

The Civil War and Aston Hall

An Outline of Events

In August 1642 King Charles I raised his standard at Nottingham and declared his subjects in rebellion - or at least those who supported Parliament. The King had fallen out with his Parliament - over the manner in which he pursued foreign, domestic and



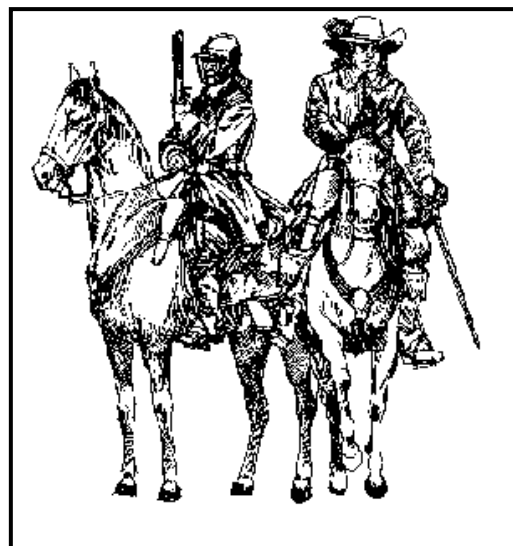
religious policies, and his insistence on upholding the Divine Right of Kings to rule. Charles' willingness to accept, and act on, the advice of his Catholic queen, Henrietta Maria, further antagonised parliament and other sections of people in the country.



The king raised an army and so did Parliament. The king travelled from Nottingham to Shrewsbury to gather Welsh troops. Parliament raised an army from amongst the London apprentices. It set out for the Midlands under the command of the Earl of Essex, engaging in a few skirmishes as it sought the king's army.

Twice during the Civil War Aston Hall came to the fore. The first occasion was

in the early months of the war. King Charles and his army travelled from Shrewsbury, down through Bridgnorth, heading for London. He stopped of at Aston Hall for one night on 18 October 1642. as he travelled through with his army on his way to take London (or so he hoped - a few days later the Royalists engaged the Parliamentary army at the battle of Edgehill).



In December 1643 a detachment of forty Royalist musketeers from Dudley Castle occupied Aston Hall. It is not clear whether Sir Thomas wanted them as he tried to prevent the soldiers from digging earthworks and felling trees around the Hall. Three hundred horse and foot under Colonel Godfrey Bosville were sent from Coventry to take the house.

They arrived on Christmas Day and as the Hall refused to surrender they bombarded it with cannon. This had little effect so the following day they stormed the church where a number of soldiers had been stationed. Once the church was taken the artillery could move closer.



At some stage a cannonball hit a stair post resulting in the damage still seen today. The soldiers in the house fought on supported by Sir Thomas' servants. But another assault over-ran the Royalist earthworks and the attackers reached the house and began to force their way through the ground floor windows. Most of the Royalists tried to surrender but two Parliamentarians were shot in the confusion and in anger their comrades killed or wounded twenty of the garrison before surrender was finally accepted.



Oliver Cromwell

The house was thoroughly sacked. Much of what was left was broken by the marauding troops. Sir Thomas was taken into custody for a short time 'without a shirt to shift him'. He claimed his house was garrisoned without his consent but he was not believed.

His estates were sequestered (confiscated) and later he had to compound (pay a large lump sum for their return). This dealt a severe financial blow to the Holte fortunes. It took until the early eighteenth century for them to make a recovery.