



# Civil War Petitions

Conflict, Welfare and Memory during and after the English Civil Wars



[www.civilwarpetitions.ac.uk](http://www.civilwarpetitions.ac.uk)



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# INTRODUCTION

## Project Team



### Principal Investigator

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### Project Manager

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The lead in researching the counties of Wales and the Marches.

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The lead in researching the counties of south-western England.

## Aims and Objectives

Recent estimates suggest that up to 3% of the population of England and Wales died as a direct result of the Civil Wars of 1642–1651 – a greater proportional loss of population than Britain suffered during both World Wars combined. This project set out to uncover the human stories of suffering, loss, survival and hope that lie behind this stark statistic. With the kind support of a Standard Grant from the Arts and Humanities Research Council, the project began in 2017 and we celebrate its completion in 2023.

Over the last six years our research and IT team have digitised on a free-access searchable website the original, hand-written petitions which thousands of wounded ex-soldiers, war widows and other dependants submitted in order to gain pensions for which they were permitted to apply by parliamentary legislation.

These petitions, drawn up between 1642 and 1718, provide graphic testimonies of what it felt like for ordinary people to live with horrific wounds, trauma, suffering and loss. The petitions are sometimes supported by certificates from medical practitioners, army officers, or the neighbours of the claimants in order to support the deserving nature of their cases. Records of how much each claimant received, where and when, have also been entered from surviving records of the courts that deliberated on pension claims and the accounts of treasurers who administered the payments.

These records are scattered across England and Wales in the collections of our fabulous county record offices, without whose support and collaboration this project would have been impossible. Our objective was to **unite these records in one searchable, digital collection** that could be used by university academics and students, teachers and schoolchildren, museum professionals, civil war enthusiasts, researchers and genealogists alike. We hope this will widen discussion of the social, economic and cultural consequences of the Civil Wars and the impacts of these conflicts on people's everyday lives.

### Key research questions

- How did ordinary men and women look back on the English Civil Wars?
- What were the experiences of the women widowed during the conflict?
- What sort of medical care was made available to the soldiers injured in the conflict?
- How far, if at all, did the experiences of Welsh people during the conflict and its aftermath differ from those of English people?
- How did those who had been wounded or bereaved negotiate with the authorities for charitable relief?
- How did political considerations and contested memories of conflict interact with the provision of relief to wounded soldiers, war widows and orphans between 1642 and 1718?
- How did those who operated welfare systems attempt to cope with the enormous strains of supporting thousands of wounded soldiers, soldiers' widows and orphans – and with what success?

## Funders and Host Organisations



## Statistics

Approximately  
**2,500**  
petitions

Approximately  
**1000**  
certificates

Approximately  
**22,000**  
individual biographies

Approximately  
**10,200**  
soldiers

Approximately  
**1,800**  
widows

Approximately  
**500**  
orphans/dependants

# OUR KEY DISCOVERIES

The Civil War Petitions Project has revealed the hidden voices of men, women and families whose lives were deeply affected by events on the battlefields of the Civil Wars. Our evidence has exposed to a wide public audience the significant advances in surgery, hospitals and pensions made during the conflict, while at the same time underscoring how the wars' consequences persisted for generations after hostilities had come to an end. The source of this knowledge comes directly from the recording and analysis of the petitions of ordinary people seeking support from the first national welfare scheme in which the government recognised its responsibility for the wellbeing of injured veterans, military widows and dependants.

We have demonstrated the strategies used by and on behalf of maimed soldiers and war widows when they made their cases to obtain charitable relief and how petitioners represented military service and how they fashioned themselves as 'deserving cases', how they played upon the expectations of the authorities, and in some cases how petitions reflected feelings of entitlement. Therefore, these petitions have helped us to learn more about the many ways in which these war victims endeavoured to sustain themselves through these difficult times. These perspectives of the poor in the memory of national events are often lost, but our documents offer a unique opportunity to hear them speak and be heard for the first time in centuries. This is as close as the early modern historian can get to a kind of 'mass observation archive' on the events of the 1640s and 1650s in England and Wales.

## Mapping the wounded veterans

David Underdown first attempted to map wounded soldier petitioners nearly 40 years ago in his landmark book, *Revel, Riot and Rebellion* (Oxford, 1985). Professor Underdown confined his study area to Dorset, Somerset and Wiltshire, but now our database has enabled more sophisticated mapping of welfare claimants as well as completing this on a national scale. Mapping our claimants often reveals clusters in urban centres and more populous areas, especially where a town or castle housed a military garrison. Recruitment appears to have been especially concentrated along major roads and trade routes. In many localities, both sides recruited from the same communities, meaning that when soldiers returned home after the wars, they had to live side by side with former enemies. This has not only changed our perception of the nature of civil war allegiances and recruitment, but has also made us rethink the depth and persistence of a post-conflict culture in England and Wales.

## New insights

Now that the evidence has been drawn together and digitised, we can interrogate the dataset in new and detailed ways. For example, we can search for how many soldiers from Devon survived gunshot wounds to the head, for example. Or we can assess how the widows of English soldiers slain in Ireland were treated, and where they came from. Additionally, we can research what became of the wounded associated with particular events or battles. For example, there are 35 petitions and certificates that mention the Battle of Naseby. Of these, 33 are royalists, and two parliamentarians, reflecting that parliamentarian casualties were much lighter. Of those 33 royalist documents, 17 of them were from Welsh claimants, suggesting that about half of the royalist infantry at Naseby were Welsh. All but two of the remaining 16 royalist claimants were from English counties bordering Wales, such as Cheshire, Shropshire and Herefordshire. This reveals something of an east-west split between the armies, as our two parliamentarian petitioners were both from Essex.

The website enables analysis of the types of wounds survived by soldiers who fought in the Civil Wars, while the petitions often contain details of how casualties were treated by practitioners and cared for by families and communities. Wound analysis from the petitions has revealed that Civil War medical practitioners were highly capable, often successfully treating surprisingly difficult cases. The general standards of care were comparable to those advocated in the published works of the foremost surgeons of the day, not only in England but across Europe. While, of course, many veterans lived with painful and debilitating wounds for decades after first receiving them, the types of wounds survived by soldiers from the Civil Wars correspond to data available from the Napoleonic Wars and even the First World War.

## Changing historical thinking

Over time, our discoveries have changed our own historical thinking. For instance, in his book, *Our Fall, Our Fame: The Life and Times of Sir Charles Lucas* (Newtown, 1996), David J. Appleby argued that 'a wounded soldier was better advised to pray to God for deliverance rather than rely on the barbarous technology of the medics.' In the light of our project's emerging research, David now concludes otherwise. In *Battle-Scarred* (Manchester, 2018), he states that 'the conflict stimulated marked improvements in military medicine... survival rates appear to have been impressively high.'

## Memorialising the wars

Provision in 1660 of civil-war military welfare continued for two generations beyond the Restoration. The continual process of talking about wartime experiences by petitioning and reapplying for pensions reinvigorated wartime memories and circulated them to new audiences, especially among younger generations.

Suffering and loss were evaluated in courtroom environments every decade (with wounded soldiers being required to show their wounds), until only a handful of veterans remained.

## The project's future

In summary, the now completed first phase of the Civil War Petitions Project, has created easy and freely available access to the voices of ordinary people, who lived through the turmoil of the Civil Wars.

Now, in the second part of our project, we will explore how these experiences from more than 350 years ago compare and contrast with those of today's military veterans and war widows.

The massacre victim

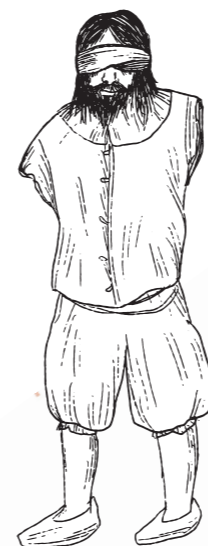


The amputee veteran



Meet some of the hidden voices the project has revealed...

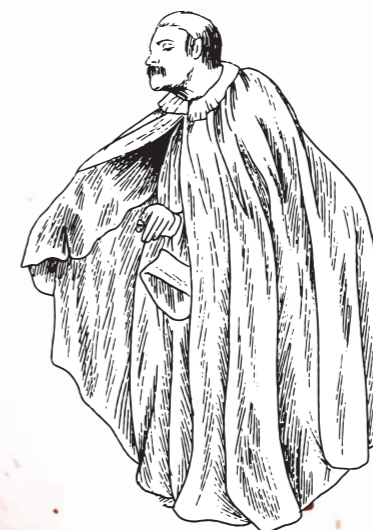
The maimed veteran



The war widow



The blinded veteran



## THE WAR WIDOW

Joan (Johan) Illery and her husband Henry lived in the village of Hemyock in Devon. At the outbreak of the Civil War, Henry joined the parliamentary forces fighting in the region.

In March 1644, Henry joined with other local inhabitants from his home village in garrisoning Hemyock Castle for parliament. After the garrison initially beat off an attempt by the king's men to capture the castle, a much larger royalist force led by John Paulet, 1st Baron Paulet, quickly overwhelmed the defending parliamentarians. The garrison was forced to surrender and was treated extremely harshly. Three men, including Henry, were summarily hanged and the rest were taken as prisoners to Exeter.



Hemyock Castle, as it appears today



Hemyock Castle, as it appears today

Ismini Pells

The victorious royalists then carried out acts of brutality on the civilian population of the village. Johan was plundered of all her goods, while the soldiers also threatened to hang her and burn her children alive. Penniless and destitute, Johan was forced to provide a living for her children by spinning wool.

As a war widow, Johan was entitled to apply for a pension. She was initially awarded two lump sum payments of £5 each (quite a large sum for the time) but after some persistence, succeeded in her claim and was awarded £2 a year (a typical pension amount).

Johan's petition shows that the English Civil Wars were much more brutal than is often assumed. Flouting the customary laws of war and atrocities against civilians was not uncommon. Johan's entitlement to a pension as a war widow was an innovation brought in during the Civil Wars. Wounded soldiers had been entitled to claim pensions from the State since 1593.



A 17th Century woman using a spinning wheel

Walker Art Library / Alamy Stock Photo

However, in 1642, parliament confirmed that all who were wounded in their armies would receive a pension but also extended this provision to the widows and orphans of those who died in their service.

After the Civil War pension scheme ceased in 1679, pensions for war widows of the rank-and-file would not be available again until 1901.

The loss of income occasioned by the death of a husband/father in war could have a severe effect on the lives of the family left behind. Widows were often forced to turn to many different ways of making ends meet.

Petitioners for pensions, especially widows, often had to be extremely tenacious. The courts sometimes awarded one-off gratuities and told petitioners to stop making claims.

However, persistence could pay off and those who were prepared to return, sometimes on numerous occasions, were often rewarded with a regular pension.



## The Petition of Joan Illery of Hemyock, Devon, 1647

Held at Devon History Centre, QS/Bundles/Box 51

To the Honourable Bench of Justices of the Peace now assembled this present General Sessions of the Peace for the county of Devon.

The humble petition of Johan Illery of Hemyock, a poor distressed widow. Showing that Henry Illery (your petitioner's late husband) in obedience unto and on the parliament's behalf, at his own costs and charges, freely adventured his life at the services performed at Exeter, Topsham, Modbury and Stratton. And upon the defeat at Stratton aforesaid, was enforced for the safeguard of his life to fly unto and to protect himself at the garrison at Lyme, where he continued during the most part of the siege that was laid against that town. And at length, together with others of that garrison, removed from there and with full hope and assurance of doing good and acceptable service to the parliament and State in general, as also to the town and parish of Hemyock (his dwelling and habitation) in particular, he there with others, in hope of the country's general aid and assistance, there fortified themselves in the castle. This being at night taken by the adverse party, your petitioner's said husband by the express command of the Lord Paulet against all rules of humanity and Christianity was most barbarously executed, not being allowed by the said Lord Paulet (although your petitioner's husband in all humility desired the smallest respite) yet not one half-quarter of an hour to prepare himself to die but was by the said Lord Paulet's express command as aforesaid immediately drawn out of the castle of Hemyock aforesaid.

He died upon a tree joining to the said castle by the said Lord Paulet's command, there with express command from him of pain of death to any man that should cut him down in seven days. Through fear whereof, your petitioner's said husband so died and hanged at the tree as aforesaid eight days following. And immediately, his soldiers not only came and took from your petitioner all her goods and personal estate, both without doors and within (her wearing apparel, nor dish, nor spoon wherein to eat her meat nor anything else excepted), but they did also threaten to hang your poor petitioner and also vowed and endeavoured to burn her poor fatherless children. Whereas your poor petitioner with her said husband, in time of peace and before her said husband spent himself and estate in the parliament's service as before is mentioned, were worth in their estates above £140. And now your poor petitioner with three poor, small, infirm children have no bread but what your poor petitioner can by her hard labour of spinning and carding provide for them.

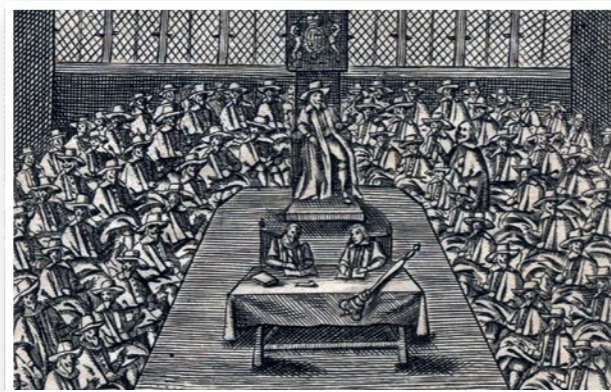
It would please this Honourable Bench and Justices aforesaid out of the bowels of compassion and Christian charity towards your poor petitioner and her three poor, fatherless, helpless, comfortless children aforesaid. Now that you are upon the occasions of your present meeting and associating for the good of the whole county in general, so likewise you maybe pleased to commiserate these your poor distressed and that you will be pleased to order and award some such present and future relief for your poor comfortless and distressed petitioner and children as you out of your bowels of compassion and according to justice and equity shall think fit.

And your poor petitioner shall daily pray etc.



**SCAN ME**

See the full petition on our website and read more about the Johan Illery story and that of others.



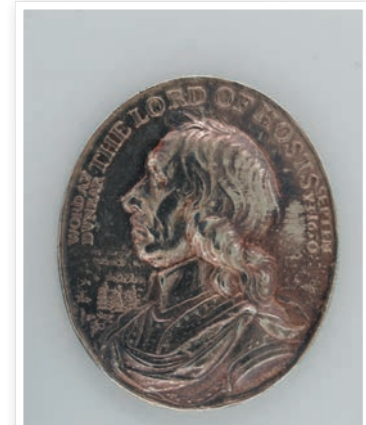
The House of Commons in the reign of Charles I

National Portrait Gallery D18316, reproduced under a Creative Commons Licence

# THE AMPUTEE VETERAN

Thomas Foster from Staffordshire was a recruit to the personal regiment created for Oliver Cromwell by parliament on 21 June 1650.

The regiment was formed to take part in the invasion of Scotland, whose leaders had proclaimed Charles II king. However, when Cromwell replaced Thomas Fairfax as Lord-General of the New Model Army, he left Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Worsley to organise the embryonic regiment. It arrived in Scotland after the battle of Dunbar.



Dunbar Medal, showing the image of Oliver Cromwell – Foster's nominal regimental commander.

Thomas Foster identifies his company commander as 'Captaine Baxter'. Although Thomas's petition is the only evidence that this officer existed, he may have been the Captain Thomas Baxter later listed in Colonel George Fleetwood's regiment.

After nine months on campaign, Thomas Foster fell seriously ill. Dysentery had ravaged the army; as Cromwell reported, 'our lying here daily consumeth our men, who fall sick beyond imagination'. Thomas was probably taken to Heriot's Hospital in Edinburgh, which the New Model had appropriated for its soldiers. After ten weeks, he had recovered sufficiently to be repatriated to Staffordshire. Sadly, his luck would not last.

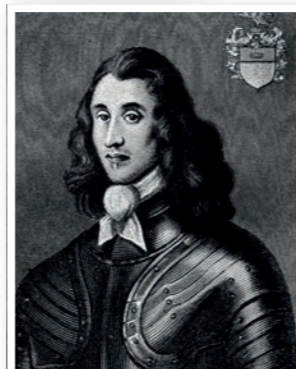


The vicious conflict in Ireland had already cost many thousands of lives. In April 1651 Parliament ordered that a further 10,000 men be conscripted in England and Wales. Thomas was seized by parish officers in Horton in October 1651. It is unclear what he was doing in the Staffordshire Moorlands, as his home was in Walsall.

He was sent to Ireland, where, two years later, he was badly wounded. Despite receiving care in the military hospital in Dublin, and then in Staffordshire, surgeons were forced to amputate his leg. Unable to provide for his family, Thomas obtained a certificate from Horton's officials in

order to petition the county's justices for financial assistance. He was awarded a pension of £4 per annum in October 1654. Six years later the Monarchy was restored. Although many counties terminated parliamentarians' pensions, Staffordshire justices continued to pay local men who had been maimed in Ireland.

Presumably they considered that those conscripted for service there had not technically fought against the Crown, and were therefore entitled to retain their pensions.



Charles Worsley (1622-1656), lieutenant-colonel and field commander. From William Royle, History of Rushmore: With a gossip talk of men and things (1914).



17th century surgical instruments, including knife and bone saw used in limb amputations. © National Civil War Centre

Thomas successfully petitioned for a continuation of his pension in October 1660. Although removed from the county pensioner list in 1662, the justices ordered his home parish to pay him a pension of one shilling per week. Thomas and his family faced a life of poverty, but hopefully at least a peaceful one.



17th century pictorial map of Galway City. Foster was very likely to have participated in the siege of Galway in 1651. © University of Galway, Asset Id 17069, Archival Record Id P133/5/2/1/37

## The petition of Thomas Foster of Walsall, Staffordshire, 3 October 1654

Held at Staffordshire Record Office, shelfmark Q/SR/288, fol. 3

To the Right Worshipful the Justices of the Public Peace at the General Quarter Sessions of the Peace held for the county of Stafford the third day of October 1654.

The humble petition of Thomas Foster, late of Walsall in the said county.

In most humble manner shows your good Worships that your poor petitioner was a soldier for the State under the command of Captain Baxter in his Highness the Lord Protector's own regiment in Scotland, where after nine months' service he was visited with the country's disease, whereof he lay ten weeks.

And being thereby unserviceable, was sent by pass to his friends in England, where so soon as he had recovered his (almost unrecoverable) disease, he was pressed for the Irish Service for Horton in this county. And he served the State in Ireland two years and three months, where he was shot into the leg with two bullets and could get no cure, notwithstanding all the means of the hospital, and was therefore returned into England about May Day last.

And all hopes being taken away of the recovering his leg, he had it cut from his body to save his life and is now under the hand of Mr James Till the surgeon at Stone to be healed.

Therefore, your Worships' poor petitioner humbly prays you to take into consideration his lamentable estate and condition, and to afford him a pension.

And your Worships' poor petitioner, as in duty he is bound, shall ever pray etc.



**SCAN ME**

See the full petition on our website and read more about the Thomas Foster story and that of others.

# THE BLINDED VETERAN

Captain Richard Vaughan hailed from North Wales, and was likely a younger son of a minor gentry family. He became a royalist soldier under Colonel Edward Gerard in the Civil Wars and stated that he had 'for many years together' served the king faithfully.

Vaughan petitioned both the Caernarvonshire and Denbighshire justices in the early Restoration to request a military pension, having 'received a shot in the face whereby he is become blind and maimed'.

A fierce royalist, Vaughan had doubtless suffered during the period of parliamentary rule, and in 1660 he described his 'present deplorable condition'. The Restoration of Charles II saw a swift change in his fortunes: he was given a substantial pension by both counties.

Vaughan's service, petition and reward are not unusual among the many royalist petitions collected together by the Civil War Petitions Project. What makes him unique, however, is that we have an image of him around the time he submitted his petitions.

In 1663, Vaughan was admitted as one of the 'Poor Knights' of Windsor, a group of thirteen veterans who were given accommodation in Windsor Castle and a shilling a day from the Crown. The 'Poor Knights' (or 'Alms Knights'),



Sir Peter Lely, Self Portrait, 1660 © The National Portrait Gallery, London



The Vaughan Almshouses at Ysbyty Ifan, established by a bequest in the will of Captain Richard Vaughan. © Chris Worsley (CC-BY-SA 2.0 licence)

whose order had been in existence since the fourteenth century, were all pensioned military veterans.

One of the Knights' main duties was the annual Garter Ceremony at Windsor held on St George's Day (23 April). It was on one of these occasions in the later 1660s that the Dutch court painter Sir Peter Lely executed a number of pencil studies of the ceremony's participants: he included one of our petitioner.

Vaughan is shown as a stooped individual, using a cane to help him



Captain Richard Vaughan by Sir Peter Lely © The Trustees of the British Museum

walk. He wears the Poor Knights' red cloak and a skull cap. His eyes are closed and he reaches forward to feel his way with his right hand. Vaughan is, of course, blind.

Vaughan was a regular sight in Windsor's grounds where he remained as a Poor Knight until his death at a ripe old age in 1700. A copper plaque was placed in St George's Chapel, which recorded that he 'behaved himselfe with great courage ... in the civill warrs and therein lost his sight by a shott'.

Most of our evidence on this project is textual, so it is a helpful reminder of the human dimension of this conflict that we can put a face to 'the Blind Captain' from North Wales.



The Garter Stalls in St George's Chapel Windsor, scene of the annual Garter Ceremony Francis Bond, Wood Carvings in English Churches (1910), <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/43530>

## The Petition of Richard Vaughan of Llanrwst, Denbighshire, 1660

Held at Caernarfon Record Office (Gwynedd Archives), shelf mark XQS/1660/126

To the Worshipful the Justices of the Peace for the county of Carnarvon.

The humble petition of Captain Richard Vaughan.

Humbly showing to your Worships that your petitioner has for many years together served his late Majesty Charles the First of blessed memory very faithfully in the late unhappy wars and in that service, received a shot in the face whereby he is become blind and maimed.

In tender consideration whereof, may it please your Worships to admit him to be one of the maimed soldiers of this county and to allow him such a proportion of the maimed soldiers' tax for his future stay and maintenance as your Worships shall think fit and may best suit with his present deplorable condition.

And your petitioner shall ever pray etc.

The petitioner is admitted as a lieutenant.



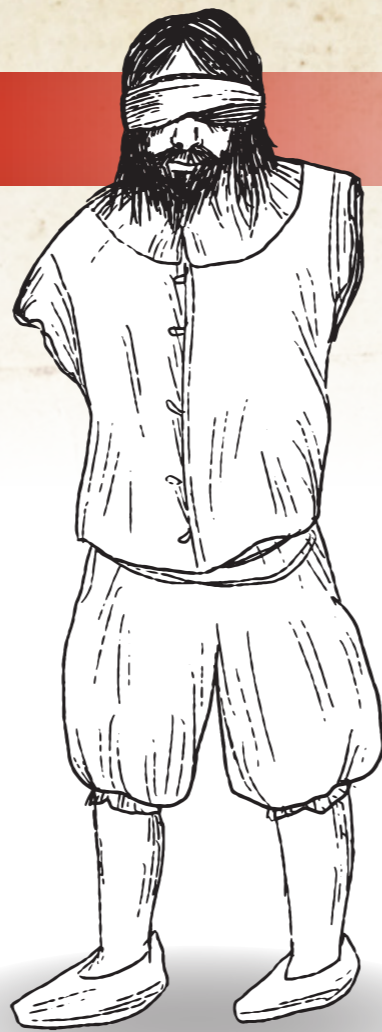
**SCAN ME**

See the full petition on our website and read more about the Richard Vaughan story and that of others.

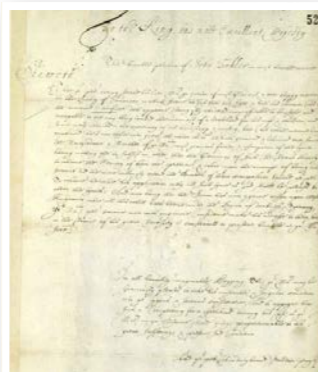
# THE MAIMED VETERAN

John Tinckler was a yeoman from the city of Durham who had enlisted as a royalist artilleryman by 1643. Tinckler was sent to serve in the royalist garrison at Hartlepool, which was being fortified and considered as a possible landing place for Queen Henrietta Maria's return to England in early 1643.

During his time at Hartlepool in spring or summer 1643, John lost his arms and eyes, possibly resulting from an accidental explosion. The royalist commissioner of array for Durham, Sir Richard Tempest of Stella (1620–1662), wrote John a certificate that enabled him to secure a yearly pension of £8 from Durham's royalist justices in October 1643.



Durham Castle Precincts, meeting place of the Durham quarter sessions that granted Tinckler his pension. Durham fell to the Scots in April 1644. Shutterstock



The Petition of John Tinckler. The National Archives, SP 29/20/41

However, the Scottish Army of the Covenant overran the county from April 1644, removing the royalist justices and disrupting the meeting of the Durham quarter sessions. At some point thereafter, John's pension was reduced to £3 per year by the local parliamentarian justices or county committeemen. It was highly unusual for a royalist maimed soldier to receive anything during the Interregnum, but an exception was made for Tinckler, who continued to receive £3 every year until 1659, probably owing to his shocking condition.

Emboldened by the Restoration of Charles II in 1660, Tinckler petitioned successfully for the reinstatement of his previous yearly pension of £8. His success may well have resulted from Charles II's personal instructions to the justices, as Tinckler petitioned the king directly in 1660.



Hartlepool was garrisoned for the royalists by spring 1643 as a possible entry point for Queen Henrietta Maria to land in England. It surrendered to the Scots in 1644. Jackson Dock, Hartlepool. Alamy



The Restoration of Charles II in London in May 1660. A petition from John Tinckler that year was among the many hundreds he received. © The Trustees of the British Museum

John's petition flattered the new king and the memory of 'his most gracious father', remarking that 'the sun has now again arisen upon these kingdoms who all this while hath been under the reign of darkness and tyranny'.

Omitting mention of his £3 annual pension, John instead claimed to Charles II that he had survived with 'nothing else to subsist on, other, than the gleanings of such Christians' charity to whom the memory of him [i.e. Charles I] was precious'.

We do not know how much longer John lived beyond 1660, but it is striking that he had survived for at least 17 years after his life-threatening injuries were inflicted; a testament to the medical practitioners who had treated him and the subsequent care he had received, most likely from his wife and children thereafter.

Our last glimpse of John in the record is that the pension of a Grace Tinckler, possibly his wife or widow, was augmented by 10 shillings per year by Durham justices in 1671.

## The Petition of John Tinckler, City of Durham, October 1660

Held at The National Archives, State Papers 29/20/41

To the King his most Excellent Majesty

The humble petition of John Tinckler in most humble manner,

Shows:

That your petitioner having served his late Majesty your father of most glorious and ever happy memory in the quality of cannoneer, in which service he lost both his eyes, and both his arms (as by the annexed certificate doth appear) being thereby rendered unprofitable to himself, and incapable to act anything toward the meanest of a livelihood for his wife and children.

And so not only reduced to the extremity of all hardship and misery, but (his whole means being expended) he is run beside into great debt under all which he hath groaned and laboured ever since the martyrdom and murder of your Majesty's most gracious father and usurpation of the times having nothing else to subsist on, other, than the gleanings of such Christians charity to whom the memory of him was precious, and who upon the account of being his servant did the more willingly extend the bowels of their compassion toward your petitioner after the times.

And now being that the sun has now again arisen upon these kingdoms who all this while hath been under the region of darkness and tyranny, your Majesty's petitioner cannot now with any more confidence make his address to them, but in the straight of his great necessity is constrained to present himself at your Majesty's feet.

In all humility imaginable begging, that your Majesty may be graciously pleased, to take his miserable and singular condition into your pious and serious consideration.

And to appoint him such a competency for a livelihood during his life, as your Majesty's wisdom shall judge proportionable to his great sufferings, and present sad condition.

And your petitioner (as in duty bound) shall ever pray &c.



**SCAN ME**

See the full petition on our website and read more about the John Tinckler story and that of others.

# THE MASSACRE VICTIM

Bridget Rumney's life was shaped by the tragic fate of her mother Elizabeth at the Battle of Naseby when in 1645, the New Model Army utterly defeated the Royalist field army in a decisive engagement one that hastened the war's end.

What is too often forgotten is that the battle also resulted in a terrible atrocity, for, as the victorious Roundhead soldiers pursued their enemies from the field, they fell upon the king's female camp-followers, killing scores of them, and savagely mutilating many more.

Practically nothing is known about the identity of the unfortunate women who suffered on that day, though Parliamentarian propagandists later claimed that they had all been prostitutes

Fortunately, a document preserved in the National Archives permits us to rescue one of these individuals from the anonymity which has previously cloaked the victims of the massacre.

In May 1660 a certain Bridget Rumney submitted a petition to the newly restored Charles II in which she begged that she herself might be 'restored' to her former position at Court.



The King's Herb-woman  
The New York Public Library Digital Collections



Farndon Field today

Bridget began by explaining that she and her mother, Elizabeth, had long been members of the royal household, and, more specifically that they had 'bin servants' to Charles I, 'in the office for providing of flowers and sweet herbs for the Court'.

In proof of her claim, Bridget enclosed a certificate confirming that she had been sworn in as 'garnisher ... of the [royal] ... lodgings, in the room of ... her mother'.

The fact that this certificate is dated September 1647 makes it clear that Bridget had been appointed only a year and a half before the king was executed, so she can have had little time to enjoy her new position. This misfortune was by no means the worst that Bridget had to suffer, however, for, as her petition makes clear, she had only succeeded to her mother's office in the first place as the result of a family tragedy.

For 'so it is', she sorrowfully informed Charles II, 'that your petitioner's poor mother and two of your petitioner's sons were slain at Naseby'.

Bridget's testimony is fascinating: first, because it permits us to identify Elizabeth as having been one of the victims of the Naseby massacre, second, because it allows us to see that this particular victim of the parliamentarian soldiers' rage had been a domestic servant of relatively advanced years, whose chief occupation before the war had been the scattering of herbs around the royal court.

Bridget's plea that her former office should be restored to her was granted and she continued to serve as Charles II's 'herb-woman' throughout the 1660s.

She can never have forgotten the Civil War though – or the terrible fate that which had befallen her sons, her mother and so many other non-combatant women in the wake of what one contemporary aptly termed 'the battle of Dreadful Down'.



The order of battle at Naseby, 1645, by Robert Streeter

Royal Collections Trust, RCIN 723056, © His Majesty King Charles III 2023

## The petition of Bridget Rumney, Westminster, May 1660

Held at The National Archives SP 29/2/151 fol. 176

To my Sovereign Lord the King's most Excellent Majesty.

The humble petition of Bridgett Rumney.

Most humbly shows:

Unto your sacred Majesty that your poor petitioner and her mother have been servants to your Gracious Majesty's late grandfather and father of blessed memory in the office for the providing of flowers and sweet herbs for the court.

But so it is, may it please your most Excellent Majesty, that your petitioner's poor mother and two of your petitioner's sons were slain at Naseby and your petitioner ever since has undergone much hardship and been exposed to great extremities with six small children for her constant love and loyal affection to your most sacred Majesty in these late unbiased days.

May it please your Highness of your most noble and abundant grace, the premisses tenderly considered, to grant that your most faithful and obedient servant and petitioner may be admitted and restored to her said office again.

And your poor petitioner and servant shall pray unto Almighty God for the prosperous estate of your sacred Majesty, according to her bounden duty, in most high honour and felicity long to reign over us.



**SCAN ME**

See the full petition on our website and read more about the Bridget Rumney story and that of others.



# DELIVERING MILITARY WELFARE

## The Yorkshire experience

The military pension scheme was administered on a county by county basis. Here is how one county coped with the enormous strains of delivering welfare to hundreds of competing claimants.

Yorkshire was England's largest county and was the principal northern theatre of the First Civil War, with a total population in 1642 of about 400,000. It was divided into three Ridings, each of which had a distinctive civil war experience. Yorkshire's surviving evidence, while far from complete, remains impressive. 134 petitions and certificates survive among the rolls of the quarter sessions' courts. 26 order books also survive, covering the city of York (1638–1660), East Riding (1647–1651), West Riding (1647–1710), and North Riding (1645–1710). These order books record the decisions of magistrates to award pensions and gratuities to war widows, wounded soldiers and their dependants. The entries range from simple lists of sums awarded to their named recipients, to records that provide information about individual claimants; in some instances, extensive details from petitions were entered directly into the books.

These records encompass 1,734 claimants, of whom 1,032 can be located by residence. The main drawbacks of the Yorkshire quarter sessions' evidence are that no petitions from parliamentarians survive, and that the West Riding clerks of the peace failed to enter places of residence into the order books for recipients before 1660. Petitions and certificates from the quarter sessions only survive for royalists and are limited to the North and West Ridings after the Restoration. Furthermore, only a snapshot survives for the East Riding in the form of the order book covering 1647–1651, leaving us with no information about East Riding royalists and limiting our ability to compare it with the other two Ridings, especially after 1660.

The distribution of claimants shows that royalists recruited more widely across larger areas of the North and West Ridings. The North Riding map suggests patterns of allegiance and shows that large numbers from both sides were recruited from the same places. Therefore, many soldiers who returned home after the wars had to coexist side by side with their former enemies.

In the North Riding the densest royalist recruitment followed the line of the Great North Road, down which the Earl of Newcastle's royalist army marched from Durham to York in December 1642. This northern army was England's largest royalist force, and much of Yorkshire was its heartland. The maps also reveal that the largest concentrations of royalists came from Knaresborough, Skipton and Helmsley, all sites of important castle garrisons, while the parliamentarians recruited heavily from the eastern parts of the East Riding. Other sources show

that many recruits were attracted from the West Riding's clothing towns such as Leeds, Bradford and Halifax. Parishes west of Leeds would likely include many large red circles if the clerks of the peace had troubled themselves to include pensioners' parishes in their order books during the 1640s and 1650s.

Significant sums of money were raised in Yorkshire for military welfare, indicating some level of consent, despite the difficult challenges involved in collection. Pensions awarded to Royalists in Yorkshire were on average lower than those awarded to their counterparts. This reflected larger numbers of royalists and greater demand after 1660 from individuals who had been denied county pensions for 15 years or more and were now suffering the effects of age on top of their injuries.

During the Interregnum, parliamentary authorities relieved large numbers of widows, recognising their entitlement and sacrifices in the cause, even increasing their pensions by 10 shillings per year for each of their children under the age of seven. This rise in status, and the 'political edge' to female petitioning, seems to have unnerved many in authority, and the position of war widows deteriorated badly, even before 1660. Parliamentary soldiers and widows lost their pensions soon after the return of Charles II. Thereafter, justices of the peace proved reluctant to award pensions to royalist widows, often granting them one-off payments called 'gratuities' instead, unless their husbands had been officers.

The Restoration was not just about restoring the Stuart dynasty; it was also concerned to reassert the traditional social and gender order after a period of acute upheaval. Restricting access to military welfare was one way of forgetting, or 'deactivating' aspects of the English Revolution that the Restoration gentry found disconcerting. In a similar way to declaring Charles II's reign as beginning in 1649, it invented continuity and denied the past.

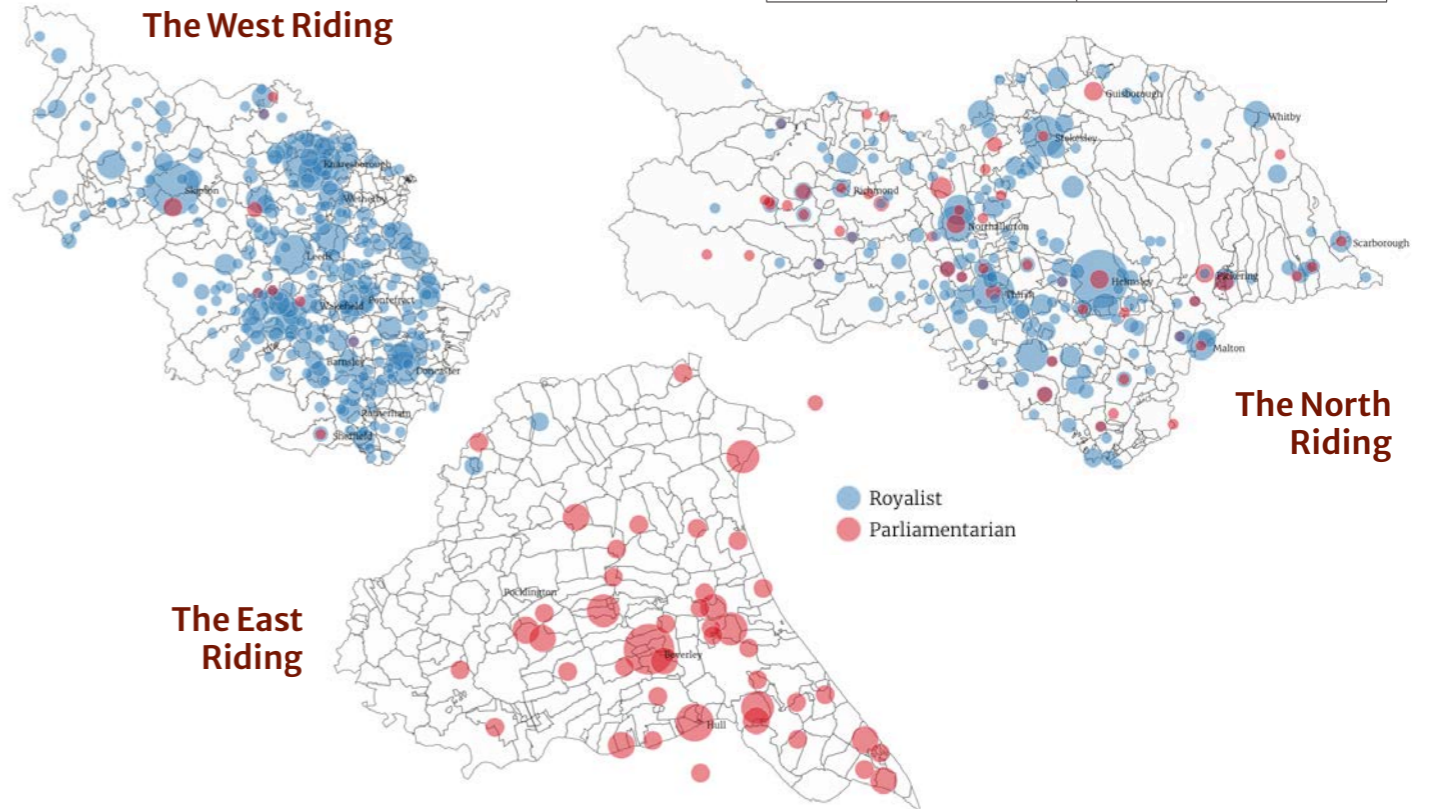
Nevertheless, the legacy of petitioning as participation in popular politics could not be completely curtailed. Late 17th century magistrates faced the ongoing challenge of providing welfare to selective but still highly visible victims of the Civil Wars, across a landscape charged with wartime memories. In Yorkshire at least, this circulation of civil-war welfare extended well into the 18th century, prolonging memories of the conflict, and reminding us now that the human costs of wars – especially of civil wars – persist for generations after the treaties that supposedly end them.

## Claimants of military welfare at Yorkshire quarter sessions

Recipient type	North Riding	East Riding	West Riding	Total
Parliamentarian maimed soldier	89	109	190	388
Parliamentarian war widow	60	22	119	201
Parliamentarian dependant	0	0	4	4
Royalist maimed soldier	359	2	710	1071
Royalist war widow	53	0	12	65
Royalist dependant	0	0	5	5
Total	561	133	1040	1734

## The county rate in the wapentakes of the West Riding, April 1648

Wapentake	Contribution per annum
Strafforth and Tickhill	£125 2s 6d
Claro	£84 10s 10d
Agbrigg and Morley	£74 15s
Staincliffe	£72 11s 8d
Barkston Ash	£55 5s
Osgoldcross	£53 1s 8d
Skirack	£52
Staincross	£35 15s
Ewcross	£14 1s 8d
Total	£567 3s 4d



## Mean pensions and gratuities to parliamentary claimants, 1645–1660

Riding	Soldier Pension	Soldier Gratuity	Widow Pension	Widow Gratuity
North Riding	£2 4s 8d	£1 8s 11d	£2 2s 5d	£0 19s 11d
East Riding	£2 15s 8d	£0 12s 2d	£2 2s 9d	£0 11s 7d
West Riding	£1 17s 9d	£0 17s 9d	£1 4s 5d	£0 10s 2d

## Total expenditure by Riding in sample years 1648–1664

County	1648	1649	1654	1662	1663	1664
North Riding	-	-	£237 12s 6d	£468	£468	-
East Riding	£119 9s	£136 2s	-	-	-	-
West Riding	£567 3s 4d	£338 19s	£338 19s	£226 16s 4d	-	£674 13s

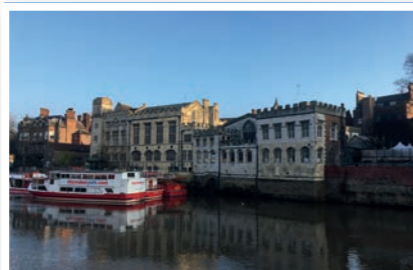
## Mean annual pensions and gratuities to royalist claimants, 1660–1710

Riding	Soldier Pension	Soldier Gratuity	Widow Pension	Widow Gratuity
North Riding	£1 4s 10d	£0 13s 9d	£1 8s 0d	£0 11s 4d
East Riding	-	-	-	-
West Riding	£1 17s 3d	£1 3s 3d	£8 3s 9d	£1 8s 9d



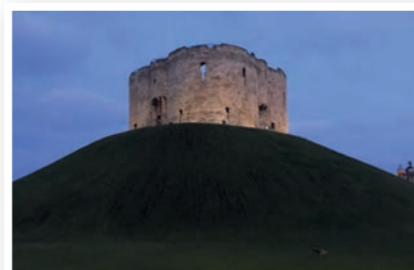
Site of the Hallgarth (now vanished), Beverley, meeting place of the East Riding quarter sessions

Andrew Hopper



York Guildhall, meeting place of the City of York quarter sessions

Andrew Hopper



Clifford's Tower, York Castle, site of imprisonment of parliamentarian pensioners during the 1660s

Andrew Hopper

# OTHER OUTPUTS

## Project publications

David J. Appleby, 'Fleshing out a massacre: the storming of Shelford House and social forgetting in Restoration England', *Historical Research*, 93:260 (2020), pp. 286–308.

David J. Appleby and Andrew Hopper (eds), *Battle-Scarred: Mortality, Medical Care and Military Welfare in the British Civil Wars* (Manchester, 2018).

Lloyd Bowen and Mark Stoye (eds), *Remembering the English Civil Wars* (Abingdon, 2021).

Eric Gruber von Arni and Andrew Hopper, 'Welfare for the Wounded', *History Today*, 66:7 (2016), pp. 17–23.

Ismini Pells, 'Soliciting sympathy: the search for psychological trauma in seventeenth-century English Civil War maimed soldiers' petitions', in E. Peters and C. Richards (eds), *Early Modern Trauma* (Lincoln, Nebraska, 2021).

Dr David J. Appleby, "'Members of one another's miseries": the culture and politics of war relief in seventeenth-century Staffordshire', in Ian Atherton, Matthew Blake, Andrew Sargent and Alannah Tomkins (eds), *Local Histories: Essays in Honour of Nigel Tringham*, Collections for a History of Staffordshire, 4th series, vol. 27 (Staffordshire Record Society, 2023 for 2022), pp. 175–190.

### Forthcoming

Transcriptions of petitions and certificates on the project's website, together with the tables and maps will be reproduced with commentary and notes in a five-volume series.

David J. Appleby, Lloyd Bowen, Andrew Hopper, Ismini Pells and Mark Stoye (eds), *Conflict, Welfare and Memory during and after the English Civil Wars, 1642–1718*, 5 vols. (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis, 2024).

Andrew Hopper, 'The politics of military welfare in Yorkshire and the memory of the Civil Wars, 1642–1709', *English Historical Review* (2024).

Ismini Pells, 'Petitioning soldiers, the power of the patient, and the provision of military welfare in seventeenth-century England and Wales', in Richard Huzzey, Maartje Janse, Henry Miller, Joris Oddens and Brodie Waddell, eds, *Petitions and Petitioning in Europe and North America: From the Late Medieval Period to the Present*.

Andrew Hopper, *Widowhood and Bereavement in the English Civil Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2025).

## Blog series

Our project website currently hosts 60 blogs written by members of the core project team alongside many guest contributions. The series was highly commended in the British Record Association's Janette Harley Prize competition. The blogs focus on particular examples, case studies or themes inspired by the project's website, including such titles as: 'Maimed and Lamed' Civil War Petitions and Disability History; The War Wounds of Sir Thomas Fairfax; Orphans' Petitions; Injuries and Inspections; The Last Soldiers of the Civil Wars; Charity in the City; Echoes of a Massacre; Injuries from Firearms; Prisoners of War; Widows Past and Present; Uncertain Authors, and Meet a Petitioner.



## Video collaboration

We would like to acknowledge Vicky Hall and her Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) actor colleagues who recorded their own performances at home during the Covid-19 lockdown.

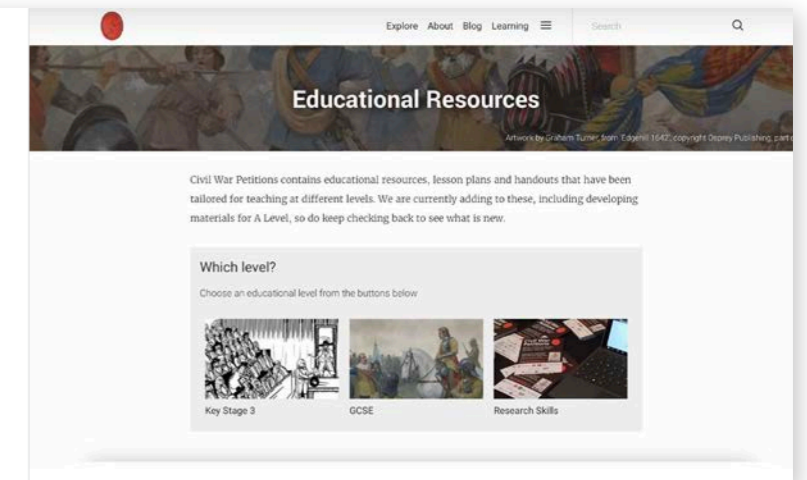
This video reminds us that the petitions and certificates are not merely dry administrative documents handled by legal officials and bureaucrats. They represent performances, often in the theatre of local courts where petitions were read and assessed, with the claimants themselves present to make their case and stand by their testimony.



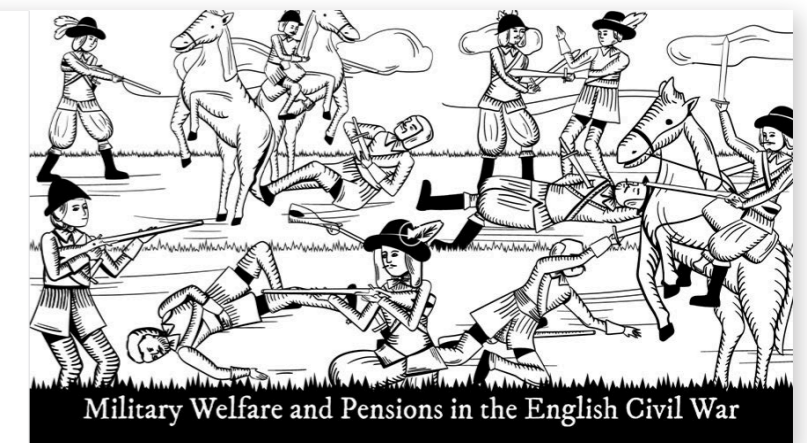
## Educational resources

The project has created a range of innovative educational resources, produced with the support of our teacher-collaborators and the Learning and Participation team at the National Civil War Centre, tailored for teaching at different levels.

These include downloadable lesson plans for teachers, handouts, animations, class activities and quizzes, as well as classroom resources for GCSE Medicine Through Time and 'How to Read a Document' videos to help build students' source analysis skills.



Two-minute animation of Project for Schools by Science Animated



From October 2023, the project will inaugurate a Civil War Educators' Network which will host annual meetings of academics, teacher-educators, schoolteachers and museum professionals. It will provide a forum for discussing strategies to embed new online resources into teaching practices of UK schools and universities.



This will draw on our website and an exciting new resource, *The World Turned Upside Down*.

[worldturnedupside-down.co.uk](http://worldturnedupside-down.co.uk)



# THE FUTURE

*'They that have received any hurt or loss by the wars ought to be liberally provided for, and comfortably maintained all their days, by them that set them forth.'*

Parliamentarian army chaplain, Robert Ram,  
*The Soldiers Catechism Composed for the Parliaments Army* (London, 1644), p. 28.

The next phase of the project will create pathways to support today's armed forces veterans, war widows and the children of service families by sharing the experiences revealed by the Civil War Petitions Project.

We will work closely with new project partners – the War Widows' Association and Breaking Ground Heritage – as well as leading museums and heritage organisations.

## Enacting the Armed Forces Covenant

The legacy of UK combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, which resulted in the deaths of 179 and 457 British Forces personnel respectively, as well as the physical and psychological wounding of tens of thousands more servicemen and women, continues to be felt today. Even in 2020–21, some of the payments from the total £736.6m distributed by the Ministry of Defence under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (for claims after 2005) and War Pension Scheme (for claims prior to 2005) for service-related injuries and death, were made to soldiers who had served in Iraq and/or Afghanistan.

Although public interest in veteran welfare declines sharply in peacetime, the challenges facing the wounded and bereaved remain problems that depend upon the involvement of civilian communities to overcome. A lack of connection with civic society often prevents veterans from accessing welfare services.

Heritage projects can lead to a decrease in the severity of feelings of social isolation experienced by those affected by conflict, along with an improvement in mental wellbeing, sense of value and educational skills. Our project's petitions are an ideal basis for a heritage project for veterans, war widows and service children. The Armed Forces Covenant, established in its present form in 2011, is a commitment from the UK Government, businesses and other organisations to support and treat fairly those who have served in the armed forces and their families. The origins of this commitment are traced to the reciprocal agreement between the State and those who fight in its service that was first recognised in England in the pension scheme for maimed soldiers established in 1593.

However, it was during the Civil Wars that this scheme was overhauled to operate on a truly effective national scale and that pension entitlement was extended to widows and orphans. Our planned activities hope to bridge the divide with civilian society through organised opportunities to communicate their experiences to public audiences.

## The next exciting phase of the project

Our follow-on project will establish pathways for improved education skills, wellbeing and social networks for veterans, war widows and service children based on a foundation of the knowledge revealed by the initial phase of the Civil War Petitions Project.

With the support of our new project partners as well as heritage organisations, academic historians and participating museums, we will explore the experiences of modern veterans, widows and their families, to help build bridges between military communities and civilian society through their shared history.



## Delivering the programme

- Museum workshops with veterans in association with Breaking Ground Heritage and the War Widows' Association
- Exhibitions at the National Civil War Centre, Newark and the Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum, Woodstock
- Travelling exhibition hosted by the National Army Museum, London
- Online exhibition on [www.civilwarpetitions.ac.uk](http://www.civilwarpetitions.ac.uk)
- Public roundtable discussion on military welfare at the National Army Museum

## The War Widows' Association

The War Widows' Association of Great Britain was formed in 1971 and became a registered charity in 1991, and is now the United Kingdom's leading representative of widows and widowers of armed forces personnel whose death was attributed to service. It includes an associate member category which encompasses all military bereaved, including parents and children as well as those whose partner's death was not due to service.



Established as a campaigning organisation, the Association is built on three pillars – campaigning, caring and remembering.

With no financial help from the Government or the Ministry of Defence, the Association has no offices nor paid staff, to ensure that all its funding benefits its members.

Currently, the Association has two campaigns. The first seeks reinstatement of the pension to those widows who were forced to surrender their war widows' pension on remarriage or cohabitation. In 2015 the Government made the War Widows' Pension a pension for life regardless of the circumstances but those who had already surrendered their pension have been excluded from this reform.

The second campaign's objective is to ensure that armed forces bereaved families are recognised as a specific group with a spokesperson in Government, similarly to the representation of veterans, as the bereaved face lifelong challenges but are often not included in the objectives of many agencies who could provide support.

The Association has a strong regional organisation providing meetings and social gatherings, decided upon by the members.

The four national events annually include our AGM in March and a Founder's Day Service in the Guards Chapel, London every July, followed by afternoon tea in the Officers' Mess. Every November, the Association holds its Remembrance service at the Cenotaph in London on the Saturday before Remembrance Sunday. Finally, the fourth event includes visits to the National Memorial Arboretum and similar locations.

[www.warwidows.org.uk](http://www.warwidows.org.uk)

## Breaking Ground Heritage

Breaking Ground Heritage designs, delivers, and consults on archaeological and heritage-based interventions for veterans and serving personnel. It works with individuals whose lives have been affected by disability, injury and ill health. Working with partner projects, the charity has developed a multi-award-winning project that has pioneered the use of heritage to promote positive well-being while simultaneously developing the skills and confidence of veterans in order to help them regain control of their lives.



Heritage has repeatedly proven to be a successful mechanism for recovery. It has been demonstrated that engagement in projects are a catalyst for change in well-being and decreased anxiety and depression, as well as improved feelings of belonging with a renewed sense of purpose.

Over the past four years Breaking Ground Heritage has studied participant experiences (veteran, serving military and civilian) to identify, measure and interpret individual or group change that occurs through participation in projects.

Breaking Ground Heritage has used its experience to create a working hypothesis which evaluates changes in anxiety and depression, which are common in these groups, and alterations in well-being in those with poor mental health engaged in its projects.

Results of this research demonstrate statistically significant reductions in symptoms of anxiety and depression and an increase in well-being. These changes are replicated each time participants re-engaged in projects. This was the first longitudinal study of this kind.

Further analysis demonstrate three primary themes interpersonal, developmental and holistic personal development. The interpersonal developments include the social aspect of being involved in projects; being a part of something and something to look forward to. The developmental factors include new skills: improved confidence, reassurance of one's own abilities and developing a passion for heritage. Finally holistic personal development showed person-centric aspects such as improved mental health, the ability to talk without judgement and the saving of lives. This evidence enabled Breaking Ground Heritage to develop an understanding of the mechanics that underpinned the successful delivery of a project.

Although Breaking Ground Heritage works primarily with serving military and veteran populations, where research criteria allow, non-military groups have been engaged with comparable outcomes.

[www.breakinggroundheritage.org.uk](http://www.breakinggroundheritage.org.uk)

# THANKS TO

## Funders

Successful completion of the project was made possible by the generous support of these institutions and individuals.

- Standard Grant, Arts and Humanities Research Council
- Impact Acceleration Award and UK Festival of Social Science Week, Economic and Social Research Council
- Department for Continuing Education, University of Oxford
- UKRI COVID-19 Grant Extension Allocation, University of Leicester

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Dr Stewart Beale  
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Dr Sally Hargreaves  
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## Project volunteers

Roy Cosslett  
Liz Elliot

Rik Sowden  
Harriet Wilson

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## Project Website Designers

Chris Carter, John Gilbert, Mike Gardner, Peter Wilson and Adrian Bean of Information Services, University of Nottingham.

## Guest contributors to blog

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Oliva Bennisson  
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Sarah Cooley  
Dr Maureen Harris  
Professor Ronald Hutton  
Dr Jenni Hyde  
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## Impact partners

### National Civil War Centre, Newark

Sarah Clarke  
Denise Greany  
Glyn Hughes  
Kevin Winter

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Our collaborative work on the 'Battle-Scarred' exhibition helped to make the case for the project to be funded, and we have learnt much from our subsequent work with them on the 'World Turned Upside Down' exhibition and the 'Upside Down World' education resources.

PDFs of the exhibition magazines are available here:



Further educational resources for schools, including the new 'Upside Down World' are available here:



## Teacher partners

Our teacher collaborators provided invaluable direction and support in developing our educational resources.

We are especially thankful to those at Newham Sixth Form College, with whom we co-presented a session at the Historical Association Annual Conference in 2022.

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Schools' Officer

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We would also like to thank Claire Wood of Spurwing Creative for her design of this booklet, the event banners and her project management of the launch event.

## Collaborating archives

The Civil War Petitions Project has been made possible by the generous support and enthusiasm of these archives and their staffs to whom we offer our sincere thanks.

The National Archives

The National Library of Wales

Bedfordshire Archives

Berkshire Record Office

Bodleian Library

Bristol Archives

Buckinghamshire Archives

Caernarfon Record Office (Gwynedd Archives)

Cambridgeshire Archives

Cambridge University Library

Canterbury Cathedral Archives

Carlisle Archive Centre

Cheshire Archives and Local Studies

Kresen Kernow (Cornwall Archives Centre)

Derbyshire Record Office

Devon Heritage Centre

Dorset History Centre

Durham County Record Office

Essex Record Office

Gloucestershire Archives

Hampshire Record Office

Herefordshire Archive and Records Centre

Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies Library

Hull History Centre

Huntingdonshire Archives

Kendal Archive Centre

Kent History and Library Centre

The Record Office for Leicestershire and Rutland

Lancashire Archives

Lincolnshire Archives

London Metropolitan Archives

Magdalene College, Cambridge, Pepys Library

Norfolk Record Office

Northamptonshire Archives

Northumberland Archives

Nottinghamshire Archives

Oxfordshire History Centre

Shropshire Archives

Somerset Heritage Centre

Staffordshire Record Office

Suffolk Record Office

Surrey History Centre

East Sussex Record Office

West Sussex Record Office

Tyne and Wear Archives

University of Nottingham Manuscripts and Special Collections

Warwickshire County Record Office

Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre

Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service

East Riding Archives and Local Studies Service

North Yorkshire County Record Office

West Yorkshire Record Office

York Explore Library and Archive



# Civil War Petitions

Conflict, Welfare and Memory during and after the English Civil Wars, 1642 - 1710

[www.civilwarpetitions.ac.uk](http://www.civilwarpetitions.ac.uk)



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