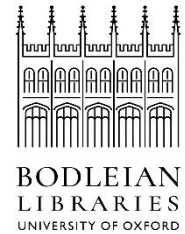


English Civil War: Teachers' Resource Pack



Contents:

1. Teachers' introduction to the political background of the English Civil War to set the Oxford sources in a wider context.
2. Teachers' notes on life in Civil War Oxford to help students examine the impact of the Civil War on ordinary people's lives. Bodleian Library sources provided in this resource pack are listed under each topic.
3. Student source handouts: printable images of the sources and transcripts for handwritten sources.
4. Student hints handouts: additional notes and questions for students to consider for each source.

Suggestions for Using this Resource Pack:

The sources provided are designed to help students to explore the impact of the Civil War on ordinary people in Oxford. Students will encounter a range of handwritten sources including receipts, draft proclamations, administrative documents, a diary and a map. There are also printed proclamations and a printed map. Transcriptions are provided of handwritten sources which are difficult to read. Most sources should be legible on the A4 handouts, except the maps (D5 and D6) which would benefit from being printed on A3 or shown on a whiteboard screen. B1 is too small to read, but a full transcript is provided.

The sources have been grouped into four categories according to types of impact on ordinary people:

- A. New arrivals & unwanted lodgers
- B. Food & farming
- C. Earning a living
- D. Fortifying Oxford

You could start by asking students to suggest how life might have changed for Oxford locals when the King and his army made the city their headquarters. You could then group their suggestions such as 'overcrowding', 'less food', 'new jobs' and 'threat of attack' into the categories above.

Assigning a group to each category, students could then examine the sources and report back to the class on their findings. The notes and questions handouts have been printed separately so that students can investigate the sources unaided first, if you prefer.

These sources are a selection from what the Bodleian Libraries hold, and cannot tell us everything; it is also important for students to think about other forms of evidence that did not survive, or that survived but can be found in museums or through archaeological investigation, rather than in archives.



1. Political Background: Teachers' Notes

Trying to identify a singular 'cause' of the English Civil War is almost impossible; many different historians have offered many different answers to explain it. It is probably better to talk about causes rather than a single cause; some short term, others longer term. What should be noted is that they were overlapping, and often mutually reinforcing: for example, suspicion about Charles I's religious habits also fed into a perception that he could not be trusted when it came to respecting the law and the rights of parliament.

Religious Conflicts

Religious identity was extremely important in seventeenth-century England, in a way that might be difficult for us to get our heads around today. In the sixteenth century, England, Wales, and Scotland had seen volatile and sometimes violent reformations take place, with religious reformers persuading the country to adopt Protestant beliefs and leave behind the Catholic religion. Although this was a slow process, by the early seventeenth century, England was strongly Protestant. People remembered with horror the year 1588, when the Catholic fleet of Philip II of Spain had attempted to invade. The Gunpowder Plot of 1605 was also commemorated as the thwarting of a Catholic attempt to blow up Parliament and undermine English religion. Most people believed that England had only been saved from these plots by God's protection.

In short, religion was a focus for ideas about nationalism and patriotism: English identity was defined by fears of a 'popish plot' to regain the country for the Roman Catholic Church, accompanied by persistent fear of invasion by the Catholic powers of Spain and France, and suspicion of English Catholics as potential traitors. Most people believed that the ruler of the nation should be a strong defender of its religious practices. But Charles I failed to live up to this expectation. In 1625 he had married Henrietta Maria, daughter of the King of France. She was a Catholic, and special agreements were made to allow her to continue practising her religion at court.

Charles himself was also deeply distrusted on the matter of religion. He appointed an Archbishop of Canterbury named William Laud who believed in an idea called 'the beauty of holiness'—that churches should be more elaborately decorated. To many of the most devout and committed Protestants ('Puritans'), Laud's innovations made English churches look much more like Catholic ones, and his idea of Christian worship looked like idol worship. Laud also gained a reputation for cruelty in silencing his critics thanks to the notorious cases of Bastwick, Burton and Prynne who were branded and had their ears cropped.

Matters were further complicated because Charles I was not just King of England— he was also King of Scotland and of Ireland. Scotland's Reformation had been more thorough than the English one, and when in 1637 Charles and Laud together attempted to impose a new prayer book on Scotland, the Scots resisted. This led Charles to raise an army in an attempt to impose the prayer book on Scotland: he was defeated twice, once in 1639 and again in 1640. These are known as the First and Second Bishop's Wars. Ireland presented a different problem. From the 16th century the English government had been trying to impose reformation on a largely Catholic population, partly through the policy of plantation, that is taking away lands from Catholic owners and giving it to Scottish and English protestant settlers.

The cumulative effect of these religious issues was to breed distrust in Charles's ability to defend Protestantism and, more generally, the kingdom.

'Divine Right' versus 'Ancient Laws'

Charles had an extremely elevated view of his role as king, sometimes described as a theory of 'divine right'. This meant that God had chosen him to rule, and he believed this gave him complete authority. This only served to increase his conflict with his critics in Parliament, who believed that they had the right to influence the way in which the country was governed—and, in particular, to counsel the king. The idea of divine right was echoed in the art and drama performed for the royal court, which emphasised Charles's role as remote from the people, and compared him to the sun, the sole source of light, virtue and goodness.

There was probably also an element of personality in these conflicts—Charles was perceived as remote and high-handed, a difficult man to get on with. But there was also an ideological aspect. Many members of Parliament also believed that kings were not completely free to act as they pleased, but that the crown was bound by a series of ancient laws and precedents. There were a significant number of lawyers and antiquarians in parliament, who believed that limitations on the power of kings could be traced back centuries, and that Charles I was trying to

break with tradition by asserting much greater powers than past rulers had wielded. While Parliament certainly did not set out to execute the king, they wanted to bring him back into line with what they believed was tradition.

Royal Finances & the Role of Parliament

Charles I did not live simply. He believed that a King's honour and dignity should be reflected in a lavish, prestigious, and expensive court. In accordance, he spent money to cultivate this royal image. This, in itself, was not a problem. The problem lay in how kings obtained their money: it came from taxation, but taxation could only be legally done with the consent of Parliament. This meant kings had to request their income from Parliament, by calling a sitting of Parliament (these were not regular). Early seventeenth-century Parliaments were increasingly resistant to granting large sums of money. Calling a Parliament also meant that kings had to hear the complaints of the members of the House of Lords and Commons before he would be granted his money.

Charles tried to work around Parliament when he needed money for war, through a device called the Forced Loan (i.e. a tax to which Parliament had not consented). This led to much unrest. From 1629, Charles decided to dispense with Parliament all together—an eleven-year period known as the 'Personal Rule'. Without Parliament, Charles tried to devise other ways of raising money by selling knighthoods and monopolies. But the most contentious of all these methods was 'ship money'. This was an infrequently-invoked medieval tax which required those who lived in maritime counties to build ships for the King's fleet, or required them to give money towards building ships. Charles levied it across the whole country. This caused outrage, particularly amongst the wealthy. One MP, John Hampden, refused to pay, and was taken to court. Although Hampden lost the case (by five judges to seven), his refusal encouraged many more people to resist paying ship money.

Charles was ultimately obliged to call a Parliament again in April 1640 to support the cost of his campaign in Scotland. But after eleven years without meeting, Parliament would grant nothing before their long list of complaints was answered. This was followed by the 'Long Parliament' of November 1640, in which MPs and Lords attempted to force the King into adopting reforms and removing some of his most hated advisors—the hated Archbishop Laud, for example, was imprisoned on treason charges. But Parliament itself quickly became split between those who wanted moderate reform, and those who wanted more far-reaching reforms—particularly in religious life, and to remove what they saw as the lingering elements of Catholicism within the English church.

The Immediate Cause

In October 1641, a rebellion broke out in largely Catholic Ireland, leading to the killing of many Irish Protestants. Fears of a Catholic plot increased—to many, this proved that the threat to the Protestant religion was real. Parliament felt the need to take action to protect the kingdom: in a document called The Grand Remonstrance, the House of Commons demanded the removal of the King's counsellors, and listed examples of royal misconduct. It was voted on in the Commons, and approved—but only narrowly. Charles rejected the demands. In response, in January 1642, Charles brought soldiers into Parliament to arrest five MPs who had led opposition against him. But they had been warned and had already escaped. This also led many who were still wavering to believe Charles could not be trusted to respect Parliament.

Riots began in London (where support for Parliament was strongest) and the King was forced to flee the capital. Supporters of the King and supporters of Parliament began raising troops. Though there were some attempts to come to an agreement, the gulf between the two sides could not be bridged. Civil War 'began' when Charles raised his royal flag at Nottingham in August 1642—but many historians would argue that the conditions which led to it had been developing for much longer.

2. Life in Civil War Oxford: Teachers' Notes

The King Arrives in Oxford

Charles arrived in Oxford on 29 October 1642, after a battle at Edgehill where neither the royalist nor the parliamentary side had emerged the winner. The King had already lost control of London. Oxford became a royalist stronghold and the wartime capital.

When Charles arrived, he began to repurpose the buildings of Oxford. The new (and very grand) Bodleian Library was used as a warehouse, and guns confiscated from the townspeople were stored there. Christ Church began the home of the King; when his wife, Henrietta Maria arrived in the city in 1643, she took up residence in Merton College. The King and Queen lived quite separately from the townspeople, but ordinary people would also have to find space to share their homes with new arrivals who came to Oxford as part of the King's court and army. Even ordinary buildings were taken over: the flour mills on the outskirts of town were used to sharpen sword blades and make gunpowder.

Local Loyalties: Crown, Gown and Town

One important question is how the inhabitants of Oxford felt about the town's new status as a royal capital. Unlike other cities (most obviously London), Oxford was not a strongly parliamentary place—this was one of the reasons it was chosen as a suitable wartime capital. The people associated with the university were mostly supporters of the King, and the controversial Archbishop Laud was chancellor of the university from 1630 until he was imprisoned by the parliamentarians in 1641.

But the city and university were divided. In general, the university (wealthy and endowed with special privileges and rights) did not have a good relationship with the town, a conflict which pre-dated the civil war. While the university offered strong support for the King's cause, the town appears to have had a far more ambivalent attitude.

Local inhabitants—the town—do not seem to have been particularly enthusiastic about supporting the crown, especially when it cost them money. For example, the city was ordered to collect pots, kettles and other metal items that could be melted down and used to make weapons. But, out of the whole city of Oxford, only 40 people handed their items over.

Whether you supported the King or Parliament could depend on strong arguments from religious and political principles, and how you believed the country should be ruled. But for 'ordinary' people, your view might also depend on the opinion of the powerful local figures who you personally owed loyalty to. For example, the Fiennes family were very influential in the Oxfordshire countryside—Lord Saye (William Fiennes), had been a vocal opponent of the crown for a considerable time. His son James was the MP for Oxfordshire and a strong supporter of the rebellion against the king. Another son, Nathaniel, led a regiment of troops for parliament. Because the Fiennes family was so powerful, they were able to persuade many of their friends and the farmers and servants who worked for them to fight for parliament, or to make a donation to parliament's forces.

Whether Oxford locals celebrated or mourned the King's arrival in their city, the Civil War would have had a major impact on their lives.

Civil War Impacts:

A. New Arrivals & Unwanted Lodgers

Some prominent Oxford people—those who most strongly supported the Parliamentary cause—left Oxford as soon as the King arrived. For example, almost everyone from the strongly Puritan (devoutly Protestant) college, New Inn Hall, left immediately. But new people ('strangers') also arrived in the city: troops were billeted there, and as well as the King and Queen themselves, their court, advisors, and servants all needed accommodation.

The pressure on housing increased considerably in December 1643, when Charles summoned a parliament to Oxford so that MPs could promise their loyalty to him. This meant a new influx of people to Oxford. In order to house the MPs, the city had to undertake a census—each college, hall, and private house had to be surveyed to find out how many people lived there (and how many extra they could fit in). If your house was judged to have enough space for a lodger, there was not much choice but to accept them.

Local people in private homes and inns were expected to provide accommodation for these incomers. Source A1 lists all the 'strangers' living in St Aldate's Parish, under the name of the householder who was forced to accommodate them. In theory, this was to the advantage of Oxford residents: they could charge rent to those who came into their homes. In practice, however, they received promissory notes instead of cash rent, and many were never repaid. In source A2, the Rector of Ducklington complains about the costs of feeding soldiers and how some of them stole the mirror and comb from his bedroom.

Overcrowding was a problem with these unwanted lodgers: in the parish of St Aldate's, with 74 houses, there were 408 'strangers' recorded in January 1644, as well as the ordinary local residents. Overcrowding led to a more serious problem: disease. Too many people living in close quarters could lead to the spread of epidemics, and wounded soldiers brought back illness with them from the battlefield. The death rate in the city increased through 1643 and 1644, and the crowded conditions also brought an increased level of crime and disorder.

B. Food & Farming

Generally speaking, Oxford's food supply was not jeopardised by the Civil War—at least, not until the final months of the war. River trade with London (which was under parliamentary control) was disrupted, but supplies still came in, and markets still ran on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

But there was some pressure on the food supply: both royalist and parliamentary armies resorted to emergency taxation, loans and seizure of property, including food (Source B4). Sources B2 and B3 record local people baking bread and biscuit for the King's use, but the King had cashflow issues and may not always have paid his bills to farmers, millers and bakers.

Source B1 shows that locals were banned from grazing their cows on Wolvercote common, because Charles I wanted to harvest the hay and use it for his armies. The fact that flour mills were taken over as places for storing armaments must have forced the locals to look elsewhere or go further afield for basic supplies.

The presence of the King in Oxford did mean that there was a new market for luxury goods, and potential opportunity for Oxford traders. Charles would have lived very differently in Christ Church to the local people—as is shown by the fact that he brought two of his own 'pastrymen' and men of the larder with him.

C. Earning a Living

The majority of people in Oxford probably tried to get through the civil war by focusing on their business and earning a living. But the presence of the King in the city put extra demands on the townspeople, through taxes and gifts to the King. When Charles arrived in 1642, the mayor and aldermen of the city presented him with £250 as a gift from the city. By the end of the war, the city's financial reserves (as well as those of the university) were well and truly depleted.

Royalist soldiers, or people pretending to be soldiers, also seem to have harassed the people bringing provisions in to trade at the Oxford markets. Sources C2 and C3 show the King trying to discourage this behaviour so that traders could enter the city without worrying that their food, horses, carts or barges would be stolen.

SOURCES:

A1: *'An Exact Accompt of all Persons being strangers now resident with the parish of St Aldates Oxon'* (Bodleian MS. Add. D. 114, fol. 46)

A2: *Rector of Ducklington's diary* (Bodleian MS. Top. Oxon. c. 378)

SOURCES:

B1: *Restrictions on grazing at Wolvercote common and Port Meadow* (Bodleian MS. 11951)

B2: *'What meale hath bin bakt for the Kings use.'* (Bodleian MS. Add. D. 114, fol. 42)

B3: *Bread and bisket sent by Kath: Moore for the kings use.* (Bodleian MS. Add. D. 114, fol. 43)

B4: *'A List of how much Victualls & of what kindes I conceive necessary to be provided for 3000 men'* (Bodleian MS. Add. D. 114, fol. 94)

SOURCES:

C1: *Making cannon baskets* (Bodleian MS. Add. D. 114, fol. 92)

C2: *Proclamation 'For the better Encouragement of such as shall bring Provisions into this City...'* (Bodleian MS. Add. D. 114, fol. 103)

C3: *'Proclamation for the better securing of the marketts at Oxford, and the safe passage of Travellers unto and from that Citty'* (Bodleian MS. Add. D. 114, fol. 170-171)

By late 1644, the costs of being a royal capital were taking their toll on Oxford: a petition was presented to the royal representatives, complaining of the burdens imposed on the town—the obligation to accommodate soldiers, the additional taxes and demands on the citizens, the increased cost of keeping the town clean. When the parliamentary forces finally took over the city, four years after the King's first arrival there, Oxford and its people were tired and demoralised.

In general, however, the city recovered relatively quickly from the civil war: tradesmen returned and re-established themselves quickly after the final surrender and, by the 1650s, Oxford was a relatively prosperous place.

D. Fortifying Oxford

As the new capital, Oxford needed defending. It already had medieval city walls, but these were inadequate for modern warfare. The plan was to build earthworks (ditches, ramparts) beyond the walls, and also to reinforce existing defences, e.g. by cutting spaces for guns and cannons into college walls. The scale and design of the new ramparts reflected the need to defend the city from artillery, and outlying forts were built to create a mutually defensible strongpoints that could resist cannon fire and prevent the approach of a besieging army.

These fortifications would have to be built by local people. In 1642, a proclamation was made that men and women from the city parishes, from the university, and even 'strangers' resident in the city were obliged to spend one day a week working on a section of earthworks. Those who did not work would be fined two day's wages. Source D3 is a list of all those from age 16–60 who were liable to work on the walls or pay the forfeit. Building earthworks also meant tearing down some houses in the St Clement's area of the city.

The aim was to get 800 people working each day on the defences. But the scheme was extremely unsuccessful: on a day when the King was brought to tour the works, only 12 people from the town were at work on the defences. Sources D1 and D2 show the King's frustration at the slow progress.

The King's commissioner was ordered to tour the city and collect fines from those who had not paid. He was met with numerous excuses. Some refused to answer the door, and others refused to pay. Some said they could not afford to pay; others promised to turn up next week. The records suggest that people were not afraid to speak their minds to a royal official, especially when the obligation to do building work would get in the way of their daily lives.

After a decisive defeat for the royalist army at the battle of Naseby in 1645, it became obvious that Oxford would soon be surrounded by Parliamentary forces. So work on the fortifications began again. Sources D5 and D6, maps from during and after the Civil War, show the construction and ruin of the earthworks.

Last Days as the Royalist Capital

Over the winter of 1645/6, the royalist cause was in collapse. The city was surrounded by troops. Charles left the city disguised as a servant and surrendered to Scottish forces. Oxford had been under siege before during the Civil War, but this was decisive: the idea behind the siege was to 'straiten' Oxford by forcing its inhabitants to live off their own supplies and stop all trade coming in and out. Even so, it was said that the city had supplies to last out a six-month siege. In addition, Thomas Fairfax, the parliamentary commander, had food sent into the city to supply the needs of Charles's younger son, James, who was still living in Oxford. After Charles's escape, an order came from the House of Commons that no-one was to be allowed in or out of Oxford unless they were coming to discuss an arrangement for surrender. An agreement was ultimately negotiated; the remaining royalist troops marched out of the city on 24th June 1646, and the parliamentary army marched in.

SOURCES:

D1: 1643 proclamation 'The Kings Majesties special direction concerning the finishing of the Fortifications, in and about the City of Oxford' (Bodleian MS. Add. D. 114, fol. 22)

D2: 1643 proclamation 'Concerning the Fortifications about the City of Oxford' (Bodleian MS. Add. D. 114, fol. 43)

D3: 'The returnes of the names of the inhabitants & lodgers within each severall parish from 16 to 60' (Bodleian MS. Add. D. 114, fol. 17)

D4: Receipt for payments in lieu of work on the walls. (Bodleian MS. Add. D. 114, fol. 36)

D5: Map of Oxford's fortifications (MS. Top. Oxon. B. 167)

D6: David Loggan's 1675 Map of Oxford (Bodleian (E) C17:70 Oxford (113))

What damaged Oxford most was not the final siege, but a fire which swept through the city in October 1644 – allegedly started by a soldier roasting a stolen pig. It destroyed many houses in the St Ebbe's district of the city, and damaged others. It also threatened people's livelihoods: 7 brew houses, 12 bake houses, 9 malt houses were destroyed. Money was still being raised for those who had lost their businesses in the fire in 1661.