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### Billeting in England During the Reign of Charles I, 1625-1649: The Case of Tickhill/Yorkshire

#### *1. Billeting in England during the reign of Charles I, 1625-1649*

The billeting of troops, and the associated taking of free quarter became issues of vital importance during the reign of Charles I. The sheer number of references to billeting in the State Papers and Privy Council records are an indication of the amount of government time devoted to it; the number of letters concerning billeting that passed to and from officers of State and local officials are evidence of the extent to which it concerned the communities involved, while its inclusion in the Petition of Right in 1628 testifies to its emergence as an issue of constitutional significance. However, apart from isolated studies dealing with strictly local examples<sup>1</sup> no significant work has been attempted on the topic to date. Part of the reason for this omission undoubtedly lies in the diverse and often fragmentary nature of the sources. There is no consolidated body of material on which to work, and it is a question of trying to piece together and make sense of a great variety of scattered references. This presents considerable difficulties for a short paper such as this. Nevertheless, I will attempt to draw on the available evidence to show some recognisable patterns in the context of the organisation and impact of billeting during this period.

The aim of this paper is twofold. Firstly, the way in which billeting was organized will be described in brief, with particular reference to the twin issues of legality and authority. In my view many of the problems associated with the presence of troops arose out of failures in organisation. Secondly, I shall take one particularly well documented incident, and use it to illustrate the way in which billeting imposed both social and economic burdens upon the communities involved.

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<sup>1</sup> Lindsay Boynton, *Billeting: The example of the Isle of Wight*, in: *English Historical Review* (1959), pp. 23-40. Another example is Richard Cust's work on billeting in Hampshire in the 1620s. The results of this work are contained in an unpublished paper, and I am grateful to Dr Cust for allowing me to read it during the preparation of this article.

## 2. Organisation

The absence of a standing army (with the exception of a brief period in the 1650s) has had enormous social and military implications for England. The billeting of troops, with its inevitable disruptions, was thus an extraordinary and periodic event rather than an everyday occurrence. There were two situations in which billeting became necessary: firstly, during foreign wars, when the effects were usually localised, with the ports of embarkation bearing the heaviest burden, and secondly, during periods of civil war, when the effects were more general. The reign of Charles I offers good examples of both situations.

In the late 1620s forces were levied for the wars against France and Spain, involving very large numbers of men - for example, 10,000 were ordered to rendezvous at Plymouth in May 1625, for the expedition to Cadiz.<sup>2</sup> This marked the beginning of four years during which the southern maritime counties were frequently burdened with providing for troops - billeting generated continual protest, and an increasing degree of resentment.<sup>3</sup> Many of the grievances were connected with organisation. Acting on orders from the Privy Council, the billeting of troops was the responsibility of the Deputy Lieutenants and Commissioners for soldiers in the counties concerned, who in turn issued warrants to the constables of hundreds to make detailed arrangements. The expenses were the immediate responsibility of the Deputy Lieutenants and Commissioners. The standard Privy Council instruction was that all the charge

"... is for the present to be by you leavyed upon the countrie in such indifferent and equall manner as is usuall upon lyke occacions of publique service. And the same to be repaid upon true accompt to be by you kept thereof betweene the Kinge and the countrie, out of such of his Majesty's treasure as shallbe hereafter sent unto you on that behalfe".<sup>4</sup>

Thus the costs of billeting were to be borne initially by the local commu-

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<sup>2</sup> Acts of the Privy Council (A.P.C.) 1625-6, pp. 55-57; Calendar of State Papers Domestic (C.S.P.D.) 1625-6, p. 23.

<sup>3</sup> On the subject of resistance against the war taxes levied by the King see Simon Healy, *Oh, What a Lovely War? War, Taxation, and Public Opinion in England, 1624-29*, *Canadian Journal of History* 38 (2003), pp. 439-65, and Richard Cust, *The Forced Loan and English Politics 1626-1628*, Oxford 1987.

<sup>4</sup> Privy Council to the Deputy Lieutenants of Southampton, 10 Nov. 1626. A.P.C. 1626, p. 357. Similar instructions were sent to other counties.

nity, an account of the expenses sent to the Exchequer to be, in theory at least, reimbursed.

The main source of problems, as far as the organisation of billeting was concerned, was the failure of the government to satisfy the communities for the charges they had undertaken. The cost of billeting became, in effect, yet another loan that was not repaid. As early as July 1625 the Commissioners for the army at Plymouth were complaining of "this most grievous lending to his Majesty by billeting his army without money".<sup>5</sup> Failure to reimburse remained a problem throughout the period between 1625 and 1630. In October 1627 the Commissioners at Plymouth regarded the billeting of soldiers upon credit as being of great prejudice to the King's service, and the main-spring of all disorders.<sup>6</sup> Indeed it was largely responsible for the growing resentment against the presence of troops, which increasingly manifested itself as resistance and, in some cases, absolute refusal to billet.

One aspect of resistance that was of particular concern to the government was the bad example set by some officials. There are cases in which bailiffs, constables, and even Commissioners for soldiers proved recalcitrant.<sup>7</sup> There was always the danger that the example set by these officials would be widely followed. One constable "not only refused to billett, nor cause to be billeted nor would pay to the billittinge of Souldiers, but hath dissuaded the whole Countrie: for diverse of his owne towne and parish would have billitted, but he dissuaded them".<sup>8</sup> When one remembers that, at parish level, it was the constables who were responsible for the detailed administration of billeting, such a refusal would have represented a serious challenge to governmental authority. The whole problem of authority with regard to the billeting of troops was one that came to have important constitutional implications.

Billeting was organized by means of royal commission, through orders of the Privy Council. The authority upon which it was based was therefore, like the lieutenancy, of a prerogative nature: it was not a statutory authority. This was clearly regarded by the Deputy Lieutenants of Hampshire

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<sup>5</sup> C.S.P.D. 1625-6, p. 375.

<sup>6</sup> C.S.P.D. 1627-8, p. 406.

<sup>7</sup> A.P.C. 1627-8, pp. 294, 427.

<sup>8</sup> Public Record Office (P.R.O.), SP16/100/87.

as an impediment. In a letter of 7 September 1626 they questioned the Council's authorization to rate and levy money for billeting, arguing that "... we have no course to levy money in this County but by help of law ...".<sup>9</sup> There are examples of people refusing to billet soldiers on the grounds that officials had no law nor authority to compel them, and that the warrants they had were insufficient.<sup>10</sup> In February 1628 Sir William Fleetwood J. P. of Missenden, Buckinghamshire, wrote to the Council about a case of refusal to billet in which he had been involved. He supported the defendant, and his arguments are significant:

"... I answered according to my poore skill, That I had neuer red that word [billet] in any of our Lawes, and knew not what it ment, but if the meaning were that a man should receiue the kings soldier into his house against his will and finde him meat and drink without present payment therefore I did not know that any of our lawes had ordeined it to be an offence for any man to refuse to yield thereto, neither had I any authority as a Justice of Peace to punish it who was sworne to doe right to all men according to the lawes of the land ...".<sup>11</sup>

Fleetwood's use of the phrase "against his will" is highly significant, for it was the phrase used repeatedly when the issue of billeting was discussed in Parliament.

It was in the parliamentary context that concern over the legal and authoritative basis for billeting found its fullest expression. In the lengthy debates that took place during the Spring of 1628 on the liberty of the subject, the billeting of troops in people's homes was cited frequently as an example.<sup>12</sup> The debates reveal the difficult and ambivalent position in which Members of Parliament found themselves - speeches frequently stress the desire of the House to preserve both liberty and the King's royal prerogative. The most famous constitutional statement on billeting was the clause relating to it in the Petition of Right, but it is not very explicit.<sup>13</sup> Much more interesting is the Petition against Billeting,

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<sup>9</sup> P.R.O. SP16/35/40.

<sup>10</sup> C.S.P.D. 1628-9, pp. 111, 131.

<sup>11</sup> P.R.O. SP16/92/69.

<sup>12</sup> Commons' Debates in 1628, vol. II, p. 60 et seq., Yale Center for Parliamentary History, ed. Robert C. Johnson, Mary Frear Keeler, Maija Jansson Cole, and William B. Bidwell, New Haven, 1977. See also Paul Christianson, Arguments on Billeting and Martial Law in the Parliament of 1628, in: *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (1994), pp. 539-67.

presented to the King in April 1628. The preamble is conciliatory and defensive, assuring Charles of Parliament's concern for his sacred rights and royal prerogative, and of its willingness to grant supply. The petition makes clear the constitutional grounds on which billeting was contested:

"That whereas, by the fundamental Laws of this Realm, every Freeman hath, and of Right ought to have, a full and absolute Property in his Goods and Estate; and that therefore the billeting and placing Soldiers in the House of any such Freeman against his Will, is directly contrary to the said Laws, under which we and our Ancestors have been so long and happily governed ...".<sup>14</sup>

There was no law against billeting as such; the basis of complaint was that enforced billeting infringed fundamental property rights.<sup>15</sup>

The petition proceeded to list the consequences resulting from the presence of troops in people's homes - these included decline in church attendance, neglect of local government, falling rents and a down-turn in trade, as well as the increase in violence and disorder that one might expect. There is a very real sense in which billeting was being used as a convenient hook on which to hang a long series of complaints. It became the issue around which was crystalized the fear of soldiers and the threat to order which they represented. As such it attained a symbolic significance, and certainly in the parliamentary context of 1628, seems to have been used symbolically.

The particular instances of problems arising from billeting that were discussed in Parliament were relatively minor in size, but they assumed a disproportionate significance. An example will serve to illustrate the point. During April and May 1628 a great deal of Parliament's time was spent debating a problem in Taunton, Somerset, involving the billeting of one hundred soldiers. The number involved was small compared to the thousands with which the communities of Devon had to contend. However,

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<sup>13</sup> S. R. Gardiner, *Constitutional Documents of the Puritan Revolution*, Oxford 1889, p. 68.

<sup>14</sup> *The Parliamentary or Constitutional History of England*, London 1751, vol. VII, pp. 446-9.

<sup>15</sup> For the relationship between Common Law and Martial Law, as well as the related debates and arguments in Parliament, see Paul Christianson, *Arguments on Billeting* (n. 12).

the issue in Taunton was one of authority. Twelve of the soldiers had been removed from the houses in which they had been placed originally, and put in "the best men's houses", of which the mayor and recorder were two. The Deputy Lieutenants had done this by their own warrant, as a mark of displeasure at the election of particular burgesses to Parliament. It was their authority to do this that was being challenged.<sup>16</sup>

This case illustrates two significant features. Firstly, that what may be termed the "constitutional" aspect of billeting, in which legality and authority were at issue, was the one that manifested itself in Parliament. Secondly, it illustrates the prominence that the affairs of Somerset received in the 1628 Parliament. One of the main speakers in that parliament, not just on billeting, was Sir Robert Phelips, who sat for Somerset and belonged to one of the dominant county families. During the 1630s in particular he was one of two chief rivals in county politics,<sup>17</sup> and this concentration on relatively minor events in Somerset should perhaps be seen as part of the local power struggle.

The need for proper authority in the management of troops was of equal importance during the Civil War. Very little evidence has survived for the royal army. Commissions of Array were widely used for raising troops and money to support the King's cause, but they did not contain provisions for the running of the army once assembled.<sup>18</sup> In the absence of evidence to the contrary, it seems likely that royal commission remained the basis of authority. In any case, it is clear that Charles took a direct personal interest, issuing detailed orders for the quartering and provisioning of his soldiers.<sup>19</sup>

The basis of authority for the parliamentary forces was, of course, completely different. Parliament governed its troops, as it did the civilian population under its control, by means of Committee and Parliamentary Ordinance.<sup>20</sup> For the billeting of troops, warrants were issued by the Quarter-Master General, and indeed people were allowed to refuse to let

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<sup>16</sup> Commons' Journals (C.J.) I, pp. 886, 898; Commons' Debates in 1628, vol. II, pp. 254, 564-5, 567, 570, 573; vol. III, pp. 419-25; vol. VI, p. 115.

<sup>17</sup> A full account of local political rivalries in Somerset can be found in T. G. Barnes, *Somerset 1625-1640, A County's Government During the "Personal Rule"*, London 1961.

<sup>18</sup> Ronald Hutton, *The Royalist War Effort 1642-1646*, London<sup>2</sup> 1999, pp. 6-7.

<sup>19</sup> Bodleian Library, Oxford, Rawlinson MSS D 395, f. 19; Eliot Warburton, *Memoirs of Prince Rupert and the Cavaliers*, London 1849, Vol. II, pp. 70-71.

soldiers quarter upon them without proper warrant. Soldiers found taking quarter without the authority of Parliament were to be apprehended by the Sheriff or Justices of Peace, and tried by Commission of Oyer and Terminer.<sup>21</sup> County Committees were anxious that forces quartering in their localities should have proper warrants. The Kent Committee protested against new quartering in June 1647, on the grounds that "Wee knowe not whether such a Warrant as this be vsuall not vouching any deriued power from the howses for their authority to place souldyers among vs".<sup>22</sup> The Committee for the Army was responsible for ordering the drawing up of accounts, and for authorizing the payment of money due for quarters that had not been discharged.<sup>23</sup> One important distinction needs to be made between the billeting of troops in the late 1620s, and that in the Civil War - in the case of the former, the Deputy Lieutenants responsible for organisation were themselves civilians, whereas in the 1640s it became an entirely military matter. This had implications both for the disciplining of the soldiers themselves, and for the ease with which it was possible for local people to voice their complaints.

As the 1640s progressed there were a great many petitions, usually from communities rather than individuals, protesting about various aspects of billeting, and, with the increasingly political nature of the army, much propaganda in the form of pamphlets. Issues of legality, authority and the subjects' liberties are recurring themes, with the Petition of Right frequently cited as a precedent. Indeed, the Petition of Right was clearly regarded as having the force of law. It is interesting to find similar phrases appearing in different petitions. A petition of December 1647 from several counties described the soldiers as "... so many Egyptian Locusts ...",<sup>24</sup> while in January 1648 "The Petition of Right of the Free-holders and Freemen of the Kingdom of England Humbly presented to the Lords and Commons ..." referred to the troops "... devouring like so many Locusts and Caterpillars, all our grasse, hay ... and provisions of all

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<sup>20</sup> Evidence of the number and variety of ordinances can be seen in C. H. Firth and R. S. Rait (eds.), *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum 1642-1660*, London 1911, 2 Vols.

<sup>21</sup> C.S.P.D. 1644-1645, pp. 463, 467; C.J. VI, p.162.

<sup>22</sup> Bodleian, Tanner MSS. 58 (a), fo. 181, a letter from the County Committee of Kent to Speaker Lenthall.

<sup>23</sup> Lords' Journals IX, pp. 221-224.

<sup>24</sup> British Library (B.L.), 669 f.11 (95).

sorts ... leaving us ... to starve and famish ...".<sup>25</sup> There are numerous other examples, and it is possible to speculate that several petitions were the result of cooperation, if not actually the product of the same pen.

The problems associated with billeting were so varied, and the complaints related to it so numerous that, given the fragmented, and somewhat elusive nature of the source material, a coherent account is not easy to achieve. It can best be attempted through examining one particular incident, and taking it as a basis for comparison and generalization.

### *3. Tickhill: A community's response to abuse and disorder*

The incident I have chosen took place at Tickhill in Yorkshire in January 1646. First mention of it comes in a letter from the Committee at York to the Speaker of the House of Commons, dated January 21st. It reads

"There were the last Week certain Officers, to the Number of 37, pretending themselves to be under the Command of Lieutenant-General Lesley, who, being quartered at Tickhill, offered several Abuses to the Inhabitants there, besides the Exactions of great Sums of Money, far beyond the Abilities of these poor Men, having formerly extremely suffered many other Ways ..."<sup>26</sup>

The abuses themselves were detailed in Articles exhibited by the inhabitants of Tickhill on January 24th,<sup>27</sup> and a meeting was held at Gainsborough, Lincolnshire, on 27th February to hear the grievances. Those present were five Commissioners of the English Parliament, and five Commissioners and officers of the Scottish army, including Lieutenant General Lesley. Firstly, this incident is unusual because of the extent of documentation that has survived. There is a wealth of detailed evidence from witnesses, both complainants and defendants, the judgements that were made, and the disagreements that arose over them. It is the only example I have found where there is access to all sides of the argument. More usually, there is a single letter of complaint, or a reply to a previous complaint, but rarely both. Why the Tickhill evidence should have survived intact is uncertain - random chance seems the most likely explanation. Secondly, it is unusual because it is the closest one can get to the ori-

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<sup>25</sup> B.L. E422 (9), fo. 16.

<sup>26</sup> Parliamentary History vol. XIV, p. 238.

<sup>27</sup> P.R.O. SP16/513/21.



ginal complaint: the testimony of witnesses has been reported directly. This highlights a problem which surrounds much of the other evidence. In the late 1620s, for example, many of the letters from the localities seem to represent generalizations of numerous complaints that have been received by Deputy Lieutenants and other local officials, and passed on to the Privy Council. It is impossible to assess how many individual complaints are represented by any given letter, and they are, by their very nature, second hand. A similar problem pertains to the Civil War period. By contrast, Tickhill offers almost first hand evidence.

The complaints made by the people of Tickhill were of a very immediate and practical nature. Soldiers had taken free quarter which, they claim "willingly and cheerefully was granted",<sup>28</sup> but in addition had demanded money, and frequently used threats to obtain it; both men and women had been verbally and physically abused, property had been stolen or damaged, and so on. There are no references here to fundamental liberties, the rule of law or statutory rights. This points to an important distinction between what one might call the "local" and the "constitutional" perspectives. The local perspective was essentially parochial; constitutional issues found their expression in the pamphlet material with which the 1640s abounds, and, as has already been seen, in Parliament. In the very immediate and practical nature of the complaints, Tickhill was typical of the many communities that had soldiers billeted upon them. There were two main categories of complaint: financial, and those related to behaviour. The vast majority of complaints were financial, both in the 1620s, and during the Civil War. At Tickhill, where there were a larger than usual number of complaints relating to the behaviour of soldiers, the violence was generally part of an attempt to extort money. Most of the financial grievances were connected with the organisation of billeting: the "system" and its failure.

In the 1620s, as has already been suggested,<sup>29</sup> the government's failure to repay the local communities for the charges they had incurred was the main source of trouble. Some money clearly was sent down from the Exchequer, but it was rarely the full amount due. In addition, there is evidence to suggest that money was misappropriated along the way. For

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<sup>28</sup> P.R.O. SP16/513/21, article 1.

<sup>29</sup> cf. page 77 above.

example, an undated manuscript, probably of August 1626, set out charges made by the people of Tavistock, Devon, against their head constable, John Rowe. Firstly, Rowe was accused of exacting money from the wealthier inhabitants to free them from billeting, thereby imposing a greater burden on the poor. Secondly, he was said to have announced an increase in the hosts' allowance for billeting from 2s 6d to 3s or 4s per week, but kept the extra money himself. Thirdly, he was alleged to have failed to pass on to the hosts much of the allowance received from the King's paymaster the previous summer, and fourthly, to have retained extra money allowed to officers for their lodging, by conspiring with inferior officers and hosts.<sup>30</sup> There are examples from other places of similar types of abuse, but Rowe was exceptional in the extent to which he seems to have capitalized on every opportunity for self-enrichment that his position afforded him.

Whether due to failure of the Exchequer to reimburse money owed to the localities, or, as in the case of Tavistock, to corrupt practices of officials, the net result was that the hosts were frequently not paid, or not paid adequately. That the main antagonism was directed against the government is clear from the number of complaints to the Privy Council, which reached a peak in 1628. It would seem that the authority and responsibility for the troops were regarded as civilian, and that people sought redress through the usual channels.

In the 1640s, however, the situation was very different, and that difference is found reflected in the nature of the financial complaints. The organisation of billeting was an entirely military concern, the responsibility of the quarter-masters, although constables did become involved to some extent, especially in the keeping of accounts.<sup>31</sup> The authority on which they acted was that of normal military procedure and discipline, backed up by parliamentary ordinance. The main source of problems lay once again in the failure to provide money, but the emphasis was on soldiers' pay. Soldiers were unable to discharge their billets, and were forced to resort to taking free quarter, because their pay was constantly in arrears.

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<sup>30</sup> P.R.O. SP16/34/114.

<sup>31</sup> Joan R. Kent, *The English Village Constable 1580-1642*, Oxford 1986, gives a good account of the duties of constables prior to the Civil War.

The chief focus for antagonism, however, was the soldiers themselves, rather than the authorities. There are two likely explanations for this. Quite possibly anger towards the soldiers was exacerbated by their disorderly behaviour, which was more of a problem in the Civil War than it had been previously (The numerous commissions of martial law testify to the importance given to military discipline in the late 1620s). A second possible explanation is that it was not clear to ordinary people, given the war-time situation, where the proper authority and responsibility lay, and that therefore they did not know how to get redress and compensation. In this context, it is significant that one of the reports to the meeting at Gainsborough was by the Minister of Tickhill, Master John Garfield.<sup>32</sup> No doubt having someone educated and articulate to voice their grievances was of great advantage to the community.

Several of the Tickhill complaints refer to the demand for money, even though free quarter had been given. This was clearly irregular and, indeed, illegal - parliamentary ordinances quite specifically prohibited the taking of free quarter, except with the permission of the County Committee.<sup>33</sup> Special provision was sometimes made for soldiers to take free quarter while waiting for arrears to be paid, but even so, money should not have been demanded as well. Evidence from other sources confirms that people were either supposed to pay money or provide free quarter, not both. Substantial amounts of money were demanded of some of the inhabitants of Tickhill - one man was required to pay fifty shillings a week. In another instance, a soldier demanded seven pounds for the time before he came to Tickhill, and ten shillings a day while he was there.<sup>34</sup>

As far as trying to solve the financial difficulties was concerned, there was little success. One short term solution was to off-set costs against taxes. In the 1620s, counties were allowed to deduct the expenses of billeting from the amount of forced loan they had to pay the King.<sup>35</sup> However, once the charges for billeting exceeded the loan money (always assuming that the full amount of the loan had been forthcoming), further problems arose.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, in the 1640s, there are a number of examples of

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<sup>32</sup> P.R.O. SP16/513/52, fos. 7-16.

<sup>33</sup> Eg. Acts and Ordinances I pp. 686-8, 694-6.

<sup>34</sup> P.R.O. SP16/513/21, articles 2 & 11.

<sup>35</sup> Eg. C.S.P.D. 1625-6, p. 509; C.S.P.D. 1627-8, pp. 43, 66.

<sup>36</sup> C.S.P.D. 1627-8, p. 104.

billeting charges being deducted from the monthly assessment.<sup>37</sup> But no long term solution was found, and both the 1630s and 1650s saw people still trying to recover money due to them.

The other main category of complaint relates to the behaviour of troops. There is a popular myth surrounding the image of the disorderly soldier, marauding, raping and pillaging. The Tickhill evidence is unusual in being particularly rich in detail with regard to the behaviour of soldiers, but other evidence is far less specific, and therefore more difficult to assess. In the late 1620s, for example, there were a great many letters from the localities to the Privy Council that expressed concern over the behaviour of troops. In some cases it is the potential for disorder, the threat of outrageous behaviour, rather than the fact of it which is at issue. The general instructions from the Privy Council to the Deputy Lieutenants of Devon in May 1625 gave orders "... for the securing of the countrie therabouts from such damage and outrage as otherwise they might be in danger of, through the insolencies and disorders of the souldiers ..."<sup>38</sup> The majority of specific complaints about the behaviour of soldiers in their billets referred to their unreasonable appetites, which far exceeded what the inhabitants were able to provide. The soldiers consequently grabbed the best for themselves, and when thwarted would easily resort to violence.<sup>39</sup>

Tickhill offers examples of particularly violent and outrageous behaviour. Money and/or goods were usually involved as well, with violence or the threat of it being used as a means of extortion. Both men and women of all ages were the victims of violence. In one incident it was alleged

"... That the Scotch Troopes there did take some of the ablest men putt Ropes about their necks, and tortured them in such a violent manner that they were for feare of death forced to promise them some xxli and some lesse according to their estates ..."<sup>40</sup>

On another occasion they

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<sup>37</sup> Bodleian, Tanner MSS 62 (b), fo. 599; Henry W. Meikle (ed.), *Correspondence of the Scots Commissioners in London 1644-1646*, Edinburgh 1917, p. 71; P.R.O. SP28/249, no piece ref. (order of the County Committee of the West Riding, 30th June 1646).

<sup>38</sup> A.P.C. 1625-1626, pp. 55-57.

<sup>39</sup> P.R.O SP16/98/99; SP16/114/64.

<sup>40</sup> P.R.O SP16/513/52, article 1 of those grievances suffered since 24th January.

"... came to one mistress Holland a very old weoman, after her sonne and all his family was fledd, burned her nose with a Candle and threatned to fire her if she would not tell where the money was ..."41

The position of women is interesting. There are examples of men fleeing for their own safety, leaving their women to deal with the soldiers on their own. Some of the threats to women, particularly the sexual threats, were of an extremely vicious and violent nature. However, one must avoid the temptation to over-estimate and dramatize this aspect, which it would be easy enough to do. Much of the disorderly behaviour was undoubtedly due to drink. It was none the less frightening for the victims, but of a less sinister nature, and often the women were able to deal with it themselves:

"Rob. Hall's wife ... sayth yt Captain Whitford haveing beene drinkeing in ye night came early in ye morneing where she and some other weomen were kneading bread for ye oven and demanded of her 10s, for yt he sayd he was to goe to Southwell yt day, but after desireing to lye downe to sleepe, he wished her to shew him into ye parlour which she haveing done he layd hould of her and would have forced her but by ye helpe of ye weomen and her owne strength she gott from him. She further averreth yt a Tynker att ye same instant comeing to ye doore demanding worke ye sayd Captain call'd him Rogue, saying a Tynker kill'd his Father and thereupon laying att him with his sword he cutt two ... [mss torn] ... which he putt upon his head, for his owne security ..."42

In the example above, the women defended themselves, but it is interesting to note on how many occasions it was in fact another soldier who intervened, and prevented violent threats from being carried out. It was reported that the Scottish soldiers

"... tooke one Christopher Johnson and was drawing him to a tree to hang him and sayd they would pull him in pieces and cause his Children to eate of him and a Major comeing by heard the children cry and fetch't him from them ..."43

It was also alleged that one Captain Grier

"... came to one Tho. Awklands Howse, he being fled for his safety,

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid. article 6.

<sup>42</sup> P.R.O. SP16/513/52, notes in the margin of a copy of the articles of 24th January, article 24.

<sup>43</sup> P.R.O. SP16/513/52, article 8 of the grievances occurring since 24th January.

caused two Souldiers to hould her the sayd Awklands wife and hett the Tangles [tongs] very hott, tooke vp her Cloaths and sayd he would seare her that neuer any man should deale with her agayne, and would as she thought haue done it, but for a Souldier yt stayed him."<sup>44</sup>

It is significant that these were instances of violence and disorderly behaviour committed by individuals, and that they were quite often dealt with and controlled by other soldiers, particularly officers. The image of whole troops of marauding soldiers raping and pillaging is simply not borne out by the evidence. Indeed, at Tickhill the soldiers themselves were on the receiving end of a considerable degree of violence and abuse, if the petition presented by Major David Melvin to the House of Lords in 1648 is to be believed. In it he sought redress for "... the barbarous and vnchristian vsage offered him by ... the Inhabitanes of Tickhill", in which

"The said parties with many others came to the petitioners lodgeing, broke open his Chamber doore, rusht into the roome with Pitchfforkes and Halbertes, strooke the petitioner on the head and ... haveing so inhumanely left your petitioner in his blood another Company comes and rob'd the petitioner of his Cloathes and forced him in that sad Conditon to walke on ffoote to Pontefraicte, which well nigh putt a period to your petitioners daies ..."<sup>45</sup>

One striking feature in all the abundance of evidence relating to the problems associated with billeting, is the awareness and concern shown by the military and parliamentary authorities. On 13th January 1646 the Scots Commissioners wrote to Lesley, making quite clear their anxiety:

"... Wee are informed by some members of the Houses of Parliament that there is a number of Reformeirs in the army who by their ill cariage bring in a scandell upon the proceedings of the army, eat up their quarters, and doe sundry ill offices tending much to the weakening of the correspondence betweene the kingdomes ..."<sup>46</sup>

There were other occasions on which the English and Scottish authorities' fear that troop behaviour would alienate people from the parliamentary cause was apparent.

Lieutenant General Lesley was clearly anxious to discipline his own

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid. article 4.

<sup>45</sup> House of Lords Record Office, Main Papers 25/7/48.

<sup>46</sup> Meikle (ed.), *Correspondence of the Scots* (n. 37), p. 150.

troops, and to be seen to exercise discipline over them. The Gainsborough meeting was followed by a meeting at Bawtry on 16th April, for the trial of the Tickhill offenders, at which the complainants appeared in person (Bawtry is situated approximately four miles to the east of Tickhill). Lesley upheld the charges in most cases. He ordered that the complainants should be paid their money, receive satisfaction for the injuries done to them, and that the soldiers should be duly punished. In the absence of the soldiers complained against, Lesley tended to believe the accusations, and promised satisfaction.<sup>47</sup> This was followed a few days later, on 21st April, by a Scottish Council of War, at which further misdeeds of the Scottish soldiers were judged. On this occasion, however, the decisions more often than not were in favour of the soldiers.<sup>48</sup>

The fact that the troubles at Tickhill involved Scottish soldiers is highly significant. Throughout the period, many of the complaints that relate to outrages committed by troops concern soldiers from Scotland and Ireland - that is, "strangers". In 1628, for example, Irish troops were the focus of hostility in a famous incident at Witham, Essex, in which local children mocked the soldiers' custom of wearing red crosses in their hats on St. Patrick's Day, by tying similar crosses to the whipping post and to a dog's tail. A riot ensued during which thirty to forty people were injured or killed.<sup>49</sup> The same year, a petition from the inhabitants of Kent to the King complained of the "rude and barbarous carriage" of the Irish soldiers who "... differing from the petitioners in nation, religion, language, and affection ..." were becoming an insupportable burden.<sup>50</sup>

The Scots, too, were on the receiving end of a considerable degree of xenophobia. They were referred to as "Red-shanks" by the Deputy Lieutenants of the Isle of Wight (owing to the red woollen stockings that were part of their dress), and the same term of abuse can be found in documents of the 1640s. Sir John Oglander, a Deputy Lieutenant and M. P. for the Isle of Wight voiced his antagonism towards "... espetiollie the red shankes or the Heylanders, being as barbarous in neytur as theyr cloathes ...",<sup>51</sup> while Sir Henry Wallop, M. P. for Hampshire maintained that

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<sup>47</sup> P.R.O. SP16/514/4.

<sup>48</sup> Bodleian, Carte MSS 80, fos. 415-417.

<sup>49</sup> P.R.O. SP16/96/39; G. E. Aylmer, *St. Patrick's Day 1628 in Witham, Essex, Past and Present* (1973), pp. 139-148.

<sup>50</sup> P.R.O. SP16/98/99I.

"They leave bastards in every parish to be a perpetual charge".<sup>52</sup> There can be little doubt that the foreignness of these troops added to their unpopularity. Lieutenant General Lesley's anxiety to discipline his own men after the Tickhill incident may well have resulted from fear that they would not receive a fair hearing otherwise.

There was considerable disagreement between the English and Scottish Parliamentary Commissioners over the Tickhill hearings that reveals something of the complexity of Anglo-Scottish relations. The English Commissioners complained bitterly about the whole proceedings. The Bawtry meeting they criticized for being hampered by military bureaucracy, and the Scottish Council of War for judicial bias and incompetence.<sup>53</sup> The English reaction must be seen in the context of increasing disenchantment with their Scottish allies, and the progressive deterioration in Anglo-Scottish relations throughout 1645. Quite apart from Tickhill, there were numerous other complaints about the behaviour and financial exactions of the Scots. Political changes at Westminster, resulting in a breakdown of the alliance between the Scots and the war-party, and an increasing degree of rapprochement with their former opponents in the peace-party, no doubt also influenced the situation.<sup>54</sup> But for the inhabitants of Tickhill, as elsewhere, the issue was not one of high politics, or constitutional principle. Their concern was for their safety, their homes and their livelihood.

#### *4. Conclusion*

The billeting of troops, and its implications for all those involved, was clearly an issue of great importance during the reign of Charles I. It had a central dimension, in which it was used by people pursuing their own political and ideological ends. For those in the localities, who were directly affected, the perception was entirely different. For them, the problems resulted almost entirely from failures in organisation and management. When organisation and discipline were good, as for the fortunate inhabitants of Rochester in January 1648, there was "peace and quiet", in

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<sup>51</sup> Quoted in: Boynton, *Billeting* (n. 1), p. 28.

<sup>52</sup> Commons' Debates in 1628, Vol. II, p. 361.

<sup>53</sup> Bodleian, Carte MSS 80, fos. 423-423 (b).

<sup>54</sup> One of the best accounts is David Underdown, *Pride's Purge: Politics in the Puritan Revolution*, Oxford 1971, Ch. 3.



which "... repining thoughts vanished, and the Souldiers were made welcome there ..." <sup>55</sup>

In spite of the fact that the Civil War contributed an element of internal conflict that was not present in the 1620s, the differences between what I have called the "local" and "constitutional" perspectives are perceivable throughout both periods. Underlying the whole debate on billeting, and the problems surrounding it, are questions of legality and authority, of property rights, the liberty of the subject and the rule of law, which were of fundamental importance to the people of early modern England. It is in this context that the study of the issues of billeting and free quarter finds its rightful place.

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<sup>55</sup> B.L., E 423 (17).