



Why did people go to war in 1642?

Case study 1: 1637-39 – Source 2

A legal complaint made by Sir Richard Strode about ‘ship money’, August 1639

(Catalogue ref: SP 16/427/32)

What is this source?

This is part of a letter written by Sir Richard Strode. He claimed that ship money (a kind of tax) and other taxes which Charles I raised in the 1630s were illegal.

The letter is one of several documents in the State Papers that complain about ship money. Richard Strode was certainly not alone in his complaint. About 30% of the ship money charged was unpaid by the people.

What’s the background to this source?

Charles I ruled from 1629-40 without calling Parliament. This period was known as the Personal Rule. Kings could not normally go this long without talking to Parliament. They usually ran short of money and new taxes had to be approved by Parliament. However, Charles hated working with MPs. He tried to get the money he needed by collecting taxes like ship money and tallage (a tax on landowners).

Ship money was supposed to be paid by counties near the coast. It was supposed to be paid in times of emergency to raise money for the navy to protect the country. However, from 1635 Charles I started collecting ship money every year. He also started collecting it from all counties, not just coastal counties.

It’s worth knowing that ...

There was a lot of opposition to ship money and other taxes. Richard Strode was a long-term opponent of the tax. He appears in government records in 1631, 1635, 1637 and 1639 complaining about ship money.

Opponents of Charles’s taxes had three main complaints:

They did not like paying the taxes!

They felt Charles was acting illegally by collecting taxes without the approval of Parliament.



They objected to the punishments and fines that were used against Charles's opponents. In most cases, opponents were punished without a trial.

Your turn: What can we learn from this source?

1. What happened to Richard Strode's cow?
2. Why was Strode upset about it?
3. What is his attitude to being forced to pay the king 'ship money'?
4. Do you think Strode was more concerned about his cow or about the king ignoring Parliament and acting outside the law?
5. Does this source give us any clues about why the kingdom went to war in 1642?

Source 2a

... the Paper ...
... that whereas it is
enacted 34. Ed. 1. That we take
our oyes shall be layd, or Levyd
by the King, or by His Highnes, with
out the good will, and assent
of the Lord, and Commony etc.
And whereas 25. Ed. 3. its enacted
that from thenceforth none shall
be compelled to make any Loan
to the King agt his will,



Source 2b

yet notwithstanding con-
 trary to the Law, and Liberty,
 and Row, worth 4. 10. 0. be-
 ing the good of Mr Richard Strode
 of Exmouth in the County of Devon
 full, and unreasonable rates made
 by the Col of the said County
 by Thomas Row a Douglas
 of the said County taken, and
 sold for the Kings Majesty's service
 on 23. Martij last at New-
 ington in the said County of Devon
 rays Rates made for the setting
 forth of Shipping without con-
 sent in Parliament.

Rich. Strode