



What kind of king was Charles I?

Case Study 2: Charles I as a ruler – Source 4

A petition against royal taxes from the town of Woodbridge in Suffolk, February 1627

(Catalogue ref: SP 16/55/59)

What is this source?

This is a petition or request from the people of Woodbridge in 1627. They were explaining to the government why they had not supplied the information they were asked for. They wanted to get out of paying a tax called 'ship money'.

The government had asked for information about shipping in Woodbridge. Once the government had all the information, the town would be told how much tax it had to pay. Ship money was a tax which was usually paid by coastal towns to help pay for the navy. It was a tax that Charles could collect without consulting Parliament.

What's the background to this source?

There were several different types of taxes that towns had to pay. As well as ship money, other taxes took the form of paying for the king's soldiers. This might be cash for the wages, ships to transport them, equipment or food for the troops. Plus in the 1600s the government did not have police forces, traffic wardens and all the other officials it has today. Instead people in towns like Woodbridge had to carry out many different jobs for the king.

- They had to raise money for a royal building.
- There was no full time army with bases and barracks. Soldiers were recruited and trained in local areas. The local people had to find food and shelter for these soldiers in their homes, farms and barns.
- They paid for powder and matches. These were essential for an army in the 1600s. Without them the guns did not work.
- They kept the beacons. These were alarm signals. If attackers were spotted coming in from the sea, a beacon would be set on fire. The next beacon further away would see the first beacon and send a signal, and so on. This would raise the alarm.

It's worth knowing that ...

Most monarchs in the 1600s were short of money. Charles I was no exception. Charles was facing a war against Spain in 1626. He was recruiting and training soldiers and sailors. He needed money to feed, pay and equip them.

Monarchs usually called Parliaments when they needed money for wars, but Charles did not like dealing with Parliament. His father (James I) had always understood that running the country meant some give and take. Charles disliked the idea of making deals and compromising. He simply wanted people to do what he told them.

Your turn: What does this source tell us?

1. The petition set out five reasons why Woodbridge would struggle to pay ship money. What were they?
2. Which reasons do you find most convincing?
3. What does this source tell us about what people had to pay for in towns like Woodbridge?
4. According to this source, had Charles been paying his bills?
5. Do you get the impression that the people of Woodbridge have a good case or do you think they are just dodging taxes?



Source 4a

Whaylt nowe becase yo^r good^s forth to take into yo^r grabe Consideration^s
 the causes & reasons w^{ch} they the said^s inhabitants doe humbly offer
 to yo^r good^s in the exp^{re} of the said^s proceedings therein according^e
 to that w^{ch} was of them required w^{ch} be ab^o
 first

the same is a county & borough

Secondly they gave betw^e all waies & charges w^{ch} the rest of the county
 for the carriage of the late King's ^{Arms} materialls for his buildinge
 all Newmarket & are still charged, Towards his Ar^{ms}
 provision for his household, Towards the payeing and
 waiteinge of his Ar^{ms}, Towards the provision of powder &
 waite, and the waies of Soldiers & officers in the band for eady
 fmo weeks trayninge, Towards the fore of powder waite &
 Bullette to be provided, Towards the Carre w^{ch} is seidall cooled
 & waies for eady of them, Towards the charge of 3000 men
 to march into Kent w^{ch} any retaine notice or Alar^m, And 5000
 men w^{ch} the Coast of Suff^{er} & 4000 men to march to Darmonth
 w^{ch} the like occasions, And towards all other charges w^{ch} the
 County be charged w^{ch}



Source 4b

Evidently the Owners of Spinninge w^{ch} in the said Towne are not in a
 manner aboute English Lawes & Custome but Collyered ouerly & but stande
 for the of the said Spinninge doe belonge unto Newcastell &
 London & other remote parts & but diuise of the Country
 And the said Owners of Woodbridge haue bene hindered w^{ch} in
 the two yeres by takinge of their Spindles into the ^{hies} Alia
 Soruice (w^{ch} are diuise of them still be) to the value of god
 all least althitt they haue retained their wayes w^{ch} ad yett
 they haue not

For the Towne consisteth of Gent & other w^{ch} haue beene their lande
 & artificers and handicraft men w^{ch} haue not any tyme
 relation to the Sea or to merchandises w^{ch} haue w^{ch}ome w^{ch} fine
 sine poaune charge shall be imposed more then w^{ch} on the
 Country they will be ready to forsake the said Towne & upon
 the estate of the said Towne will be quite outgrowne