

Why did people want the king back in 1646?

Case study 1: Effects of war, 1642-45 - Source 1

A letter written by a Parliament officer, Nehemiah Wharton, 13 September 1642

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What is this source?

These are sections from a letter by Nehemiah Wharton, a Parliamentary officer in the Civil War, written to George Willingham, a merchant.

Wharton was a Puritan gentleman from the Midlands (near Leicester). His letters have proved very useful in giving us a picture of the impact of the Civil War on ordinary people.

What's the background to this source?

This source comes from an early stage of the war – less than one month in and a month before the first big battle at Edgehill in October. As well as the big battles, there was a lot of smaller fights or skirmishes in the Civil War.

Skirmishing meant small-scale mini-battles between units of Royalist and Parliamentary troops. Apart from fighting each other, the top priority of each army was to find food and supplies for the soldiers and horses. Each side often took anything they could find from local farms, villages and towns. They often took able-bodied men and forced them into their armies.

It's worth knowing that ...

Wharton was a Puritan, a hard-line Protestant. During the war Puritans became increasingly powerful and important in the army.

They and their men spent a lot of time at religious services, reading and discussing the Bible. As the war went on, many army officers and soldiers began to see themselves as chosen by God to protect the Protestant Church and Parliament from men like Archbishop Laud (who wanted to make changes to the church) and from possible plots by Catholics.

Your turn: What can we learn from this source?

1. What happened to Justice Edmonds?
2. Is it possible to say whether this kind of thing happened a lot?
3. Do you think the countryman had much choice in becoming Wharton's guide?
4. According to this source, what did Prince Rupert do?
5. Do you think this source gives a reliable view of the impact of the war?
6. What does this source tell you about Nehemiah Wharton?
7. Why did nothing happen on Sunday?
8. Study the source and the supporting notes. Why did so many soldiers begin to see themselves as 'soldiers of god'?
9. How does this source help to explain why many people were supporting Charles in 1646?



Source 1

Sabbath day sent the 7th was yeatably misad. Monday morning I was informed
 by a country man of a Capt. [unclear] 6 miles distant which had got out horse
 for the [unclear] of away and had arms in his house and I immediately got
 20 musketeers and marched out to search the house. The country man followed
 with a soldiers wd. to take care him arms and made him my guide. But having
 marched a mile certaine gentlemen of the country informed me that
 Justice Edmonds a man of good reputation was ^{but since 7 leagues of the way} plundered by the Capt. [unclear]
 of Colonel Cholmleys regiment and caused of the very goods whereupon
 I immediately divided my men into 3 squadrons surrounded them and forced
 them to bringe their pillage upon.

Monday morning we
 had tidings that y^e gentle Robert that Diabolical Traitor had surrounded Loston
 and demanded two thousand pounds or else threatened to plunder the town
 whereupon our soldiers were sent made to be at them but wanted summeffor

Tuesday morning shortly
 Mr. Obdiah Sedgwick gave us a worthy sermon and my company in particular
 marched to reach him in rank and file Mr. John Sedgwick was appointed to preach
 in the after noon but we had news that y^e gentle Robert had plundered
 Harbrough and fired some adjacent towres