton's scouts, Waller was able to deploy his army in an almost unassailable position on Lansdown Hill and would have been confident of victory had it not been for the valour of the Royalist Cornish foot whose attack succeeded 'to the wonder and amazement of both friends and enemies'.¹⁴⁵ However Waller's intelligence about the precariousness of Hopton's forces following their attack on Lansdowne Hill was not good, as he was not aware that one more determined attack would have sent the Royalists tumbling back to the bottom 'like a heavy stone upon the very brow of the hill'.¹⁴⁶ Certainly Waller appreciated the value of the intelligence being provided to his scouts by the local people. Using the retreat of Hopton's army after the battle of Lansdown to his advantage, Waller obtained much useful intelligence

¹⁴² Philip, *Journal*, Volume 1, pp. 50-51.

¹⁴³ Chadwyck Healy, *Bellum Civile*, pp. 52 and 55.

¹⁴⁴ E. 249[3], *A Perfect Diurnall* (London, 1-8 May 1643).

¹⁴⁵ E. 59[24], *Mercurius Aulicus* (Oxford, 1 July 1643).

¹⁴⁶ Chadwyck Healey, *Bellum Civile*, p. 96.

from the local populace by reporting that ‘he had given a notable defeat to the Prince’s army, and had broken the whole body of his forces’, adding that ‘if ... they would now cheerfully come in and shew their zeal ... by joining him ... they might soon make an end of the cavaliers’.¹⁴⁷ Further evidence of Waller’s intelligence operations was provided by his capture of five Royalist ammunition wagons escorted by the Earl of Crawford, a Royalist brigade commander, after a report about the convoy by Parliamentary scouts had led to its interception by Waller’s troops.¹⁴⁸

Evidence of how Waller integrated intelligence into his planning was provided when he attacked Crawford’s brigade at Alton on 13 December 1643. Waller used the intelligence which had been obtained from his own scouts’ reports, and from the interrogation of prisoners, to establish an accurate assessment of the strength of the Royalist garrison, and of where the Royalist scouts were placed. He was therefore able to select a route that allowed a carefully selected force to approach ‘within half a mile of [Alton], altogether undiscovered by the enemy, our scouts being so diligent, that not a person [had] any opportunity to inform the enemy of our proceedings’.¹⁴⁹ Printed reports added that Waller had ‘carried the business so privately that they were upon the enemy [almost at once], he not having notice above a quarter of an hour before’.¹⁵⁰ Although Crawford managed to escape with most of his cavalry, the Royalist foot were left to fight unsupported until all of them were killed or captured.

The impact that intelligence-gathering made upon the outcome of the southern campaigns is clear from the contemporary accounts. It is evident that Waller, in particular, made extremely effective use of his intelligence information and that this enabled him to counter the intelligence being received by Hopton from Royalist sympathisers in the south west. The evidence indicates that much of the Parliamentary intelligence came from active scouting, although after Lansdown, Waller’s encouragement of the local people to provide his pursuing troops with intelligence, demonstrated that he appreciated the importance of locally provided information.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 97.

¹⁴⁸ E. 60[17], *Certain Information* (London, 10-17 July 1643).

¹⁴⁹ E. 78[22], *A Narration of the great victory obtained by the Parliament’s forces under Sir William Waller at Alton* (London, 16 December 1643). See also, E. 78[19], *The Parliament Scout* (London, 8-15 December 1643); E. 252[11], *A Perfect Diurnall of some Passages* (London, 11-18 December 1643); E. 78[29], *The Weekly Account* (London, 20 December 1643); and E. 78[8], *A True Relation of the Whole Proceedings of Sir William Waller and his Army from 20 November to 9 December 1643* (London, 1643).

¹⁵⁰ E. 78[19], *The Parliament Scout* (London, 8-15 December 1643).

9 Conclusion

It is clear from this detailed examination of the contemporary evidence that both sides made very significant use of intelligence. Particularly during the Gloucester and Newbury campaign, the primary evidence confirms that intelligence-gathering had improved significantly with accurate information being passed regularly to the commanders in time for them to deploy their forces in order to meet reported threats. Although scouting remained the most widely used form of intelligence, the primary evidence confirms that information from spies, intercepted letters and other informants increased steadily during 1643. It also shows that the Royalist northern army had an effective local intelligence service which, largely due to the interception of messages, was able to provide Newcastle with invaluable intelligence about the movements and intentions of his enemy. Likewise it is clear that the critical significance of the Parliamentary intelligence information in the northern campaign should not be underestimated. For the Parliamentary grand design to have worked as well as it did, Lord Fairfax needed to have accurate intelligence of the disposition and strength of the Royalist army. As the Parliamentary prospects in the North improved, so too did their supporting intelligence service, perhaps because more people came forward with information. The contemporary evidence suggests that Parliamentary commanders made better use of their intelligence information; both Fairfax in the north and Waller in the south west integrated their intelligence reports into their plans. As a result, Fairfax was able to prevent a considerably larger Royalist army from moving south to reinforce Charles, just as Waller was able to outmanoeuvre Hopton at Lansdown and Alton.

It is evident that, during the siege of Gloucester, Luke was receiving regular reports from his agents amongst the besieging Royalist forces starting within a week of the start of the siege.¹⁵¹ Timely Parliamentary intelligence from his scouts not only enabled Essex to get clean away from Gloucester, but their reports also enabled him to deploy his forces onto some key topographical strong points, occupied briefly the night before by Royalist scouts, during the initial troop deployments immediately prior to the battle of Newbury. The accounts of the 'race' to London also show that the scouting of both sides was particularly effective with the

¹⁵¹ Luke, *Journal*, Volume II, pp. 137-138.

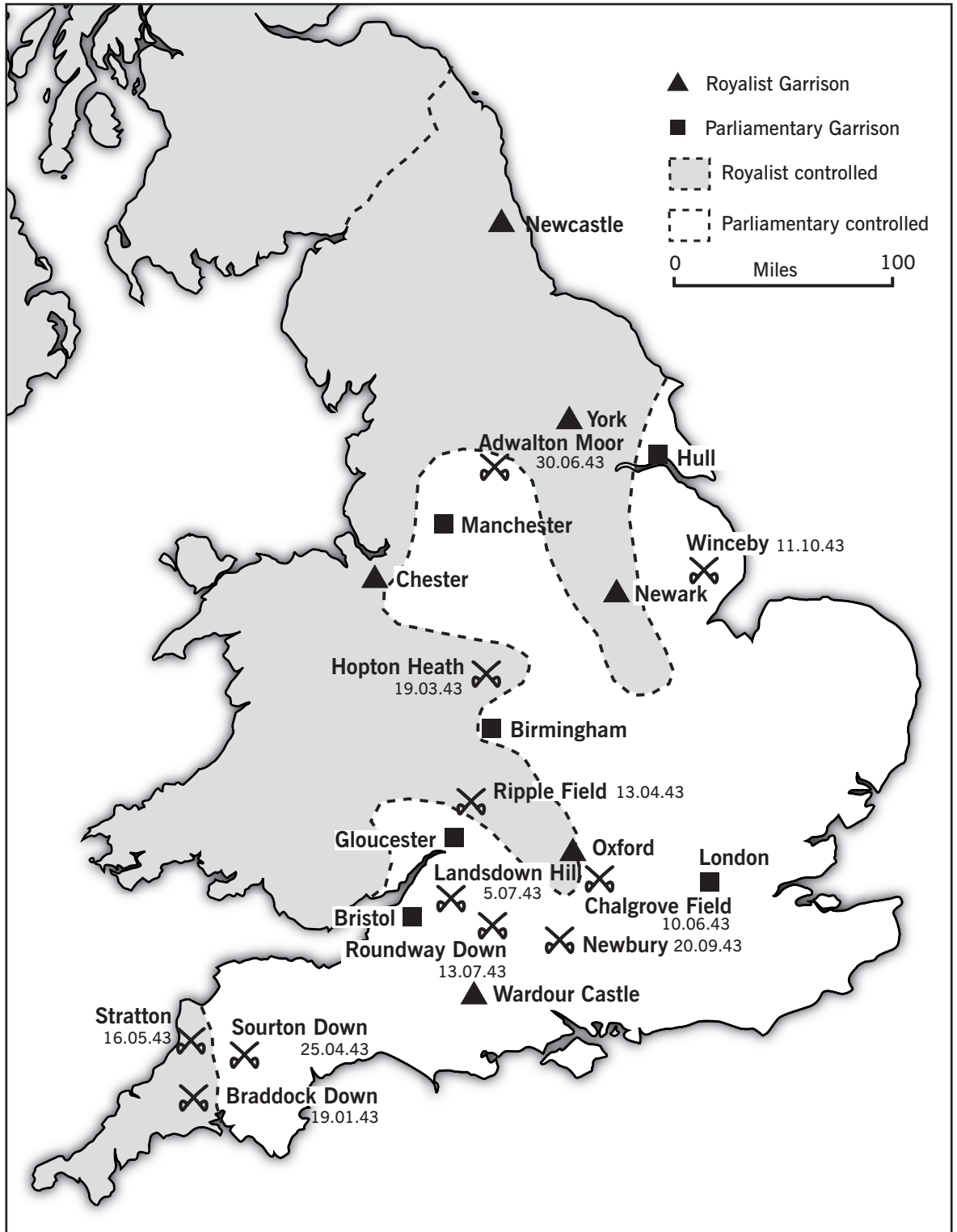
commanders on both sides being constantly aware of their enemy's position. There is clear evidence that both sides benefited from other sources of intelligence information during 1643. Deserters to the Royalist cause allowed Rupert to raid Parliamentary positions and Newcastle's army gained an invaluable insight into Parliamentary plans when Belasis intercepted letters from Sir Thomas Fairfax. Similarly the capture of Hopton's correspondence after the skirmish at Sourton Down gave the Parliamentary sequestrators some invaluable evidence for their prosecutions. As we have seen from the evidence of Luke's extraction of intelligence from the Royalist pamphlet, *Mercurius Aulicus*, it appears perfectly likely that news-pamphlets increasingly provided useful military intelligence to both sides.¹⁵² The contemporary accounts show that a significant amount of intelligence information informed all of the military decisions during the main 1643 campaigns. Although both sides had established intelligence-gathering organisations, the Parliamentary use of the County Committees, supported by intelligence information from their garrison commanders, provided them with a more effective intelligence structure.¹⁵³ The interception of mail increased steadily during 1643 as captured letters provided both sides with valuable intelligence. Luke's appointment as Scout-master General had given the Parliamentary forces a distinct advantage over their Royalist opponents as his agents had provided Essex with important intelligence information at a number of key moments during 1643.

¹⁵² See Chapter 4.

¹⁵³ See Annex A for a list of the scout-masters identified during research for the present thesis.

Map 2:

The main battlefields of 1643 and the area controlled by the King at the start of that year



Chapter Seven

Intelligence Operations in 1644 – The Tide Turns

1 Introduction

The campaigns of 1643 had seen a growing appreciation of the importance of intelligence information. The contemporary evidence which relates to the campaigns of 1644 shows that intelligence information now began to have an increasing influence on the military operations on both sides as commanders came to realise that it had been superior intelligence that had played a significant part in determining the outcome of the relief of Gloucester and the battle of Newbury.¹ The aim of this chapter is, therefore, to explore how this increased awareness of the benefits of accurate intelligence influenced the principal military campaigns of 1644. Like its predecessor, this chapter will summarise the key military actions of the year before considering what other historians have considered the role of military intelligence to have been during these campaigns. The evidence of the primary sources will then be considered in detail in order to establish the extent to which intelligence-gathering did influence the outcome of the 1644 operations. In conclusion, a comparison will be made between the current perception of the impact of the 1644 intelligence operations among historians and the evidence which is contained in the contemporary accounts. To facilitate presentation, the key military campaigns of 1644 will continue to be assessed in two main geographic areas – the North and the South.

2.1 The principal military events of the Northern campaigns of 1644

The balance of military power in the north was transformed when the Scottish army crossed the border on 19 January. Although the Scottish advance south was delayed by bad weather, Newcastle was forced onto the defensive in Yorkshire as he redeployed to contain the invasion. Whilst Lord Fairfax consolidated the Parliamentary position in east Yorkshire and Lincolnshire, his son, Sir Thomas Fairfax, was ordered to assist Sir William Brereton in the relief of Nantwich – the Parliamentary headquarters in Cheshire, which had been besieged by Lord Byron with Royalist forces supplemented by soldiers brought across from Ireland.² Brereton had no previous military experience, but in 1643 he had been appointed commander-in-chief of the Parliamentary forces in Cheshire, where he had led an aggressive campaign throughout the north midlands.³ After Byron was defeated by Fairfax and Brereton on 26

¹ J. Day, *Gloucester and Newbury 1643. The Turning Point of the Civil War* (Barnsley, 2007), p. 217. See also pp. 23, 111, 142, 156 and 166.

² T. Fairfax, *A Short Memorial of Thomas, Lord Fairfax* (London, 1699), p. 434.

³ J. Morrill, *Sir William Brereton* (DNB).

January, Fairfax returned to attack the Royalist forces which had been left by Newcastle in order to preserve Royalist interests in Yorkshire. Newcastle had appointed General John Belasis to command the Yorkshire Royalist forces but his defeat at the battle of Selby on 11 April gave the Parliamentary forces control in Yorkshire. To counter this threat to his rear, Newcastle concentrated his infantry in York but sent his cavalry south to join Rupert. The Parliamentary and Scottish armies combined to besiege York on 21 April, thereby forcing Newcastle to appeal to the King for help. Having successfully relieved the siege of the Royalist forces at Newark on 21 March, Rupert was ordered to march north to relieve York, but was decisively defeated by the Parliamentary and Scottish armies at the battle of Marston Moor on 2 July. Newcastle withdrew to the continent after the battle and this victory gave Parliament control of the north.⁴

2.2 The principal military events of the Southern campaigns of 1644

During 1644, the military events in the Southern theatre of operations became increasingly linked with the operations which were being conducted in the Thames Valley area as both sides began to concentrate their forces. In the beginning of 1644, the Royalist army was endeavouring to threaten London from the south but this plan was thwarted when Sir William Waller and Sir William Balfour defeated the advancing Royalist forces, led by Lord Forth and Lord Hopton, at the battle of Cheriton on 29 March. The Royalist Western army, led by Prince Maurice, had become entangled in the unsuccessful siege of Lyme. Meanwhile, the combined operations of the armies of Essex and Waller began to press hard against the Royalist forces in Oxford. Reversing an earlier decision to remain on the defensive and to reinforce their garrisons protecting Oxford, the Royalists abandoned key garrisons at Abingdon and Reading in late May which allowed the Parliamentary armies to threaten Oxford directly.⁵ This placed the Royalists at a serious disadvantage, although Charles managed to evade the encircling forces and marched to the west. At this point, Essex decided to separate his army from Waller's forces and to relieve the siege at Lyme.⁶ Waller was ordered to pursue Charles' army, only to be defeated by the Royalists at Cropredy Bridge on 29 June. After relieving Lyme, Essex marched further into the west in order to relieve the siege of Plymouth and to threaten Royalist control of Cornwall. Charles, concerned for the safety of his Queen in Exeter, led his Oxford army after Essex, and to her relief, in July.⁷

⁴ E. Hyde, *The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England, together with an Historical View of the Affairs in Ireland* (sixteen books, London, 1702-4), Book VIII, pp. 77-79.

⁵ S.R. Gardiner, *History of the Great Civil War* (four volumes, London, 1893), Volume 2, pp. 345-346.

⁶ J. Rushworth, *Historical Collections* (London, 1659-99), Part III, Volume II, pp. 670-671.

⁷ Gardiner, *History*, Volume 2, p. 351.

Having been forced to withdraw from Lyme when Essex had led his army into the south west, Maurice retreated into Devon. Soon afterwards, he linked up with Charles' advancing army and the combined Royalist armies pursued Essex into Cornwall. This concentration forced the capitulation of the Parliamentary army at Lostwithiel in September. When the Royalist forces marched back towards Oxford, they were engaged by a combination of several different Parliamentary armies at two indecisive battles which were fought around Newbury on 27 October and 10 November. These engagements effectively brought the fighting of 1644 to a close.

3 The role of military intelligence in the Northern campaigns of 1644: The views of subsequent historians

Perhaps because of the growing appreciation of the contribution that had been made by intelligence information to the 1643 campaigns, the impact of intelligence information upon the 1644 campaigns in the north was acknowledged by a number of seventeenth and eighteenth-century historians. John Rushworth's *Historical Collections*, for example, which had included only a few references to intelligence-gathering in its account of the years 1642-43, contained numerous descriptions of actions where intelligence information had played a significant part in determining the outcome of military confrontations during 1644. In his description of intelligence operations in the northern campaigns, Rushworth recounted how advance notice of the Royalists' approach had enabled the Parliamentary commander, Colonel Lambert, to prevail at Bradford, and how the Royalists had become acquainted with the Fairfaxes' appointments from '[many] intercepted ... letters' which had led to the action at Selby.⁸ Rushworth also described how intelligence had been received during the relief of the siege of York,⁹ when he wrote 'the Generals had certain notice that Prince Rupert ... was advancing and ... would quarter that night at Knaresborough'.¹⁰

Even Clarendon's *History* included more information about the intelligence-gathering operations which had been conducted during the 1644 campaigns than it had done about similar operations during 1642-43. Although Clarendon's chronology of the 1644 northern actions was occasionally suspect (for example, he described the battle of Nantwich as having taken place after the battle of Selby), he nonetheless acknowledged the part played by

⁸ Rushworth, *Collections*, Part III, Volume II, pp. 617-618.

⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 623, 631-632 and 636.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 631.

intelligence in the relief of Newark, when he recounted how ‘the enemy, who had always had excellent intelligence, was so confident that he [Rupert] had not the strength to attempt that work, that he [Rupert] was within six miles of them before [they realised]’.¹¹

An increased awareness of the impact of intelligence-gathering upon military operations was also evident in the historical accounts of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Warburton’s *Memoirs* identified a number of examples where intelligence information had played a significant part in Rupert’s northern military successes. For example, he noted that the speed of Rupert’s march to relieve the siege at Newark had clearly deceived Meldrum, the besieging Parliamentary commander. Warburton remarked that the Parliamentarians ‘had heard some rumours of Rupert’s approach, but being also well assured of his distance and the small number of his forces, they disbelieved even their own scouts’.¹² He also recounted how Rupert had used intelligence from all sources to bring his operations around Newark to a speedy conclusion. Not only had ‘a deserter informed him [Rupert] that they [the Parliamentarians] were in direful want within the Spittal’, Warburton observed, but also Rupert had ‘found, by an intercepted letter, that Fairfax was advancing’ and, therefore, that a speedy resolution of his action around Newark was necessary.¹³ Warburton also alluded to the value of the intelligence information which had been available to Rupert when he described the relief of York in June. Warburton stated that ‘Rupert’s scouts brought intelligence that the enemy had drawn off from the siege, in order to concentrate their divided forces’. He also recounted how Rupert had used his intelligence about the position of the Parliamentary and Scottish forces, the speed of his advance, and his knowledge of the local bridges and roads, to out-manoeuvre his opponents decisively, the Parliamentary generals having deployed their forces on Marston Moor, three miles to the west of York in anticipation of a royalist advance on the city from Knaresborough.¹⁴ Yet this theme was not developed by all historians during this period as Gardiner’s *History* made no significant mention of intelligence-gathering in any of his accounts of the 1644 campaigns.

Relatively few of the accounts of the 1644 campaigns in the north written in the early part of the twentieth century referred to the impact of intelligence operations. Firth’s edition of the life of the Duke of Newcastle did include a brief reference to intelligence information when it

¹¹ Clarendon, *History*, Book VII, p. 416.

¹² E. G. B. Warburton, *Memoirs of Prince Rupert and the Cavaliers* (three volumes, London, 1849), Volume II, p. 393.

¹³ *Ibid*, p. 396.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 441-444.

recorded that the Royalists had received word that ‘there was some discontent between ... [the Parliamentarian and Scottish armies], and that they were resolved to divide themselves, and to raise the siege without fighting’.¹⁵ Then, in 1890, Firth wrote an assessment of two manuscripts relating to the battle of Marston Moor; one of which was written by the then Royalist Governor of Scarborough Castle, Sir Hugh Cholmley, whose account included the suggestion that the Allied assault had been initiated by intelligence from a deserting Royalist officer.¹⁶ Like Rupert himself, Firth did not accept this suggestion.

The first historian to explore the military aspects of the 1644 northern campaigns in detail was Peter Young in his comprehensive account of the Marston Moor campaign.¹⁷ Young acknowledged that Rupert had been well aware of the deployment of the besieging armies and had used this intelligence when planning his approach march.¹⁸ He also described how the besieged Royalists had been sending out messengers to Rupert as often as they could penetrate the tightening ring around the city, and suggested that these messengers would have been able to acquaint Rupert with the position and strength of the besieging armies.¹⁹ Subsequently, Young co-authored a military history of the Civil War with Richard Holmes.²⁰ This account recognised the impact that superior Parliamentarian intelligence had had upon the outcome of the battle of Nantwich when it described how Byron’s ‘relations with the local inhabitants ... [had been] bad, and Byron ... [had been] unable to obtain any useful intelligence’.²¹ Holmes and Young went on to describe how Fairfax had received better intelligence during that battle and how this had enabled him to make better informed decisions, contrasting this with Byron’s comparatively poor scouting which had led to ‘his failure to concentrate against Fairfax when there was still time’.²² Young and Holmes also described how the intelligence of Meldrum’s movements, which had been provided by Rupert’s scouts, had played a key role in the relief of Newark.²³ Their account of the role played by intelligence in the Marston Moor campaign was similar to that published in Young’s earlier work.²⁴

¹⁵ C. H. Firth (ed.), *The Lives of William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle and of his wife Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle* (London, 1907), p.60.

¹⁶ C. H. Firth, ‘Two Accounts of the Battle of Marston Moor’, *English Historical Review* (Volume 5, No. 18, 1890), pp. 345- 352.

¹⁷ P. Young, *Marston Moor 1644. The Campaign and the Battle* (Kineton, 1970, Re-printed Moreton-in-Marsh, 1997).

¹⁸ Young, *Marston Moor*, pp. 82-83.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 80.

²⁰ P. Young and R. Holmes, *The English Civil War. A Military History of the Three Civil Wars 1642 – 1651* (London, 1974).

²¹ *Ibid*, p. 174.

²² *Ibid*, p. 176.

²³ *Ibid*, pp. 177-178.

²⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 184-185 and 191-192.

Nevertheless, the impact of intelligence information on the 1644 northern campaigns continued to receive inconsistent attention in subsequent accounts. For example, in his description of the 1644 battles,²⁵ Austin Woolrych did not acknowledge the impact that intelligence information had had upon these issues. He described how the Parliamentarians had ‘rather over-estimated Prince Rupert’s strength’, before declaring that ‘Parliamentarian intelligence was not aware of Prince Rupert’s desire to fight at all costs’.²⁶ He made no mention of the fact that Rupert’s march to relieve York was only possible because Rupert had possessed intelligence of the dispositions of the Allied armies around York. Similarly, H.C.B. Rogers’ account of Newark and Marston Moor did not assess the part which had been played by intelligence-gathering; at Newark; Rogers merely recounted how Meldrum ‘had been informed of Rupert’s approach’, and, at Marston Moor, he only described the intelligence which had been received by Newcastle about ‘the friction between the opposing commanders’.²⁷

Peter Wenham’s later account of the siege of York, written in 1970, had rather more to say about how intelligence information had played a key role in the Marston Moor campaign.²⁸ Wenham recounted how an intercepted Parliamentarian letter had given the Royalists accurate intelligence of Fairfax’s plans.²⁹ He also gave examples of intelligence which had reported the progress of the siege; for example, he cited a letter written on 5 May from a Royalist sympathiser, John Frechville, to Lord Loughborough, the Royalist commander in Leicestershire, which described how ‘according to the best intelligence we have from York, it is not so distressed’.³⁰ Wenham also described how ‘sundry intelligence that Prince Rupert is already on his march towards Newark, tending northwards’ had been reported to the Committee of Both Kingdoms.³¹ Wanklyn and Jones’ account of the Marston Moor campaign also acknowledged the contribution which had been made by intelligence information to the northern campaigns when they recounted how Luke’s spies had reported Rupert’s ‘northern design’ to relieve York as early as 6 May.³² Wanklyn and Jones noted that the Parliamentarian commanders besieging York had been informed of Rupert’s position and strength as the

²⁵ A. Woolrych, *Battles of the English Civil War* (London, 1961).

²⁶ Woolrych, *Battles*, pp. 63 and 66.

²⁷ H.C.B. Rogers, *Battles and Generals of the Civil War 1642- 1651* (London, 1961), pp. 117 and 138.

²⁸ P. Wenham, *The Great and Close Siege of York 1644* (Kineton, 1970).

²⁹ *Ibid*, p. 2.

³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 21.

³¹ *Ibid*, p. 13.

³² M. Wanklyn and F. Jones, *A Military History of the English Civil War, 1642 – 1646* (Harlow, 2005), p. 174.

Royalist relief army had moved north from Shrewsbury.³³ In his later account of the battle of Marston Moor, Wanklyn noted the observation of Sir Hugh Cholmley that the Parliamentary attack had been initiated following a report from a Scottish deserter which had informed the Parliamentary commanders that the Royalists were not planning to attack and were standing down for the evening.³⁴

Further descriptions of the role which was played by intelligence during the 1644 campaigns in Yorkshire have recently appeared in the work of David Cooke.³⁵ In his review of the Civil War in Yorkshire, and specifically in his more recent exploration of the Marston Moor campaign, Cooke describes how Newcastle had received intelligence of the Scots ‘massing along the border, in preparation for their long-expected invasion’ and how this intelligence had allowed Newcastle to march north quickly to confront them.³⁶ He also notes that Royalist intelligence-gathering had provided intelligence of the Parliamentary attack on Selby.³⁷ Cooke’s description of the Marston Moor campaign confirms that intelligence reports had been received by all of the chief commanders.³⁸ Furthermore, Cooke demonstrates that intelligence of Rupert’s advance had been reported to the Parliamentary commanders around York who reported that they had understood that ‘Prince Rupert was drawing towards York, with ... twenty five thousand horse and foot’.³⁹ Cooke concludes his summary by citing Cholmley’s suggestion that intelligence from a deserting Royalist officer had initiated the Parliamentary assault.⁴⁰ The most recent study of these actions, contained in Wanklyn’s *The Warrior Generals*, recounts how the Parliamentary commanders lacked ‘intelligence of the movements of the enemy [Newcastle]’ as the Royalist army withdrew to York. Wanklyn does not mention any intelligence information being received prior to the battle at Marston Moor.⁴¹

Several of the biographies of Civil War commanders which have been published during the last sixty years have also referred to the use that their subjects made of military intelligence information. Those that do explore the impact made by intelligence-gathering on northern operations reveal that a great deal of it was available. Whilst, for example, Ashley’s account of

³³ Wanklyn and Jones, *Military History*, p. 181.

³⁴ M. Wanklyn, *Decisive Battles of the English Civil Wars* (Barnsley, 2006), p. 125.

³⁵ D. Cooke, *The Civil War in Yorkshire. Fairfax versus Newcastle* (Barnsley, 2000); and D. Cooke, *The Road To Marston Moor* (Barnsley, 2007).

³⁶ Cooke, *Civil War in Yorkshire*, pp. 96-97.

³⁷ *Ibid*, p. 101.

³⁸ See, for example, Cooke, *Marston Moor*, pp. 29 and 44.

³⁹ *Ibid*, p. 82.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 91-92.

⁴¹ M. Wanklyn, *The Warrior Generals. Winning the British Civil Wars 1642-1652* (New Haven and London, 2010), p. 94.

Rupert's military prowess contains few references to Rupert's use of intelligence information,⁴² Kitson provides details of how intelligence operations had been used to inform Rupert's plans remarking that 'Rupert gave a high priority to the gathering of intelligence and ... he would undoubtedly have known a great deal about the commanders and units in the three opposing armies'.⁴³ By comparison, the accounts of Sir Thomas Fairfax's campaigns in the north in 1644 in two recent biographies say little about his use of intelligence information.⁴⁴ Wilson's account, for example, merely states that, before the battle of Nantwich, 'Fairfax's intelligence (now at last somewhat better) told him that Byron was planning to meet him'.⁴⁵

4 The role of military intelligence in the Southern campaigns of 1644: The views of subsequent historians

Rushworth's account of the Southern campaigns contained several references to intelligence information. In his account of the battle at Cheriton, for example, Rushworth acknowledged how accurate intelligence had informed the movements of both armies before the battle.⁴⁶ From the late seventeenth to the late nineteenth centuries, historians continued to devote considerable coverage to the role which had been played by military intelligence in the Thames Valley campaigns of 1644. For example, when recounting the operations of Waller and Essex around the Thames Valley that summer, Rushworth acknowledged that intelligence information had been used to good effect by both armies in the Cropredy Bridge campaign. He also described how a party of horse had been sent forth by Sir Samuel Luke to 'observe [the Royalist army's] motions'; and he alluded to the fact that Essex had had 'intelligence of the King's departure from Oxford' on 3 June.⁴⁷ Similarly, the role which had been played by intelligence-gathering operations during the Lostwithiel and Newbury campaigns was repeatedly acknowledged by Rushworth who described how 'Prince Maurice, being advertised that Essex was advancing as near as Dorchester, [had] thought fit to raise the siege' by 15 June, and how Essex 'had notice of the King's approach further westwards' on 2 August.⁴⁸ In sharp contrast to the extensive descriptions provided by Rushworth, the accounts of May and most of

⁴² M. Ashley, *Rupert of the Rhine* (London, 1976).

⁴³ F. Kitson, *Prince Rupert. Portrait of a Soldier* (London, 1994), pp. 172 and 181-185.

⁴⁴ See, for example, J. Wilson, *Fairfax. General of Parliament's forces in the English Civil War* (New York, 1985); and A. Hopper, 'Black Tom'. *Sir Thomas Fairfax and the English Revolution* (Manchester, 2007).

⁴⁵ Wilson, *Fairfax*, p. 42.

⁴⁶ Rushworth, *Collections*, Part III, Volume II, pp. 654 -655.

⁴⁷ Rushworth, *Collections*, Part III, Volume II, pp. 670, 672, and 674 -675

⁴⁸ See, for example, Rushworth, *Collections*, Part III, Volume II, pp. 682 and 690.

the later Royalist historians are silent on the intelligence-gathering operations which were conducted during the 1644 campaigns in the south.

Clarendon's descriptions of the southern campaigns reversed this trend as his *History* contains numerous references to intelligence-gathering. For example, Clarendon records that, during the Cropredy Bridge campaign, 'the intelligence that Waller was still designed for the western expedition, made the King appoint his whole army ... to a rendezvous at Marlborough'.⁴⁹ A little later, he reports that 'by this time there was reason to believe, by all the intelligence that could be procured ... that Waller had laid aside his western march'.⁵⁰ Clarendon also noted that, on one occasion, Waller had 'had early intelligence of his majesty's motions', and that Charles had known 'upon intelligence that both [Essex's and Waller's] armies followed by strong marches'. Clarendon also acknowledged how the intelligence 'that Waller was marched out of Evesham with his whole army towards Worcester' had been particularly useful to Charles when he was returning to Oxford in mid-June. Clarendon went on to report that Charles had 'received good intelligence that Waller, without knowing anything of his [Charles] motion, remained still in his old quarters'.⁵¹

Clarendon's account of intelligence-gathering during the king's campaign in Cornwall was equally positive and reflected the fact that Charles had enjoyed 'the conflux and concurrence of the whole people' while he was in Cornwall.⁵² Clarendon makes it clear that the Royalists had been receiving intelligence information from a number of sources, for he notes that, when intelligence of the intended breakout by the Parliamentary horse at Lostwithiel had been given to the Royalists by two deserters from Essex's army, it was found that 'this intelligence agreed with what [the Royalists] had otherwise received'.⁵³ Similarly, Clarendon reported that, when Charles had decided to return to Oxford after Lostwithiel, the king had received intelligence 'of all the obstructions and difficulties his enraged enemies could lay in his way' and had, in consequence, realised that 'he [Charles] must look to fight another battle before he could reach Oxford'.⁵⁴ Clarendon broadened his account of the intelligence information which had been received to include a description of the defection of Sir Richard Grenville and the

⁴⁹ Clarendon, *History*, Book VIII, p. 22.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p. 25.

⁵¹ Clarendon, *History*, Book VIII, p. 50, 54 and 56.

⁵² *Ibid*, p. 93.

⁵³ *Ibid*, p. 115.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p. 144.

information he had brought with him describing the Parliamentary strategic plans along with the plot to betray Basing House.⁵⁵

The references made in the eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century accounts of intelligence-gathering showed clearly the impact that intelligence operations had had upon the southern campaigns of 1644. For example, in his edition of the *Fairfax Correspondence*, Bell noted that, at the start of the Cropredy Bridge campaign in the first week of June ‘Waller had better intelligence, and sent a body of horse flying after the King to hang upon his rear and harass his progress until he could come up himself’.⁵⁶ As Rupert was mainly engaged in the north, Warburton’s *Memoirs* included few references to the southern campaigns and he appeared unaware of the role which had been played by Leonard Watson, Scout-master General to the Earl of Manchester’s army in the campaign in the north. It is noteworthy that, in his account of the Second Battle of Newbury, he described Watson simply as ‘a Roundhead, perhaps secretary to Oliver Cromwell’.⁵⁷ Following his usual practice, Gardiner made no significant mention of intelligence-gathering in his account of any of the 1644 southern campaigns. The only intelligence-related incidents that Gardiner did describe were the defection of Richard Grenville to the Royalists and the thwarting of the Parliamentary plan to seize Basing House, along with the report from the two deserters of the breakout of the Parliamentary horse from Lostwithiel.⁵⁸

Relatively few of the accounts written in the early part of the twentieth century referred to the impact made by intelligence operations on the 1644 southern campaigns. Godwin’s account of the Civil War in Hampshire only made passing reference to the scouting that had preceded the battle of Cheriton.⁵⁹ Later, in 1933, Mary Coate’s account of the Civil War in Cornwall drew attention to the intelligence which had been provided by Grenville when he defected.⁶⁰ More significantly, Coate evaluated the intelligence information about Essex’s army which the Cavaliers had received during the Lostwithiel campaign, describing how the strong Royalist sympathies in Cornwall had provided ‘support [which had been] invaluable, [because] it meant supplies and intelligence’.⁶¹ Her account of the final stages of the Lostwithiel campaign again

⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 140.

⁵⁶ R. Bell (ed.), *The Fairfax Correspondence* (two volumes, London, 1849), Volume I, p. 105.

⁵⁷ Warburton, *Memoirs*, Volume II, p. 449.

⁵⁸ S. R. Gardiner, *History of the Great Civil War 1642-1649* (four volumes, London, 1893), Volume II, p. 319, and Volume III, p. 14.

⁵⁹ G.N. Godwin, *The Civil War in Hampshire (1642-45)* (London, 1904), pp. 173-177.

⁶⁰ M. Coate, *Cornwall in the Great Civil War and Interregnum 1642 – 1660* (Oxford, 1933), p. 132.

⁶¹ Coate, *Cornwall*, p. 141.

emphasised the significance of intelligence. Coate remarked that Charles had been able to out-manoeuvre Essex and deny him key military positions because Essex's 'intelligence was poor ... [and] he did not appreciate their significance', Coate also reported how intelligence of the planned breakout of the Parliamentarian horse had been brought in by the two deserters.⁶²

The first modern historian to explore the military intelligence aspects of the 1644 southern campaigns in detail was, again, Peter Young who, in partnership with Margaret Toynbee, carried out a comprehensive evaluation of the Cropredy Bridge campaign.⁶³ Their account of this campaign included a substantial amount of detail about the intelligence-gathering operations.⁶⁴ They concluded that intelligence gathering during this period had been particularly effective, stating that:

'although the intelligence service on both sides in the Civil war is generally written off as rudimentary, both Charles and Waller do seem to have been apprised pretty quickly of every movement of the enemy during these critical weeks of June 1644'.⁶⁵

Subsequently, Young and Holmes acknowledged the contribution which had been made by intelligence-gathering to the outcome of the Cropredy Bridge campaign. For example, they described how Charles, having 'received intelligence' of Waller reaching Hanwell, near Banbury, had 'set out for Banbury'.⁶⁶ The importance of intelligence information in the Cropredy campaign was also to be subsequently acknowledged by Wanklyn and Jones who described how both the king and Waller had been able to monitor each other's movements – and how the king had been able to evade Waller and return to Oxford when Waller's scouts were fooled by the Royalist feint towards the north.⁶⁷ In his later description of the fighting, Wanklyn cites the use of intelligence information in the Cropredy Bridge and Newbury engagements.⁶⁸

⁶² Ibid, pp. 146-147.

⁶³ P. Young, *Marston Moor 1644. The Campaign and the Battle* (Kineton, 1970), pp. 78 -84; and M. Toynbee and P. Young, *Cropredy Bridge 1644. The Campaign and the Battle* (Kineton, 1970), pp. 43 -46, 58, 61, 65-66, 68-69, and 72-75.

⁶⁴ See, for example, Waller's letter to the Committee of Both Kingdoms written on 4 June 1644. BL, Harleian MSS, ff. 83- 83v; and E. Walker, *His Majesty's Happy Progress and Success from the 30th of March to the 23rd of November 1644* (London, 1705).

⁶⁵ Toynbee and Young, *Cropredy Bridge*, p. 73.

⁶⁶ Young and Holmes, *English Civil War*, p. 185.

⁶⁷ Wanklyn and Jones, *Military History*, pp. 165-170.

⁶⁸ Wanklyn, *The Warrior Generals*, pp. 110-111, 137 and 157-158.

Adair's biography of Waller contains numerous references to the intelligence information which had been received by both Waller and Charles during the Cropredy Bridge campaign.⁶⁹ Adair described how the king had determined to quit Oxford after 'receiving intelligence that Essex intended to storm the city next morning',⁷⁰ and noted that the king had later drawn back to Buckingham 'upon intelligence that [Waller] was ... upon the march'.⁷¹ Similarly Adair described how Waller's scouts had 'informed him ... that the King's army had marched westwards to Witney and Burford',⁷² and noted that 'the King's army had also halted not 5 miles beyond the river at the village of Edgecott'.⁷³

Edgar's biography of Hopton contained some specific references to the gathering of intelligence during the 1644 campaigns, and described how 'Parliamentary intelligence still bruited the intent of the Royalists to march into Kent upon their old design'.⁷⁴ Edgar's account of the Cheriton campaign also included descriptions of intelligence being obtained from either prisoner interrogation, or from scouting.⁷⁵ Although Edgar made few specific references to intelligence-gathering, his account did include several references to the outcome of some of the pieces of intelligence which had been received. For example, Edgar described how:

'On 26 March 1644 word came [to Hopton] that Waller, adding to his array 1,800 horse and dragoons under the command of Sir William Balfour, had marched out of Sussex and come ... ten miles south-east of Winchester'.⁷⁶

Adair's account of the battle of Cheriton did not acknowledge the impact of intelligence-gathering, although he did describe how both sides had relied upon their scouts to provide information about the position and strength of their opponents, as well as citing several contemporary sources which had described the scouting information which had been received by both sides during the campaign. For example, Adair cited contemporary references which reported that Hopton had 'sent out strong parties of horse severall wayes towards the Enemy, with command not to allarum them, but only to secure the Army from any surprise of theirs', that these 'scouts brought in some prisoners' and that intelligence had been gained 'as some

⁶⁹ J. Adair, *Roundhead General. The Campaigns of Sir William Waller* (Stroud, 1997).

⁷⁰ Adair, *Roundhead General*, p. 160.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, p. 188.

⁷² *Ibid*, p. 187.

⁷³ *Ibid*, p. 188.

⁷⁴ F.T.R. Edgar, *Sir Ralph Hopton. The King's man in the West (1642 – 1652)* (Oxford, 1968), p. 156

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 158 and 160.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p. 158.

prisoners confessed'.⁷⁷ Adair's account revealed that each side had been well informed of their opponents' position at all stages of the campaign and that no encounter was the result of an 'accidental' meeting.⁷⁸ In his biography of Sir William Waller, Adair also detailed the constant use that Waller made of intelligence-gathering during his 1644 southern campaigns and confirmed that Waller's skill in positioning his forces had reflected the accurate intelligence he had had of the Royalist dispositions.⁷⁹ Adair's references to Waller's scouting activities are numerous; for example, he describes how Waller had 'despatched six troops of horse to scout towards Winchester, and they returned that night with three prisoners' and added that 'now fully aware ... that Hopton had sallied out of Winchester, Waller ordered a rendezvous for his army ... next morning'.⁸⁰ In his account of Waller's contribution towards the Second Newbury campaign, Adair describes how the Parliamentary plan was influenced by Waller's intelligence that 'the King expected present [immediate] supply from Prince Rupert and that two brigades of his horse were gone to Banbury [we] thought it fit not to delay'.⁸¹

A further contribution to our understanding of the impact made on the fighting by intelligence information comes from other, more recent, local historical accounts. Tony MacLachlan's descriptions of the Civil War in Hampshire, for example, notes that both sides in the Cheriton campaign had soon become aware of the movements of their opponents after having 'sent out scouting parties', and were thus able to deploy their forces accordingly.⁸² Even more recently, Wanklyn and Jones have explored the strategic significance of intelligence operations on the conduct of the southern campaigns. Of particular interest is their evaluation of the intelligence information which had been reported by Grenville when he defected, which had informed the Cavaliers of Parliament's 'grand design' to counter the threat posed by the Royalist Western army. The Parliamentary plan was for Waller to march westwards, receiving his supplies through Lyme which would become the base for operations against the Royalist forces. Wanklyn and Jones' account convincingly argues that Maurice's subsequent protracted siege of Lyme, and Forth's reinforcement of Hopton's army to intercept Waller, reflected the confidence that the Royalists had had in Grenville's intelligence information;⁸³ whilst Wanklyn's latest work, *The Warrior Generals*, recounts how intelligence information was

⁷⁷ J. Adair, *Cheriton, 1644. The Campaign and the Battle* (Kineton, 1973), pp. 117, 119 and 120-122.

⁷⁸ For numerous examples, see Adair, *Cheriton*, pp. 117-125.

⁷⁹ J. Adair, *Roundhead General. The Campaigns of Sir William Waller* (Stroud, 1997).

⁸⁰ Adair, *Roundhead General*, p. 157. See also pp. 159-162.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 212.

⁸² T. MacLachlan, *The Civil War in Hampshire* (Salisbury, 2000), pp. 210-215.

⁸³ Wanklyn and Jones, *Military History*, pp. 159-161.

used effectively at Cheriton and during the Lostwithiel campaign.⁸⁴ It thus appears that historians are therefore becoming generally more aware of the fact that intelligence-gathering played a prominent role in the southern theatre in 1644.

6 The role of military intelligence in the Northern campaigns of 1644: The evidence of the primary sources

This section will explore the part which was played by intelligence operations in determining the outcome of the most significant actions of 1644 which took place at Nantwich, Newark, Selby and Marston Moor. The part played by intelligence information in the Nantwich campaign was described in a number of contemporary records; the most important being Sir Thomas Fairfax's account, preserved in his *Short Memorial*. In his description of the battle of Nantwich, Fairfax recorded a number of occasions in which he had received intelligence about the Royalists; for example, he described how he had 'had intelligence that the Lord Byron had drawn off his siege, and intended to meet us in the field,' how he had been 'informed, that the river which runs through the town, being raised by the melting of the snow, hindered those that lay on the other side of the town from joining with them' and how 'word came that the enemy was in the rear'.⁸⁵ These reports played a critical part in the Parliamentary victory. The intelligence that Byron planned to 'meet them in the field' allowed Fairfax to 'put his men into the order in which I intended to fight', whilst the intelligence about the 'raising of the river due to melted snow' encouraged Fairfax 'to march into the town and relieve them [the Parliamentary garrison]'. The final piece of intelligence that 'the enemy was in the rear' enabled Fairfax to 'face about two regiments ... and relieve those that were engaged'.⁸⁶ It is also worth noting that both Parliamentary and Royalist news-pamphlets had been reporting the position of Fairfax's relief force for some weeks before the battle. For example, on 16 January, the *Kingdoms Weekly Intelligencer* reported how 'Sir Thomas Fairfax ... on Tuesday 9 January was at Stafford, and joined with Sir William Brereton there and Collonel Kadgeley with 1,000 Morelanders met them also'.⁸⁷ This report was confirmed by the *True Informer* which also reported that the relief force was '6,000 horse and foot', although it was not sure if 'Sir William goes with Sir Thomas, or is returned to Nantwich'.⁸⁸ Several other news-

⁸⁴ Wanklyn, *The Warrior Generals*, pp. 83, 115-117 and 127.

⁸⁵ Fairfax, *Short Memorial*, pp. 434- 435.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, p. 435.

⁸⁷ E. 29[4], *Kingdom's Weekly Intelligencer* (London, 9 -16 January 1644). Fairfax had spent some time in Lancashire gathering forces together before advancing to the relief of Nantwich.

⁸⁸ E. 29[18], *True Informer* (London, 13 -20 January 1644)

pamphlets also reported the progress of Fairfax's force.⁸⁹ Thus the Royalist court journal, *Mercurius Aulicus*, reported that 'Sir Thomas Fairfax is gone with 24 troopes of horse to relieve Sir William Brereton'.⁹⁰ The account of the battle which was published in *Mercurius Aulicus* confirmed that 'Lord Byron having intelligence of severall bodies of Rebels marching against him thought fit to fall on part of them before they came together';⁹¹ Byron's intelligence of these Parliamentary advances was also confirmed by several London newspaper-pamphlets.⁹² The contemporary accounts of this action confirm that intelligence information informed the military decisions of both sides before and during the action. As Fairfax was thoroughly immersed in the doctrine of providentialism, he attributed his victory to 'the mercy of God'.⁹³ However, it is surely reasonable to consider that another factor was the more accurate intelligence he had collected as this information had enabled him to defeat his opponent.

Intelligence information also played a major part in Rupert's relief of the siege of Newark. Sir John Meldrum, the Parliamentary commander, had been besieging Newark since 29 February. An eyewitness reported that, on 12 March whilst at Chester, Rupert had received orders from the king to march to the relief of the garrison.⁹⁴ This report described how, when he reached Bingham, Rupert intercepted 'Meldrum's owne letters' from which he learnt that 'the rebels had no more but an uncredited rumour of Prince Rupert's coming'.⁹⁵ The eyewitness also reported how Rupert had derived his intelligence information from a variety of sources describing how Rupert had 'had notice from his espials, how the rebels were busy all the morning in sending away their cannon', and later on, when he had trapped the besiegers in the Spittal, how Rupert had had 'notice given him by a prisoner, and by one who came over to us [a deserter], how the rebels were so distressed for want of victuals, that they were not able to live there two days'. This intelligence had enabled Rupert to decide that it would be 'cheaper to block up their trenches, than to storm them', especially as he had received further intelligence from some more intercepted letters that 'my Lord Fairfax, and his sonne Sir Thomas, being

⁸⁹ See, for example, E. 252[17], *A Perfect Diurnall of Some Passages in Parliament* (London, 15-22 January 1644); E. 29[20], *Certain Informations From Severall parts of the Kingdome* (London, 15-22 January 1644); E. 30[7], *Mercurius Civicus London's Intelligencer* (London, 18-25 January 1644); and E. 30[11], *The Parliament Scout* (London, 19-26 January 1644).

⁹⁰ E. 30[1], *Mercurius Aulicus* (Oxford, 13 January 1644).

⁹¹ E. 32[17], *Mercurius Aulicus* (Oxford, 27 January 1644).

⁹² See, for example, E. 31[7], *The Parliament Scout* (London, 26 January - 2 February 1644); and E. 31[10], *The True Informer* (London, 27 January-2 February 1644).

⁹³ Fairfax, *Short Memorial*, p. 436.

⁹⁴ E. 38[10], *His Highnesse Prince Ruperts Raising of the Siege at Newark* (Oxford, 1644). This report was repeated in E. 40[6], *Mercurius Aulicus* (Oxford, 16 March 1644).

⁹⁵ E. 38[10].

commanded to march, other places might ere long have need of his presence'.⁹⁶ In his account, the eyewitness also reported the presence of 'Sir William Neale, Scout Master General' and recounted how Neale had helped rescue Rupert when he had been surrounded by Parliamentary troopers during the battle.

Meldrum should have been aware of Rupert's approach for the London news-pamphlets had been reporting the position of the relief force ever since Rupert had set out from Chester. For example, *The Parliament Scout* reported that 'Prince Rupert ... draws out from about Shrewsbury parts, towards Leicester and Newark, but his numbers we hear not, nor whether he will go as far as Newark as is reported'.⁹⁷ This report had been confirmed by numerous other news-pamphlets, including *The Kingdoms Weekly Intelligencer* which had reported that forces were being gathered 'to oppose Prince Rupert's coming to relevee the towne, to whom the Queene hath writ twice to engage his honour to save Newarke'.⁹⁸

Rupert's Newark campaign was also reported in the news-pamphlets.⁹⁹ The eyewitness accounts described how Rupert had used intelligence information that had been obtained from scouts, spies (espials), deserters, prisoners and intercepted letters. The fact that Sir William Neale, Rupert's Scout-master, had been present at the relief of Newark may well explain why such extensive and effective use had been made of all forms of intelligence information. Although the relief of Newark has been described as 'the most impressive feat of arms that [Rupert] had yet performed',¹⁰⁰ the contribution made by the prince's intelligencers has not been properly acknowledged. All the primary evidence confirms that intelligence information played a major part in Rupert's victory – just as Meldrum's defeat can be attributed to his failure to respond to the intelligence reports that he received of Rupert's advance. It is, however, quite possible that the Parliamentary commanders in the north took note of Meldrum's failure; during the subsequent Selby campaign they appear to have assessed their intelligence information far more carefully.

Both sides received important intelligence during the Selby campaign. In his letter of 12 April to the Committee of Both Kingdoms describing his victory over Sir John Belasis at Selby, Lord

⁹⁶ E. 38[10].

⁹⁷ E. 37[21], *The Parliament Scout* (London, 8-15 March 1644).

⁹⁸ E. 38[13], *The Kingdoms Weekly Intelligencer* (London, 13-21 March 1644). See also E. 38[14], *Mercurius Civicus London's Intelligencer* (London, 14-21 March 1644); E. 40[6], *Mercurius Aulicus* (Oxford, 16 March 1644); and E. 38[18], *The Parliament Scout* (London, 15-22 March 1644).

⁹⁹ See, for example, *Mercurius Civicus, London's Intelligencer* (London, 21-28 March 1644).

¹⁰⁰ C.V. Wedgwood, *The King's War 1641-1647* (London, 1974), p. 301

Fairfax reported how the Royalists had ‘intercepted divers of our letters, and thereby became acquainted with our appointments, and so endeavoured to prevent them’.¹⁰¹ Subsequently, Lord Fairfax used his own intelligence that the Royalist commander ‘lay in Selby with 2000 men,’ to concentrate his troops for an assault on the Royalist forces.¹⁰² The fact that the Royalists had obtained intelligence of Parliamentary intentions from the intercepted letters was confirmed by a report in *Hulls Relation*, a contemporary Parliamentary pamphlet describing the exploits of the garrison in Hull. This pamphlet reported how Belasis had attempted to disrupt the Parliamentarians’ ‘designe’ once he had received intelligence that the Fairfaxes had:

‘united their forces neer Selby, to which place the Governor of York (by letters intercepted, understanding the designe) drew forth all the forces he could make to prevent their meeting, but failing therein he fortified the towne’.¹⁰³

Intelligence information played a major part in the battle of Selby: whilst the intelligence supplied to the Royalists prompted Belasis to attack Fairfax’s forces, the intelligence supplied to the Parliamentarians enabled them to concentrate their forces and repel the Royalist assault. This was a key battle as the destruction of the Royalist forces at Selby led directly to the collapse of Newcastle’s resistance to the invading Scots.

The crucial part played by intelligence in the Selby campaign had been recognised by the Committee of Both Kingdoms who, in their letter of 5 March, instructed Lord Fairfax to ‘hold continual intelligence with the Scottish army’.¹⁰⁴ The increasingly effective exchange of intelligence information between the armies of the Scots and the Parliamentarians helped to contribute to the next major Parliamentary victory in the north – the battle of Marston Moor.

Hardly surprisingly, there are numerous primary sources which shed light on intelligence operations during the Marston Moor campaign. Most of these accounts concentrate on describing how the battle was fought, though, and only a few describe the intelligence-gathering that preceded the battle. Sir Thomas Fairfax’s recollection of the battle makes no mention of how Rupert had out-manoeuvred the Allied armies besieging York, nor does he

¹⁰¹ Rushworth, *Collections*, Part III, Volume II, p. 618.

¹⁰² Fairfax, *Short Memorial*, p. 436.

¹⁰³ E. 51[11], *Hulls managing of the Kingdoms cause or, a brief Historicall Relation of the Severall Plots and Attempts against Kingston upon Hull* (London, 18 June 1644).

¹⁰⁴ *CSPD, 1643-44*, p. 35.

describe any of the intelligence reports which informed the Allied commanders about Rupert's approach.¹⁰⁵ However, other eyewitness accounts provide more information about the intelligence that the Allied commanders were receiving about Rupert's advance. Thus Simeon Ash, chaplain to the Earl of Manchester, described how the Allies 'had certain intelligence that Prince Rupert, with his army, were quartered at Boroughbridge, within twelve miles of York', whereupon the Allied generals 'resolved ... to raise the siege, that they might be able to counter the great forces now ready to assault them'. Ash went on to report how the Allied commanders 'were assured by our scouts that the Prince with his whole body would pass that way [south of the River Ouse]'.¹⁰⁶ Ash's account is confirmed by that of Leonard Watson, Manchester's Scout-master, who notes that 'upon notice that Prince Rupert was advancing ... we drew off all our forces ... and put ourselves into battalia upon Owse-moor, within three miles of York'.¹⁰⁷ As early as the beginning of June, London news-pamphlets had been reporting 'constant intelligence [that] Prince Rupert's Army was on their march for the relief of York',¹⁰⁸ with an army of '14,000 horse and foot completely armed'.¹⁰⁹ Further confirmation of the fact that intelligence of the Royalist approach was being regularly reported by scouts is contained in letters which were written by soldiers serving with the Allied forces. For example, one Captain Stewart later wrote that:

'understanding that Prince Rupert with about twenty thousand foot and horse did march towards us, the whole army arose from the siege and marched towards Long Marston Moor ... but the Prince, having notice of our march, passed with his army by the way of Borough bridge'.¹¹⁰

These reports confirm that the Allied commanders were receiving regular intelligence reports and were monitoring the approach of the Royalist relief force very closely. Although well aware of Rupert's position, they were misled by the speed and direction of his final approach, as well as being deceived by the feint made by the Royalist horse towards the Allied army

¹⁰⁵ Fairfax, *Short Memorial*, p. 437.

¹⁰⁶ E. 2[1], *A Continuation of True Intelligence from the English and Scottish Forces in the North* (London, 16 June – 10 July 1644).

¹⁰⁷ E. 2[14], *A more exact Relation of the late Battaille neere York, fought by the English and Scottish forces, against Prince Rupert and the Earle of New-Castle* (London, 1644).

¹⁰⁸ E. 51[3], *A Particular Relation of the most remarkable Occurrences from the united forces in the North* (London, 1-10 June 1644). See also, E. 53[12], *Exact and Certain News from the Siege at York*, (London, 1644); E. 252[41], *A Perfect Diurnall of some Passages in Parliament* (London, 3-10 June 1644); E. 50[26], *The Kingdomes Weekly Intelligencer* (London, 4-11 June 1644); and E. 50[32], *The Spie* (London, 6-13 June 1644).

¹⁰⁹ E. 51[10], *The Kingdomes Weekly Intelligencer* (London, 11-18 June 1644).

¹¹⁰ E.54 [19], *A Full Relation of the Late Victory*, (London, 1644). See also, E. 54[11], *A Relation of the Good Success of the Parliaments Forces* (London, 1644).

drawn up on the west side of the river Ouse.¹¹¹ According to Sir Thomas Fairfax, intelligence reports indicated that the Royalist forces totalled ‘about 23 or 24,000 men’.¹¹²

Contemporary accounts confirm that the Royalist commanders were equally well aware of the Allied positions and the size of the armies besieging York.¹¹³ Rupert’s gathering of reinforcements during his approach, as well as the route he chose for his final march on the city show that he had good intelligence of the Allied forces and their positions – including information about the bridge of boats connecting the two banks of the river Ouse. The earl of Newcastle possessed yet more information about the tensions between the Allied commanders and advised Rupert to wait upon events for ‘he had intelligence that there was some discontent between them, and that they were resolved to divide themselves’.¹¹⁴ Newcastle therefore advised Rupert to wait on events, but as Rupert considered his orders from Charles required him to fight, neither Newcastle’s intelligence information, nor his advice, was heeded.

Sir Hugh Cholmley, the Royalist Governor of Scarborough Castle, provided another contemporary report of intelligence information which may have had a significant impact on the outcome of the battle. This report, which has hitherto received little attention, described how ‘a Scottish officer amongst the Prince [Rupert] his horse, whilst the armies faced one another, fled to the Parliament army and gave them intelligence’.¹¹⁵ According to Cholmley, this intelligence provided ‘the reason why they [the Allied armies] fell thus suddenly upon the Prince’.¹¹⁶ If, as Cholmley believed, the unknown Scottish officer’s intelligence advised the Allied commanders that the Royalist commanders, expecting no action that day, were standing down their forces, then the subsequent Allied victory owed much to this intelligence report. Leonard Watson, the Parliamentarian Scout-master, preferred to attribute the Allied decision to attack simply to ‘the help of God’.¹¹⁷

The evidence of the primary sources makes it perfectly clear that intelligence operations played a decisive part in all the main military actions in the northern theatre during 1644. These accounts also reveal that the Parliamentarian commanders recognised the significance of

¹¹¹ Firth, *Life of Newcastle*, p. 59.

¹¹² Fairfax, *Short Memorial*, p. 437.

¹¹³ See, for example, E. 54[11].

¹¹⁴ Firth, *Life of Newcastle*, p. 60.

¹¹⁵ Bod. L, Clarendon MSS. 1764. See also, C. H. Firth, ‘Two Accounts of the Battle of Marston Moor’, *English Historical Review* (Volume 5, No. 18, 1890), pp. 345- 352; and J. Binns (ed.), *The Memoirs and Memorials of Sir Hugh Cholmley of Whitby, 1600 - 1657* (Yorkshire Archaeological Society, 2000), p. 136.

¹¹⁶ Bod. L, Clarendon MSS. 1764.

¹¹⁷ E. 2[14].

intelligence-gathering more than their Royalist opponents did; thus Sir Thomas Fairfax would have been well aware of just how important the Parliamentary intelligence information had been to their final victory. The next section of this chapter seeks to establish whether the significance of intelligence-gathering was so well understood in the other campaigns further south.

7 The role of military intelligence in the Southern campaigns of 1644: The evidence of the primary sources

This section of the chapter focuses upon the Battle of Cheriton (29 March), the Battle of Cropredy Bridge (29 June), the Battle of Lostwithiel (20 August to 3 September) and the Second Battle of Newbury (27 October). The intelligence aspects of the Third battle of Newbury are also reviewed. Contemporary accounts reveal that intelligence operations played a distinct part in determining the outcome of all of these battles.

Two of the army commanders at the battle of Cheriton, Lord Hopton and Sir William Waller, later wrote accounts of the campaign which include descriptions of the intelligence information which influenced their decisions. Hopton's intelligence-gathering network had clearly been effective for, in the last week of March, it was reported to him that:

‘Sir William Waller had gotten a recrew of about 1,800 horse and dragoons, under the command of Sir William Balfour joyn'd to him and therewith advanced out of Sussex towards Winchester and was come as far as Warneford and West Meon’.¹¹⁸

On receipt of the intelligence of Waller's advance, the Royalist commanders decided to ‘draw up to them’; on 26 March, Hopton accordingly reinforced his scouting screen and ‘sent out strong parties of horse severall ways towards the enemy, with command not to allarum them, but only to secure the Army from any surprise of theirs’.¹¹⁹ The Royalist intelligence resulted in the deployment of their army; the Royalist Colonel, Walter Slingsby, recounted that upon ‘hearing that some Footte and horse of his [Waller] first Troopes quarter'd within eight miles of Winchester, we drew out ... our whole body’.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ C. E. H. Chadwyck-Healey (ed.), *Bellum Civile: Hopton's Narrative of His Campaign in the West (1642-44) and Other Papers* (Somerset Record Society, 18, 1902), p. 78.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 78.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 100.

Hopton continued to receive intelligence reports and was speedily informed that the Parliamentarians ‘having discovered one of our parties the night before were drawne out, and embattailld upon a hill’. Once a Royalist scouting party ‘brought word of their marche’, Hopton began to suspect ‘that the Enemyes designe might be to send Sir William Balfour with his horse and dragoons to possess Alsford [Arlesford]’.¹²¹ From this moment on 27 March, the two armies received constant intelligence reports of each other’s movements until Hopton ‘marching himself with Sir Edward Stowell in the head of his brigade, did plainly discover Sir William Balfour’s troopes marching in the lane level with them, and they were not a mile asunder’.¹²² Royalist intelligence-gathering continued as the scouts ‘hunted about ... and at last discovered his whole strength, horse, foote and artillerye, in a low meadow within half a mile of us’.¹²³ On the morning of 28 March, the day before the battle, Hopton ‘sent out a little party, to discover where the enemy were, which was quickly met by light parties of the enemy’.¹²⁴

The Parliamentary intelligence-gathering was equally effective for their scouts promptly detected the Royalist advance. Of particular interest to the Parliamentary scouts was the fact that the planning of the Royalist advance had been based upon a detailed understanding of the Parliamentary army routines. As one of the Roundhead officers, a certain Elias Archer, later reported ‘we discovered the enemy, who took some few of our men that were straggling from their colours, and soon after appeared in a great body... intending (as some prisoners confessed) to take us at Church.’¹²⁵ Waller was able to monitor Hopton’s progress and, although he lost the race to Arlesford, by using his intelligence reports, he was able to make one of his celebrated manoeuvres during the night before the battle when he ordered a force of infantry to occupy Cheriton Wood, a commanding height on the flank of the Royalist position. Parliamentary scouting continued until early the next morning for, as one Captain Harley recounted to his brother, ‘in the morning before day, I sent a party of horse to discover which way the enemy did lie’.¹²⁶

Further intelligence of Hopton’s movements was provided by Sir Samuel Luke’s spies. As early as 5 January, Luke had reported that ‘Hopton is dayly expected at Winchester with his

¹²¹ Ibid, p. 79.

¹²² Ibid, p. 79.

¹²³ Ibid, p. 101.

¹²⁴ Ibid, p. 81.

¹²⁵ E. 40[9], *Winchester taken, Together with a Fuller Relation of the Great Victory obtained (through God’s Providence) at Alsford, on Friday 28 March 1644* (London, 1644).

¹²⁶ BL, Portland MSS, Volume 3, pp. 106-110.

forces, which are reported to be 9 or 10,000'.¹²⁷ Further reports followed and, by 28 January, Luke was reporting that 'all [men] in the county of Hampshire [aged] from 16 to 60 [are] to be at Winchester on Friday last to take up arms against Sir William Waller'.¹²⁸ Luke's agents continued to report Hopton's intention 'to fall upon them [Waller's forces] very shortly'.¹²⁹ Further reinforcements of Hopton's forces were reported by Luke's spies on 6, 10 and 15 March.¹³⁰ The appointment of Lord Forth to join with Hopton was reported (albeit somewhat belatedly) on 24 March.¹³¹ Waller's plans to advance, along with the latest estimate of Hopton's army as '10 or 12,000 horse and foote', were reported on 26 March.¹³²

The Cheriton campaign provides yet another example of the way in which the rival commanders' decisions were influenced by the intelligence information that was widely available to both sides. Both Hopton and Waller were well aware of their opponents' intentions and at no stage of the campaign was there any uncertainty over the enemy's position. Although Waller followed up his victory by occupying a number of local Royalist towns,¹³³ intelligence that a Royalist army was being formed around Marlborough, coupled with the lack of pay for his London brigades, caused Waller not to exploit his victory to the full.¹³⁴

The Cropredy Bridge campaign was described by Sir Edward Walker, the Secretary to the Royalist Council of War. His account provides an invaluable insight into the decision-making process of the senior Royalist commanders. Walker describes how intelligence information was fully integrated into Royalist planning; particularly during the early stages of the Cropredy Bridge campaign when the movements of the Parliamentary armies, led by Essex and Waller, were regularly reported to the Royalist Council of War. These intelligence reports were used to determine Royalist responses to the threat posed by the two Parliamentary armies, as is shown by Walker's statement that, in mid April 1644:

¹²⁷ I.G. Philip (ed.), *Journal of Sir Samuel Luke* (3 volumes, Oxfordshire Record Society, 1953), Volume III, p. 231.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 241.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 256

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 261, 264 and 265.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 269.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 270.

¹³³ Winchester surrendered by the end of the month. Christchurch was captured on 5 April and Bishops Waltham was occupied on 9 April.

¹³⁴ E. Walker, *His Majesty's Happy Progress and Success from 30th March to the 23rd of November 1644* (London, 1705), p. 8.

‘Upon intelligence that a considerable force of Rebels was drawing towards Aylesbury, orders were sent not to stir from Marlborough except they had certain Intelligence that Waller would attempt to go into the West’.¹³⁵

Walker’s account shows just how frequently intelligence information was received by the Royalist Council of War during the Cropredy Bridge campaign. For example, he describes how in June 1644, ‘certain intelligence was brought that the Rebels of Waller’s army had passed at Newbridge’.¹³⁶ This was important information as it made clear to Charles that Waller had reacted to his feint or ‘grimace’ towards Abingdon, and this, in turn, enabled the king to evade both his opponents’ armies and march out of Oxford ‘having our scouts abroad’.¹³⁷ Intelligence reports continued to flow into the Royalist headquarters throughout the campaign. For example, when the king was at Evesham on 6 June, ‘upon intelligence that Waller was advancing with his whole army, His Majesty altered his purpose and marched to Worcester’.¹³⁸ Later in the campaign, when Charles was planning his return to Oxford from the far side of the River Severn, the report that the Parliamentarians had no ‘intelligence that Waller knew of our retreat or was moved from his quarters’ was a key factor in the king’s decision to cross the river at Worcester and head for the Cotswolds by the fastest route. Even then Charles would not move until he ‘had perfect intelligence that Waller was not moved and that those passes were secured’.¹³⁹ The Council of War held on 22 June was well aware of the positions of both Essex’s army as it marched to the west, and Waller’s army as it pursued the king. On 27 June, Sir Edward Walker recalled that ‘upon more certain notice that Waller was not far from Banbury, it was thought best to march thither and to lay hold of a fit opportunity to give the Rebels battle’.¹⁴⁰ The close proximity of the king’s and Waller’s armies during the Cropredy Bridge campaign in the final days of June was clearly an important factor as it facilitated the scouts keeping in touch with the opposing forces, as well as reducing the time it took to deliver the intelligence reports. Walker reports that ‘certain intelligence ... that a body of 300 Rebel horse were within 2 miles of our van’, caused the Royalist advanced guard to move forward swiftly thereby creating a gap which Waller then tried to exploit.¹⁴¹ After the battle, intelligence reached Charles that Waller’s army was about to be reinforced by another Parliamentarian army, led by General Brown. On receipt of this intelligence, Charles

¹³⁵ Walker, *Happy Progress*, p.8.

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, p.18.

¹³⁷ *Ibid*, p.20.

¹³⁸ *Ibid*, p.20.

¹³⁹ *Ibid*, p.25.

¹⁴⁰ Walker, *Happy Progress*, p. 30.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid*, p.32.

‘observing the Probability of Waller’s and Brown’s sudden conjunction, whereby they might overpower him’ decided to ‘bend his course ... where they should not speedily follow him’ and withdrew his army to Evesham.

Turning now to the Parliamentary side, we should note that, in his letters to the Committee of Both Kingdoms, Waller also made a number of observations about the intelligence information he had received during the campaign. For example, on 4 June, Waller reported that his scouts had brought him news of the king’s flight from Oxford and that he was in pursuit, hoping to catch up with the king at Witney.¹⁴² Later, on 13 June, Waller recorded that he had received ‘information that the enemy was in Kidderminster ... being two miles from Bewdley, where the King and his army lay and yet remain’.¹⁴³ On 20 June, Waller had reached Gloucester when his scouts reported that the king had marched to Witney and Burford.¹⁴⁴ Having been ordered by the Committee to follow the king eastwards, Waller was able to report that:

‘Upon intelligence that we were upon the march [the King] drew all back to Buckingham again. By the best intelligence we can get they are 10,000 horse and foot, 8 field pieces, four pieces of battery, and a great mortar piece’.¹⁴⁵

By 27 June, both armies were in close contact and Waller’s scouts reported that the king had halted five miles beyond the River Cherwell at Edgecote. Another contemporary account, printed in a London news-pamphlet, provided a detailed description of how intelligence was gathered by the Parliamentary forces, noting that:

‘Wee discovered their army to be upon the march towards Daventry: and as some (who were since taken prisoners) affirme, their intent was from hence to York; whereupon command was given ... to advance after them and fall upon their reere’.¹⁴⁶

Luke’s men were also reporting the movements of the king. On 4 June, they reported the king’s army to be at Burford, while the following day it was reported that the king’s forces ‘were

¹⁴² *CSPD*, 1644, p. 206. Letter from Waller and Haselrig to the Committee dated 4 June 1644.

¹⁴³ *Ibid*, p. 246.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p. 252.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p. 279.

¹⁴⁶ E. 53[18], *An Exact and full Relation of the last Fight, Between the Kings Forces and Sir William Waller* (London, 5 July 1644).

gone that night towards Worcester'. On 6 June, Charles was reported at Winchcombe, en route to Worcester itself, and on 11 June, he was said to be at Worcester.¹⁴⁷ Further references to the intelligence which the Parliamentarians possessed appeared in the London newspapers; for example, later in the campaign, *Mercurius Civicus* was reporting how 'we had certain intelligence that His Majesty had gotten over the Severn ... and is fled to Worcester with all his horse and dragoons'.¹⁴⁸

In summary, Walker's account of the Royalist decision-making process provides excellent evidence of the growing Royalist awareness of the significance of intelligence-gathering. The reports which appeared in *Mercurius Aulicus* at this time – which reported Waller's movements very accurately indeed – also reveal that the Cavaliers were by now obtaining much more effective intelligence.¹⁴⁹ Parliamentarian intelligence was similarly informative; Waller's letters confirm that he was integrating accurate intelligence information into his military decisions. From the moment that Charles's flying army left Oxford, its movements were being reported promptly and reliably by both Parliamentarian scouts and pamphleteers. Every move of this campaign reflected the constant and accurate flow of intelligence information to the army commanders.

The Cornish campaign of 1644 demonstrated to both sides the advantages to be gained from intelligence; for the Royalists had an abundance of information, whilst the Parliamentarian forces had none. The superior Royalist intelligence enabled Charles to win a decisive victory – one which offset the defeat of his army at Marston Moor. Walker's account is a vital source of evidence for the Lostwithiel campaign. Walker shows that it was intelligence about the diverging movements of the armies of Essex, Waller and Brown which determined the king's decision to march in pursuit of Essex and 'disturb him before Waller could possibly come to his assistance'.¹⁵⁰ Walker also reports that Essex was mis-informed by Lord Robartes about the level of support the Parliamentarian army could expect to receive if it marched into Cornwall. Walker makes it clear that once the Royalist army had entered Cornwall, which he describes as 'a country exceedingly affectionate to His Majestie and his cause',¹⁵¹ intelligence began to pour into the king's camp. For example, on 1 August Charles 'had intelligence that Essex was

¹⁴⁷ H. G. Tibbutt (ed.), *The Letter Books of Sir Samuel Luke*, Historical Manuscripts Commission, JP4, (London, 1963), pp. 661- 667.

¹⁴⁸ E. 51[16], *Mercurius Civicus*, *London's Intelligencer* (London, 13-20 June 1644).

¹⁴⁹ See, for example, E. 52[7], *Mercurius Aulicus* (Oxford, 8 June 1644); E. 53[5], *Mercurius Aulicus* (Oxford, 15 June 1644); and E. 54[5], *Mercurius Aulicus* (Oxford, 22 June 1644).

¹⁵⁰ Walker, *Happy Progress*, p.37.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, p.49.

gone from Liskeard to Bodmin'.¹⁵² Of particular importance to the present thesis is Walker's surprise at the amount of intelligence information which was generated by the civilian population who, in Cornwall, were generally friendly towards the king. Walker notes that it was 'not until now ... [that] we [were] sensible of the great and extraordinary advantage the Rebels had over His Majesty's armies throughout the Kingdom, by intelligence (the life of all warlike actions) ... which, by the loyalty of this people, the Rebels were deprived of'.¹⁵³ The intelligence reported by local people helped the Royalists to dominate the campaign. As Walker went on to report, 'the [Rebel] army was no sooner quartered at Liskeard but we had hourly notice of the Rebels actions'.¹⁵⁴ Walker notes that, later in the campaign when Essex's army was isolated at Lostwithiel, two deserters brought intelligence of the proposed breakout by the Parliamentarian horse which 'intelligence was very particular, and being confirmed from other parts, was believed'.¹⁵⁵

The Parliamentarian commander was in no doubt about the disadvantages of being isolated in enemy territory. Writing from Lostwithiel, Essex reported that 'Intelligence we have none, the country people being violently against us, if any of our scouts or soldiers fall into their hands, they are more bloody that the enemy'.¹⁵⁶ It is interesting to note that Luke recorded no reports about affairs in the far south-west at this time, presumably because his agents were unable to procure any information in Royalist Cornwall.¹⁵⁷ The Parliamentarian pamphlets published details of the earlier movements of the opposing forces, for example, *The Spie* reported that, after the relieving of Lyme, Essex's 'next design is in generall for the west';¹⁵⁸ and, later in June, *Mercurius Civicus* reported that Essex had 'possessed himself of Dorchester'.¹⁵⁹ Having relieved the siege of Plymouth, Robartes' advice to Essex to march into Cornwall was reported, as was the king's decision to march in pursuit;¹⁶⁰ but the gradual tightening of the Royalist ring around Essex eventually reduced the flow of information so that, in the end, all that appeared in the Parliamentarian press were repeated reports that the Parliamentarian army was isolated in Cornwall.¹⁶¹

¹⁵² Ibid, p.49.

¹⁵³ Ibid, p.50.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, pp.50-51.

¹⁵⁵ Walker, *Happy Progress*, p. 70.

¹⁵⁶ *CSPD, 1644*, p. 434; and M. Stoye, *Loyalty and Locality* (Exeter, 1994), p. 234.

¹⁵⁷ Tibbutt, *Letter Books*, p. 26.

¹⁵⁸ E. 50[32], *The Spie* (London, 6-13 June 1644).

¹⁵⁹ E. 51[16], *Mercurius Civicus* (London, 13-20 June 1644).

¹⁶⁰ E. 54[20], *The Parliament Scout* (London, 4-11 July 1644).

¹⁶¹ See, for example, E. 6[12], *The Kingdomes Weekly Intelligencer* (London, 6-14 August 1644); E. 6[16], *The Parliament Scout* (London, 8-16 August 1644); E. 254[20], *A Perfect Diurnall of some Passages in Parliament*

From the point of view of the present thesis, the most remarkable aspect of the Lostwithiel campaign is the fact that, if we are to believe Walker, it took the Royalists so long to appreciate the very considerable benefits which were bestowed by superior intelligence. Their belated realisation of this fact is particularly significant for two important reasons. Firstly, it reveals that the Royalists had been fighting for over two years before they had begun to appreciate the importance of intelligence information; but secondly, and in many ways far more significantly, it shows just how much benefit the Parliamentary commanders had been deriving from their own intelligence-gathering operations. With only one more major campaign ahead of them, this realisation may well have come too late for the Royalist commanders. Certainly, the evidence of the primary sources suggests that the king's great success at the culmination of the Lostwithiel campaign owed much to the fact that, on this occasion, it had, for once, been the Royalists who had enjoyed superior intelligence.

The manoeuvrings before the Second Battle of Newbury were also partly described by Sir Edward Walker in his account of the battle.¹⁶² His account provides a most revealing description of how intelligence information informed the military decisions of the Royalists during the last major campaign of 1644. Royalist intelligence reports had given Charles an accurate picture of the position and strength of the Parliamentary forces that were gathering to cut off his return to Oxford. At a Council of War held in Exeter in the last week of September, Charles was informed that Essex's foot had reached Southampton, that Waller with new recruits of foot was at Shaftsbury, where he had joined Middleton and his horse, and that 'Manchester with at least 5,000 horse and foot' was at Reading.¹⁶³ Walker observes that Charles was determined to assist the besieged garrisons at Banbury, Donnington and Basing, and that this requirement did much to shape the Newbury campaign. As Charles marched eastwards, the scouts of the opposing forces came into contact and this generated the first of the many intelligence reports which informed the decisions which were taken on both sides during the next weeks. Walker describes how intelligence reports led to skirmishes and raids; for example, on 1 October, His Majesty 'had intelligence that a party of horse ... had beaten up a quarter of Waller's horse at Whitchurch and ... had taken a captain and about 20 prisoners ...

(London, 12-19 August 1644); E. 7[33], *True Informer* (London, 24-31 August 1644); and E. 254[29], *A Perfect Diurnal of some Passages in Parliament* (London, 2-9 September 1644).

¹⁶² Walker, *Happy Progress*, pp. 110-113.

¹⁶³ Walker, *Happy Progress*, p. 88.

which probably caused Waller to dislodge from Blandford'.¹⁶⁴ Intelligence reports about the Parliamentary forces continued to come in; on 15 October, for example, Charles was told that 'Manchester was about Reading with 5,000 horse and foot and 24 pieces of ordnance, and that four regiments of the Trained Bands of London were coming towards him ... Essex was at Portsmouth ... and Waller was at Andover with 3,000 horse and dragoons'.¹⁶⁵ Unfortunately for the Royalists, Colonel Hurry, who had deserted to the king the year before, now deserted to the Parliamentary commanders with details of Charles' plans which led to 'the Rebels knowing His Majesty's strength as their own'.¹⁶⁶

On the Parliamentary side, too, much use was being made of intelligence at this time. Waller had been regularly reporting back to the Committee of Both Kingdoms during the early stages of the Newbury campaign. On 17 September, for example, he informed the Committee that he had instructed his troops at Salisbury 'to send out continual parties into the west to gain intelligence'.¹⁶⁷ Waller was not the only Parliamentary commander to be seeking intelligence. On 3 October, Manchester was reporting to the Committee how he had established from his own scouts, and from intelligence from Sir William Waller, that the king was marching fast to the east via Newbury and Abingdon to Oxford.¹⁶⁸ On 4 October, *The True Informer* reported that:

'Parliament received letters from the Earl of Manchester, whereby it was certified that he had received intelligence from Sir William Waller that the King with the main body of his army on Wednesday last was seven miles on this side of Dorchester and that he was resolved to come on with a swift march ... for Oxford ... and that ... he conceives them to be 12,000 horse and foot'.¹⁶⁹

On the same day, the Committee informed Essex that 'we have received advertisement that the King's forces were upon Wednesday advanced 5 miles on this side of Dorchester'.¹⁷⁰ Essex's reply to the Committee's letter was very revealing. Writing back to them on the next day, he stated that 'scouts are useful to prepare officers and men for the worst but well grounded intelligence is to be obtained only from a party of the army commander by one whom we may

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 99.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 105.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 110.

¹⁶⁷ *CSPD, 1644*, p. 478.

¹⁶⁸ *CSPD, 1644 - 45*, p. 8.

¹⁶⁹ E. 11[3], *The True Informer* (London, 28 September- 5 October 1644).

¹⁷⁰ *CSPD, 1644 -45*, p. 13.

confide in'.¹⁷¹ This statement suggests that Essex was not entirely persuaded by the intelligence that was being received, and that he would only believe in reports which came from individuals whom he himself personally knew and trusted. It would certainly appear from this remark that both the Parliamentary Essex and the Royalist Falkland (who had been killed at the First Battle of Newbury) shared reservations about the credibility of intelligence from spies – or from sources that were not personally known to them.¹⁷² If this was indeed the case, such reservations would undoubtedly have limited the amount of intelligence information that Essex was prepared to act upon.

On 11 October, the Committee of Both Kingdoms used the intelligence reports which they had received about the Royalist army in an attempt to co-ordinate the Parliamentary forces' interception of the king as they 'had certain intelligence he is marching eastwards'.¹⁷³ The Parliamentary scouts were, by this time, delivering some extremely detailed reports; for example, on 18 October, General Browne reported from Abingdon that:

'A scout assures me that the King was yesterday in Salisbury with his foot, and his horse quartered in the villages on this side, and that Sir William Waller was then at Andover. This man, who has spent seven days in the King's quarters, reports that the only designe of the Royal army was for Abingdon, though their horse may go out of the direct course as a blind'.¹⁷⁴

Browne's report also included the information that 'the Royalists ... be not fewer than 16,000, whereof 8,000 are horse'. From these pieces of information, the Committee was able to provide Essex with a comprehensive intelligence update of Royalist intentions on 20 October.¹⁷⁵ Reports like this enabled the Parliamentary forces to concentrate in the path of the Royalists' eastwards march.¹⁷⁶ However, the Royalist scouting detected the Parliamentary concentration which caused Charles to alter the direction of his march to the north. This change of direction caught the Parliamentary commanders by surprise, internal dissent appears to have slowed their reactions and allowed the Royalists to occupy a strong defensive position between the Kennet and Lambourn rivers. The resulting battle was inconclusive when it could have been a

¹⁷¹ *Ibid*, p. 15.

¹⁷² See below, Chapter 3, p. 44.

¹⁷³ *CSPD, 1644 -45*, p. 32. See also *CSPD, 1644 - 1645*, pp. 38-39 for a further example of this co-ordination.

¹⁷⁴ *CSPD, 1644 -45*, p. 52.

¹⁷⁵ *CSPD, 1644*, p. 521.

¹⁷⁶ *CSPD, 1644 -45*, p. 65.

resounding Parliamentary victory – particularly as the withdrawal of the Royalist army was detected but no scouts were deployed to shadow the Royalist army and thereby possibly exploit that intelligence.¹⁷⁷

This was not the end of this sorry state of Roundhead intelligence affairs. After the battle of Newbury had been fought on 27 October, the effectiveness of Parliamentary intelligence-gathering was further bedevilled by internal dissent between the earl of Manchester and Cromwell. The Royalists' intentions to recover their artillery from Donnington Castle were known to the Parliamentary commanders for Manchester wrote on several occasions to the Committee informing them 'of certain intelligence that the King is to come to Wallingford with his whole army and that he intends to march to fetch away the artillery and ammunition in Donnington Castle'.¹⁷⁸ However, the Parliamentary scouts were not watching the Wallingford Bridge and thus did not detect the advancing Royalist army in time to concentrate the Parliamentary army in open country to block their advance. As was reported in the news-pamphlets, 'we cannot plead ignorance of the King's motions, it being traced by us day by day'.¹⁷⁹ This second failure of the Parliamentary forces around Newbury resulted in the members of the House of Commons requiring an enquiry into the perceived military failures.¹⁸⁰

8 Conclusion

All of the primary evidence suggests that there was a steady increase in the use of intelligence information in all theatres of the war during the year 1644, and that this increase reflected the commanders' growing awareness of the value of accurate and timely intelligence. Nonetheless, the assertion that 'most civil war battles were more often the result of armies meeting accidentally' is simply not supported by the huge quantity of surviving primary evidence for 1644. In fact this evidence suggests precisely the reverse for no major engagement occurred 'accidentally' during the 1644 campaigns and that the outcomes of all of these battles were influenced – if not decided – by accurate and timely military intelligence. Indeed, the failure of the Royalists to intercept Essex's cavalry at Lostwithiel and the failure of the Parliamentarians to intercept Charles's army as it withdrew from the Second battle of Newbury provide clear evidence of failures to react to intelligence information.

¹⁷⁷ See, for example, Wanklyn, *Warrior Generals*, pp. 135-136.

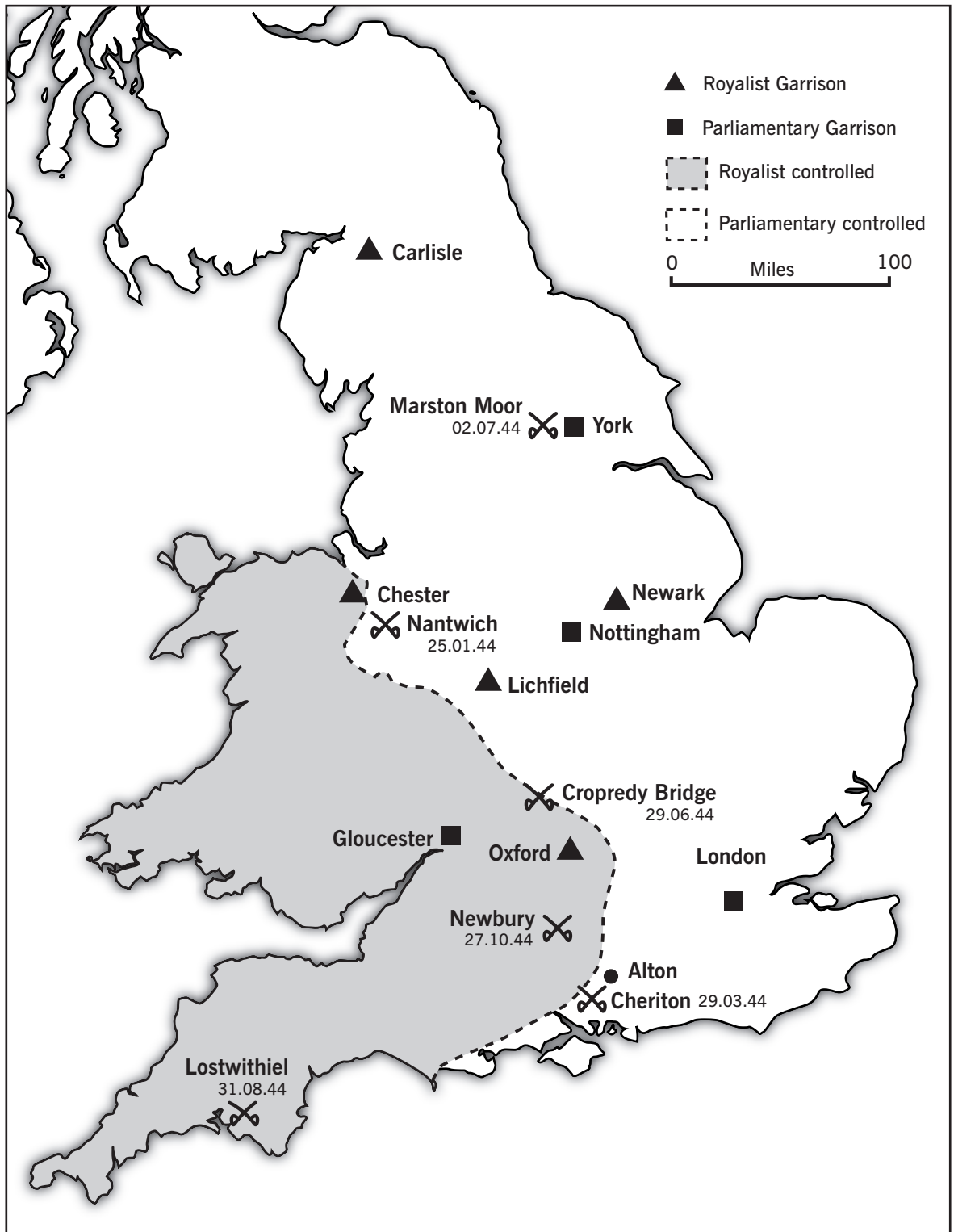
¹⁷⁸ *CSPD, 1644 -45*, pp. 100, 106 and 108.

¹⁷⁹ E. 17[4], *The Parliament Scout* (London, 8-15 November 1644).

¹⁸⁰ E.256 [34], *A Perfect Diurnall of Some Passages in Parliament* (London, 4-11 November 1644).

Map 3:

The main battlefields of 1644 and the area controlled by the King at the end of that year



Chapter Eight

The Triumph of Intelligence Operations – The Campaigns of 1645

1 Introduction

The campaigns of 1645 effectively decided the outcome of the English Civil War. Accurate Parliamentary intelligence-gathering played a decisive part in the battles of Naseby and Langport – the two battles which destroyed the remaining Royalist field armies. Although the impact of intelligence information upon the outcome of the campaigns was recognised by contemporaries, it has taken some time for it to be acknowledged in subsequent historical accounts. The aim of the present chapter is to establish the contribution which was made by intelligence information to the outcome of the battles. The chapter will be divided into three parts. First the key military actions of 1645 will be summarised. Second, the views which other historians have taken about intelligence operations during these campaigns will be considered. Finally, the extensive evidence of the primary sources will be assessed before the chapter concludes with an evaluation of the impact of intelligence operations on the outcome of the 1645 campaigns.

2 The sequence of military events

The winter of 1644-45 was used by both sides to review and restructure their armed forces. For the Royalists, these changes chiefly involved the senior ranks where a number of professional soldiers replaced the magnates who had formerly tended to command the king's armies. Thus Sir Richard Grenville assumed command of the Royalist forces remaining in the West, Prince Maurice took command of the Royalist forces along the Welsh borders, and Prince Rupert replaced the Earl of Forth in overall command of the Royalist armies.¹ By comparison, the Parliamentarian's re-organisation was far more fundamental as they created a completely new army from the amalgamation – and enhancement – of the existing Roundhead forces. Sir Thomas Fairfax was selected to command the 'New Model Army'. The second major change followed the passage through Parliament of the Self Denying Ordinance, a piece of legislation which required all officers who were Members of Parliament to surrender their commissions. The officers of the New Model army would henceforward be selected for their

¹ E. Hyde, *The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England, together with an Historical View of the Affairs in Ireland* (sixteen books, London, 1702-4), Book VIII, p. 168.

military, rather than their political, experience.² This military upheaval generated considerable concern and speculation on both sides and was still in progress when the New Model Army took to the field in May 1645.³ Indeed, concerns that the Royalists would deploy their forces before the New Model Army was ready caused the Committee of Both Kingdoms to order Cromwell to delay the junction of the Royalist forces by conducting a cavalry raid around Oxford.⁴ Notwithstanding the success of Cromwell's subsequent operations, some Royalist leaders were heartened by the inevitable disruption caused by the reorganisation of the Parliamentary forces, believing that the introduction of the 'New Model', as some Royalists 'scornfully termed this Army',⁵ offered them the opportunity to win a decisive victory.

The Royalist high command's 'grand design' for 1645 identified two priority tasks – the recovery of their supremacy in the north and the consolidation of their power base in the south west. Although the recovery of the north, and the relief of the besieged Royalist garrisons at Chester and Pontefract, was possibly a higher priority, the need to recapture Taunton and thereby consolidate the Royalist hold on the south west was also viewed as an urgent task.⁶ Unable to determine their priorities, the Royalist commanders, having concentrated around Stow on 8 May, then divided their forces. General Goring was detached from the main Royalist field army, with 3,000 horse, to re-capture Taunton, while Charles and Rupert led the rest of the Royalist field army to the north – initially to eliminate the Parliamentary threat to Chester, but principally to restore Royalist supremacy in the north and to cooperate with the Marquis of Montrose and his small army which had won several victories in Scotland since September 1644.⁷

Although Parliamentary intelligence about the 'grand design' of the Royalist armies was accurate,⁸ the Roundhead commanders were still restructuring their armies until early May. This meant that they were unable to take decisive action to pre-empt the intentions of the Royalists. However, the Committee of Both Kingdoms, aware of the immediate risk of the

² C. Firth, *Cromwell's Army. A History of the English Soldier during the Civil Wars, the Commonwealth and the Protectorate* (London, 1902), pp. 40- 41.

³ Clarendon, *History*, Book IX, p. 6.

⁴ J. Sprigge, *Anglia Rediviva: England's Recovery* (London, 1647), p. 10.

⁵ Sprigge, *Anglia Rediviva*, p. 12. See also, Clarendon, *History*, Book IX, p. 36.

⁶ Clarendon, *History*, Book IX, pp. 12, 24 and 27.

⁷ *Ibid*, p. 35.

⁸ See, for example, *CSPD, 1644-45*, pp. 331, 334 and 341.

surrender of the Parliamentary garrison at Taunton, determined that their first priority was to disperse the besieging Royalists and it was this task that was assigned to the newly formed New Model Army. Thus, on 1 May, Fairfax led some 16,000 men into the west, reaching Blandford a week later. Meanwhile, as Fairfax moved to the west, the Royalist army marched eastwards and concentrated around Oxford. This concentration caused the Parliamentary leaders in London to change their plans. Cromwell was ordered to shadow the Royalist forces while Fairfax, at Blandford, was ordered to detach a brigade to relieve Taunton, whilst he retraced his steps with the rest of the New Model Army to attack the Royalist forces around Oxford.⁹ Fairfax so skilfully detached the brigade to relieve Taunton that the Royalists prematurely lifted the siege, believing that the whole New Model Army was still marching westwards to engage them. The Western Royalists, once they realised their error, reinvested Taunton thereby preventing Colonel Weldon's brigade from rejoining the New Model Army at Oxford.

While Fairfax was marching back east towards Oxford, Charles, shadowed by Cromwell, was marching north to relieve Chester. Although the initial Parliamentary plan was to defeat the king's army by using the combined forces of the Scottish army and the local Parliamentary forces led by Sir William Brereton,¹⁰ the victories of Montrose distracted the Scottish commanders and delayed their advance south to face the oncoming Royalists. Finding himself outnumbered, Brereton was forced to lift the siege of Chester and to withdraw into Lancashire where he deployed to bar any Royalist advance to the west of the Pennines.¹¹ In an attempt to draw Charles away from his northern venture, on 15 May Fairfax was ordered to besiege Oxford.¹² By 19 May, Fairfax was encamped around Oxford. Cromwell was also ordered to join Fairfax at Oxford, after detaching a brigade under Colonel Vermuyden to reinforce the slowly advancing Scottish army.

Although Charles had now raised the siege of Chester, his route to the north through Lancashire was blocked. Accordingly, the Royalist army sought an alternative route to the north and marched eastwards towards Newark. As the Committee of Both Kingdoms perceived this movement of the Royalists to be a threat to the Eastern Association, on 26 May

⁹ Sprigge, *Anglia Rediviva*, pp. 16-17.

¹⁰ *CSPD, 1644-45*, pp. 409, 452 and 455.

¹¹ See R.N. Dore (ed.), *The Letter Books of Sir William Brereton*, (two volumes, The Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, 1990), Volume I, p. 446; and *CSPD, 1644-45*, p. 505.

¹² *CSPD, 1644-45*, p. 497. Letter dated 17 May from Committee of Both Kingdoms to Sir Thomas Fairfax.

Cromwell was ordered to leave the siege of Oxford and to reinforce the Isle of Ely so as to bar the approaches to the Eastern Association.¹³ However, the news of the siege of Oxford, coupled with a report that the city was low on supplies, had caused consternation in the Royalist Council of War.¹⁴ In an attempt to draw Fairfax away from Oxford, the Royalist commanders decided to attack Leicester, which was duly captured on 31 May. Charles then paused in the Daventry area whilst he sent a convoy south to re-supply Oxford.¹⁵

The news of the fall of Leicester came as a shock to the Parliamentary leaders and they immediately ordered Fairfax to march north to deal with the Royalist army. Fairfax left Oxford on 5 June and, by 12 June, had reached Kislingbury, only five miles away from the Royalist army, without Charles being alerted to the proximity of the New Model Army. Although the Oxford convoy escort had now rejoined the Royalist army, the Parliamentary army, reinforced by 13 June with the forces of Cromwell and Vermuyden, heavily outnumbered the Royalist army. The Parliamentary forces were now too close for Charles to evade so the Royalists turned south to engage Fairfax. The Parliamentary forces won a decisive victory at Naseby on 14 June 1645 and, shortly afterwards retook Leicester. After the battle, the king fled west to South Wales while Rupert attempted to gather the remaining Royalist forces into another field army. Informed by his intelligence reports of the threat to Taunton, Fairfax moved swiftly to restore Parliamentary supremacy in the Midlands, before marching rapidly into the south west to engage Goring and the remaining Royalist field army. Fairfax's defeat of Goring's army at Langport on 10 July was the last major engagement of the first Civil War, but fighting continued for another year as the New Model Army methodically eliminated the remaining pockets of Royalist resistance.

3 The role of military intelligence in the campaigns of 1645: The views of subsequent historians.

How were these campaigns viewed by subsequent historians? The first retrospective account of the campaigns of 1645 was provided by Joshua Sprigge, Fairfax's chaplain, who published a history of the New Model Army in 1647.¹⁶ Sprigge's book, *Anglia Rediviva*, includes a good deal of detail about the use of intelligence during the Naseby campaign; for example, it

¹³ *CSPD, 1644-45*, p. 530.

¹⁴ E. Walker, *Brief Memorials of the Unfortunate Success of His Majesty's Army and Affairs in the year 1645* (London, 1705), p. 127.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 128.

¹⁶ J. Sprigge, *Anglia Rediviva; Englands Recovery* (London, 1647).

contains a wide range of contemporary reports, as well as information which appears to come from eye-witnesses.¹⁷ Although some doubt has recently been raised as to whether Sprigge was actually present on the field,¹⁸ rather than witnessing the engagement from the wagon train,¹⁹ his account has nonetheless gained acceptance over the years as being a ‘principal authority for the battle’.²⁰ Sprigge’s narrative contains numerous references to intelligence information being used to determine Fairfax’s decisions. For example, it recounts how, on 13 June:

‘Scoutmaster general [Leonard] Watson (whose continued diligence in getting timely intelligence of the Enemies’ motion, then, and always, redounded not a little to the enablement of the army) brought him certain notice, that the enemy was drawing off Burrough-hill towards Harborough’.²¹

Sprigge reports the receipt of an even more significant piece of intelligence information on 15 June, the day after the battle, when he describes how a packet of letters was brought to Watson by one of his spies, who was in the employment of Sir Edward Nicholas (the king’s secretary, who was based in Oxford). These letters included one from Goring to the king, reporting that Taunton was about to fall, and asking the king not to engage Fairfax until ‘his forces were joyned with his Majesty’. As Sprigge comments ‘this intelligence did withal much quicken us to make speed to relieve Taunton’.²² The date that this intercepted letter was actually received by Fairfax, and its relevance to intelligence operations during the battle of Naseby, will be considered in more detail later in the present chapter.

Sprigge also described how intelligence continued to flow into Fairfax as he moved southwest to engage Goring around Taunton. The lifting of the siege and Goring’s subsequent movements were all reported accurately and quickly to Fairfax.²³ The wealth of information pertaining to intelligence which appeared in *Anglia Rediviva* may explain why subsequent accounts of the 1645 military campaigns also contained numerous descriptions of the

¹⁷ See, for example, Sprigge, *Anglia Rediviva*, pp. 27, 29, 31 and 33.

¹⁸ See, for example, G. Foard, *Naseby: The Decisive Campaign* (Barnsley, 1995), p. 403.

¹⁹ See P. Young, *Naseby 1645: The Campaign and the Battle* (London, 1985), p. xx.

²⁰ See, for example, E.G.B. Warburton, *Memoirs of Prince Rupert and the Cavaliers* (three volumes, London, 1849), volume I, p. 101; Young, *Naseby*, p. xix; and M. Wanklyn, *Decisive Battles of the English Civil War* (Barnsley, 2006), p. 168.

²¹ Sprigge, *Anglia Rediviva*, p. 31.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 47-48.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 60-64.

contribution which had been made by intelligence information to the outcome of the fighting. Although John Rushworth was secretary to the New Model Army's council of war, and had been present at the battle of Naseby, his own book, *Historical Collections* which was published in 1659, nonetheless drew very heavily upon Sprigge's book. Indeed, Rushworth's account of the Naseby campaign often repeats Sprigge's words verbatim, with only the occasional additional sentence being inserted from time to time. For example, Rushworth describes how intelligence of the Royalist plan to move their artillery train from Oxford led the Committee of Both Kingdom to send orders to Fairfax 'to dispatch some horse beyond Oxford ... to intercept that convoy, and hinder the King and his Train from passing out to meet them'.²⁴ He also goes on to describe how intelligence information had kept the Parliamentary commanders informed of the position and size of the Royalist armies at all times during the campaign. Rushworth states that intelligence reports on the Royalist forces were being received from a number of sources. For example, he notes that, on 2 May, the commander of the Coventry garrison had reported to the Committee of Both Kingdoms that 'we have this morning received Intelligence, that the two princes Rupert and Maurice this last night came with all their forces to Evesham'.²⁵ Rushworth also reproduces a letter from the Parliamentary Committee of Northampton (dated 4 June) which reported that 'we have at this instant received certain intelligence that the King's army is advanced this way, and that a great party both of horse and foot come as far as Harborough'.²⁶

But the most interesting part of Rushworth's account relates to the occasion upon which Fairfax was given the intelligence about Goring's army's movements which was contained in the letter intercepted by Watson's agents. Rushworth (following Sprigge's account) states that Fairfax had not been given the intercepted letters from Goring to the king until the day *after* the battle (i.e. 15 June). As Sprigge had done before him, Rushworth described, in some detail, how Watson had had a spy working for Sir Edward Nicholas, and how this spy had brought a package of letters to Watson on the day after Naseby. Significantly however, at this point Rushworth amends Sprigge's account, and inserts a sentence claiming that 'Fairfax seemed unwilling to open [these letters] ... [until] Cromwell and Ireton [had] prevailed [upon him] to

²⁴ J. Rushworth, *Historical Collections* (London, 1659-99), Volume I, p. 23.

²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 28.

²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 37.

open them'.²⁷ Among the package of letters, there was the one from Goring to Charles declaring that:

‘in three weeks time (nine days whereof were then expired) General Goring was confident to master the forces at Taunton and by consequence to settle the west of England [and therefore] ... advising the King ... to stand on the defensive, and not engage till his forces were joyn'd with his Majesty's’.²⁸

Clearly the intelligence that Goring was committed to continuing the siege at Taunton was of crucial importance to the commanders of both sides. For the Royalists, the information contained in Goring's letter would have made the king keen to avoid an engagement with the New Model Army until *after* he had been reinforced by Goring. Certainly both Sprigge and Rushworth appreciated the significance of the information for Charles as they both concluded that:

‘had these letters been presented to the King (as they might have been but for this Defeatment) in all probability his Majesty had declined fighting for the present ... but as the want of this Intelligence was so fatal to his Majesty, so the notice thereof quickened Fairfax to make speed to relieve Taunton’.²⁹

On the other hand, however, neither of them appears to have acknowledged the significance of this intelligence for Fairfax. Had he read the intercepted letter before the battle, he would have known that, at that time, he greatly outnumbered the Royalist army – especially in cavalry – and that he needed to engage the Royalist army *before* it was reinforced by Goring. The question of when Fairfax actually received this important intelligence will be discussed later in this chapter.

Clarendon's *History*, which was published some 40 years after Rushworth's book, also included a number of references to the use of intelligence-gathering during the Naseby and Langport campaigns. Clarendon was highly critical of Royalist intelligence-gathering during the Naseby campaign, describing how, after Leicester had been taken, ‘the army marched to

²⁷ Ibid, p. 49.

²⁸ Ibid, p. 49.

²⁹ Ibid, p. 49.

Daventry in Northamptonshire where, for want of knowing where the enemy was, or what he intended to do, the king [was] in a quiet posture for the space of five days'.³⁰ Clarendon is also very critical of Royalist intelligence-gathering just before the battle of Naseby. For example, at one point, he records that, early on the morning of the battle:

‘It began to be doubted whether the intelligence they had received of the enemy was true. Upon which the scoutmaster [Sir Francis Ruce] was sent out to make farther discovery; who, it seems, went not far enough; but returned and averred, that he had been three or four miles forward, and could neither discover nor hear any thing of them: and presently a report was raised in the army that the enemy was retired. Prince Rupert thereupon drew out a party of horse and musketeers, both to discover and engage them, the army remaining still in the same place and posture they had been in. And his highness had not marched above a mile, when he received certain intelligence of their advance, and in a short time after he saw the van of their army’.³¹

On this occasion, Clarendon is undoubtedly correct to suggest that the Royalist intelligencergatherers were ineffective and had helped to pave the way for the disaster that was to follow. Unsurprisingly perhaps, Clarendon was not aware of how great an advantage superior intelligence had given the New Model Army. Later, Clarendon describes the failures of Royalist intelligence at Langport citing the surprise of Porter’s troops just before the battle of Langport.³² He also mentions the action when Royalist forces engaged each other by mistake at Taunton.³³

The acknowledgement of the impact of intelligence operations at Naseby by Sprigge, Rushworth and Clarendon was also reflected in the later writings of nineteenth-century historians. Warburton’s *Memoirs* contained numerous references to the intelligence reports which had been received by Rupert during the first six months of 1645. In particular, Warburton described how Sir Edward Nicholas had provided the Royalist commanders with the bulk of their intelligence information on the movements and intentions of the

³⁰ Clarendon, *History*, Book IX, p. 36.

³¹ *Ibid*, pp. 38-39. See also Warburton, *Memoirs*, Volume III, p. 103.

³² Clarendon, *History*, Book IX, p. 57.

³³ *Ibid*, p. 45.

Parliamentarian forces.³⁴ Warburton also noted how little intelligence information appeared to have been provided by the Royalist scouts of the advancing New Model Army, and argued that the laxity of the scouts had limited the options open to the Royalist Council of War by curtailing the time they had to agree a valid plan. In addition, Warburton supplied a coruscating verdict on the Royalist's scout-master's reconnaissance on the day of the battle, one which concluded that 'the scoutmaster was sent out to reconnoitre, and with the usual worthlessness of the King's servants, he returned with the assertion that there was no enemy in the neighbourhood'.³⁵ Clearly Warburton agreed with Clarendon that the failure of the Royalist intelligence had lost the king the battle, and reflected Charles' ignorance of the fact that the excellence of the Parliamentary intelligence had given Fairfax a significant advantage even before the battle began.

Writing forty years later, S.R. Gardiner also showed a keen awareness of the important role that intelligence had played in the Naseby and Langport campaigns.³⁶ Gardiner's description of the 1645 campaigns contained more references to intelligence information than any of his descriptions of the earlier campaign had done; for example, he described how, on 29 April, 'the Committee must have had secret intelligence from Oxford to have known ... [of Goring's march from Taunton to Oxford] so early'.³⁷ Gardiner also referred to the intelligence which, in May, had been offered to the Committee of Both Kingdoms by the Royalist Lord Saville, who had suggested that Oxford would be surrendered should the Parliamentary armies besiege – and summon – that city.³⁸ Saville's intelligence proved to be inaccurate and Fairfax was most unhappy at being ordered to besiege Oxford whilst the Royalist army marched unopposed by the New Model Army.³⁹ The lack of effective Royalist intelligence information during the crucial days before the battle of Naseby was firmly attributed by Gardiner to a failure on Rupert's part when he stated that on 12 June Rupert 'knew no more of Fairfax's movements than if he had been in another island'.⁴⁰

Gardiner was the first historian to suggest that Goring's letter to the king had been intercepted by Watson and shown to Fairfax the day *before* the battle of Naseby. Although he made

³⁴ Warburton, *Memoirs*, Volume III, pp. 91 and 97.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

³⁶ S.R. Gardiner, *History of the Great Civil War 1642-1649* (four volumes, London, 1893).

³⁷ Gardiner, *History*, Volume II, p. 207.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 212.

³⁹ Sprigge, *Anglia Rediviva*, pp. 24-25.

⁴⁰ Gardiner, *History*, Volume II, p. 240.

frequent use of Sprigge and Rushworth in other parts of his *History*, Gardiner, appears to have set their account of Goring's intercepted letter aside, for he states that:-

‘On the evening of the 13th ... Fairfax learnt that he was freed from one danger which had been imminent. Scoutmaster Watson brought in an intercepted letter which proved to be a despatch from Goring to the King announcing the impossibility of his leaving the West, and begging Charles to postpone a battle till he was able to join him’.⁴¹

In support of his claim that the intelligence had reached Fairfax the day before the battle, Gardiner cited a Parliamentary news pamphlet, published on 20 June 1645, and a sermon given by Hugh Peters on 2 April 1646. (We will return to these two sources a little later). Gardiner then went on to describe the failure of the Royalist scout-master to discover the approaching New Model army, and Rupert's subsequent more successful personal reconnaissance.⁴² Gardiner's research had suggested that the intelligence which Sprigge and Rushworth had declared was only available to Fairfax *after* the battle had, in fact, been made available to him *before* it. Indeed, Gardiner implied that it was the receipt of this intelligence on the night of 13 June which had determined Fairfax to launch an immediate attack on the Royalist army. Gardiner also described how intelligence had enabled Fairfax to attack Goring in his strong defensive positions based on the Rivers Yeo and Parrett; he also noted how poor Royalist intelligence had enabled Massey to trap Porter's horse bathing.⁴³

The significance of intelligence-gathering during the 1645 campaign continued to be very clearly appreciated by early twentieth-century historians. In Sir Charles Firth's books on Oliver Cromwell and the New Model Army, for example, the intelligence aspect of the battles of Naseby was explored in some depth.⁴⁴ Firth described how, in April, a Parliamentary intelligence report that ‘the King was about to take the field’ had led to Cromwell being ‘despatched to Oxfordshire to prevent the King from joining Prince Rupert’.⁴⁵ In his account

⁴¹ Ibid, pp. 242-243.

⁴² Ibid, p. 244.

⁴³ Ibid, pp. 269-270.

⁴⁴ C.H. Firth, *Oliver Cromwell and the Rule of the Puritans in England* (Oxford, 1900), pp. 119-123; and C.H. Firth, *Cromwell's Army. A History of the English Soldier during the Civil Wars, the Commonwealth and the Protectorate* (London, 1902), pp. 63-67.

⁴⁵ Firth, *Oliver Cromwell*, pp. 119-120. On 24 April, Cromwell had routed three regiments of Royalist horse at Islip.

of Naseby, Firth stated that Rupert had received inaccurate information from his scouts which had 'deluded him into the belief that Fairfax's troops were retiring'.⁴⁶ In *Cromwell's Army*, Firth described the intelligence-gathering structure of the New Model Army, and recounted how 'just before the battle of Naseby, Watson did very valuable service by intercepting Royalist despatches'.⁴⁷ As has been noted earlier in the present thesis, Firth also stated that one of the chief 'causes of the success of Fairfax and Cromwell was the efficiency of their intelligence department'.⁴⁸

Writing some fifty years after Firth, C.V. Wedgwood was equally aware of the key role which had been played by intelligence in the 1645 campaigns.⁴⁹ Wedgwood described how faulty Royalist intelligence had enabled a brigade of Fairfax's army to relieve Taunton, and how the intelligence of a 'mischievous and groundless' plot to betray Oxford submitted by Lord Saville, the 'uncertain Royalist',⁵⁰ had led the Committee of Both Kingdoms to order Fairfax to besiege that city.⁵¹ Wedgwood also described how Fairfax had 'feared, from what he had learnt from prisoners, that Goring's forces would soon be added to those of the King', adding that 'his best hope, as he saw it, was to force the King to fight before this junction could be made'. Wedgwood also agreed with Gardiner in claiming that, on 13 June, Fairfax had 'had in his hands ... an intercepted letter from Goring to Rupert ... which announced Goring's objection to the summons he had received' from the king. Fairfax saw his opportunity, Wedgwood observed, 'and took it'.⁵² By comparison, Wedgwood says little about the intelligence operations that preceded the battle of Langport mentioning only that 'the Parliamentary scouts reported that Goring was moving'.⁵³

In 1961, Austin Woolrych re-evaluated the Naseby campaign. He, too, attributed the Parliamentary success to their superior intelligence.⁵⁴ Woolrych noted that Parliament had been receiving intelligence information throughout the campaign; he described how Brereton had 'sent confident intelligence' of the Royalist march towards Chester, and how Lord Saville's intelligence that Oxford 'would open the gates to a besieging army' had caused 'the

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 123.

⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 65.

⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 67.

⁴⁹ C.V. Wedgwood, *The Great Rebellion: The King's War 1641-1647* (London, 1958).

⁵⁰ Wedgwood, *The King's War*, p. 174

⁵¹ Ibid, p. 446.

⁵² Ibid, pp. 450-451.

⁵³ Ibid, p. 466.

⁵⁴ A. Woolrych, *Battles of the English Civil War* (London, 1961), pp. 138-139.

reducing of Oxford to be the main action of the campaign'.⁵⁵ Woolrych argued that Fairfax had had 'excellent intelligence of the royalists' movements from Brereton and Luke whilst Charles and Rupert had 'had no idea that evening [i.e. 11 June] that the New Model was within a dozen miles of them'.⁵⁶ Woolrych, like Wedgwood, followed Gardiner in suggesting that Watson had given Fairfax the crucial letters from Goring on the evening before the battle.⁵⁷ After recounting the failure of Ruce, the Royalist scout-master general, to find Fairfax's advancing army on the day of the battle,⁵⁸ Woolrych concluded that 'Brereton's prompt and accurate reports of the royalists' movements from West Drayton to Leicester, and Luke's remarkably efficient intelligence service ... greatly helped the New Model'.⁵⁹ Finally, Woolrych drew attention to 'the contrast in efficiency between the Scoutmaster-Generals of the two sides'.⁶⁰

In 1974, Antonia Fraser provided an overview of the intelligence information which had been received by the Parliamentarians in her account of Cromwell's life when she wrote that 'intelligence varied from the brilliant to the negligible'.⁶¹ Fraser also followed Gardiner's lead when she described how, on 12 June, 'Fairfax was now aware of Goring's recalcitrance from Royalist papers captured in a skirmish, and realized that he must be in a position of enormous numerical superiority over the King' and that neither Charles nor Rupert 'had any idea how close the New Model actually was'.⁶² Fraser was one of the first historians to acknowledge the impact of intelligence on the outcome of the battle when she concluded that 'Fairfax had already won a tactical victory over the King before the first shot of Naseby was fired'.⁶³

The next writer to make a significant contribution to our understanding of the way in which intelligence was used in the 1645 campaign was Peter Young who, in 1985, published a detailed analysis of the battle of Naseby.⁶⁴ Although this analysis concentrated on where and how the battle was fought, it also described some of the intelligence operations in detail.⁶⁵ Young drew attention to a number of intelligence operations which had influenced the

⁵⁵ Ibid, pp. 107-108.

⁵⁶ Ibid, pp. 113, 115 and 139.

⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 117.

⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 121.

⁵⁹ Ibid, pp. 138-139.

⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 139.

⁶¹ A. Fraser, *Cromwell: Our Chief of Men* (London, 1974), p. 153.

⁶² Ibid, p. 154.

⁶³ Ibid, p. 155.

⁶⁴ P. Young, *Naseby 1645: The Campaign and the Battle* (London, 1985).

⁶⁵ Ibid, pp. xvii, and 216-220.

outcome of the campaign; for example, he showed how intelligence had been regularly exchanged between the Scottish and New Model commanders and the Committee of Both Kingdoms.⁶⁶ In particular, he noted how intelligence about the concentration of the Royalist army in April had led to the deployment of Cromwell ‘to march beyond Oxford ... to intercept ... [Rupert’s horse], and keep the King and his train from passing out [of Oxford]’.⁶⁷ Young recounted how Fairfax’s detachment of Colonel Weldon’s brigade to relieve Taunton in May had fooled ‘the Western Royalists, whose intelligence left something to be desired.’⁶⁸ Young went on to describe how intelligence information had influenced the selection of Leicester for assault later on in the campaign.⁶⁹ However, he did not describe the events between the fall of Leicester and the battle of Naseby as his account moved directly to a description of the battle itself; thus he did not assess the impact of intelligence during the days immediately before the battle. This surprising omission meant that he expressed no opinion on the intelligence that had informed Fairfax’s march from Oxford to intercept the king.

The contribution made by intelligence to the 1645 campaigns has continued to be recognised in historical and biographical accounts published after 1985. In his acclaimed study of the New Model Army, for example, Ian Gentles recounts the affair of the letter from Goring which had been intercepted and brought to Fairfax. In particular, Gentles notes that:

‘The messenger who carried this and other letters was either a renegade or a double agent, since he delivered them not to Royalist headquarters but to Scout-master General Watson, who brought them to Fairfax. The general at first refused to open the King’s mail, but Cromwell and Ireton at length prevailed upon him to conquer his scruples. What they read convinced them of the necessity of fighting the King at once and then moving quickly to smash Goring at Taunton’.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Ibid, pp. 220-221.

⁶⁷ Ibid, pp. 205-206.

⁶⁸ Ibid, p. 213.

⁶⁹ Ibid, pp. 228-229.

⁷⁰ I. Gentles, *The New Model Army in England, Ireland and Scotland, 1645 – 1653* (London, 1992), p. 55. During a conference on the battle of Naseby held at Kelmarsh Hall on 29 June 2008, Gentles was later to state that one of the reasons why Parliament won the battle was ‘because their intelligence was so good’.

Gentles also noted that failures in the Royalist scouting had led to the surprising of General Porter's cavalry brigade the day before battle was joined at Langport on 10 July. Gentles described how;

‘Porter’s men were relaxing by a stream, their horses at grass in the meadow, the men bathing, drinking or strolling along the riverbank. Massey caught them unawares.’⁷¹

Gentles went on to describe how further intelligence informed Fairfax of Goring's intentions before Langport. He cited how ‘from scouts and local inhabitants, he [Fairfax] learned that Goring was without his baggage and artillery’. From this intelligence, Fairfax knew that his opponent ‘had already opted for a retreat’ and this information ‘emboldened [Fairfax] to strike’.⁷²

In his account of the *Civil War in the Midlands*, published in 1992, Roy Sherwood also refers to the superior intelligence which had been enjoyed by the Parliamentarians during the Naseby campaign. Sherwood describes how ‘intelligence as to the King’s movements poured into Derby House’.⁷³ Sherwood’s account of the Naseby campaign includes repeated references to the intelligence information which had been received by Fairfax, and the use he made of it. He also described how the Royalists first heard of the advance of the New Model army on 13 June, when the king ‘received intelligence that Fairfax was advanced to Northampton with a strong army, much superior to the numbers he had formerly been advised of’. Sherwood also avows that Goring’s letter had been shown to Fairfax before the battle.⁷⁴ Similarly, Frank Kitson’s biography of Prince Rupert, published in 1992, considers the intelligence aspects of the Naseby campaign and assesses the impact that they had had upon the outcome of the battle. Kitson describes how the letter from Goring had been intercepted and shown to Fairfax, as well as including the account of the Royalist scout-master’s failure to detect the advancing New Model army on the morning of the battle.⁷⁵

⁷¹ Gentles, *New Model Army*, p.67. See also, Clarendon, *History*, Book IX, p. 57.

⁷² Ibid, p. 68.

⁷³ R. Sherwood, *The Civil War in the Midlands 1642- 1651* (Stroud, 1992), p. 134.

⁷⁴ Ibid, p. 140-141.

⁷⁵ F. Kitson, *Prince Rupert: Portrait of a Soldier* (London, 1994), pp. 236-239.

In 1995, Glenn Foard published a substantial review of the Naseby campaign, which included a great deal of new information about intelligence operations and which noted that the New Model Army had ‘had twenty scouts under the command of the scoutmaster, Major Watson’.⁷⁶ Foard recounted how Rupert’s scouts had captured some New Model soldiers on 10 June, and how a suspected Royalist spy had been held in custody for a week to prevent intelligence of the approach of the New Model reaching the king.⁷⁷ However, whilst Foard concluded that the New Model army’s intelligence-gathering had been providing Fairfax with a constant series of reports on the position and strength of the Royalist army, he did not comment on the intelligence significance of the intercepted letter from Goring on the timing of the battle of Naseby. Following Sprigge and Rushworth, Foard clearly considers that the intercepted letters were not brought to Fairfax until after the battle.⁷⁸ Foard was keen to explore the reasons for the marked superiority of the Parliamentary intelligence operations. He ascribed this superiority partly to the lack of any local Royalist garrisons – which were ‘the most effective sources of intelligence as they knew their own territory so well’ – and partly to ‘information gained from the interception of correspondence’ and ‘from spies within the Royalist garrisons’.⁷⁹ Foard concluded that the Parliamentarians had gained superior intelligence because the Royalist army’s route had taken them into Parliament’s most effective intelligence and communications network, run jointly by Sir Samuel Luke in Newport Pagnell, and by Nathaniel Sharpe, the postmaster at Northampton. Foard also claimed that Fairfax had denied the Royalist army any significant intelligence-gathering opportunities by keeping his army out of range of the Royalist scouts until he was ready to move directly against them.

The most recent accounts of the Naseby campaign have all acknowledged the decisive impact of superior Parliamentary intelligence. Writing in 2004, for example, Trevor Royle agreed with Gardiner’s assessment that the content of Goring’s letter had been known to Fairfax before the battle, claiming that ‘the New Model Army had ... evolved a better system of reconnaissance’.⁸⁰ Writing a year later, Malcolm Wanklyn and Frank Jones similarly observed that accurate intelligence about the Royalist armies had enabled the Committee of Both

⁷⁶ G. Foard, *Naseby: The Decisive Campaign* (Barnsley, 1995), p. 202.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 91, 121, 164 and 167.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 322.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 159-160.

⁸⁰ T. Royle, *Civil War: The Wars of the Three Kingdoms 1638 – 1660* (London, 2004), p. 326.

Kingdoms to seize and maintain the military initiative throughout.⁸¹ Wanklyn and Jones claimed that a report from Nicholas in Oxford had caused the king to believe that Fairfax ‘seemed to be retreating in a north-easterly direction towards Bedford, apparently to protect the eastern approaches to the [Eastern] Association’. They suggested that this erroneous report had misled the Royalist commanders at a critically important time and examined the movements and reports of Goring in some detail, in order to establish just what Charles and Rupert knew of his intentions in the days before the battle. Their summary of Goring’s intentions indicates that there were grounds for uncertainty.⁸² Following their examination of Goring’s correspondence, Wanklyn and Jones concluded that the letter from Goring did come ‘into Sir Thomas Fairfax’s hands on 13th, 14th, or 15th June’. Although the incident of the Royalist scout-master was not specifically mentioned in their account, Wanklyn and Jones stated that ‘faulty intelligence’ had impaired Rupert’s selection of a suitable battleground on the morning of 14 June. In his later work, *Decisive Battles of the English Civil War*, Wanklyn provided a further account of the Naseby campaign, but drew no further conclusions about the impact of intelligence operations upon the Naseby campaign.⁸³ In his most recent publication, *The Warrior Generals*, Malcolm Wanklyn recounts how intelligence information enabled Fairfax to ‘know exactly where the Oxford army was’.⁸⁴ Interestingly, he cites Sprigge’s *Anglia Rediviva* when he states that the intercepted letter from Goring was not seen by Fairfax until the day after the battle.⁸⁵

When exploring the battle of Langport, Wanklyn and Jones describe how more effective Parliamentary scouting would have allowed Fairfax to have achieved an even more dramatic victory had he ordered Massey to follow up Goring’s retreating forces more effectively.⁸⁶ In his later account of the battle of Langport in *The Warrior Generals*, Wanklyn draws attention to the use made by both Massey and Fairfax of their intelligence of Goring’s movements, and the impact on Royalist morale following the scattering of Porter’s horse in the River Isle the day before the battle.⁸⁷

⁸¹ M. Wanklyn and F. Jones, *A Military History of the English Civil War, 1642 -1646* (Harlow, 2005), pp. 231-244.

⁸² *Ibid*, pp. 242-243.

⁸³ M. Wanklyn, *Decisive Battles of the English Civil Wars* (Barnsley, 2006), p. 162.

⁸⁴ M. Wanklyn, *The Warrior Generals. Winning the British Civil Wars 1642-1652* (New Haven and London, 2010), pp. 160-162.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, p. 273.

⁸⁶ Wanklyn and Jones, *Military History*, p. 256.

⁸⁷ Wanklyn, *Warrior Generals*, pp. 171-172.

In summary, it is evident that historians have had far more to say about the role played by military intelligence in the 1645 campaigns than in any of the campaigns which had preceded them. All accounts agree that Fairfax had enjoyed markedly superior intelligence compared to that received by the Royalist commanders, and that this superiority had played a decisive part in his victory. Whilst there is unanimity that Fairfax was receiving regular reports about the position and strength of the Royalist army, there is some divergence of views regarding the timing of the interception of Goring's letter to the king and whether this information was available to Fairfax before the battle of Naseby.

4 The role of military intelligence in the campaigns of 1645: The evidence of the primary sources

The thesis will now consider what the primary sources tell us about the conduct of military intelligence during the Naseby campaign. As the king's army was the first to take the field, it is perhaps logical to start with the account of the Royalist operations which was written by Sir Edward Walker. This source provides an invaluable insight into the role played by intelligence information in the planning and conduct of Charles' campaign. Walker's account describes how the Royalist 'grand design' for their 1645 campaign was bedevilled by internal disagreements. Walker describes how Royalist intelligence about the plight of the besieged Parliamentary garrison at Taunton, coupled with intelligence about the similar plight of the Royalist garrisons at Chester and Pontefract, caused the division of the Royalist forces which 'laid the Foundation of our future Ruin'.⁸⁸ Nicholas had provided the Royalist Council of War with accurate intelligence regarding the state of Chester and the strength of Parliamentary forces in that area when it had met at Stow on 8 May to finalise their plans for the 1645 campaign.⁸⁹ The Royalist commanders were receiving regular intelligence reports from Nicholas, who controlled Royalist intelligence-gathering operations from Oxford and his intelligence information influenced Charles' decision to detach Goring into the West to capture Taunton, whilst the rest of the Royalist army moved north, initially to relieve Chester.

However, execution of the Royalist 'grand design' was hampered by poor local intelligence-gathering by the Royalist army sent to capture Taunton. For example, when Fairfax detached a brigade under Colonel Weldon to relieve Taunton, the brigade commander, Colonel Weldon, described how the Royalist scouts had not detected the splitting of Fairfax's forces and thus

⁸⁸ Walker, *Brief Memorials*, p. 125.

⁸⁹ Clarendon, *History*, Book IX, p. 29.

‘could not believe but we [Weldon’s brigade] were my Lord Goring’s forces, [as] we were within four miles of the town before they would believe we were come, and then ... they confusedly ran every way’.⁹⁰ The advancing Parliamentary commander concluded that, as his forces had ‘never discovered one Scout of theirs [i.e. the Royalists]’, he believed that the Royalists ‘took our army for Goring’s’.⁹¹ This failure of Royalist intelligence led to a premature withdrawal of their forces from the siege which allowed Weldon to relieve Taunton unopposed. Although Goring’s forces re-imposed the siege, the Parliamentary reinforcement meant that Taunton’s capture would take more time – this delay would not only hamper the eventual concentration of the Royalist armies, but would also have a critical impact on their overall plan of campaign.

The Royalists’ northern campaign also ran into problems. The march of the Cavalier army to the north was swiftly detected by the local Parliamentary local commanders – Sir William Brereton commanding the Parliamentary forces besieging Chester, and Sir Samuel Luke commanding the garrison at Newport Pagnell.⁹² Like Luke, Brereton had established a reliable and responsive intelligence network to monitor the movements of the Royalist forces. Brereton reported to the Committee of Both Kingdoms on 2 May, that he had ‘received intelligence, which originally came out of the mouth of one of the Prince’s secretaries that the Princes are upon their advance this way to relieve Chester’.⁹³ The Committee replied on 9 May informing him that ‘by the intelligence we have received, we conceive the King’s march to be towards your parts’.⁹⁴ Understandably, the approach of the Royalist army was monitored closely by Brereton’s intelligence organisation.⁹⁵ However, despite Brereton’s requests for the Scottish army to march south to reinforce him, on 17 May, he had to abandon the siege of Chester when the Royalist army, totalling some 8,000 men reached Stourbridge.⁹⁶ Brereton continued to monitor the movements of the Royalist army and, on 22 May, reported that the Royalists were now ‘heading for Newark’ with ‘10,000 to 12,000 men’.⁹⁷ The accuracy and frequency

⁹⁰ E. 284[9], *An Exact Relation of the raising of the siege, and relieving of the town of Taunton* (London, 1645).

⁹¹ E. 284[11], *A Great Victory obtained against the Enemy, at the raising of the Siege from before Taunton* (London, 1645).

⁹² R. N. Dore (ed.), *The Letter Books of Sir William Brereton* (two volumes, Lancashire and Cheshire Record Society, 1984-90); I.G. Philip (ed.), *Journal of Sir Samuel Luke* (3 volumes, Oxfordshire Record Society, 1953); and H. G. Tibbutt (ed.), *The Letter Books of Sir Samuel Luke*, Historical Manuscripts Commission, JP4, (London, 1963).

⁹³ Dore, *Letter Books*, Volume I, p. 343.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 384.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 420.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 446.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 480.

of Brereton's intelligence reports were much appreciated for they undoubtedly assisted the Parliamentary commanders to plan their own movements, as Lord Fairfax acknowledged in a letter to Brereton on 24 May:

‘I thank you for your frequent intelligence and vigilance to know all the motions of the enemy, which I very much depend on. [Your reports] have better enabled me to direct the union of the forces that are appointed to the securing of these parts’.⁹⁸

Thus the Royalists' plan to march north, revitalising their support in Yorkshire, and perhaps joining up with Montrose's victorious forces, was not only disrupted by Weldon's relief of Taunton and Fairfax's subsequent siege of Oxford, but it was also rapidly detected by the Parliamentary intelligence-gatherers. Once Chester had been relieved and the Royalist army turned eastwards, reporting intelligence of their movements became the responsibility of Sir Samuel Luke. His letter books provide extensive evidence of his intelligence reports. For example, on 24 May, Luke was reporting that ‘it is thought that he [Charles] will march to Newark’.⁹⁹ After the capture of Leicester, on 4 June, Luke reported to Leonard Watson, Fairfax's scout-master, that ‘his Majesty intends to quarter this night at Market Harborough’.¹⁰⁰ This was one of a series of regular reports that Luke made to Watson over the next ten days, including one recounting the fact that ‘Royalist prisoners say the intention is to join with Goring and then fight Fairfax, afterwards, if successful, going north’.¹⁰¹ However, Luke did not always receive correspondingly frequent intelligence reports from Watson, indeed he wrote to him on 14 June ‘demanding intelligence – having given two letters and received none’.¹⁰² As this was the day that Naseby was fought, Watson may perhaps be excused for having higher priorities at that time.

Digby conceded that the Parliamentary actions had ‘staggered our Designe’, and had then ‘retarded’ the Royalist march to the North because Charles feared he would lose Oxford.¹⁰³ Although, on 6 June, Walker had reported that Fairfax's army had left Oxford and ‘that he was

⁹⁸ Ibid, p. 488.

⁹⁹ Tibbutt, *Letter Books*, p. 286.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, p. 299.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, p. 563.

¹⁰² Ibid, p. 320.

¹⁰³ Walker, *Brief Memorials*, p. 127.

marching towards Buckingham’, this news did not alter Charles’ determination to delay the Royalists’ march north while he re-supplied Oxford. Walker described how the Royalist army ‘marched to Daventry, and there stayed five days, both to mark the motions of Fairfax and to [await the return of his forces] from Oxford’. For a whole week, Nicholas was unable to provide any further intelligence about Fairfax’s movements until 13 June, when ‘intelligence [was] given of the Advance of Fairfax to Northampton’. Thus the first intelligence the Royalists received of the Parliamentary army’s advance was not until ‘Fairfax and his army were quartered within five miles of us’. Indeed, a letter from John Rushworth to Sir Samuel Luke, written on the evening of 13 June, stated that some Royalist prisoners, captured that day, believed ‘that the rebels [Roundheads] were gone into Cambs [Cambridgeshire]’.¹⁰⁴ Even on the day of the battle, Royalist intelligence-gathering continued to be unreliable; Walker recounted how ‘one Ruce, the Scout-master, was sent to discover; who, in short time returned with a Lye in his mouth, that he had been two or three miles forward, and could neither discover or hear of the Rebels’. It was only some time after receiving this report that Rupert’s own scouting patrol obtained ‘certain Intelligence of their [the New Model Army] Advance’.¹⁰⁵ This lack of fresh Royalist intelligence information, at a critical time of the campaign, placed Charles at a clear military disadvantage. The Royalists’ intelligence of the position of the Parliamentary army was evidently inaccurate.

The Royalists might have learnt a great deal of information about military movements from the London news-pamphlets – although there is no record of the Royalist intelligencers having used this source. Had they read the pamphlets, the Royalist commanders would have seen that their plan to relieve the siege at Chester was known to Parliament as early as mid April.¹⁰⁶ Two weeks later, the London press reported the plan of ‘Sir Thomas Fairfax and Major General Skippon to advance into the west with 8,000 horse and foot for the relief of Taunton’.¹⁰⁷ Later still, on 10 June just before the battle of Naseby, the pamphlets were accurately reporting the Royalist Oxford army as being ‘not above 13,000’,¹⁰⁸ ‘on Danes’ Hill [Borough Hill, near

¹⁰⁴ Tibbutt, *Letter Books*, p. 575.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, p. 129-130.

¹⁰⁶ E. 278[13], *Mercurius Civicus* (London, 10-17 April 1645).

¹⁰⁷ E. 284[1], *Mercurius Civicus* (London, 24 April-1 May 1645). This deployment was also reported in the *Weekly Account* and the *Kingdomes Weekly Intelligencer*. See also, E. 282[3], *Weekly Account* (London, 30 April- 7 May 1645), and E. 282[2], *Kingdomes Weekly Intelligencer* (London, 29 April- 6 May 1645).

¹⁰⁸ E. 288[8].

Daventry]’¹⁰⁹, and expecting ‘daily a supply of horse from Goring out of the west’¹¹⁰.

Charles was not receiving any comparable intelligence on the position of the New Model Army.

The primary sources confirm that intelligence-gathering had played a crucial part in determining the positioning of the opposing forces before the battle of Naseby. These contemporary accounts make it perfectly clear that Royalist intelligence-gathering had been particularly ineffective, whilst the Parliamentary intelligence operations had given Fairfax a distinct military advantage. Contemporary accounts described how the pursuing Parliamentarians had ‘full knowledge’ of the Royalists movements before both battles.¹¹¹ In addition, before the battle of Naseby, Parliamentary intelligence operations had provided Fairfax with a further crucial piece of intelligence – information which gave him a decisive military advantage.

This key piece of intelligence is referred to in the Parliamentary news-pamphlet, *Perfect Occurrences*, which was published on 20 June. Under the date 13 June, the editor of this pamphlet noted that the king had recently ordered Goring to ‘send him speedily 2,000 horse and 3,000 foot’ to reinforce his army so that he might engage Fairfax. The pamphleteer stated that, having received this order, Goring had then returned the following answer – an answer which had been intercepted by Parliamentary intelligencers:

‘May it please your Majesty,

We are now in a fair way of taking Taunton, and the whole west will be easily reduced to your obedience, this designe we are upon is of exceeding great confidence, and if we should send away any part of our forces, (the Rebels being 4,000 within the towne, our whole strength not above 9,000), our designe would be then quite spoiled and the west in danger to be lost if 5,000 should be drawn away, now I humbly desire that your Majesty would be pleased to send your commands, by this bearer (who will returne within five days) to which I desire to submit, and continue,

¹⁰⁹ E. 288[2].

¹¹⁰ E. 262[8].

¹¹¹ For example, see E. 288[22], *A True Relation of a Victory obtained over the King’s forces, by the army of Sir Thomas Fairfax* (London, 1645).

Your most affectionate servant,
Goring'.¹¹²

The pamphleteer went on to claim that, as Goring had received no response from the king – his letter having been intercepted – the Royalist commander had ‘thought that his judgement was approved of, and that the King did not desire the forces’.¹¹³ Contemporary corroboration of the news-pamphlet report was also provided by Hugh Peters, the Chaplain to the Ordnance train. In a sermon which he preached to both Houses of Parliament on 2 April 1646, Peters referred to the fact that ‘the King’s letters from Goring [had been] taken by the great care of our honest and vigilant Scout Watson, the night before the Naseby battell’. Peters also stated that, had the king received this letter from Goring, he would have been ‘wholly dissuaded from fighting with us then’.¹¹⁴ As this information was part of his sermon, Peters provided no evidence – such as the date of the letters intercepted by Watson – to corroborate this assertion, nor did he give any indication of how he had obtained this information. However, although there is no definite evidence that the letter quoted in the news-pamphlet and the letter described by Peters are the same, both the pamphlet and the sermon make it clear that Fairfax received intelligence from an intercepted letter about Goring’s intentions the night before the battle. Peters’ account seems never to have been challenged, either at the time of his sermon, or subsequently. Peters was a close associate of the senior Parliamentarian commanders, frequently visited the general headquarters, and was thus well placed to record the actions of the chief Roundhead officers before the battle.

The question of whether Goring’s intercepted letter was shown to Fairfax the night before the engagement, or the night after it, is an important one for the overall assessment of the effectiveness of the 1645 intelligence-gathering operations. As this intercepted letter has been cited by many later historians as evidence that Fairfax knew of Goring’s continued action outside Taunton, and that he therefore could not rejoin the king, it is important to explore the other contemporary accounts that mention the interception of this letter. The two most contemporary accounts – the report in *Perfect Occurrences* and the sermon of Hugh Peters – both provide clear evidence that this critical piece of information about the intentions and location of Goring’s force – with its strong complement of cavalry – was known to Fairfax

¹¹² E. 262[10], *Perfect Occurrences of Parliament* (London, 13-20 June 1645).

¹¹³ E. 262[10].

¹¹⁴ H. Peters, *Gods Doings and Mans Duty* (London, 1646), p.19

before the battle. Contradicting this evidence are the reports of Sprigge and Rushworth which state that Fairfax did not receive the intercepted letter until the day **after** the battle.

However, the corroborative evidence of Rushworth is of particular relevance to determining the time it was seen by Fairfax, as a sentence in his account states that both Cromwell and Ireton had had to persuade a reluctant Fairfax to open the king's intercepted letters.¹¹⁵ As Ireton is known to have been seriously wounded during the battle – so seriously that at least one contemporary writer feared that he would die,¹¹⁶ it seems very unlikely that he would – or indeed could – have been summoned to help Cromwell persuade Fairfax to open the king's letters the next day. The fact that Cromwell and Ireton had had to persuade Fairfax to open the letter, coupled with the contemporary evidence of the report in *Perfect Occurrences* and Hugh Peters' sermon, provides compelling evidence that a letter from Goring stating his intention to continue the siege at Taunton – and thus not to join the king – was intercepted **and read** by Fairfax before the battle. As he was concerned about the relative strength of his cavalry, there can be little doubt that Fairfax would have been keen to receive any intelligence information that would have resolved this major concern for him.¹¹⁷ The intelligence contained in this intercepted letter revealed that he had an immediate opportunity to engage the Royalist army while he enjoyed a decisive superiority in numbers – especially in cavalry. Armed with this specific intelligence, it is unsurprising that Fairfax decided to engage the king as soon as possible.

Further support for this conclusion is contained in a letter written to the Speaker on 17 February 1646, in which Fairfax acknowledged the 'diligent and faithful service performed by John Tarrant, a Scout ... who very often hazarded his own life in bringing unto me from the enemy's quarters exact intelligence of their [the Royalists] affairs and most especially at the battle of Naseby'.¹¹⁸ Regrettably, Fairfax's letter does not specify whether Tarrant delivered Goring's intercepted letter before or after the battle. Nevertheless, the fulsomeness of Fairfax's commendation of Tarrant's intelligence work makes it tempting to suggest that he believed Tarrant to have played a key role in helping to bring about the victory – and therefore that he had received his intelligence **before** the engagement took place.

¹¹⁵ Rushworth, *Historical Collections*, Volume I, p. 49

¹¹⁶ E. 288[21].

¹¹⁷ Sprigge, *Anglia Rediviva*, p. 33.

¹¹⁸ Bod. L, Tanner MSS 59, f. 750.

It is difficult to say why both Sprigge and Rushworth have stated that this significant piece of intelligence had not been received until after the battle. One possible explanation is that they made a mistake about the timing of a report which they both viewed as peripheral to the main action. As Luke had reported, 13 June had been a busy day for the Parliamentary commanders and their Council of War, and there is a letter from Rushworth, secretary to Fairfax's Council of War, apologising for the loss of a letter from a Mr. Knightly, a member of the Parliamentary Committee of Prisoners. In his letter, Rushworth explained how 'amongst our great engagement yesterday in securing the papers and letters, this letter of Mr. Knightly, which the general received the night before the battle, is so mislaid as for the present it cannot be found'.¹¹⁹ Another possible explanation is that, as the position of the Royalist Oxford army was already known to the Parliamentarians, and as there had been no reports of Goring's forces being anywhere near Naseby, Sprigge and Rushworth could well have considered the contents of Goring's letter to have been largely irrelevant as it merely confirmed what they already knew. On the other hand, it must be remembered that, when Sprigge wrote *Anglia Rediviva*, he was keen to emphasise the contribution which had been made by the New Model Army to the overthrow of the king, and this determination may have led him to diminish not just the numerical superiority enjoyed by the New Model Army over the Royalists, but also the extent of the intelligence which they possessed. Most modern historians have concluded that Fairfax **did** receive the intercepted letter before the battle, and the evidence of the present thesis tends to support this conclusion. Certainly, it confirms the battle of Naseby was emphatically not 'the result of armies meeting accidentally'.¹²⁰

What is not in dispute is that the intercepted letter gave Fairfax a clear idea of the straitened circumstances at Taunton and, having re-captured Leicester, he moved swiftly to their aid. The news-pamphlets also quickly reported the Royalist movements after the battle of Naseby; for example, in the last week of June, *Mercurius Civicus* published that 'His Majesty was gone to Bristol ... Goring had drawn off his forces from Taunton to join him'.¹²¹ The following week, the news-pamphlets reported the junction of Fairfax's and Massey's forces 'near Lyme',¹²² and a week later still, Goring's force was reported to be '6 or 7,000 horse, 2,500 foot and 8

¹¹⁹ Tibbutt, *Letter Books*, p. 577.

¹²⁰ Marshall, *Intelligence and Espionage*, p. 18.

¹²¹ E. 289[10], *Mercurius Civicus* (London, 18-25 June 1645).

¹²² E.292 [1], *Mercurius Civicus* (London, 26 June – 3 July 1645).

pieces of ordinance'.¹²³ These reports were repeated in other news-pamphlets.¹²⁴ Fairfax himself reported how '1500 Royalists having no intelligence of his [Massey] being in motion, were surprised in a careless posture [when] Major-General Massey fell on them'.¹²⁵ As at Naseby, Parliamentary intelligence during the Langport campaign proved more accurate than that available to the Royalists, and enabled Fairfax to win another decisive victory.

5 Conclusion

Close analysis of the contemporary evidence has shown that, far from being a campaign in which 'intelligence activities were on a primitive level', the Parliamentary campaign of 1645 was one in which intelligence gathering was accurate, effective and swiftly integrated into the military decision-making structure. Even Clarendon agrees that accurate intelligence enabled Fairfax to track the movements of the Royalist Oxford army from a distance outside the effective range of the Royalist scouts, whilst he determined the best time to attack. At all times during these campaigns, the Parliamentary commanders knew the precise location of the Royalist forces, and had a reasonably accurate idea of their intentions. The contemporary accounts confirm that, although Fairfax was never in any doubt as to the position of his opponents, he was concerned about the operational potential of the Royalist horse commanded by Goring and did not wish the Royalist forces to combine before his attack. The interception of Goring's letter thus provided Fairfax with the key piece of intelligence he needed – and one which allowed him to decide to attack the Royalist army when he knew he had a decisive advantage. The Royalists, on the other hand, appear to have had comparatively little idea where their opponents were and from the very beginning of the campaign, news of the movements of the New Model Army came as a surprise to them. Inadequate intelligence before the battles of Naseby and Langport was one of the major factors which caused the Royalist armies to be defeated decisively – and thus lose the Civil War.

¹²³ E.292 [18], *Mercurius Civicus* (London, 3-10 July 1645).

¹²⁴ See also, E.262 [11], *A Perfect Diurnall*, (London, 16-23 June 1645); , E.262 [21], *A Perfect Diurnall*, (London, 7-14 July 1645); E.293 [1], *A Perfect Diurnall*, (London, 8-15 July 1645); E.292 [15], *Kingdom's Weekly Intelligence* (London, 1-8 July 1645) and E.293 [1], *Kingdom's Weekly Intelligence* (London, 8-15 July 1645).

¹²⁵ E.261 [4], *Copies of Three letters from Sir Thomas Fairfax* (London, 1645). See also, E.292 [28] and E.292 [30].

Chapter Nine

Conclusion

1 Introduction

This thesis set out to explore the validity of the current historical perception that military intelligence had little impact upon the outcome of the English Civil War. A detailed exploration of the surviving contemporary accounts has provided a substantial body of evidence to show that military intelligence played a significant – and at times decisive – part in the conflict. As this evidence represents a new development to much of the current historiographical orthodoxy, the present thesis will conclude with an assessment of that orthodoxy before reviewing the extent to which military intelligence was a significant factor in determining the outcome of the fighting.

2 The perceptions of previous historians

The present thesis has shown that previous writers on the contribution made by military intelligence to the outcome of the English Civil War have tended to reach one of two widely divergent conclusions. The most widely accepted conclusion, normally reached by those historians writing general surveys of the conflict, has tended to dismiss the role of intelligence as ‘rudimentary’,¹ ‘primitive’,² or ‘erratic’.³ On the other hand, scholars presenting more focused accounts of individual campaigns – or analyses of specific aspects of the fighting – have normally reached the conclusion that military intelligence played a significant part in determining the outcome of those individual campaigns. The recognition of the part played by intelligence began relatively recently with Firth’s 1902 study of *Cromwell’s Army*, followed by Godwin’s 1904 account of the fighting in Hampshire, and, thirty years later, by Mary Coate’s treatment of the Civil War in Cornwall, in which she described the impact of intelligence information in some detail.⁴ More recently, Jon Day’s review of the 1643 Gloucester and Newbury campaign has recounted how Essex had received ‘a mass of accurate information from Oxford, the camps at Gloucester and Sudeley, and garrisons across central England’.⁵ Day has demonstrated that Luke’s men ‘had provided real time reporting of Rupert’s

¹ M. Toynbee and P. Young, *Cropredy Bridge 1644. The Campaign and the Battle* (Kineton, 1970), p. 73.

² A. Marshall, *Intelligence and Espionage in the Reign of Charles II, 1660-1685* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 18.

³ B. Worden, *The English Civil War 1640-1660* (London, 2009), p. 69.

⁴ C.H. Firth, *Cromwell’s Army: A History of the English Soldier during the Civil Wars, the Commonwealth and the Protectorate* (London, 1902), pp. 63-67; G.N. Godwin, *The Civil War in Hampshire (1642-45)* (London, 1904), pp. 14, 18, 71-72, 112 and 173-177; and M. Coate, *Cornwall in the Great Civil War and Interregnum 1642-1660* (Oxford, 1933), pp. 62, 65, 71, 75-79, 89, and 91.

⁵ J. Day, *Gloucester and Newbury 1643. The Turning Point of the Civil War* (Barnsley, 2007), p. 217.

movements' and that it was one of them who had 'delivered the snippet that saved Essex's army from envelopment north of Tewkesbury'.⁶

The most plausible reason for these widely divergent conclusions is suggested by an examination of the amounts of primary evidence which were considered by particular historians. The books and articles exploring individual campaigns have invariably drawn on all of the available contemporary sources relating to those campaigns; sources which have revealed a large amount of intelligence information. On the other hand, those historians who have sought to provide a more strategic overview of the fighting have, perhaps understandably, been content to rely more heavily on Clarendon's *History*. As the earlier chapters of the present thesis have shown, there is a substantial body of contemporary evidence to support the conclusion that intelligence information played a much more decisive role than Clarendon either realised or was prepared to acknowledge. Clarendon's assertion that, during the Edgehill campaign, 'neither army knew where the other one was'⁷ influenced legions of subsequent historians, who tended to simply repeat this statement as if it were an established fact. For example, both Gardiner and Warburton repeatedly echoed Clarendon's assessment of military intelligence operations apparently oblivious of the growing number of contemporary accounts of intelligence-gathering that were then available.⁸ Indeed, Warburton's comment that, at Edgill, 'the two great armies were in total ignorance of each other's movements' reflected Clarendon's perception exactly.⁹

Clarendon's perception of Civil War military intelligence operations remained unchallenged until Sir Charles Firth evaluated the role of intelligence-gathering in his account of the New Model Army. Firth was thus not only the first historian to explore the accuracy of Clarendon's account of the Civil War by testing it against other contemporary accounts,¹⁰ but he was also the first to acknowledge that 'one of the causes of the success of Fairfax and Cromwell was the efficiency of their intelligence department'.¹¹ His exploration identified a number of areas

⁶ Ibid, p. 217

⁷ E. Hyde, *The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England, together with an Historical View of the Affairs in Ireland* (sixteen books, London, 1702-4), Book VI, p. 79.

⁸ See, for example, E. G. B. Warburton, *Memoirs of Prince Rupert and the Cavaliers*, (three volumes, London, 1849), Volume II, pp. 5-6, 10-11, 62, 101, 132, 209, 273-274, 287, 331, 349, 395 and 442; Volume III, pp. 92-93 and 102-104; and S. R. Gardiner, *History of the Great Civil War 1642-1649* (four volumes, London, 1893), Volume I, pp. 43, 87, 130, 150, 161-162, 169, 173, 198, 321, 362 and 372; Volume II, pp. 16, 31-32, 209-211 and 242.

⁹ Warburton, *Memoirs*, Volume II, p. 10.

¹⁰ See C. H. Firth, 'Clarendon's History of the Rebellion', *English Historical Review*, Volume 19 (1904).

¹¹ Firth, *Cromwell's Army*, p. 67.

where the evidence of the contemporary accounts contradicted Clarendon's conclusions.¹² But, although Firth's warning that Clarendon's account should be used with caution was repeated by Ronald Hutton in 1982,¹³ the wider implications of the findings of the local historians were not immediately followed up – leaving the orthodox view that military intelligence had been ineffective unchallenged at the national level.

Peter Young's later work into the military aspects of the Civil War provided another instance of the more detailed 'local' studies contradicting the 'national' perception that military intelligence-gathering was ineffective. But, because Young focussed his research upon the military aspects of the fighting, his assessments of the contribution made by Civil War military intelligence-gathering were inconclusive. Thus his assessments of the key Civil War battles did not include detailed explorations of the impact that intelligence information had had upon their outcome. One exception may be found in his joint assessment with Margaret Toynbee of the Cropredy Bridge campaign in which, as we have seen, they acknowledged that 'although the intelligence of both sides in the Civil War is generally written off as rudimentary, both Charles and Waller do seem to have been apprised pretty quickly of every movement of the enemy'.¹⁴

Since Young's day, the role played by intelligence during the Civil War has continued to be obscured by conflicting scholarly opinion. Some of the more recent assessments of Stuart intelligence operations have continued to reflect Clarendon's perception. For example, Alan Marshall has asserted that 'intelligence activities were on a primitive level and that most civil war battles were more often the result of armies meeting accidentally rather than as any intelligence coup'.¹⁵ Yet, during the same period, many other historians, including Glenn Foard, Jon Day, David Cooke and Peter Reese, have noted that intelligence-gathering operations had a significant impact on the outcome of key Civil War campaigns. Perhaps Peter Reese's account of the life of General George Monck, the Royalist officer who was Cromwell's commander in Scotland before the restoration of Charles II, contains the most revealing comment about the extent to which Civil War commanders had appreciated the value of their intelligence information. Reese reminds us that Monck had written that 'intelligence is the most powerful means to undertake brave Designs and to avoid great ruines'.¹⁶

¹² See, for example, Firth, 'Clarendon's History', pp. 44-46.

¹³ R. Hutton, 'Clarendon's History of the Rebellion', *English Historical Review* (Volume 97, 1982), p. 88.

¹⁴ Toynbee and Young, *Cropredy Bridge*, p. 73.

¹⁵ A. Marshall, *Intelligence and Espionage in the Reign of Charles II, 1660-1685* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 18.

¹⁶ G. Moncke, Duke of Albermarle, *Observations upon Military and Political Affairs* (London, 1674), pp. 35- 40.

A further characteristic of most of the ‘strategic’ historical studies of the Civil War is that the true contribution made by intelligence-gathering is often overlooked in those accounts which cite information about an event without necessarily exploring *how* that information was obtained. For example, in his assessment of Civil War military leadership, Stanley Carpenter refers to generals’ military ‘intuition’ which is often ‘the firm knowledge of events, terrain, the nature of the enemy and one’s own troops’.¹⁷ Whilst this is undoubtedly true, Carpenter does not appear to acknowledge that it is frequently intelligence information which has provided ‘the firm knowledge’ for the ‘intuition’ that successful generals have subsequently displayed. The lack of specific acknowledgement – and hence recognition – of the underlying and implicit contribution made by intelligence-gathering has often hampered effective assessment of the impact of intelligence upon Civil War military actions. For example, Carpenter’s account of the Civil War operations in the north also includes several references to Parliamentary ‘superior generalship’, but seemingly fails to appreciate that it was very often superior intelligence information that had allowed the Parliamentary commanders to demonstrate their ‘superior generalship’. Similarly, the Royalists had been able to seek reinforcements because they ‘had heard of [Lambert’s] approach’.¹⁸ Although Carpenter describes how, in March 1644 during the action around Bradford, Lambert had been able to defeat the Royalists because he had ‘realised the enemy’s vulnerability’, the generalship of Sir Thomas Fairfax provides evidence that he himself recognised the need for accurate and timely intelligence to inform his decisions. The significance of intelligence-gathering is not acknowledged by Carpenter. This characteristic can be seen in many other historical accounts where generals are said to have ‘heard’ – or ‘learnt’ – of some significant event; however, the contribution of intelligence-gathering to that ‘hearing’ or ‘learning’ is never specifically acknowledged.¹⁹

3 How effectively did Civil War commanders use their intelligence information?

The primary evidence shows very clearly that both sides invested in intelligence-gathering operations as the conflict progressed, and that both sides benefited from these operations. As has been shown in earlier chapters, the memoirs and letters of the military commanders, such as Fairfax, Waller and Hopton, contain numerous references to the intelligence information

¹⁷ S.D.M. Carpenter, *Military Leadership in the English Civil Wars, 1642-1651: ‘The Genius of this Age’* (Abingdon, 2005), p. 26.

¹⁸ Carpenter, *Military Leadership*, pp. 85-86.

¹⁹ See, for example, C. Hibbert, *Cavaliers and Roundheads. The English at War 1642-1649* (London, 1994), p. 206; J. Kenyon, *The Civil Wars of England* (London, 1988), pp. 142-143; H.C.B. Rogers, *Battles and Generals of the Civil Wars 1642-1651* (London, 1968), p. 228; and T. Royle, *Civil War. The Wars of the Three Kingdoms 1638-1660* (London, 2004), p. 241.

that they had received.²⁰ The evidence of these commanders' own accounts proves that intelligence information was critical to their successes.²¹ However, it is equally apparent from all the contemporary accounts that, after Edgehill, the Parliamentarian commanders were quicker to appreciate the military benefits of accurate intelligence and that they implemented an effective intelligence-gathering organisation more rapidly than the Royalists did. The coordination and dissemination of intelligence information was carried out far more effectively by the Parliamentarian Committees than by the Royalist Council of War. The primary evidence confirms that it was not until the victory at Lostwithiel in 1644 that the commanders of the Royalist Oxford army began to realise just how much valuable information could be provided by an effective intelligence organisation. However, by then there was little time for the Royalist to improve their intelligence organisation in order to influence the outcome of the war. By comparison, the contemporary accounts show that the Parliamentarian commanders appear to have realised the value of intelligence information significantly earlier than their Royalist opposite numbers. Indeed, as we have seen, there is good contemporary evidence to suggest that the Royalist intelligencers – and their information – were regarded with suspicion by some of the king's own commanders.

Of all the Civil War commanders, Essex was the first to appoint a Scout-master General and the contemporary accounts indicate that the Parliamentarians were the first to appoint scout-masters as part of their County Associations – although these appointments were later to be emulated by the Royalists.²² Whilst both sides established intelligence organisations as the fighting spread, and improved their communications in order to be able to pass the intelligence information generated by those organisations more quickly and securely, contemporary sources provide substantially more evidence of superior Parliamentarian intelligence-gathering. In particular, the writings of Brereton and Luke describe an increasingly responsive and innovative intelligence-gathering operation and this conclusion is supported by the evidence contained in other contemporary accounts; for example, in William Lilley's own observations about the Parliamentarian intelligence-gathering organisation in Oxford.²³ We do know of

²⁰ See, for example, T. Fairfax, *Short Memorials of Thomas, Lord Fairfax* (London, 1699), p. 416; *CSPD, 1644*, p. 301; and Clarendon MSS, 1738, ff. 1, 4, and 6.

²¹ See, for example, Fairfax, *Short Memorials*, p. 435; E. 97[2], *The Victorious and Fortunate Proceedings of Sir William Waller* (London, 12 April 1643); and Clarendon MSS, 1738, ff. 1, 4, and 6.

²² Anon, *A List of Officers claiming the sixty thousand pounds &c. granted by His Sacred Majesty for the relief of his truly loyal and indigent party* (London, 1663), pp. 45 and 128.

²³ See, for example, BL, Add MSS, 11331, f. 18; and BL, Add MSS, 11332, ff. 80-5; I.G. Philip (ed.), *The Journal of Sir Samuel Luke* (3 volumes, The Oxfordshire Record Society, 1947); and W. Lilley, *The Last of the Astrologers. A History of his Life and Times* (First published 1715, second edition Scholar Press, Yorkshire, 1974), p. 77.

similar Royalist intelligence-gathering operations, for example, the spy network set up by John Barwick in London in 1644-45 – but, as far as we can tell from the evidence of the primary sources, their impact was less decisive.²⁴ Certainly there is no evidence that the Royalist commanders ever established a postal interception and decyphering organisation as effective as that established by the Parliamentarians from 1643 onwards. As 1645 progressed, the capture and de-coding, first of the king's correspondence at Naseby, and then of Digby's correspondence which was captured at Sherborn in October 1645, showed that the Parliamentarians were able to decypher the greater part of their enemies' intercepted messages – causing enormous damage to the Royalist cause. As the Parliamentarians gained more territory moreover, so their sources of intelligence increased – and the Royalist sources correspondingly diminished. As the battles of Edgehill, Newbury and Naseby demonstrated to the Parliamentarians (and as Lostwithiel had to the Royalists), there were definite intelligence advantages to be gained from fighting battles in areas where the majority of the local populace favoured one's own cause.

Intelligence information could be of no value unless it was used by commanders in time to influence the outcome of military actions.²⁵ As this thesis has shown, in the majority of cases, Civil War commanders acted upon their intelligence information in a timely manner, thereby allowing that information to make a vital contribution to the outcome of local military actions and skirmishes. However, there were many occasions when intelligence information was not used to the best possible effect. For example, in 1644, the Parliamentary armies of Essex and Waller, operating together, had an excellent opportunity to assault Oxford, capture the king, and bring the war to a decisive end. Essex's subsequent decision not to continue to co-operate with Waller, to divide the Parliamentary forces and for Waller to contain the Royalist army while he led his own army into the west, wasted the opportunity to use their numerical superiority to defeat Charles decisively in 1644. Further opportunities were lost later in that year during the Second Newbury engagement. Up until this point, the successes and failures of intelligence operations had been fairly evenly shared between the Royalist and Parliamentary commanders. However, in 1645 Royalist intelligence operations were markedly inferior to those of the Parliamentarians. The more accurate and timely Parliamentary intelligence information contributed significantly to the decisive victories won by Fairfax at both Naseby and Langport.

²⁴ P. Barwick, *The Life of John Barwick* (London, 1728), p. 46.

²⁵ See Chapter 3, above.

Despite the distaste which some individual Royalists clearly felt for intelligencers, the senior commanders generally responded well to their intelligencers' reports. Research for this thesis has revealed only two examples of accurate intelligence information not being effectively used by Royalist commanders. One is during the Gloucester campaign when the Royalist commanders did not respond quickly enough to their intelligence of Essex's move towards Cirencester.²⁶ The other is Rupert's rejection of Newcastle's intelligence that the Allied armies before York were expected to split up and go their separate ways once York had been relieved. In both cases, the Royalists lost the subsequent military actions (at Newbury and Marston Moor). Had the Royalists acted promptly upon those pieces of intelligence the outcome of the Civil War would almost certainly have been very different.

4 The impact of intelligence-gathering upon the outcome of the English Civil War

One of the chief aims of the present thesis was to establish to what extent the outcome of the English Civil War had been influenced by intelligence-gathering operations. The research which has been carried out makes it very clear that intelligence-gathering operations were conducted widely and that intelligence information made a decisive contribution to military operations on both sides. Contrary to Clarendon's perception, much useful military information was derived from a variety of intelligence sources. Not only do the surviving writings of Civil War generals confirm their dependence upon timely intelligence reports, but the importance of intelligence is widely confirmed in the accounts of the fighting by other participants. For example, the passing of intelligence information is recorded by both Parliamentary and Royalist soldiers, such as Nehemiah Wharton and Richard Symonds;²⁷ as well as by senior Cavalier and Roundhead officers, such as Colonels Slingsby and Birch.²⁸ The interception of mail and decyphering of messages was used increasingly from 1643 onwards.²⁹ The newspapers of the period also provide numerous examples of military intelligence information. Of course, not all of this information was correct – and some of it was contradictory – but the primary evidence shows clearly that the importance of gathering military intelligence was recognised by both sides from very early on in the war. An analysis of Firth's manuscript copies of Prince Rupert's correspondence with his commanders, for example, reveals that

²⁶ See Warburton, *Memoirs*, Volume II, pp. 203-204 and 287-288.

²⁷ See, for example, *CSPD, 1642*, pp. 391-392; and C. E. Long (ed.), *Richard Symonds: Diary of the Marches kept by the Royal army during the Great Civil War* (Camden Society, 1859), p. 8.

²⁸ See, for example, Bod. L., Clarendon MSS, 1738, ff. 2, 3 and 7; and J. Roe (ed.), *Military Memoir of Colonel John Birch* (Camden Society, 1873), pp. 4, 50 and 70.

²⁹ See, for example, C. H. Firth, 'Thomas Scot's Account of his actions as Intelligencer during the Commonwealth', *English Historical Review* (Volume 13, No. 51, 1897), p. 527.

almost two thirds of all these letters contained intelligence information about the Parliamentarian forces.³⁰

The reporting of counter-intelligence operations confirms that Civil War commanders recognised the impact that intelligence information was having upon the outcome of the fighting. The Bullman affair, described in Chapter Three, demonstrates the apprehension which was felt about successful enemy intelligencers – and shows how determined and ruthless were the actions taken to eradicate the intelligence provided by such men. In addition to the traditional sources of information provided by scouts, the very nature of the civil conflict encouraged the active participation of local people. As in any civil war, the participation of the population created considerable problems for both sides as it made identification of the true enemy more difficult; particularly when the conflict offered local people many opportunities to provide information, food and money – or to carry messages. Civilian participation in the conflict resulted in increasingly violent behaviour by soldiers of both sides as they sought to extract money, information or confessions from local people and there is considerable evidence of increasing coercion as the war progressed.³¹ Indeed, in the printed ‘Catechisms’ which were produced for soldiers on both sides, soldiers were authorised to use ‘torments ... in some cases ... to finde out the truth’.³² Contemporary accounts provide many examples of brutal treatment being afforded to civilians on the pretext of legitimate military activities. For example the Cavalier journal, *Mercurius Rusticus*, described how the steward of the Royalist Sir John Lucas, was ‘pricked with drawn sword [and] a dozen candles [were] lighted ... and held to and under his hands, and lighted match [was] applied between his fingers’ in an attempt to extract information.³³ The primary sources make it clear that the soldiers themselves believed that the local population frequently participated in intelligence-gathering operations, and made little distinction between spies, messengers and ‘intelligencers’.

5 Was intelligence the factor which decided the outcome of the English Civil War?

For many years, historians have debated which were the crucial factors which enabled Parliament to defeat the king decisively. It seems logical to suggest that Parliament won the

³⁰ Bod. L, Firth MSS, C6 and C7, *Prince Rupert's Correspondence*. 334 out of the 569 letters which are contained in these two volumes reported intelligence about Parliamentarian forces.

³¹ See, for example, E. 103[3], *Mercurius Rusticus* (Oxford, 20 May 1643); and E. 106[12], *Mercurius Rusticus* (Oxford, 10 June 1643).

³² See R. Ram, *The Souldiers Catechisme* (London, 1646), p. 10; and T. Swadlin, *The Souldiers Catechisme* (Oxford, 1645), p. 11.

³³ E. 103[3], *Mercurius Rusticus* (Oxford, 20 May 1643).

Civil War because its armies won the final crucial battles.³⁴ But which military factors enabled the Parliamentary armies to win those battles? Could intelligence operations have made possible an earlier conclusion to the fighting? Earlier chapters of this thesis have shown how intelligence operations had enabled forces on either side to win local superiority – but, until Charles had been decisively defeated in the field, he could not be forced to negotiate an agreement with Parliament. Several factors have been frequently cited by scholars as reasons for the Parliamentarians’ success, for example, the fact that Parliament controlled most of the wealth-producing centres of the country – particularly London.³⁵ Likewise the Parliamentary control of the Navy has been identified as another major factor in their final victory.³⁶ Similarly, the superiority of Parliamentary munitions and *materiel* have also been cited as a decisive factor – along with their numerical superiority (especially after the intervention of the Scottish army in 1644).³⁷ But another important factor which goes a long way towards explaining the Parliamentarians’ military successes has hitherto been almost entirely overlooked.

As historians are now beginning to realise, intelligence information played a decisive role in the major battles which were won by Parliament. Although the previous chapters have shown that there is strong evidence of active and comprehensive intelligence-gathering operations being conducted throughout the Civil War, of still more importance is the evidence reviewed in the present thesis which suggests that military intelligence made an important contribution to the outcome of the fighting. The impact of military intelligence information was cumulative as local successes influenced directly the national ‘grand designs’ of each side. Ultimately, to win the war one side had to decisively defeat the other. As this result had not been achieved at Edgehill, both sides sought to reinforce their main army using forces drawn from all parts of the country. The impact of intelligence-gathering thus spread as each side sought to gain the local superiority that was needed in order to send reinforcements to their main army. For example, contemporary accounts reveal that the intelligence information received by the heavily-outnumbered northern Parliamentary army was of critical importance in enabling Fairfax to keep the much larger Royalist forces embroiled in the north, and thereby to prevent the earl of Newcastle from sending reinforcements to join the main Royalist field army at Oxford. Further south, intelligence information was vital to both Hopton and Waller as they

³⁴ See, for example, M. Wanklyn, *Decisive Battles of the English Civil Wars: Myth and Reality* (Barnsley, 2006), pp. 200-206.

³⁵ C. Hill, *The Century of Revolution 1603-1714* (London, 1974), pp. 99-100.

³⁶ B. Capp, *Cromwell's Navy. The Fleet and the English Revolution 1648-1660* (Oxford, 1989), p. 2.

³⁷ Wanklyn, *Decisive Battles*, p. 203.

struggled to prevent either side sending reinforcements to their main army. Contrary to Marshall's perception that Civil War battles 'were more often the result of armies meeting accidentally',³⁸ the evidence of the contemporary sources confirms that intelligence information informed and influenced every major military action from 1642 to 1646.

As has been explored in the previous chapters of this thesis, the primary evidence reveals that intelligence-gathering played a significant role in each of the military campaigns. Although Clarendon denigrated the contribution made by intelligence to the Edgehill campaign, there is clear evidence that the proceedings of the Royalist Council of War were being reported regularly to Essex by Blake, the Parliamentary spy. The contemporary evidence suggests that Essex delayed his pursuit of the Royalist army as he preferred to trap it between two Parliamentary forces. It also indicates that the Parliamentary commanders had intelligence of the Royalist Council of War's plans, although they were not aware that Charles had subsequently changed this plan when Rupert's scouts reported the latest position of the Parliamentary army. Contemporary accounts show clearly that, when the Royalist scouts discovered the Parliamentary army on the evening before the battle, this intelligence was received in time for the Royalist army to concentrate and take up its battle formation without hindrance from the Parliamentary forces. If the Royalist scouts had not detected Essex's army on the evening of 22 October, it is perfectly possible that Essex's intelligence reports would have enabled him to realise his plan to trap the Royalist army before London's defences. As the confrontation at Turnham Green was to suggest, the result of any such engagement might well have resulted in a decisive Parliamentary victory – a victory which would have had its roots in superior Parliamentary intelligence.

There is a great deal of contemporary evidence of intelligence-gathering having an impact on the outcome of the subsequent campaigns as both sides sought to reinforce their main army. In 1643, Waller used the intelligence of the Royalist dispositions around Highnam gathered by the Gloucester garrison to destroy Lord Herbert's 'Welsh' army before it could join the king. Hopton realised that he had the opportunity to attack the Parliamentary army at Stratton when he received the intelligence that Stamford had divided his army and detached his horse. Accurate intelligence informed Waller's movements before Lansdown and Roundway Down; he lost those battles because the fighting skills of his men were outmatched by the courage of the out-numbered Royalist forces. Contemporary accounts of Fairfax's engagements with

³⁸ Marshall, *Intelligence and Espionage*, p. 18.

Newcastle's forces in the north also provide evidence of how intelligence information informed the deployment of both armies. It was the failure of his men to carry out his orders that caused Fairfax problems at both Seacroft Moor and Adwalton Moor – not a failure of intelligence as both Fairfax and Newcastle possessed accurate information about their opponents. Intelligence information also played a particularly important role in the Gloucester and Newbury campaigns at the end of 1643. Initially faulty Royalist intelligence persuaded Charles that Gloucester would surrender to him personally; subsequently superior Parliamentary intelligence enabled Essex to manoeuvre his army in such a way as to overcome all Royalist attempts to overcome him in the Cotswolds. Of crucial importance to the Newbury campaign was the intelligence information reported by Luke's spies as it enabled Essex, not only to break clear from the encircling Royalist forces, but also to capture a substantial supply convoy that had just arrived at Cirencester. Although the Royalist army was able to beat Essex into Newbury, the superior Parliamentary scouting of the battlefield enabled Essex's army to gain a decisive advantage by occupying key geographic features before the battle. At the very end of 1643, Parliamentary intelligence-gathering gave Waller key information about the Royalist dispositions and scouting activities – information which allowed him to decisively defeat Hopton's forces at Alton.³⁹

Clear evidence of the impact of accurate and timely intelligence information also emerged throughout the campaigns of 1644. Once again, the contemporary evidence shows that both Waller and Hopton were receiving accurate intelligence information before the battle at Cheriton; an impromptu Royalist attack, apparently made without the knowledge or consent of the Royalist commanders, was the cause of the Royalist defeat – not faulty intelligence. The contemporary accounts of the subsequent campaigns of 1644 provide a mass of evidence to show that intelligence information played a significant part in each action. Rupert's marches to relieve Newark and, later in the year, York, were both informed by intelligence information of the Parliamentary positions. At York, Newcastle had relevant intelligence about the inherent instability of the relationships of the Allied army commanders: intelligence which Rupert set aside in his desire to carry out what he considered to be the king's higher priority order to engage the Allied army at Marston Moor. There is some contemporary evidence to suggest that the attack of the Allied Army was ordered following intelligence information that the Royalist army was standing down for the evening. The actions further south at Cropredy Bridge and Lostwithiel also reflect the impact of intelligence-gathering as there is a substantial body of

³⁹ See Chapter 6, above.

evidence to show that, whilst both Waller and Charles were well informed by their scouts and intelligencers during the Cropredy Bridge campaign, the intelligence information played a decisive role in the Royalist victory at Lostwithiel – especially as the Parliamentary army received virtually no intelligence when it was isolated by the Royalist armies. The fact that the Royalist commanders were surprised by the amount of intelligence they were receiving from the local people is an important indication of the relative paucity of intelligence information that they had been receiving during their operations around Oxford and the Thames Valley.⁴⁰ The failure of the Parliamentary commanders to win decisive victories around Newbury in the autumn of 1644 may be attributed partly to the failure of their intelligence organisation.

The campaigns of 1645 demonstrated just how decisive the impact of intelligence-gathering could be. Both at Naseby and at Langport, intelligence information enabled the New Model army to engage the Royalist forces from a position of considerable numerical and tactical superiority – and to win the decisive victories that had eluded them since Edgehill three years before. It was better intelligence that informed Fairfax of Goring's continued embroilment around Taunton, intelligence that informed him of the position of the Royalist army which allowed him to attack decisively and without warning at a place of his own choosing. After Naseby, it was more accurate intelligence which informed him of the urgent need to move swiftly to the west and defeat Goring's forces decisively at Langport. The appointment of Fairfax as Lord General meant that the New Model Army was commanded by a man whose experience in the North had made him well aware of the importance of military intelligence. Not only was this awareness of the importance of intelligence information crucial to the outcome of the campaign, but the movements of the Royalists, initially towards Chester and then towards Newport Pagnell, took their army into the areas controlled by two other Parliamentary commanders who were equally aware of the importance of intelligence-gathering – Sir William Brereton and Sir Samuel Luke. Yet again, the evidence of the contemporary sources proves that the accurate intelligence provided by these two Parliamentary commanders had a decisive impact on the outcome of both the battle at Naseby where it both enabled Fairfax to deploy the Parliamentary army at a distance outside the range of the Royalist scouts, and also informed Fairfax that the Royalist army was divided and that he had a marked numerical superiority. During the battle at Langport, Fairfax's timely intelligence allowed him to surprise the Royalist cavalry the day before the battle and informed him of Goring's intention to retreat on the day of the battle.

⁴⁰ See Chapter 7, above.

The contribution of intelligence information to determining the outcome of the final battles of the Civil War should not be underestimated as it allowed Parliament to achieve the decisive victories over the king's armies which it had sought to achieve since 1642 – victories which led to Charles' surrender in 1646.⁴¹ Of course, intelligence information did not win the battles by itself, any more than the intelligence information provided by Bletchley Park alone helped the Allies to win the Second World War. But the intelligence gathered during the Civil War did do a very great deal to help the Parliamentary armies to emerge victorious – just as failures in the Royalist intelligence-gathering at critical times denied their commanders the intelligence information they needed to win the war. The primary sources contain an overwhelming amount of evidence to show that intelligence operations merit recognition and inclusion as a significant factor in determining the outcome of the English Civil War.

6 After the English Civil War

Having won the Civil War, it is clear that the Parliamentary commanders recognised the contribution which had been made by intelligence to their success. Consequently they developed their newly acquired intelligence-gathering skills during the years of the Protectorate and Interregnum. It is particularly significant that, during his campaigns in Scotland, George Monck strengthened and extended the scout-master's role, insisting that it be maintained at a time when Cromwell was seeking to make reductions in Monck's force levels. As Monck wrote to Cromwell:

‘there has been as much good service done for the public by the intelligence I have gotten by the help of a Deputy-Scoutmaster-General, than hath been done by the forces in preventing the rising of parties’.⁴²

The advantages of efficient scouting had been recognised by the Parliamentary forces for their scouting patrols played an important part in determining Cromwell's dispositions for the battles of Preston, Dunbar and Worcester.⁴³ There was no longer any delay in appointing a Scout-master General to assist in the campaigns of the 1650's. Cromwell appointed a Dr Henry Jones, sometime Bishop of Clogher, to be his Scout-master General during his operations in

⁴¹ See Chapter 8, above.

⁴² BL, Clarke MSS, XL, f. 21.

⁴³ See, for example, H.C.B. Rogers, *Battles and Generals of the Civil Wars 1642-1651* (London, 1968), pp. 280-282; P. Reese, *Cromwell's Masterstroke. Dunbar 1650* (Barnsley, 2006), pp. 77-78; and M. Atkin, *Cromwell's Crowning Mercy. The Battle of Worcester 1651* (Stroud, 1998), pp. 60, 62 and 65.

Ireland, whilst Mr George Downing was appointed as Scout-master General during Cromwell's actions in Scotland.

During the Protectorate, the lessons of the Civil Wars were absorbed and the work of the intelligence services was strengthened. These improvements to the gathering of intelligence were not restricted to the military arena. On 1 July 1649 Thomas Scot was appointed by Parliament to a national position 'to manage the intelligence both at home and abroad'.⁴⁴ With the introduction of national Postal Services came the increased use of the interception and deciphering of mails to obtain intelligence information; Scot described how intercepted letters were 'decyphered by a learned gentleman incomparably able that way, Dr Wallis of Oxford'.⁴⁵ Also while Scot was in charge of intelligence-gathering the number of informants was steadily increased and intelligence reports were more widely accepted from loyal local people.⁴⁶ More people became involved in intelligence operations; some army officers, such as Colonel Joseph Bampffield, emerged as professional intelligence agents, but women also became more fully involved in intelligence operations.⁴⁷ Of potentially most significance, however, was the formal acknowledgement of the importance of intelligence to national security when, in July 1653, the responsibility for all aspects of intelligence-gathering was formally placed under the control of John Thurloe, Cromwell's Secretary of State. Thurloe undertook the crucial role of co-ordinating the intelligence-gathering services and connecting them to the central offices of government.⁴⁸ Clearly the effectiveness of the intelligence services operated during the Interregnum was recognised for, at the Restoration, the Protectorate intelligence organisation was taken on by Charles II who thereby acknowledged that much of the national experience of intelligence-gathering had been drawn 'from the experience of its former enemies'.⁴⁹ Certainly Thurloe had created a structure which would provide a basis for intelligence-gathering 'for generations to come'.⁵⁰

7 Avenues for further research

Research for the present thesis has identified a number of avenues which it would be profitable for future historians of military intelligence in the English Civil War to explore. A detailed

⁴⁴ CSPD, 1649-50, p. 221. See also Marshall, *Intelligence and Espionage*, p. 21.

⁴⁵ C. H. Firth, 'Thomas Scot's Account of his Actions as Intelligencer during the Commonwealth', *English Historical Review* (Volume 12, No. 45, 1897), p. 121.

⁴⁶ Marshall, *Intelligence and Espionage*, p. 22.

⁴⁷ J. Loftus and P.H. Hardacre (ed.), *Colonel Joseph Bampffield's Apology: written by himself 1685* (London, 1993). See also J. Loftus (ed.), *The Memoirs of Anne, Lady Halkett and Ann, Lady Fanshawe* (Oxford, 1979).

⁴⁸ P. Aubrey, *Mr Secretary Thurloe, Cromwell's Secretary of State, 1652-1660* (London, 1990), p. 33.

⁴⁹ Marshall, *Intelligence and Espionage*, pp. 20 and 29.

⁵⁰ Aubrey, *Mr Secretary Thurloe*, p. 128.

exploration of how the role of the scout-master was developed in the English regions between 1642 and 1646 would be most useful, for example. Equally helpful would be further research into how spying was improved and its results incorporated into the national intelligence organisation that began to emerge during the Protectorate. An evaluation of the conduct of intelligence-gathering by the local county committees and associations would also be invaluable, as would further research into the funding of Civil War intelligence-gathering operations. The very considerable contemporary documentation which survives in the National Archives relating to the funding and management of local organisations would be invaluable here. In view of what this thesis has revealed, it would be interesting to review some more of the orthodox accounts of the remaining key Civil War campaigns – such as Adwalton Moor, Lostwithiel and Langport – in order to ensure that the impact of military intelligence upon the outcome of those campaigns has been sufficiently evaluated. Research into these subjects would not only supplement assessments of Thurloe's contribution to intelligence operations during the Interregnum, but would also provide an important link between previous research into Elizabethan intelligence operations and previous research into the subsequent developments of English intelligence operations after the Restoration.

The research which has been carried out for this thesis has shown clearly that the contribution made by intelligence operations to the result of the English Civil War was substantially more significant than has been acknowledged for the past 365 years. The evidence of the primary sources shows clearly that intelligence information played an important role in determining the outcome of all the major Civil War battles. The use of military intelligence therefore deserves to be recognised as a key factor which influenced the outcome of the Civil War itself. The contemporary sources show that, far from being 'primitive', the military intelligence techniques and organisation implemented during 1642 and 1646 provided a solid foundation for the future development of military intelligence operations during the Protectorate and Restoration.

ENGLISH CIVIL WAR SCOUT-MASTERS 1642-46

As no comprehensive list of Civil War scout-masters currently exists, the following appendices list all the scout-masters who have been identified during the course of research for the present thesis. Given the nature of their work, scout-masters presumably preferred not to draw too much attention to themselves. Even so, a surprising number can still be identified, as the following list shows.

Appendix 1: Royalist Scout-masters

John Bennet. Bennet claimed to have been the king's scout-master in Berkshire.¹

Sir Charles Blunt. Blunt was the son of Sir Richard Blount of Sissinghurst, Kent. He had been knighted in Ireland in 1618 and was appointed to Oxford Army. Blunt was reported to be Scout-master General to Prince Rupert at Brentford in 1642 and was still in post at Newbury in 1643.² In May 1644, Blunt was reported as being deputy governor of Donnington Castle, prior to being appointed Governor of Greenland House in 1644.³ These appointments would have reflected the increasingly common practice of appointing scout-masters as governors of frontline garrisons. Shortly after being praised by the Earl of Forth,⁴⁵ Blunt was reportedly killed by one of his own officers during a scuffle with a sentry in Oxford in June 1644.⁶

George Bradbury. Bradbury claimed to have been the king's scout-master in Stafford.⁷

Ludowick Bray. Ray claimed to have been the king's scout-master in Nottingham.⁸

Thomas Cartwright. Cartwright claimed to have been the king's scout-master in Stafford.⁹

William Cockayne. Cockayne claimed to have been the Scout-master General and Quarter-master General in Devon.¹⁰

John Edwards. Edwards claimed to have been the king's scout-master in Carmarthen.¹¹

¹ Anon, *A List of Officers claiming the sixty thousand pounds &c. granted by His Sacred Majesty for the relief of his truly loyal and indigent party* (London, 1663).

² B. A. H. Parritt, *The Intelligencers: The story of British Military Intelligence up to 1914* (Ashford, 1971), p.4.

³ I. G. Philip (ed.), *The Journal of Sir Samuel Luke* (3 volumes, Oxfordshire Record Society, 1950), Volume III, p.258.

⁴ *CSPD, 1644*, p. 163.

⁵ *CSPD, 1644*, p. 163.

⁶ P.R. Newman, *Royalist Officers in England and Wales, 1642-1660* (New York, 1981), p. 33. See also E. 50[26], *The Kingdoms Weekly Intelligencer* (London, 4-11 June 1644); and E. 50[32], *The Spie* (London, 6-13 June 1644).

⁷ Anon, *A List of Officers claiming the sixty thousand pounds &c. granted by His Sacred Majesty for the relief of his truly loyal and indigent party* (London, 1663).

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

Thomas Hancks. Hancks claimed to have been the king's scout-master in Stafford.¹²

John Holland. Holland claimed to have been the king's scout-master in Leicester.¹³

Colonel Michael Hudson. Born 1605, Hudson took holy orders and was appointed Rector of Cliffe, Northamptonshire in 1641. He served as a colonel under Newcastle and, in 1644, he was Scout-master General to the Northern Army. He attended Charles I during his flight to join the Scots and was murdered in 1648.¹⁴

Captain Moore. On 8 April 1645, Moore was reported to have been scout-master to the Earl of Northampton.¹⁵

Sir William Neale. Described as six foot tall, very beautiful in youth, with great courage but a great plunderer and cruel,¹⁶ Neale joined the staff of Prince Rupert in 1643 and was appointed as his Scout-master General. He was present at the capture of Cirencester in 1643 and fought at relief of Newark when he helped save Rupert's life. Neale was appointed Governor of Hawarden Castle, Flintshire in 1644 and was ordered to surrender the castle in 1646. Neale then passed into obscurity; he died on 24 March 1691 and was buried in Convent Garden Church in London.¹⁷

Ralph Pierpoint. Pierpoint claimed to have been the king's scout-master in Hereford.¹⁸

James Roberts. Roberts claimed to have been the king's scout-master in Radnor.¹⁹

Sir Francis Ruce. Clarendon identified Ruce as the Royalist scout-master at the battle of Naseby.²⁰

William Smart. Smart claimed to have been the king's scout-master in Stafford.²¹

Mr Smith. Smith was identified as Scout-master General of the Northern Army by the Duchess of Newcastle.²²

Appendix 2 Parliamentarian Scout-masters

Samuel Bedford. Bedford was initially appointed as deputy to Sir Samuel Luke and was subsequently appointed Scout-master General to the Committee of Both Kingdoms.²³

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ N. Cranfield, *Michael Hudson* (DNB). See also, P.R. Newman, *Royalist Officers in England and Wales, 1642-1660* (New York, 1981), p. 203.

¹⁵ E. 279[8].

¹⁶ A. Clark (ed.), *Brief Lives, chiefly of contemporaries, set down by John Aubrey, between the years 1669 and 1696* (two volumes, London, 1898), Volume 2, p.93.

¹⁷ See also I. Roy, *Sir William Neale* (DNB).

¹⁸ Anon, *List of Indigent Officers*.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ E. Hyde, *The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England, together with an Historical View of the Affairs in Ireland* (sixteen books, London, 1702-4), Book IX, pp. 38-39.

²¹ Anon, *List of Indigent Officers*.

²² M. Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, *The Lives of William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle and of his wife, Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle* (London, 1872), p. 32.

George Bulmer. Captain Bulmer was identified as scout-master in the Thames Valley in 1643.²⁴

John Gardiner. Gardiner was paid as scout-master to Colonel Sir John Noxworth's Kent regiment.²⁵

John Harding. Harding was also paid as scout-master to Colonel Sir John Noxworth's Kent regiment.²⁶

Theodore Jennings. Jennings was identified as Scout-master General to the Earl of Denbigh when he was captured and taken to Wallingford Castle.²⁷

Kirby. Kirby was identified by the Royalists who captured him as the 'scout-master of Warwick'.²⁸

Sir Samuel Luke. Luke was appointed by Essex to be his Scout-master General in January 1643. Subsequently appointed governor of Newport Pagnell in November 1643 and relinquished his post as part of Self Denying Ordinance (although he was extended in post during Naseby campaign).²⁹

Name unknown. James Chudleigh, the Parliamentarian commander was clearly unimpressed by the 'intolerable neglect of our Deputy Scout-master' at Sourton Down on 25 April 1643.³⁰

Major Patson. Patson was reported as being Scout-master General to General Hammond at the surrender of Exeter.³¹

James Pitsom. Pitsom was reported as Sir William Waller's scout-master in 1644.³²

Lt. Col. Roe. Roe was reported as being Scout-master General to the City of London.³³

Richard Terry. Terry was reported as being scout-master to Coventry.³⁴

Leonard Watson. Watson had originally been appointed as Manchester's Scout-master General in the Eastern Association. He was a keen supporter of Cromwell and he was appointed as Scout-master General to the New Model Army in 1645.³⁵

²³ E.303 [2].

²⁴ E. 249[2]. See also, I.G. Philip (ed.), *Journal of Sir Samuel Luke* (three volumes, The Oxfordshire Record Society, 1947), Volume I, p. 68.

²⁵ See TNA, *Commonwealth Exchequer Papers*, SP28/130, ff. 26/27.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ E. 9[5], *Mercurius Aulicus* (Oxford, 24 August 1644).

²⁸ E.40 [32].

²⁹ S. Kelsey, *Sir Samuel Luke* (DNB). See also Philip, *Journal*; and H. G. Tibbutt (ed.), *The Letter Books of Sir Samuel Luke: 1644-45* (Historical Manuscripts Commission JP4, HMSO, 1963).

³⁰ E. 100[6], *A Most Miraculous and Happy Victory* (London, 1643).

³¹ E. 319[22], *Powtheram Castle at Exeter, Taken by Sir Thomas Fairfax* (London, 31 January 1646).

³² M. Wanklyn, 'A General Much Maligned. The Earl of Manchester as Army Commander in the Second Newbury Campaign', *War in History* (Volume 14, Number 2, 2007), pp. 149 and 153.

³³ E. 288[38].

³⁴ *CSPD, 1644*, p. 149.

³⁵ J. Sprigge, *Anglia Rediviva: England's Recovery* (London, 1647), p 31.

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Abbreviations

BL	The British Library, London
Bod L	The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford
CSPD	Calendar of State Papers (Domestic)
E	The British Library, Thomason Tracts
SP	State Papers
TNA	The National Archive, Kew

MANUSCRIPT PRIMARY SOURCES

The National Archives

SP 21 (Committee of Both Kingdoms).
 SP 28 (Commonwealth Exchequer Papers).

The British Library

Additional MSS 11331-3 (Sir William Brereton's papers).
 18778-80 (House of Commons Journals).
 18979 (Fairfax Papers).
 18980-2 (Prince Rupert's Papers).
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Egerton MSS 785-7 (The Letter Books of Sir Samuel Luke).

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