

Sensational sources

Secret code

What do we know about this source?

- It was written on 31 August 1645.
- Prince Maurice wrote it to George, Lord Digby. Both of these men were senior commanders in the armies of Charles I.
- It was written in cipher (a kind of code). This suggests that these were troubled times, or why would you bother putting your letters in code?

Can you crack the code?

Ciphers use letters, numbers or symbols to replace individual letters and numbers of a message. Without a key to show how the cipher works, it is very hard to decode, as there are millions and millions of possible combinations.

If you can crack the code, that would be great, because then you can tell us what the letter says. We don't know! education@nationalarchives.gov.uk

There are enough bits in ordinary English to tell that there is a war going on. Prince Maurice wrote that the Royalist town of Hereford was about to be attacked by Parliament's forces. The rest of this document is a mystery, but even this scrap tells us that England was being torn apart in the 1640s.

