The Governance of Shropshire During the Civil War and Interregnum 1642-1660

Abstract
Often considered as an insignificant, sleepy, rural backwater, the county of Shropshire has attracted little academic interest, particularly concerning the period covering the civil war and Interregnum. Recent studies on the county have concentrated solely on the military aspect of the conflict and have not ventured into the Commonwealth and Protectorate years, nor looked at the administration and the internal politics of the shire. Yet in the first months of the war, the county was seen by Charles I as being vital to his success given its location on the Welsh border and with good transport links to the neighbouring Marcher counties. Shrewsbury was the main rallying point for the crown, and many of the local gentry flocked to the town with donations for the royal coffers. From then, up until 1645, most the county was held for the crown, until the fall of Shrewsbury in 1645 signalled an end to royalist dominance. This thesis is not an analysis of the causes of, or the actual events of, the war, as those matters are peripheral to this examination, being mentioned only briefly during the examination. It is, however, a full analysis of both county society and government, and will consider local issues, some of which had a wide-ranging effect, finances, justice and religion. But, most importantly, it will examine the personnel involved in both local and central government, how they changed over the period according to their allegiance and who was in power, and whether in the aftermath of war former royalists were welcomed back into the Commission of the Peace and other local committees to resume what they saw as being their rightful place in society. The academic study of the county is not a unique concept, having been promoted by Professor Alan Everitt in the 1960s in his study of Kent. In that research, Everitt proposed the concept of the county community, whereby the insular gentry were more interested in local affairs than national issues, and very much resented any interference from central government into what they considered was their domain. This thesis is not an attempt to try and slot Shropshire into that category, for Everitt’s argument has long been considered void. However, the basic framework of research into the county community that many academics have used in the past will be utilised to a certain extent, and the findings compared as much as possible with other neighbouring counties to try and ascertain whether there were any peculiarities within this Marcher society.

Citation

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This thesis applies the historiography of the early modern public sphere to analyze the political literature which militated for curricular and structural reform of England's universities during the Civil War and Interregnum (1642-1660). The writers considered, who represent the breadth of the political and confessional spectra, advanced a multitude of reform schemes that variably proposed to topple Aristotle from the curricula, replace Oxford and Cambridge with local trade schools and abolish the Bachelor of Divinity degree. Alumni of these institutions led the effort to restructure the insti...