

Why did people go to war in 1642?

Case study 1: 1637-39 – Source 3

An engraving of a protest in Edinburgh in 1637

(By permission of The British Library, E.365 (6))

What is this source?

This picture describes events that happened in Edinburgh in 1637. It shows the reaction of Scottish Protestants when the head of the church in Scotland tried to use a new prayer book for church services.

The picture appeared in a book called 'The sight of ye transactions of these latter years' by John Vicars. The book was a description of what was happening at the time. Today a TV documentary would probably do the job of a book like this.

What's the background to this source?

Throughout the 1630s Charles and his Archbishop of Canterbury, William Laud, brought changes to the organisation of the church and also to the way people worshipped in church. The Scots did not like Laud's new prayer book or his other ideas. They also disliked an Englishman making decisions about the church in Scotland.

Religion was very important to everyone. In the 1500s England and Scotland had broken away from the Roman Catholic Church and become Protestant countries. In the 1600s there was still a lot of suspicion about Catholics trying to undermine the country. Some hard-line Protestants accused Charles and Laud of making the Church of England too much like the Catholic Church. Some of these hard-line Protestants, known as Puritans in England, had a lot of sympathy for the Scots.

It's worth knowing that ...

In February 1638 Scottish rebels formed themselves into a National Assembly. They signed a Covenant (agreement) banning the new prayer book.

The Covenanters (the rebels who supported the Covenant) then got rid of other changes brought in by Laud. In November they got rid of bishops altogether. Charles would not put up with this challenge to his

authority. He took an army to Scotland to crush the rebels. Unfortunately, he could not beat them. His fight with the Scots dragged on until October 1640.

Your turn: What can we learn from this source?

1. Describe the scene as though you were reporting it for a radio broadcast.
2. What is happening?
3. How would you describe the feelings of the crowd?
4. Do you think this was simply a small number of people causing the trouble?
5. Does this source give us any clues about why the kingdom went to war in 1642?



Source 3

