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The Use Of  
CANNON IN THE CIVIL WAR

With Particular Reference

to

DERBYSHIRE

by

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Published by the Local History Section

of the

DERBYSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

1963

Because of the interest occasioned by my previous article, (Derbyshire Miscellany Vol.II No.6 p.318-9) and through the useful suggestions of members, I am encouraged to submit these notes, which I hope will assist in clarifying the picture so far as the use of guns in Derbyshire is concerned.

It appears desirable, in order to place the matter in its proper context, to review the situation generally, and to this end I have consulted various works, including the following, to which I am indebted for numerous extracts: Whitelock's Memorials, 1682; Rushworth's Collections, 1659-1701; "Cromwell's Army", by C. H. Firth, 1902; "Castles and Cannon", B. H. St. John O'Neill, "Life of Col. Hutchinson", Lucy Hutchinson; "Memoirs of the Duke of Newcastle", by Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle; "Derbyshire", Pilkington; "Waterloo", John Naylor, 1960; and "The Story of the Gun", by Lt. A. W. Wilson, R.A., 1944. Firth quotes extensively from earlier writers, as "Animadversions of War", 1639, "Principles of the Art Military", 1643, etc. Appended to a particular edition of "The Life of Col. Hutchinson" is an excellent day to day account of the Siege of Lathom House. From the gunnery standpoint St. John O'Neill is disappointing, as buildings were his interest and he refers to the gun only insofar as it affects castles and fortifications.

Generally there are masses of references to the use of guns, but only very infrequently does one find precise information as to range and effect, and the picture must be built up by extracting appropriate evidence from numerous actions.

Rennie Hayhurst

Tissington,  
1963

Originally, the gun had been envisaged as a static engine of war, for use either in defence of a fortified place or in the besieging of a stronghold. There was thus no attempt made to facilitate mobility, and certain guns were made of a tremendous size. As early as 1453 a bronze cannon which weighed nearly 19 tons was made for the siege of Constantinople. It was 17 feet long, 25 inches bore, and fired a stone "pellet" of 600 lbs. Today, at Edinburgh Castle, one can see "Mons Meg", of 20 inches bore, reputed to have been forged at Mons, 1461-83, which, using 105 lbs of powder, and set at 45 degrees elevation, is said to have sent an iron ball 1408 yards and a stone one 2876 yards. It is interesting to note that this gun is of iron bars welded together, with iron bands shrunk around them. It is supposed that Ralph Hog made the first cast iron guns at Buxted, Sussex, in 1542, and English cast-iron guns are said to have outshot the Spaniards' brass Cannon during the battle of the Armada. At this period the difference between so-called "point-blank" fire and the actual trajectory of the shot was appreciated, and Nicholas Tartaglia in 1537-43 wrote a treatise wherein he describes a "Gunner's Quadrant" for elevation of the gun to correct for "The Visuall Line" and "The Way of the pellet".

During the Tudor period remarkable inventiveness and ingenuity of craftsmanship were displayed in hand firearms. Henry VIII in his personal armoury had hand guns with rifled barrels, breech-loaders, and guns similar to revolvers. It is, therefore, somewhat surprising to find cannon continuing in essentially the same basic form throughout several centuries; that is, having smooth bore, muzzle loading, and being fired by applying match to a touch-hole; this state of affairs applying from the inception of cannon until well after the Crimean War.

It is interesting to reflect upon the question, "When was the last time, prior to the Civil War, that cannon were used in England?". I find they were used by Charles I's army and the Scots, near Newcastle, during that brief and inglorious campaign in 1640. But a more interesting occasion is related by Speed concerning Wyatt's Rebellion in 1554, following the accession of Queen Mary. On approaching London from Kent, Wyatt "has eight brasse Peeces taken of the Queenes, besides other of their owne, marched the next morning unto Cowling Castle, where the L. Cobham then lay, and bending their Ordnance against the Gate, brake it open with their shot, and made entrance for their men". Later, "The White Tower having him in danger, shot off her Ordnance, but did misse their marke, some levelling too farre over, and some as much too short". And again, Wyatt, having planted four pieces of ordnance at London Bridge, "The White Tower began to be topped with Ordnance, seven Culverings and Demy Cannons levelled against the Bridge-foote, the Steeples of St. Olive's and St. Marie Overies; all the White Tower laden with her Peeces, three Fawconets over the Water-Gate, and a double Culvering upon Divelling Tower; and all these were turned and fearefully charged upon the Borough of Southwarke". (1)

However, at the time of the outbreak of the English Civil War, Gustavus Adolphus, with his small Swedish army, had just been demonstrating, during the Thirty Years' War in Europe, the value of his new ideas in warfare. I think his objectives can best be summarised as "Firepower" and "Mobility", and his success was such that the methods of this most advanced military commander of the period must have been brought back to Britain by the many English and Scots who fought with him.

There were a great many sizes of cannon, the heavier types being regarded as "Siege or Battering pieces"; those of smaller bore being more readily transportable, and regarded as "Field pieces". The following list is taken from "The Gunner" by Robert Norton, one of His Majesty's Gunners in about 1630:

	<u>Calibre</u> (inches)	<u>Weight</u> (lbs)	<u>Length</u> (feet)	<u>Shot</u> (lbs)	<u>Approx. Range</u>	
					Point Blank	Maximum
					(yards)	
<u>Siege Guns</u>						
Cannon Royal	8	8000	8	63	320	2000
Cannon	7	7000	10	47	500	5000
Demi-cannon	6	6000	12	27	500	5000
Culverin	5	4000	11	15	400	2100
<u>Field Guns</u>						
Demi-Culverin	$4\frac{1}{2}$	3600	10	9	350	2000
Saker	$3\frac{1}{2}$	2500	$9\frac{1}{2}$	$5\frac{1}{4}$		
Minion	3	1500	8	4		
Falcon	$2\frac{3}{4}$	700	6	$2\frac{3}{4}$		
Flaconet	2	210	4	$1\frac{1}{4}$		
Robinet	$1\frac{1}{4}$	120	3	$\frac{3}{4}$		

An important omission from the above is the Drake, which fired a ball of about 3 lbs. Rate of fire is said to be about 10-12 times per hour for the larger pieces and 15 per hour for the smaller guns.

In addition there were "Mortar pieces", being short barrelled pieces, of comparatively small range, and used with their barrels elevated to "lob" projectiles into an enemy stronghold. Even in 1543 Henry VIII had mortars 11" and 19" diameter, and the shells were stuffed with "wild fire or Fireworkes and a Match (fuse) that the fireworke might be set on fire for to break in small peeces, whereof the smallest peece hitting any man would kill or spoile him".(2) In 1644 the Countess of Derby and her supporters in Lathom House were more annoyed by the besiegers' mortar pieces than all their other artillery,

so that they eventually made a sally and captured it. The gist of the report runs:

- Apr.2 Played mortar piece. Loaded with stones. 13 inches diameter. 80 lbs. weight. Half a musket shot from house.
- Apr.4 One stone and one grenado which overplayed the House. Had green and wet hides ready to prevent burning.
- Apr.10 Sally. All besiegers' cannon nailed.
- Apr.12 Two shots of mortar piece although it had been nailed and battered with smiths' hammers.
- Apr.15 Mortar piece 5 times with stones and once with grenado. Fell short of house. Mortar piece with stone. Then grenado. Fell into an old court. Went above half a yard into earth and rose again and burst with violence. Shook down an old building.
- Shot their cannonier.
- Mortar piece again five times and in night with stones and once with grenado. Fell short due to new gunner.
- Apr.26 Capture mortar piece. Other guns too heavy to bring off. Had arrangement of ropes for mortar piece. Great rejoicing in Lathom House at its capture.(3)

Elsewhere mortars were in general use during the Civil War. Aug.1643, at the Seige of Gloucester by the Royalists ". ...divers Grenado's were shot into the Town.....one in the open Street.....a Woman coming by with a Pail of Water, threw the Water thereon, and so extinguished the Fusee thereof, that it did not break but was taken up whole, and weighed 60 l weight".

Friday, Aug.28. "The besiegers, besides many Granado's and great Stones from their Mortar Pieces, shot above 20 Fiery red hot Iron-Bullets, some 18, some 22 pound weight, which in the Night appeared flying in the Air like shooting Stars".(4)

But the iron cannon ball was the normal type of shot fired by the usual form of cannon. Wilson states that the ball was normally  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch less in diameter than the bore of the gun, which sounds a long way removed from fine engineering, for it can be taken as certain that the bore itself would be by no means uniform, and further,  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch on a Falconet of 2 inches bore means much more than  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch on the 8 inch Cannon Royal. It is well-known that during the War there was considerable importation of armaments from the Continent. In spite of our having been allied to European countries in the last

two Wars we have not yet achieved standardisation, and one can well envisage that the imported guns must have aggravated the problems of Civil War gunners by requiring ammunition different from the many kinds already needed. In addition, there was "Chain Shot", i.e. two cannon balls fastened together with a chain, and either fired from one cannon, or from two cannons discharged simultaneously. To cause the greatest number of casualties amongst masses of men the guns were sometimes loaded with nails, iron scrap, etc., as when the Royalists were besieged by the Scots at Newcastle they "Played from the Castle with scattered shot, whereby the Scots received considerable loss". (5)

It appears that the majority of guns were made of brass, with iron less common:

June 1646. "At Bostall House the garrison marched out "and left four Brass Pieces and one Iron Gun". (6)

At Cicester, Jan 30, 1642/3. Prince Rupert advances with "two whole Culverins, besides 4 small brass Field-pieces and 2 Mortar-pieces". (7)

Sir Ralph Hopton, for the King, takes Thirteen Brass pieces at Stratton, May 16, 1643. (8)

In Aug, 1644, on Essex's surrender at Lostwithiel "His Majesty possessed himself of all the Rebels Train of Artillery, viz. Forty nine Pieces of Fair Brass Ordnance (taken then and the day before) among which was the Great Basilisco of Dover, two hundred Barrels of Gun-powder, Match, Ball etc. proportionable.....". (9)

The following is significant: on the taking of Sheffield by the Duke of Newcastle "and finding near that place some iron works, he gave present order for the casting of iron cannon for his garrisons.....". (10)

An unusual method of construction is occasionally referred to: July 1644, Waller at Copredy Bridge lost "five drakes, a Minion, and two leather guns". (11) The latter is an invention credited to Gustavus Adolphus, who, seeking lightness as an aid to mobility, made guns with a thin barrel of copper or tin, strengthened by bands of leather shrunk around it. Such guns do not appear to have had a long life.

In action, standing behind each gun was its powder, or "budge" barrel. From this, the gunner, by means of a long-handled ladle, placed powder down the gun barrel. "All take half the weight of their bullet of fine, and 2 pts of ordinary powder, and may take much more if reinforced". (12) Following the insertion of a wad, or Tampion, the powder was rammed and the ball placed in the gun, which was then fired by applying lighted "match" to the touch-hole. The capture of powder was always noted, and "match" was also an essential

commodity. On the surrender of Welbeck House to the Earl of Manchester, Aug. 2, 1644, was taken ".....store of match and bullet". (13) Massey at Tewkesbury, June 5th, 1644, took ".....eighteen Barrels of Powder, one hundred and twenty Skains of Match.....". (14) On discharge, their being no arrangements to absorb recoil, the gun would leap into the air, and would thus require to be "re-laid" before firing again. The discharge would also be accompanied by a dense cloud of white smoke, for it was not until the 1880's that smokeless powder was invented. Before re-loading, the gun-barrel had to be cleansed for approximately half the powder would remain behind as burning deposit. A gunner's assistant was known as a "Matross".

The ranges of different guns given in the Table are, I think, of little moment, for in practice it appears that guns were placed as near as possible to their objective, consistent with reasonable safety of the gunners. Firth states that the heaviest piece habitually used in the field was the Culverin, with a point-blank range of about 400 paces, or extreme range 2,100 paces. But more often in the field the Demi-Culverin was used, with a ball of 9-12 lbs. weight, a point-blank range of 320-380 paces or 1,800-2000 paces "at utmost random". It would seem that "utmost random" must have been an apt description for anything over point-blank range, having regard to discrepancies in bore and fit of shot, to possible variations in mixture of powder and to the impossibility of applying consistent quantities of powder. All this apart from "laying" the gun, or taking account of wind and weather. For the guns had no "sights"; neither did they have for very many years. It was suggested to Lord Nelson that he should have sights fitted to his guns, and his reply was, "I shall be happy to consider fixed sights for my guns, but as usual I hope to get so near to the enemy that I don't need 'em". This a hundred and sixty years later. We have seen how the killing of the gunner, who had apparently "got his range" at Lathom House improved the situation there. Furthermore, at Lathom House the besiegers were so anxious to place their guns close that, in employing prisoners to make sconces they sheltered behind a kind of testudo, "a wooden engine running on wheels, roofed towards the House, with thick planks, and open for the enemy to cast up the earth". (15) The mortar piece at Lathom was stated to be "half a musket shot from the house".

It is evident that a castle or strong building required a considerable pounding by heavy guns before a breach could be made. At the Siege of Elfsborg, Sweden, by Danish and English in 1612, King James I "at 7.a.m. began to play with 7 pieces upon one of the towers continuously tyll 10 o'clock at which tyme he had beaten down parte of the tower having spent 200 shot". At 2 o'clock the same day ".....played cannon again and before 5 oclock (having drawne down more great peeces) he had with 286 shott made a breach for 3 to enter abrest". (16) The Royalists besieging Gloucester, Aug. 1643, ".....Planted Two great Culverins, of between 15 and 16 pound Bullet, at the east side, and

therewith battered the Town Wall.....planted Three Pieces of Ordnance on their Battery at Gawdey-Green of 15, 18 and 23 1 bullet weight, and thence made many shots..... But as fast as any breaches were made, they were made up again with Wool-Sacks and Cannon-Baskets.....planted there more pieces of ordnance within less than pistol shot of the Town Wall.....making 150 great shot thereon..... One bullet of 20 1 weight came through a chamber of the Crown-Inn, carried a Bolster before it into the Window, and there slept in it". (17) Major-General Laughern, Jan.1644/5 took Cardigan town but was a further three days in taking the Castle "making a breach with his great Ordnance". (18) At Lathom House the besiegers made 30 shots from demi-cannon and culverins to batter a postern tower. They took only the battlements and a yard of wall which were made good again the same night. (19) When the King took Leicester in May 1645 "orders having been given to raise a Battery before the New Work, the same by Eleven a Clock next day was finisht, and Six great Pieces of Ordnance planted thereon, and played fiercely all that Afternoon, making a breach by Seven a Clock in the New Work Wall so wide that Ten men might enter a-breast". (20) Cannon and Demi-cannon were used by Parliamentary forces in August 1645 at the fiercely contested siege of Sherborn, when a breach was eventually made in the wall by guns placed at extremely close range, and the soldiers "(whilst their Cannon play'd hard upon the Castle and wanted shot) fetcht off the Bullets (that had been shot) from under the very Walls, and had Six-pence apiece for every Bullet they so brought off". (21) It is obvious from this that many of the cannon balls had struck the walls without embedding themselves, and this in spite of the short range.

Cromwell's action against Winchester Castle, after taking the town, affords another instance: October 1645 "he summoned the Castle who denyed, then he planted six Guns.....made a breach with two hundred shot, and then the Governour beat a Parley". Large stores were taken here, including seven Cannon. (22)

The conveyance of guns must have been an important factor. It was customary to supplement the army's resources by calling upon the country to supply horses and waggoners, as is instanced in letters sent by the King's Privy Council in 1640 to Lords Lieutenant of Counties, ".....there is nothing more necessary than a fit provision to be made of Horses for the Train of Artillery;.....take order that there may be provided fifty strong and able Horses, and seventeen able Carters to take care of them within the limits of your Lieutenancy.....". (23) This example is for Cambridgeshire. Horses being much in demand by Cavalry and Dragoons the additional requirements of an artillery train must frequently have been a severe tax upon resources. Firth states that a Culverin required eight horses to draw it, but that the bulk of guns used were Sakers, Minions and Drakes. However, the terrain and weather conditions would much affect the situation, as on the surrender of his forces at Lostwithiel in August 1644 Essex could not get his guns away owing to bad ground after heavy rain "Thirty horses were put

to each of them, but could not move them". (24) The magnitude of the task of moving a full train of artillery may be judged from the fact that in 1647 Fairfax had ".....sixteen demi-culverins, ten sakers, fifteen drakes and fifteen smaller field pieces, in all fifty-six guns, besides mortars and battering cannon intended for use in sieges". (25) The situation at the time of Waterloo affords an interesting comparison, when Capt. Mercer's battery of 6 nine-pounder guns required for their service Five Officers, a Surgeon, 187 N.C.O's and men, one farrier, two collar makers, a wheeler and 226 horses. (26) It is indeed on record that following the Civil War, when Cromwell was campaigning in Ireland, the horse situation was so serious that oxen were sometimes used for hauling guns.

I suggest that psychologically the possession of guns must have had considerable effect. The noise of their firing would no doubt be of more than negligible import - the firing of cannon was an accepted signal for the start of an action - and we might remember that even in the last War, when noise might seem to have been the least of our worries, the Germans considered it worth-while to fit special noise-making fins to some of their bombs.

Now it will be found that in reports of Civil War actions specific distances are rarely given. It will frequently be found that guns are "within pistol-shot", within "Musket-shot", and it follows that it is desirable to know what such distances were. Here again, the maximum range is by no means the distance at which such weapons were normally used. The musket was generally of smooth bore, loaded in the same manner as the cannon, and fired by "match". Such was the "matchlock musket". There was also the firelock, wherein loading followed the same procedure, but firing was done by pulling a trigger which ignited the powder by sparks from a piece of flint impinging upon steel. Such a firearm was known as a "snaphaunce", or "firelock", or, in improved version, a "flintlock". Although these were the common types of infantry firearms, higher quality guns had been made for many years. Before Sherborne, August 6, 1645, "Capt. Horsey.....was shot dead in the Place, with a Birding-Piece, from one of the Towers". (27) The Birding Piece would no doubt be a weapon of superior class, possibly a wheel-lock, perhaps having a rifled barrel. The pistol, increasingly used by cavalry during the Civil War, was of necessity a "Flint-lock" of some type, for the cavalryman could not use a matchlock as the latter required two hands to fire it - one holding the match. Like the infantryman's firearms, pistols varied greatly in quality. Some had a wheel-lock and a rifled bore, which gave increased accuracy, and in this connection an interesting story is told of Prince Rupert, who, when passing through Staffordshire, is said to have drawn one of the pistols from his belt and fired at a Church weathercock, and hit it. On the suggestion being made that it was a lucky shot he took the other pistol and hit it again. The story is given as an indication -

with some co-operation by Prince Rupert - of the superior accuracy of a rifled barrel. Perhaps it is not founded upon fact, but the reader will, I am sure, agree that it makes a good story. In 1642 Donald Lupton, in his "Warre-like Treatise of the Pike" wrote "But now the Horse, having left off the Lance, and using their Pistols and Carbines in place of it, which can kill and sinke 120 yards off and above.....". Almost two hundred years later, when the common military musket, Brown Bess, was not vastly altered from the Civil War firelock, we find that the musket ball "could give mortal injury at 500 yards, but was very inaccurate at that range, and fire was usually held until troops were 100 yards away". (28)

And now, having attempted a general assessment of the situation, I return to the particular use of cannon in Derbyshire. In this County there was no place, on either side, which had a garrison of any great strength. The war in Derbyshire was essentially one of mobility, conducted by comparatively small forces, giving rise to a somewhat fluid situation, wherein the ascendancy in a particular area could change rapidly. No major battle took place in the County, although large armies passed all around it.

Bolsover Castle and various houses in Derbyshire were fortified, though none on the scale of Basing House or similar places, where massive earthworks, bastions, etc. were constructed outside the perimeter of the house proper. The County was affected by numerous strong-points about its perimeter. Colonel Hutchinson held Nottingham for Parliament, and thus provided a bastion between Derby and the Royalists firmly established at Newark. The Hastings family held Ashby de la Zouch for the Royalists and Tutbury Castle was likewise a Royalist stronghold. The large forces of Sir William Brereton, for Parliament, moved about Staffordshire and Cheshire, and to the north Sheffield Castle was held for the Royalists. The forces of Sir John Gell, whilst not large in comparison with the main armies moving about the country, were sufficient to act as a stabilising influence in the County; they subdued the various Royalist centres of influence and co-operated in actions of some importance outside the County, as at Lichfield, Stafford and Nottingham.

But the use of artillery is my concern, and I return to Sir John Gell, who, having obtained a nucleus of 100 men from Hull, plus local volunteers, sent his Major Mollanus on November 25th 1642 to Coventry for "two saccers" and some ammunition. Having received these pieces safely at Derby, Sir John Gell forthwith advanced against the Earl of Chesterfield's Bretby House, which was fortified for the Royalists. Sir John Gell had "2 saccers", no doubt the two from Coventry, but Bretby had seven Drakes and was too strong for the Parliamentarians' small ordnance. However, the Royalists fired their Drakes and Sir John Gell gave half-a-dozen shots from the Sakers, when the soldiers came right up to the walls and shortly took the house,

with its 7 drakes, 5 double barrels of powder and good store of match and bullets. The Parliamentarians' artillery was thus considerably augmented, but the next artillery movement was against Sir John Harpur's house at Swarkestone, again with two sakers. This was likewise reduced and the fortifications dismantled. (29)

In a report of Lord Fairfax to the Speaker of the House of Commons, Dec. 10, 1642, it was stated that Sir John Gell had 800 men. (30)

On receipt of a request from the moorlanders in Staffordshire, Sir John Gell sent men, again under Major Mollanus, with one Saker, to assist them in regaining Stafford town, in which Royalists had obtained ascendancy. But after waiting two or three days at Uttoxeter, the appointed rendezvous, and nobody coming to his assistance, Major Mollanus returned to Derby. (31)

The next reported use of ordnance was against Col. Hastings' fortifications at Ashby, but the attack was called off owing to the reported approach of Prince Rupert. (32)

In February 1642/3 Major Mollanus with 500 of the Derbyshire Foot assisted in an abortive attack upon the Royalists at Newark, and lost one Drake there. (33)

During the absence of Major Mollanus Sir John Gell at Derby received a report of the besieging by Lord Brooke of a Royalist force under Lord Chesterfield in Lichfield Cathedral Close, during which action Lord Brooke was killed. Sir John Gell mustered what forces he could and went to assist, being given command of the whole besieging forces in place of Lord Brooke, when his total strength was said to be about 1,200 strong, with one demi-culverin and some small drakes. According to Sir John's narration they "approached to the Cloase with our mortar peece as neare as possibly hee could, and after hee had shott three granadees they fell to parlee and surrendered...". (34) I find no other reference to the use of mortars by Sir John Gell's troops.

Later in the same month, March 1643, was fought the battle of Hopton Heath, near Stafford, where Sir John Gell's forces were combined with those of Sir William Brereton and the opposing Royalists captured "two casks of drakes". This was the occasion when the Earl of Northampton, in command of the Royalist forces, was killed, and subsequently, on his son's request for the handing over of the body, Sir John Gell offered to exchange it for the two drakes, but the suggestion was not accepted.

Sutton House, fortified for the Royalists by Lord Deincourt, was attacked by Sir John Gell's forces under Lt. Col. Thomas Gell and

Major Mollanus. The Parliamentarians had 500 men and three pieces of ordnance; they took the house and demolished the fortifications.

Shortly afterwards, Col. Gell, with one piece of ordnance assisted Lord Grey in the taking of Burton, leaving the piece of ordnance and a company of men as garrison, but the town was shortly lost again to forces accompanying the Queen on her march from the north.

Sir Richard Fleetwood fortified his house, presumably Wootton Lodge. It was attacked and taken by storm by Sir John Gell. I find no record of artillery being used, but recall seeing two cannon balls, of saker or minion, when visiting the house with the Derbyshire Archaeological Society. There was evidence that Wootton Lodge had originally been larger than at present, and though it was implied that the demolished portion had been destroyed by cannon fire, this seems hardly possible.

Later in the same year, 1643, Sir John Gell's men were in action at Nottingham, assisting Col. Hutchinson's forces in the town, and also at Tutbury where they had to give up their attempt to take the Castle.

Sir Thomas Fairfax, in Derby in 1643, pressed Sir John Gell to let him have men for service in Yorkshire, and the request was granted. Sir John said that at that time he had 100 men at Wingfield Manor from which force he would withdraw 60 to contribute towards the number of 400 men to be handed over to Fairfax's army.

The Earl of Newcastle's forces were about the County at the time, and in December 1643, took Wingfield Manor. "Letters came from my Lord Marquis of Newcastle, advertising as that yesterday was seven night, December 15, Sir Francis Mackworth with five hundred horse and foot and some cannon came before Wingfield Manor, a house of the late Earl of Shrewsbury, strengthened with a strong embattled wall of fifteen foot high and ten foot thick. The rebels refused to yield it upon summons, whereupon Sir Francis played upon it with his cannon, but (through the great strength of the wall) did not much harm to the house. At length, upon exchange of the body of a gentleman slain by the King's forces for one killed near the walls who could not be brought off, some words passed, when Sir Francis told them, that if they would surrender they might find favour, which offer was soon embraced; and after a short treaty they were allowed to march away, leaving all their arms behind them, being about 160, with good store of ammunition and above three months' provision, all which was taken in the house, which through its strength and situation, standing in the middle way between Derby and Chesterfield, will be very advantageous to His Majesty's affairs". (35)

Sir John Gell's narrative relates that in April 1644 "forty peeces of ordnance were coming from London to Peterborough for him". Acting

in concert with Lord Grey Major Mollanus went to Peterborough and brought this valuable convoy safely to Derby. In view of the scale of activity taking place in Derbyshire and of the number of pieces attached to much larger forces I can hardly believe that such a mass of artillery could have been intended solely for use in the County. The guns apparently arrived safely in Derby, but of their subsequent disposal I find no record.

Captain Robinson, for the King, had a garrison in fortifications at the important Trent crossing at Wilney Ferry. An attack, reported by Rushworth July 18th 1644 was made by Lord Grey of Groby and Sir John Gell, and was noteworthy for the successful use of a strategem, wherein the besiegers brought up, on the windward side, some sixty loads of burning hay, the smoke from which drove the Royalists from their trenches and compelled them, after a brief action, to capitulate. The Parliamentarians "planted their Ordinance" and captured two Drakes in the fight. In Wilne Church today may be seen a monument much defaced, reputedly by the Roundhead soldiers.

Following the battle of Marston Moor in July 1644 Major General Craford marched southward and attacked Sheffield Castle. Resistance was stubborn and the besiegers "were forced to send to York for an iron Demi-Cannon, and the Great Piece commonly called "The Queen's Pocket Pistol"; which being brought up, they battered it so violently, that the Governour on the 10th August thought fit to Parley, and at last agreed on the following Articles.....". (36) It is interesting to note that the "Queen's Pocket Pistol" had been taken from the Marquis of Newcastle's forces at Hull about a year earlier. Taken at Sheffield were "some hundreds of Granadoes, a great quantity of round shot from the Cannon to the Minion, ten barrels of powder, eight Iron Pieces, two Mortar-pieces.....". (37)

Maj. Gen. Craford continued his southerly advance, entering Derbyshire, and, in August 1644 took "Collonel Fretchwell's House, and obtained it to be Surrendered without Blows, where he got eleven Iron Guns, Three hundred Arms, and a considerable Quantity of Powder, and that the Collonel should slight his Works which were very strong". This refers no doubt to Staveley. (38)

Next came the surrender of Bolsover Castle with six Ordnance.

Since the previous December Wingfield Manor had been held by the Royalists. In July 1644 Sir John Gell was besieging the place, when General Craford arrived in the Vicinity. "Colonel Gell finding that his ordinance would doe noe good against the Mannor and understanding that Maj. Gen. Crayford had foure great peeces, sent two of his officers unto him, to desire him them for three or four dayes for battering: and in soe doinge hee would doe the countrey good service, because it was a place that could not bee otherwise taken, without they were pined out.

Maj. Gen. Craford, desirous to doe the State and countrey good service came presently with his ordinance and some horse and ffoott thither; and soe wee planted ours and their ordinance together, and after three houres battrey they yielded themselves, being about two hundred and twenty". (39) Rushworth's report is dated August 21, 1644, and states that five hundred arms, four barrels of powder and eight pieces of ordnance were taken. Pilkington, Vol.11, p.317, states "The assault was begun on the east side with cannon planted on Pentridge common, and a half-moon battery raised for its defence in this quarter was soon carried. But a breach being found impracticable, the cannon were removed to a wood on the opposite side. From hence they had a more powerful effect. They made such an impression on the wall that a considerable breach was soon opened, and the besieged were obliged immediately to surrender - I saw the breach by which the assailants entered, and several cannon balls which were employed on this memorable occasion. One, which was lately found in the hill, weighs thirty-two pounds". The cannon ball referred to is evidently suited to Major General Craford's demi-cannon. It is also interesting to note the reference to a "Half-Moon Battery" from which it may be inferred that fortifications had been constructed outside the perimeter of the House itself.

When the Derbyshire Archaeological Society visited Ashbourne some two years ago members were shown, at the Church, two cannon balls reputed to have been fired at the Church "by Cromwell". Damaged stonework on the west front of the Church is pointed out as having been caused by this action. During the Civil War there was considerable activity by both parties in and about the town and it is not clear on what occasion the reputed bombardment took place; however the most probable time would appear to be in 1645, when, following Naseby, King Charles retreated northwards, passing through Ashbourne in mid-August with some three thousand men. Coming from Tutbury, where his garrison at that time was still holding firm, he was harassed south of Ashbourne by Sir John Gell's forces from Barton House. Now it is said that the cannon which bombarded Ashbourne were situated at Margery Bower, near Clifton, which situation would have suited attack on an army entering Ashbourne from Tutbury direction, but, being about a mile and a half from the town, it would appear that the objective was not an attack on Ashbourne, for which the size of Sir John Gell's force, having regard to the number of the King's remaining army, was entirely unsuited, but the harassing of the retreating Cavaliers. In which case any shots directed at Ashbourne could be regarded as having only nuisance value, for it would appear that the guns used, according to the size of the cannon balls, were either Sakers or Minions, which did well to reach Ashbourne, much less hit the Church.

To hark back to Wingfield; although the Manor evidently suffered some damage by battery at this time it is probable that much greater damage was occasioned at its "slighting", for, according to that most interesting letter of the Rector of Ashover, the Reverend Emmanuel Bourne "on June 23rd (1646) an ordinance was passed for the destruction

of Wingfield Manor - which for its strengthe was not easy tooke, and had at last to be blown up with gunpowder". (40)

The Reverend Emmanuel goes on to say that a company of dragoons under a Muster Master named Smedley proceeded from Wingfield, the next day, to his house, Eastwood Hall, Ashover: "I now found that they had brought three small pieces of ordnance, which they drew to the top of the Feebrick, and discharged them at the hall, but the cannons being small (only two drake and one suker) they did no harm beyond breaking the windows and knocking off the corners of the walls, and they soon tyred and sett the pyoneers to work, but the walls being thick and the mortar good, they made little progress, till at last growing impatient, they did put a barrel of powder in the tower and at once destroyed more than half the hall and left the other in ruins, so that it cannot be repaired".

This is hardly comprehensible. One can understand the planting of cannon beyond musket shot of a strongly held place such as Wingfield, but here there was no opposition whatever; the whole area was firmly established in parliamentary control. Why then should they trouble to haul heavy artillery to the top of a hill at extreme range? And the second remarkable thing is that apparently they hit their objective. The fact that the guns did little damage is only compatible with what we have noted in other situations. I can only conclude that the episode was merely a light-hearted military exercise - men with plenty of time, plenty of ammunition - they could afford a full barrel of powder to slight the hall - and no adversary; merely trying out their marksmanship.

The rhyme written by Wheatcroft, Emmanuel Bourne's Clerk, may be a fitting conclusion:

"The Roundheads came down upon Eastwood old hall  
And they tried it with mattock and tried it with ball,  
And they tore up the leadwork and splintered the wood  
But as firmly as ever the battlements stood;  
Till a barrel of powder at last did the thing  
And then they sung psalms for the fall of the Kyng."

These notes will, I hope, assist in placing Civil War Gunnery in its true perspective, as regards the number of guns employed, the manner in which they were used, and their effect. It is obviously impossible to give the numbers held by each protagonist at a particular time, but the numbers captured by parliamentary forces from many Derbyshire country houses are enlightening, and it would be interesting to know their eventual use and destination. Another point of interest is the origin of these guns. How did so many private houses, not normally considered to be in the nature of castles or fortified places, come to be provided with such a number

of pieces or ordnance? I would suggest that many of these pieces were of considerable age; quite possibly even at that time they were "antiques", and just as, during the last war, the arming of the Home Guard produced a variety of weapons covering a long period of time, so it would be possible, during the Civil War, for weapons to be brought forth which were originally made with the Spanish Armada in mind.

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