

CROMWELL STUDY DAY: OCTOBER 2014

‘...LOOKED ON AS A WONDER, THAT NEVER BEHELD HIS ENEMIES IN THE FACE BUT RETURNED FROM THEM CROWNED ALWAYS WITH RENOWN AND HONOUR...’:
CROMWELL’S CONTRIBUTION TO PARLIAMENT’S MILITARY VICTORIES, 1642–51.¹

By Prof Peter Gaunt

Mercurius Civicus, London’s Intelligencer of Truth Impartially Related from Thence to the Whole Kingdom, in its edition for the week 23–30 April 1646, by which time full parliamentary victory in the main civil war was in sight, gushingly reported as its lead news item that:

The active, pious and gallant commander, Lieutenant General Cromwell, being come to the city of London, not for any ease or pleasure, but with the more speed to advance the great cause in hand for the reformation of religion and the resettling the peace and government of the kingdom, he on this day, April 23rd, repaired to the parliament. As he passed through the hall at Westminster he was looked on as a wonder, that never beheld his enemies in the face but returned from them crowned always with renown and honour, nor ever brought his colours from the field but he did wind up victory within them. Having taken his place in the House of Commons, Mr Speaker by order of the whole House gave him great thanks for the unwearied services undertaken by him for the honour and safety of the parliament and the welfare of the kingdom.

Samuel Pecke’s *A Perfect Diurnall of Some Passages in Parliament* of 20–27 April reported the same incident in similarly flowery tones, noting the return to London and to the Commons of ‘the ever renowned and never to be forgotten Lieutenant-General Cromwell’, upon whose arrival in the chamber his fellow MPs gave way to ‘much rejoicing at his presence and welfare’ and to giving ‘testimony of their true respects to his extraordinary services for the kingdom’.

By the closing year of the civil war, Cromwell’s fans were pouring high praise on his military record, picking him out for what was, even by the rather fulsome standards of the day, unusually glowing words and phrases –

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an 'active, pious and gallant commander', who 'never beheld his enemies...but returned from them crowned always with renown and honour', who always wound victory within his colours, who performed 'extraordinary services for the kingdom' and who was to be 'ever renowned and never to be forgotten'. Most modern historians, both military historians of the civil war and biographers of Cromwell alike, have generally concurred in these assessments of Cromwell the soldier, albeit in more measured tones and employing more scholarly and academic language, with evidence adduced in support. Cromwell is often viewed and referred to as a natural military genius, the most successful and outstanding commander of the English civil war, a figure to be compared with England's and Britain's other outstanding military leaders – certainly with Montgomery, Wellington and Marlborough, and perhaps for the more imaginative, with King Alfred and King Arthur, too.²

There is no doubt that, backed up by other important attributes, of course – intelligence, hard work, a strong and fervent faith, a fair helping of good luck and the errors or shortcomings of his opponents and rivals – Cromwell's career was made by the civil war and by his successful military campaigns. Whatever his belief in a God-given mission, that alone would certainly not have led him so far and so high had he bombed on the battlefield and proved himself to be at best an adequate or rather mediocre military officer and commander – a Grey or a Stamford, a Fiennes or a Gell, or a godly Hutchinson, or one of the many middle-ranking regional commanders of the opening years of the civil war who plodded on for a while, with a mixture of successes and failures or disappointments, but whose military careers had peaked or fizzled out well before the end of the civil war, or before they were halted by the Self Denying Ordinance.

Cromwell's growing power as a politician and statesman, as a shaper of political and constitutional developments, rested on his position as a successful military commander who had a loyal and potent army behind him. Cromwell engaged with the Rump not as an MP or politician, still less as leader of any political party or clear group, but as Lord General of the New Model Army. He was only able to act as he did in April 1653 and expel the Rump because he had military backing. With the Rump gone, and again eight months later when the Nominated Assembly hastily resigned, political power and leadership effectively reverted to him, not because of his political

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skill or standing, but as military commander-in-chief of a large and well-ordered army. During the 1650s and especially as Lord Protector during the last five years of his life, Cromwell undoubtedly did deploy very considerable political skills and was a statesman of high standing, much aplomb and significant success, and to some degree he drifted away from the army and sought to civilianise his government, or at least to give that appearance and patina to his regime. But he owed his position to the army – to the constitution cobbled together by a few senior officers in dark and smoky backrooms in December 1653, and to the continuing support of an overwhelmingly loyal army throughout his Protectorate, both before and after the army's constitution had been superseded by one drawn up in parliament. Cromwell never forgot that, never made the mistake of thinking that he could survive without the army's support or that he had an alternative, viable powerbase, and he was always anxious and active, employing carrot and stick, to ensure and to preserve continuing military backing. Thus, there is no doubt that Cromwell was made and propelled onwards and upwards by his military successes; military victories made Cromwell and without those victories and the durable military standing and backing which resulted, it is highly unlikely that he would have become Lord Protector, or that the 1650s would have developed politically and constitutionally in the way that they did under his leadership.

But in re-examining Cromwell's active military career, the purpose here is to turn the question around – ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country; and similarly ask not how far and in what ways Cromwell was made and his career advanced by his military victories and standing, but instead how far, in what ways and to what degree Cromwell contributed to the military victories and achievements of parliament and of the parliamentary cause in general. In exploring that question, the focus will be on Cromwell's active military career and his campaigns in the field. These spanned just nine years, from August 1642 at the very outbreak of the civil war when he apparently picked up a sword in anger for the first time, to the crowning mercy and victory at Worcester on 3 September 1651. After Worcester, Cromwell quickly returned to London and only very rarely and very briefly left the capital thereafter, up to his death at Whitehall exactly seven years later. He remained Lord General and commander-in-chief until his death, he ensured the continuing loyalty and discipline of his army, and he actively engaged with soldiers and officers in

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London and addressed their concerns. But never again after Worcester did he lead troops in the field. Equally, this assessment will not range over the wider impact of Cromwell as a military commander on broader political and religious developments – so there is no discussion here of his role in the Heads of the Proposals, the Putney Debates and army politics during 1647, of his contribution to the revolutionary events of winter 1648–49 in general and to regicide and the establishment of the republic in particular, and so on. Instead, the focus is on Cromwell's active field campaigns, of 1642–46 during the main or first civil war, of 1648 during the royalist rebellions of that year and the so-called second civil war, and during his Irish and Scottish expeditions of 1649–51, in order to explore how far Cromwell really did contribute to parliament's military successes.

It is reasonably easy to address and to suggest an answer to that question from 1648 onwards, when Cromwell held separate commands and operated largely independently of other senior commanders and armies. In this final phase of his active military career, there are controversies and divergent interpretations aplenty about some of his tactics and specific actions – most obviously his actions at Drogheda and Wexford – and about the wider political, religious, social and ethnic policies which followed in Scotland and Ireland and how far they were intended, envisaged and supported by him. However, the reality and nature of Cromwell's campaigns and victories of those years and that they were usually his, acting as the clear and independent overall commander in those theatres, are not in doubt.

Cromwell's campaign during 1648, in tackling royalist opposition during the so-called second civil war, fell into two phases: the first in South Wales focused on the siege of Pembroke, the second in north-west England focused on the operation and major field engagements around and south of Preston.³ The main royalist rising in South Wales, led by Poyer, Powell and Laugharne, had already suffered a major set-back and had been broken as a field operation even before Cromwell arrived in the region, when on 8 May 4,000 locally-based parliamentarians under Colonel Horton engaged and routed an 8,000-strong rebel army outside St Fagans. By the time Cromwell entered South Wales in command of five New Model regiments he had led from London, plus further forces which had rendezvoused with him around Gloucester, bringing his army up to around 6,500 men, they hugely outnumbered the remaining rebels; that Horton's army was also now free to

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operate with and under Cromwell's command strengthened the already massive advantage which Cromwell possessed in South Wales. He had plenty of men and resources to leave other officers to reduce the now isolated rebel strongholds of Chepstow and Tenby, while he set about besieging, bombarding and reducing the main surviving rebel stronghold: the walled town and castle of Pembroke.

Cromwell and the bulk of his army, around 6,000 men, arrived outside Pembroke on 24 May; inside, the rebels had just a few hundred men to defend town and castle. Despite Cromwell's huge advantages – the speed with which he occupied higher ground south of the town and began bombarding it with cannon and mortars plus his initial optimism that Pembroke would fall very quickly – events proved otherwise. With the benefit of hindsight, nearly two months later, on 23 July, his army chaplain noted more soberly that Pembroke was 'the strongest place' they had ever encountered, that the castle was 'impregnable' and that only after 'six weeks siege, constant rain and much hardship endured by us and them' could the place be taken.⁴ Cromwell's problem was that he initially lacked the heavy ordnance needed to make much impression on Pembroke's mighty walls, and he was frustrated by the long delays in getting heavier weaponry to him by boat from Bristol and Gloucester. Impatient and perhaps miscalculating the strength of opposition, Cromwell made several premature attempts to storm Pembroke – on 6 June the attack was called off when the scaling ladders were found to be too short to carry the town walls, while on 19 June some of Cromwell's men were able to get into the town through a small breach which his guns had opened up, only to be expelled with losses by a rebel counter-attack. His hopes of a quick resolution and his optimistic reports during June that the defenders were desperate and divided, short of food and drink and on the brink of collapse and submission – all proved wide of the mark. Only at length and when their position became completely hopeless did the defenders open serious negotiations, leading to the surrender of Pembroke to Cromwell on 11 July on fairly generous terms, far more generous than those the officers in command of the operations against Chepstow and Tenby offered their opponents.

Overall, Cromwell's contribution to the campaign in South Wales during summer 1648 was largely competent but by no means crucial. The key victory in the major and only significant field engagement of the campaign

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was not his. He possessed huge superiority in numbers, equipment and morale over an enemy already defeated in the field, broken and reduced to a few hundred men and a trio of isolated outposts; given such overwhelming advantages, any half-decent commander could, and should, have wrapped up the region. In practice, Cromwell's operation against Pembroke was adequate and eventually successful but it was not particularly good; he appears to have made significant miscalculations and it finally ended only when fairly generous terms were offered to his vastly outnumbered opponents. What might be said in Cromwell's favour, however, is not only the strength of Pembroke itself, which initially he seems not to have appreciated, but also his speed in moving against and into South Wales. He led his New Model troops west from the Windsor area on 3 May, was in Gloucester by 8 May and at Monmouth on 10 May. By moving so quickly, he may have compelled the South Wales rebels, who were still attracting fresh support and drawing in further followers in early May, to move on Cardiff sooner than they otherwise wished or than would have been to their advantage, and to offer battle prematurely at St Fagans, suffering a catastrophic defeat there, when ideally they may well have preferred to wait before engaging parliamentary troops. With Cromwell and his main army so close and closing so fast, they perhaps had little choice but to offer battle.

Cromwell was anxious to conclude the Pembroke and South Wales phase of his campaign because, with Sir Thomas Fairfax and a large part of the New Model tied down in Essex undertaking the long and continuing siege of Colchester, it fell to him to attempt to block the advance of the Scottish-royalist army which crossed the border on 8 July 1648 and was marching south, presumably with London as its ultimate goal. In reality, the Scots were beset with problems – the deal they had made with the king at the very end of 1647 divided the Scots, helping to explain why it took so long to raise an army in Scotland and why that army numbered just 8,000 men when it eventually entered England. Many of its members were raw recruits rather than the veterans of the main civil war; it was short of money, arms and other supplies; it was poorly led by the lacklustre Duke of Hamilton, hindered rather than helped by the Earl of Callendar, and many other officers showed barely disguised contempt for the decisions of one or both of them. They attracted very little support as they moved south through what is now Cumbria and northern Lancashire; heavy rain and atrocious weather, combined with shortages of supplies and poor leadership, meant

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that the army made very slow progress south, taking a month to reach Hornby and getting no further than the Preston area by mid August. As they trundled south the army became dangerously disjointed, with the horse moving well ahead of the foot and with the infantry itself physically divided between a unit of around 4,000 men commanded by Sir Marmaduke Langdale and the main body of Scottish foot under Hamilton.

In reality, therefore, once Pembroke had surrendered to him, Cromwell had time to move his army northwards. He adopted a circuitous route, retracing his steps along the South Wales coast and on to Gloucester, swinging across the Midlands to pick up supplies for his army, entering Yorkshire and rendezvousing with parliament's main northern commander, John Lambert, and other parliamentarian troops at Wetherby on 12 August. Only now turning westwards directly to move on the Scottish-royalist army in Lancashire, Cromwell led his combined force across the Pennines via Skipton and down the Ribble valley towards the Preston area. Staying on the north side of the swollen Ribble, Cromwell made a conscious decision not to attempt to get to the south of the Scottish-royalist forces and thus to block their line of advance and the road south towards London – a move which would also have allowed the Scots quite easily to turn back northwards and to return to the far north of England or across the border to their homeland. Instead, Cromwell made directly for the enemy forces, as 'it was thought that to engage the enemy to fight was our business',⁵ as he put it, but in so doing he fell in behind them, adopting an approach which was apparently more dangerous, but which had the advantage of cutting off a shaken or defeated enemy from the obvious line of retreat to their homeland or any easy refuge.

While the ensuing major engagement is generally referred to by historians simply as the battle of Preston, in reality it comprised a series of related but essentially separate confrontations which took place north-east and just south-east of Preston during 17 August, as well as along the main road between Preston and Warrington over the following days. Surviving contemporary sources are unclear or inconsistent about the size of the two armies on 17 August, and modern estimates of Cromwell's army range from 8,000 up to 14,000 men, and of the royalists – had they properly combined into a single force – from 15,000 up to 18,000 men in total. It is clear that Cromwell would have been outnumbered, significantly or hugely, had he

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ever engaged the full royalist force. However, because of the very disjointed and strung-out nature of his opponents, in reality Cromwell never had to face their full force, though whether he knew that when he decided to attack on 17 August is far from clear.

In the first major engagement, starting at around noon, Cromwell assaulted Langdale's 4,000 men, mainly foot, as they were moving down the Ribble valley towards Preston. Initially caught on the open moor between Preston and Longridge, Langdale's force fell back into and sought greater protection from enclosures on both sides of the road stretching for two miles down to the outskirts of Preston itself. However, many of Langdale's men never reached the town, for in a series of hard-fought cavalry and infantry assaults during the afternoon the huge numerical advantage which Cromwell possessed over Langdale swung the tide of battle decisively in his favour, and Langdale's men were routed. In the second phase of the battle, beginning around 6 pm and running on to nightfall, Cromwell raked with musket fire and then assaulted part of the Scottish-royalist army (comprising some cavalry and much of the Scottish infantry under Hamilton, together with Langdale's surviving troops) in the valley and low ground south-east of Preston, near the junction of the Ribble and the Darwen and the key bridges over those rivers. Those Scots who survived and who got away southwards, together with the bulk of the Scottish cavalry who were already well south of the town on 17 August and had played no part in the fight around Preston, were largely mopped up by Cromwell over the following two days. Ragged, demoralised, short of supplies and, given their losses of 5,000 or more killed or captured around Preston, probably now significantly outnumbered, the surviving elements of the Scottish-royalist army were no match for the victorious Cromwell.

Cromwell had fed off the mistakes and shortcomings of his opponents. Given the sort of numerical disadvantage which most historians think he would have suffered had the whole Scottish force and their few English-royalist allies combined in a single army around Preston, Cromwell should have lost. The strung-out and disunited nature of his enemies may have been vital in giving Cromwell victory, though we must also credit Cromwell's dynamism and aggression in closing on and attacking what turned out to be just a small part of the enemy force in the Ribble valley on 17 August, giving his opponents no chance to come together and to act as a

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united army. Equally, it is fairly clear that the Scottish-royalist army of 1648 was pretty dismal, with many inexperienced troops, a divided and lacklustre high command, short of supplies and demoralised after having suffered several weeks of appalling weather by the time of Preston. So while Cromwell's role and more particularly the decisions he took on 17 August boosted the chance of parliamentary victory, perhaps they were not crucial – after all, in John Lambert parliament already possessed a skilled, experienced and aggressive commander in northern England. But Cromwell's apparently risky decision – and I do believe it was a conscious and planned decision and not mere happenstance – to fall in behind the Scottish-royalist army, to get between it and its obvious line of retreat to (and a degree of safety in) its homeland, ensured that the victory in Lancashire was so complete and that the Scottish-royalist military threat to England was snuffed out so quickly and so thoroughly in mid-August 1648.

Cromwell's next direct military engagement in the field occurred in May 1649, when he helped to quell growing and often Leveller-inspired unrest in part of the New Model Army stationed in southern England. He spoke to troops mustered in Hyde Park on 9 May, allaying their fears with reassurances over regular pay and voluntary service in Ireland, and then accompanied them as they moved west via Andover to crush the mutiny. On the night of 14–15 May he was involved in swooping on Burford and in a largely bloodless operation in putting down a mutiny in one-and-a-half regiments which were occupying the town. Cromwell was always very firm on maintaining military discipline and clamping down on mutinous activities, particularly if they had any hint of Levellerism about them, so these actions undoubtedly had his very strong support and he took the lead in haranguing the recalcitrant troops the following day. But we should remember that Cromwell was only second-in-command and he was working directly with and under Lord General Fairfax in this operation. It was Fairfax, not Cromwell, who oversaw the brief campaign, including the summary execution of three ringleaders in Burford churchyard once order had been restored.

Cromwell's campaign in Ireland lasted nine months, from his landing near Dublin on 15 August 1649 to his departure from Youghal on 26 May 1650. As in South Wales in summer 1648, so in Ireland in summer 1649, Cromwell did not have to face a hostile force in the field – one of the

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biggest and most potent enemy armies in Ireland had been engaged and destroyed by a more junior commander, in this case Colonel Michael Jones at the battle of Rathmines, less than a fortnight before Cromwell and his New Model expeditionary force landed. For Cromwell there followed a sometimes bitter and frustrating campaign of sieges, not battles, as he sought to take enemy strongholds, employing a New Model force 12,000-strong at its height, though often depleted by disease. At times, as at Drogheda and Wexford early in his campaign, he achieved brutal but swift successes, followed later by the equally swift though more orderly capture of places such as New Ross, Cashel, Cahir, Fethard and Gowran. At times, his siege operations became bogged down by bad weather and disease as much as by obstinate enemy resistance, leading him to abandon attempts on Waterford and Duncannon; and at times he secured an enemy stronghold only after long and expensive operations, for example, accepting the surrender of Kilkenny in March 1650 only after attempts to take it by storm had been repulsed with significant losses. Even worse from his perspective, his final significant operation in Ireland, the attempt on Clonmel in May 1650, went badly awry. Repeatedly ordering his troops to attack a breach opened in the town walls, they repeatedly fell into an ambush which the defenders had prepared, leaving wave after wave of parliamentarian dead. Estimates vary, but perhaps up to 2,500 of his men were killed at Clonmel and even if, as is likely, the death toll was much lower and perhaps closer to 1000, it remained by some margin the single most costly and, for their own side, most deadly day in the New Model's history.

Cromwell's campaign in Ireland was a little mixed. Again, his slight weaknesses in siege operations and his underestimation of his enemies in that context are evident, leading to premature, failed or costly attempts to storm. It was certainly limited in nature – again, he benefitted from someone else's victory in a key field engagement fought just before he arrived and he did no more than besiege strongholds. It was also limited in duration and location. Apart from the early strike against Drogheda, north of Dublin, he campaigned only in southern Ireland, generally along and round the coast between Wexford and Cork, and never moving much further than 35 miles inland from that coast. Geographically, therefore, Cromwell's direct involvement with Ireland and direct engagement with the English republic's enemies was focused on a very limited part of southern and south-eastern Ireland, and he only fought in eight of Ireland's thirty-two

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counties. Nevertheless, although he left it to other commanders to complete the conquest of Ireland after his departure, and it took a further two years to end resistance in the west and north-west of the island and to extend English republican control to the whole of Ireland, Cromwell's campaign had broken the back of Irish resistance and was the decisive phase in the English re-conquest.⁶

Cromwell's military campaign in Scotland was longer than his Irish campaign, for he crossed the border near Berwick on 22 July 1650 and recrossed the Tweed on 9 August 1651 in pursuit of the Scottish-royalist army. Although in Scotland Cromwell also at times became becalmed by bad weather and disease – his own serious and protracted illness as well as disease in his army – overall it was very different from that earlier campaign, for it involved very few sieges, occasional but very important field engagements and long periods of manoeuvre-style campaigning. The latter was not Cromwell's forte and for significant periods he was outmanoeuvred by his canny Scottish opponents who stayed safe within very strongly fortified bases, against which Cromwell did not dare launch a frontal attack – in late July and August 1650 in Edinburgh and Leith, for much of spring and summer 1651 in Stirling – and who refused to be drawn out to offer battle in the field, however frequently Cromwell approached and criss-crossed the ground outside those two strongholds. The Scots correctly anticipated that shortage of supplies, poor weather – in summer as much as in winter – and generally dwindling morale would sap the English army.

Stunning victory though it was, against all the odds – engaging and defeating a much bigger, fitter and apparently more strongly-positioned Scottish army – the battle of Dunbar occurred when and where it did because Cromwell and his much depleted army were retreating. How often can we say that of Cromwell? His nervy, disjointed letter written on the eve of battle, though still hopeful of God's support, seemed to anticipate the possibility of serious military defeat, alerting the commander of parliament's forces in north-eastern England to the possibility of a triumphant Scottish army sweeping on southwards.⁷ Even the dramatic, unexpected victory at Dunbar at dawn on 3 September 1650, testimony to Cromwell's skill in reading a battlefield and enemy dispositions and to his dynamism in seizing on opportunities he observed, altered the geography but not the overall pattern of the campaign. While Cromwell and his army were able to swiftly mop up most of the

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lowlands and southern Scotland, including Edinburgh, Glasgow and the central belt, the Scots were able to pull back into the Highlands, where Cromwell dare not follow them, and to rebuild their army in and around Stirling, which Cromwell felt unable or unwilling to attack.

Having suffered serious ill health himself and seen his army struggle through the Scottish winter of 1650–51, Cromwell was determined to break the logjam and to avoid a protracted campaign and a second winter in Scotland. Thus he decided, sometime after Dunbar and the renewed stand-off in its wake, to send his troops north in summer 1651, forcing a crossing of the Firth of Forth and breaking into the rich agricultural lands of Fife, Kinrossshire and parts of Perthshire, upon which the Scottish army in and around Stirling depended for their supplies; such a move might threaten to outflank as well as to starve out the Scots in Stirling.⁸ The forced landing and triumph against a Scottish brigade at Inverkeithing on 20 July was Lambert's victory, as the senior field officer and commander on the day, but it was Cromwell who had designed and laid careful plans for the move. In then throwing much of his army into Fife, moving as far north as Perth, as a consequence greatly running down the forces he had available in southern Scotland and also showing no great inclination to reinforce the Anglo-Scottish border or northern England, Cromwell may well have anticipated the Scottish-royalist sudden drive south and, through a mixture of threat and opportunity, he probably tacitly encouraged it. I believe, and have argued elsewhere, that this was a conscious decision by Cromwell, once again deliberately taking the potentially high-risk strategy of allowing his opponents to get on the English and London side of him and his main army, and who were thus able to engage the Scots somewhere well to the south, away from the Highlands and with little chance of part or all of the Scottish army being able to get back to their homeland.⁹

Cromwell's letters of late July and August 1651, once the Scottish-royalist army had started moving south, were calm and measured. He wrote that 'it will trouble some men's thoughts' in England that the Scot's were heading south and were several days' march ahead of his army, just as it 'may occasion some inconveniences' – a splendidly understated word, used twice in the letter to describe the consequences of the Scottish-royalist army entering England. But he went on to explain that he had needed to adopt that strategy, for 'if some issue were not put to this business, it would

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occasion another winter's war [in Scotland] to the ruin of your soldiery'.¹⁰ Never one to sit back and play the long game, Cromwell was determined to force events, even if that entailed apparent risks and generated unease and fear in others on his own side.¹¹

Military historians, from Gardiner and Firth onwards, do not get very excited about the purely military and command aspects of the campaign and battle of Worcester. Cromwell was able to move his main army south in a fairly unhurried manner, picking up reinforcements and supplies en route, confident that further regular troops and militia forces in the Midlands would be able to slow and contain the Scottish-royalist army and keep it well away from London. He exuded the confidence of a commander who, by the beginning of September 1651, led an army which outnumbered the Scottish-royalists holed up in Worcester by around two-to-one, as well as of a man who felt assured of God's support. He was able to encircle and coop up his opponents, to launch assaults on a day and at times and places of his choosing, and to be able to divide his army to mount a two-pronged attack, with plenty of men held as a mobile reserve, together ensuring a crushing and complete victory, the crowning mercy of his military career. With such a huge numerical and material advantage at Worcester, the parliamentarians were almost bound to win, no matter how well Charles Stuart and his Scottish allies performed. It would have taken a fool of a parliamentarian commander to squander such advantages and to lose the engagement, and Cromwell – with his experience and godliness, his careful planning and preparations – was certainly no fool. His determination to avoid another Dunbar and another Scottish winter, his willingness to take a calculated risk which he believed was no real risk, even if others would be frightened, in allowing the Scots to drive south deep into England, all brought rich rewards on 3 September 1651.¹²

As in Ireland, so in Scotland, Cromwell's campaign was geographically restricted – a map of his Scottish itinerary shows that for most of the time he was shuttling backwards and forwards across the central belt within a narrow rectangle with Dunbar and Glasgow at its two ends and covering only a small fraction of the country. As in Ireland, too, the Scottish campaign was marked by short bursts of activity and key victories interspersed with long periods during which he and his army became bogged down. Together, this meant that when he left Scotland in summer

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1651 much of the country remained unconquered and unoccupied and – once again, as in Ireland – it was left to other commanders to mount a three-year campaign to fully conquer and extend English control over the Highland zone and the islands in particular. But during his time in Scotland and despite the limitations of his campaign, by a mixture of good luck and decisive action Cromwell had broken the back of Scottish resistance and had firmly entrenched English power and control over most of lowland and southern Scotland, while his crushing victory at Worcester had destroyed the main Scottish army.

Overall, then, how should we assess Cromwell's contribution during the closing years of his active campaigning, the period of independent command 1648–51? It is a mixed record, revealing Cromwell's limitations in sieges and manoeuvre-type warfare, but also his dynamism and aggression in field engagements, twice – around Preston and outside Dunbar – pulling off that very rare civil war trick of defeating a much larger army. Adopting an apparently risky strategy in allowing his Scottish opponents to get to the south of him in August 1648, and again in summer 1651, in fact worked hugely to his advantage and ensured victories which were much clearer, fuller and more decisive than they would have been had some parts of the defeated Scottish armies been able to fall back to their homeland. Despite a rather mixed record in both Ireland and Scotland, he broke the back of resistance there and firmly extended English republican control to key parts, though by no means to all, of the two countries. His performance when he possessed a clear or huge advantage in numbers, supplies and morale was generally competent and efficient, though at times during 1648–51 he had such an advantage that any senior and experienced general would surely have done as well in his stead. Although inevitably speculative, it might be instructive to ponder how far things may have unfolded differently if in 1648 Cromwell had taken charge of the operation in Kent and Essex and become becalmed before Colchester, leaving Fairfax to command in South Wales and against the invading Scottish army; and again if Fairfax rather than Cromwell had led the expeditions to Ireland in 1649 and into Scotland in 1650.

It is much harder to reach clear conclusions about the importance of Cromwell's personal and direct contribution to parliament's victory in the main civil war of 1642–46, for two principal reasons.¹³ Firstly, only

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occasionally and then usually only for short periods during the main war was Cromwell acting completely independently and entirely on his own initiative; for most of the war he was serving under (and with) more senior – and often more experienced – officers and commanders. The degree to which he shaped broad campaigns and specific operations 1642–46 was clearly limited, as he was generally operating alongside and to a greater or lesser extent on the orders and under the oversight of military superiors. Secondly, as we will explore further, towards the end of this paper, there is an unresolved historical debate about whether the outcome of the war and the complete and unconditional military victory which parliament's armies achieved by early summer 1646 were due largely to the decisions and qualities of specific commanders (often those, on both sides, more senior than Cromwell), and to the planning, course and outcome of specific military operations on the one hand, or to a range of much broader, deeper and often resource-linked and not directly military factors on the other. The latter, of course, would accord little role to any individual commander, including Cromwell; even the former interpretation tends to lay greater stress on the decisions and actions, the successes and failures, of generals who for most of the war were more prominent and senior than Cromwell – who, let us remember, was until spring 1645 no more than second-in-command of one of parliament's regional armies and who was generally kept on a fairly tight leash by that army's commander.

From the outbreak of the war in summer 1642, Cromwell was a committed parliamentarian, one of the first MPs to take up arms, commissioned as captain of a troop of horse. His direct intervention in August to prevent the Cambridge colleges sending their plate off to support and help finance the embryonic royalist war effort was doubtless helpful but hardly decisive, as the king collected plenty of cash and bullion during the opening weeks of the war and his initial campaigns were not undermined by financial weakness. Cromwell's role during the Edgehill campaign of autumn 1642 is not entirely clear; the likeliest interpretation is that he was still raising troops in his home patch when the Earl of Essex's main army rolled out of London and across the Midlands, that he and his men arrived too late to play a significant role in the indecisive battle of Edgehill on 23 October, and that he remained with Essex's army as it returned to London and then turned back the king in the stand-off at Turnham Green, west of London, in early November. Even if we cannot always place Cromwell and be certain where

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he was at this very early stage of the civil war, it is clear that his own direct and personal role, as an inexperienced junior officer, was minor.

Cromwell's contributions during 1643 were crucial to his unfolding military career, but probably not very important in terms of the overall war and parliamentary war effort. Promoted at the start of the year to be colonel and commander of a cavalry regiment, he was charged with working with other officers in East Anglia and the East Midlands, initially to try to hold Lincolnshire against any drive south by the Earl of Newcastle's northern, Yorkshire-based army, and then, once much of that county had fallen, to protect the north-western frontier of parliament's East Anglian heartlands, shoring up the Nene and Welland valleys. Accordingly, within a quite narrow geographical range, Cromwell was very active during the year raising and training troops, gathering money and supplies, strengthening the defences of Cambridge, Peterborough and other key bases, in the process liaising closely with fellow-officers and county administrators within the region. But his involvement in military action and in engaging the enemy, and thus his direct contribution to military developments, were quite limited.

In spring and summer 1643 he was involved in two successful operations to clear royalists from bases they had secured in the Peterborough area, namely the town and abbey of Crowland and Burghley House. Both were short and aggressive operations, entailing a brief siege and bombardment, followed by a frontal attack and storming. For good or ill, this became Cromwell's usual approach to attacking enemy strongholds during his ensuing military career – long, patient, close sieges aimed at eventually starving out the defenders was never his style – and there is no reason to doubt his own letters written after both operations, suggesting that he had had a significant say in how they were conducted. But we have to exercise some caution here and add certain riders. Firstly, at both Crowland and Burghley he was operating alongside other parliamentary colonels (and their regiments), some of whom had much more experience of military operations. Secondly, both strongholds were stormed primarily by infantry, so we might again question how far Cromwell, whose forte was or became cavalry operations and who commanded a horse regiment, really was in a position to shape events. Thirdly, these were in any case fairly minor and isolated royalist outposts – indeed, the small body of royalist troops in Burghley had probably only

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occupied the house *in extremis* when they found themselves isolated and being hemmed into the Stamford area by converging parliamentarian forces – and even had the king's men enjoyed a longer or less harassed occupation of either or both bases, there is no indication that they would have posed much of a wider threat or been able to tip the balance of power in the region.

As for battles and significant field engagements, again Cromwell's experience during 1643 was quite limited and within his home region. He did not, for example, play any role in the first battle of Newbury, the biggest battle of the year, or in the relief of Gloucester, which some historians have portrayed as the turning point of the entire civil war. In July he engaged and defeated a royalist army outside Gainsborough, bravely attacking uphill in order to engage the king's forces, again showing dynamism and energy and a desire to take the fight to the enemy. At Gainsborough he also learnt the advantage of keeping men in reserve, for he noticed that while his troops had broken the bulk of the enemy army, his opponents had held back some of their horse to form an as yet uncommitted and well-ordered reserve. Quick to appreciate the danger of his opponents snatching victory from the jaws of defeat by employing this reserve against his own forces, who were losing shape as they pushed for victory and began pursuing broken remnants of the royalist army, Cromwell hurriedly ordered some of his own men to stay back and form up as a reserve of his own. In due course, this engaged and defeated the royalist reserve, ensuring a complete victory. As well as employing this tactic on the battlefield, Cromwell's letters of the time point to other factors which contributed not only to his victory at Gainsborough but also to his later successes – his close attention to logistics and supplies, his care in liaising with other commanders and administrators, his determination to keep close control of his men on the battlefield, and his overwhelming belief that he was engaged in a godly cause and had the Lord's support. On the other hand, Gainsborough was a modest engagement between small bodies of mounted troops – Cromwell had perhaps 1,200 men, while his opponents had a few more but their army was not significantly bigger. Moreover, it did not alter the general course of events in the area, for the approach of a larger royalist army shortly afterwards compelled Cromwell to fall back southwards and Gainsborough itself quickly fell to the royalists without much of a fight. While the engagement outside Gainsborough may have taught Cromwell valuable

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lessons which he carried forward, it is hard to claim for Cromwell's victory there any significant role in the course of the regional campaign or of the tides of war during 1643.

Cromwell's other battle of 1643 also occurred in Lincolnshire, later in the year and towards the end of the campaigning season. On 11 October he was at Winceby, apparently commanding the front line of parliamentary cavalry, which moved forward and engaged the royalist horse at the start of the battle. Again, this predominantly cavalry engagement resulted in a clear parliamentary victory. Although sources for the battle are not plentiful and some aspects of it remain in doubt, we should be careful not to exaggerate either Cromwell's direct contribution or the role of the battle in the wider campaign. Cromwell was certainly not the most senior officer present and did not have overall command, as the Earl of Manchester, commander-in-chief of the Eastern Association army, was there and directed the battle. Cromwell's own role may have been rather mixed, as some accounts suggest or imply that he got too far ahead of his men, became a little detached and was thus very vulnerable when he was unhorsed, needing to be rescued by others and saved from imminent death. Contemporary accounts differ about the effectiveness of Cromwell's initial charge, some suggesting that, despite his own misfortune, his cavalry broke the royalist army and put them to flight; others indicate that it was much less effective and that it was the subsequent charge by the second or reserve line of parliamentary cavalry, commanded by Sir Thomas Fairfax, that was decisive, inflicted serious damage and so secured victory. In any case, claims that parliament's victory at Winceby halted the advance south by Newcastle's northern royalist army, thereby saving the parliamentary heartlands of East Anglia and warding off the danger of complete defeat for parliament in the civil war, seem misplaced and very wide of the mark. The potential drive south by Newcastle's army during the latter half of 1643 never, in fact, materialised. In part this was because of the threat posed by the parliamentary port and garrison of Kingston upon Hull, from which destructive raids were being launched across Yorkshire, forcing the royalists to keep much of their army in the area, before, during and after Newcastle's failed siege of Hull, which he abandoned around the same time as Winceby. In part this was because there were growing indications of a military alliance between the English parliament and the Scottish government, and Newcastle was unwilling to move his army south in significant numbers when he was increasingly

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fearful of a Scottish force crossing the border and attacking him from the north. Claims that parliament's – and to a degree, though only a limited degree, Cromwell's – victory at Winceby saved East Anglia or even the whole war for parliament seem wildly exaggerated, for there was no sign that a drive south in force by Newcastle's army was imminent or likely, let alone underway.

Cromwell played a more senior and elevated military role during the latter half of the main war: in 1644 as commander of the cavalry and second-in-command of the Eastern Association army, though under and subordinate to Manchester as that army's commander-in-chief; and in 1645–46 as commander of the cavalry and second-in-command of the New Model Army, though under and subordinate to Fairfax as that army's and parliament's commander-in-chief. For most of that time he did not hold an independent command and was operating directly with, and thus under, his military superior. Most of the operations – almost all of them successful – in which Cromwell participated in 1644–46, including the sieges of Bridgwater, Bristol, Exeter, Oxford and Sherborne and the battles of Langport, Marston Moor, Naseby, Newbury (the second battle) and Torrington, were not directed by him as overall commander or the most senior officer present. In many of those operations, it is hard to discern a distinctive, still less decisive, personal contribution by Cromwell. He did occasionally lead effective though quite brief and small-scale semi-detached campaigns in the Home Counties during these years, most notably in Buckinghamshire and the fringes of Oxfordshire for around ten days in March 1644, and for around four weeks between early April and early May 1645, but they had limited goals and outcomes.

More importantly, Fairfax entrusted up to seven New Model regiments to his command in autumn 1645, which he led on a short, sharp, successful, if occasionally brutal four-week campaign to mop up a handful of surviving royalist bases in central southern England, most notably Devizes, Winchester and Basing House, which all fell to him through a mixture of threat and the application of overwhelming military force. However, rather like his successful operation in South Wales in summer 1648 (though without the equivalent of being bogged down outside Pembroke), by that stage his hugely outnumbered opponents were marooned in isolated and already neutralised bases, and the vast numerical and material advantage he

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possessed almost guaranteed success. The speed and force with which he took these strongholds, especially mighty Basing, are notable, but again given the wider context and circumstances and the advantage parliament held by that stage, any decent commander worth his salt should have been capable of mopping them up. Cromwell did so remarkably quickly, but in fact speed was not really of the essence and it did not turn out to be much of an overall military advantage, for by the time Cromwell's detached operation successfully ended and he rejoined the main army in late autumn, the New Model had become somewhat bogged down in the South West; they could undertake only limited campaigning in Devon and Cornwall during what transpired to be the cold and snowy winter of 1645–46. Although he could not have known it, Cromwell could probably have taken twice as long to capture the royalists' southern outposts and it would have made no great difference to either the course of the closing stages of the war, or the timing of the final parliamentary victory.

More broadly and in the field, during the campaign of 1644 Cromwell failed to galvanise and was himself perhaps hampered by the rather lacklustre approach of his superiors, especially Manchester. Cromwell achieved very little militarily during high summer and early autumn – the thirteen weeks or so, from the battle of Marston Moor to the second battle of Newbury, were rather empty. At Newbury itself, the strange and over-complicated battle plan adopted by a group of senior officers – more senior than Cromwell – did not work well and so threw away the numerical advantage which they held over the king and his main Oxford army. During the afternoon of the lengthy battle, under Sir William Waller Cromwell commanded the left cavalry wing of that part of the parliamentary army which attacked the western side of the royalist defensive position, but contemporary accounts of the battle are silent on what Cromwell achieved, suggesting that he actually achieved little. Cumulatively, the senior parliamentary officers then allowed Charles I and his army to march away overnight unhindered and unscathed. All that can be said in defence of Cromwell's apparently very limited contribution to a disappointing operation is that he probably had little say in the overall battle plan, and did not have command of either part of the army which attacked the king's position on 27 October – Waller commanded the western part, Manchester the eastern.

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Cromwell's main military contributions to the parliamentary campaigns of 1644 and 1645–46, and thus to victory in the main civil war, probably lie in two other areas, one clear and well documented, the other far less tangible. The former is Cromwell's decisive contribution when given overall command of one wing of the parliamentary army in the two most important and decisive set-piece battles of the period – the left wing at Marston Moor on 2 July 1644, the right wing at Naseby on 14 June 1645. In both cases, Cromwell was very successful in employing part of his cavalry to break the opposing royalist horse, in retaining tight control of his men in order to prevent his front line from charging off the battlefield in pursuit of plunder and fleeing royalists, and to prevent his rear line(s) or reserve from becoming involved in this phase of the fight; thus he had available a large part of his cavalry complete, in good order, fresh and as yet uncommitted, employed to devastating effect to tear into the now exposed flank of the royalist infantry in the centre of the battlefield. This may have been very important at Marston Moor, for on the other wing – the parliamentary right – the horse under Fairfax had been repulsed, in the process also unhinging part of the parliamentary infantry in the centre and apparently putting the outcome of the battle in doubt. Cromwell's success on the left and his ability to use his horse to begin overwhelming the royalist foot turned the tide of battle and ensured a full and decisive parliamentary victory, which in turn swiftly delivered the whole of northern England to parliament and wrecked the king's war effort in the North. Cromwell played perhaps a lesser but similar and still significant role at Naseby, where parliament's other cavalry wing, this time under Sir Henry Ireton, struggled and became bogged down – though at Naseby, unlike at Marston Moor, it seems that the parliamentary foot in the centre was strong and already getting the upper hand even before Cromwell's victorious horse gave support by attacking the royalist foot. Parliament's victory at Naseby contributed hugely to its overall victory in the war, as the king lost his last major field army and most of his best remaining infantry. But again we must add a word of caution, for at both battles parliament possessed a large or overwhelming numerical advantage from the outset – perhaps 28,000 to 18,000 men at Marston Moor, and 14,000 to 10,000 at Naseby. The scale and decisive nature of parliament's victories at both battles can be attributed in part to Cromwell, but even without his dynamic and successful cavalry charge on one wing and his intervention in the centre, an overall

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parliamentarian victory remained very likely; in civil war battles, bigger armies usually defeated smaller armies.

Secondly and less tangibly, Cromwell may have raised and kept high the morale of the parliamentary army – he was certainly given a rapturous reception by the troops when he joined the New Model in spring 1645. And, while he clearly failed to galvanise Manchester during 1644, he may have bolstered Fairfax's command in 1645–46 and ensured that he pressed on and took the fight to the royalists wherever possible – harrying the royalists in Somerset in summer 1645 and preventing them falling back in good order by launching a daring assault at Langport in early July; in a similar fashion smashing their way into Torrington on a dark winter's evening in February 1646 rather than give the king's men a chance to get away under cover of darkness. In addition, perhaps also encouraging Fairfax to try to keep the New Model's campaign moving through winter 1645–46 rather than going into winter quarters, even if both were defeated for a while by the harsh weather. Yet Fairfax probably did not need Cromwell or any second-in-command to play this role and to encourage him to pursue such direct and aggressive tactics. Fairfax had already proved himself to be a gambler, a commander able and willing to be aggressive, to launch surprise attacks in the depths of winter, to strike at apparently strong and impregnable enemy positions, and to undertake raids deep into enemy territory with the odds and the numbers stacked up against him; he had displayed all those traits when struggling to hold Yorkshire against Newcastle's royalists during 1643, even once he had been pushed back into Hull.

In assessing Cromwell's contribution to parliament's victory in the main civil war of 1642–46 we should also remember that, as in Ireland and Scotland in 1649–51, it was geographically limited. Cromwell's military career began and was grounded in East Anglia and the East Midlands. Indeed, it was perhaps fortunate for him that he was based in that region, largely sheltered from major royalist thrusts and advances, as he learnt his military trade during 1643. Had he been a newly-promoted and still quite inexperienced colonel and regimental commander in say Devon, Dorset, Somerset or Wiltshire, counties which fell to the king during the major, and for a while apparently unstoppable, royalist advance across south-western and southern England during summer 1643, one wonders whether he, like

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so many other parliamentary officers, would have been swept aside and swept away by the royalist steamroller, and whether his self-confidence, standing and military career would have recovered. As it was, moving out from the parliamentary heartlands, Cromwell campaigned further afield during 1644–46, in the Home Counties, the South and the South West. But during the main civil war he played very little role in the whole of northern England (excepting only a few weeks in spring and summer 1644, outside, just west of and south of York) or in the West Midlands (excepting only his probable presence at the end of the day at Edgehill, and then marching around the area and away with Essex's main army). He played no part in the fighting in Wales and the Marches 1642–46. Apart from fighting on the fringes, or skirting the moors, of the South West, Cromwell's campaigns of the main war were therefore confined to the lowland zone. He had been born, was brought up and spent most of his life in the flatlands of the Fenlands and East Anglia, and lowland or at most gently rolling landscapes seemed to suit his style of warfare. The type of warfare to which Fairfax must have come accustomed in parts of Yorkshire, of Sir John Gell in the Peak District or of Sir Thomas Myddleton and the Harleys in Herefordshire and southern and western Shropshire, were outside Cromwell's comfort zone – that is apparent from the way he studiously kept out of the Highlands while campaigning in Scotland in 1650–51 – and he never fought there.

Finally, and by way of offering some conclusions about Cromwell's direct military contribution 1642–46 and the part it played in securing victory for parliament, we need to address the unresolved historical debate about the reasons for parliament's victory and the king's defeat in the main civil war. One group of historians, the majority, point to a number of broad and usually resource-related factors which made a parliamentary rather than a royalist victory more likely from the outset and which, as the war went on and resources became more depleted, made that parliamentary victory ever more probable. These factors include the way that, even when it was territorially squeezed by royalist advances during 1643, parliament always possessed the most populous, prosperous and urbanised parts of England and Wales, including many flourishing ports, and so had access to far more resources than the king; that parliament always held London, the nation's capital, its political, judicial, administrative and socio-economic centre and by huge margins the country's biggest town and most active port; that from

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the outset and throughout the war, parliament possessed the navy and always had control of home waters; that its military alliance with the Scots proved very helpful for a time in bolstering the parliamentary war effort, while the king's truce with the Irish Catholics and attempt to bring over reinforcements from Ireland proved to be both a propaganda own-goal and very disappointing in terms of the numbers of troops able to reach the English and Welsh mainland; that parliament's administrative structure was stronger and more effective than the king's at all levels, centrally, regionally and at county level; that during winter 1644–45 parliament reformed and greatly improved its command structure and military capacity, via the Self-Denying Ordinance and the creation of the New Model Army, to a degree and with a level of success way beyond anything attempted or achieved on the king's side; and that, particularly through their fervent godliness, parliamentary troops were more strongly motivated than the king's men. Most of these factors and developments were not caused or shaped by Cromwell in any way, even to a small degree.

Cromwell had no part in determining the allegiance of London, of the provinces or of the navy, for instance, and even political decisions – such as making an alliance with the Scots in summer 1643 or setting up new war-time administrative structures, many of them also established during 1643 – taken and enacted by parliament, to which Cromwell had been returned as MP for Cambridge, were largely outside his control; as an MP he had just one voice and one vote, and in any case he was absent from London and from the House of Commons for most of the war years, including almost the whole of 1643, as he was away on campaign. The most that could be said of Cromwell in this context and as part of this interpretation is that he did strongly support the Self-Denying Ordinance and the creation of the New Model Army in parliament during the period from late November 1644 to late February 1645 when he was in London, and seems to have been taking his seat quite regularly, and that he represents a very good example – perhaps an archetype – of fervent godliness, with a forceful belief in God's support for parliament's war. But overall, Cromwell has a very limited part to play in the resource-based interpretations of parliament's victory.¹⁴

Another group of historians, generally the minority but a vociferous one, argues that although many of these points are evidently true and that overall the resources available to parliament exceeded those available to the king, in

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practice there is little sign that the royalists lost militarily because of shortages. There were generally no great disparities, they argue, between the resources brought to bear by the two sides in key operations and campaigns down to, and including, the Naseby campaign of summer 1645; there is also little evidence that in key battles the royalist army was underfunded and had arms and equipment inferior to those of the parliamentary army opposing them, for example, or lost because they were short of saddles, sword, bullets or powder. Several times, most notably at the key engagements of Marston Moor and Naseby, the royalists gave battle when they were significantly outnumbered and duly lost, with huge consequences for the course of the war, but historians who privilege operational factors rather than broader resource-linked factors incorporate this as part of their interpretation. They argue that the king's defeat and parliament's victory can be explained at least in part and probably in large part by operational decisions, including Rupert's decision unnecessarily to offer battle at Marston Moor with his exhausted and outnumbered army, at a time when the combined English and Scottish army may have been marching away, rather than wait and refresh his men, call up royalist reinforcements which were available in the region, and then offer battle under more propitious circumstances. They advance similar arguments regarding the king's decision to turn and offer battle at Naseby rather than push on northwards, rendezvousing with the large number of royalist troops still available in and around Newark, and perhaps even seeking to call up some of the numerous and experienced royalist cavalry which the king had (probably unwisely) left in South Wales, before offering battle. Some historians in this camp, particularly if they feel that the royalists had a chance of securing victory earlier in the war, have suggested that factors such as the king's failure to move quickly on and attack London after the battle of Edgehill in 1642, his approval of the successful but costly (in terms of royalist dead and injured) storming of Bristol, his long and fruitless siege of Gloucester, Newcastle's equally long and equally fruitless siege of Hull and the failure of the royalist army to resume the first battle of Newbury after the first day, instead allowing Essex's army to march past and away unmolested, all in the course of 1643, squandered that opportunity for royalist victory.¹⁵

Historians who privilege operational factors as a part or full explanation for the parliamentary victory and royalist defeat tend to argue that on balance parliament had the better generals who took wiser decisions and made fewer

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and less expensive mistakes than the king and his generals. In particular, they often focus on the negative consequences of perceived missed opportunities and mistakes made by leading royalists, outside London and at Bristol, Gloucester, Hull, Newbury, Marston Moor, Naseby and elsewhere. If this sort of interpretative line is followed, Cromwell has a role, as one of the better generals on parliament's side who, to the extent that he made key operational decisions during the civil war (although, as this paper has argued, that was not often), got it right more often and more importantly than his opponents. But it is hardly a ringing endorsement of Cromwell or one which has him anywhere near the top of the explanatory pedestal. The king, Rupert and Newcastle are accorded much larger (negative) roles. Given his brilliance as a cavalry commander in the field and given his performance at Marston Moor and Naseby, we might expect Cromwell to have a substantial part in operational explanations for parliament's victory in the civil war of 1642–46. In fact and perhaps surprisingly, Oliver Cromwell is again no more than a bit player in this version of the story.

- ¹ This is a slightly revised version of my lecture of the same title given at the Association's study day on 'Cromwell's Army' held at Huntingdon in autumn 2014. It has been tidied up and lightly referenced for publication, including restoring a few points that were omitted on the day for reasons of time, but it consciously retains the feel and rhythm of the original lecture, including some colloquialisms and the occasional use of first person singular.
- ² Military assessments and biographies of Cromwell include Peter Young, *Cromwell* (London, 1962), John Gillingham, *Cromwell, Portrait of a Soldier* (London, 1976), Austin Woolrych, 'Cromwell as a soldier' in John Morrill (ed.), *Oliver Cromwell and the English Revolution* (Harlow, 1990), Alan Marshall, *Oliver Cromwell, Soldier: The Military Life of a Revolutionary at War* (London, 2004) and Frank Kitson, *Old Ironsides: The Military Biography of Oliver Cromwell* (London, 2007).
- ³ The main secondary accounts include the relevant parts of Ian Gentles, *The New Model Army in England, Ireland and Scotland, 1645-53* (Oxford, 1992), Robert Matthews, *'A Storme out of Wales': The Second Civil War in South Wales, 1648* (Newcastle, 2012), Stephen Bull and Mike Seed, *Bloody Preston: The Battle of Preston, 1648* (Lancaster, 1998), Malcolm Wanklyn,

Decisive Battles of the English Civil War (Barnsley, 2006) and Stephen Bull, 'A General Plague of Madness': *The Civil Wars in Lancashire, 1640-1660* (Lancaster, 2009).

- 4 Hugh Peters's letter printed in *A Copy of his Highness Prince Charles his Letter to the Commanders of his Majesty's Forces* (1648), p. 4.
- 5 W.C. Abbott (ed.), *The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell* (4 vols, Cambridge, Mass., 1937-47), I, p. 634.
- 6 For starkly different assessments of Cromwell's campaign in Ireland, see the condemnatory Micheál Ó Siochrú, *God's Executioner, Oliver Cromwell and the Conquest of Ireland* (London, 2008), the much more positive assessment of Tom Reilly, *Cromwell: An Honourable Enemy* (London, 2000), a substantially revised edition of which is in preparation, and the more neutral James Scott Wheeler, *Cromwell in Ireland* (Dublin, 1999).
- 7 For a reassessment of Dunbar and its links with Cromwell's unfolding Scottish campaign and with the Worcester campaign, see Peter Gaunt, 'Oliver Cromwell's last battle', *Transactions of the Worcestershire Archaeological Society*, series 3 20 (2006), reprinted in David Hallmark (ed.), *The Battle of Worcester, 1651: A Collection of Essays on the History of the Battle of Worcester* (Worcester, 2012). For other modern accounts of Dunbar, see Stuart Reid, *Dunbar, 1650: Cromwell's Most Famous Victory* (Oxford, 2004) and Peter Reese, *Cromwell's Masterstroke: The Battle of Dunbar, 1650* (Barnsley, 2006).
- 8 When he decided to do this is unclear – perhaps not until spring or early summer 1651, though at a lecture given at the Cromwell Association 2014 AGM in Worcester, Professor Malcolm Wanklyn argued with supporting evidence that Cromwell took the decision at least to force a crossing of the Firth of Forth in autumn 1650, soon after Dunbar.
- 9 Gaunt, 'Oliver Cromwell's last battle', *passim*.
- 10 Abbott, *Writings and Speeches*, II, pp. 443-45.
- 11 For accounts of Cromwell's campaign in Scotland, see also John Grainger, *Cromwell Against the Scots: The Last Anglo-Scottish War, 1650-52* (East Linton, 1997) and the relevant sections of R. Scott Spurlock, *Cromwell and Scotland: Conquest and Religion, 1650-60* (Edinburgh, 2007) and Stuart Reid, *Crown, Covenant and Cromwell: The Civil Wars in Scotland, 1639-51* (Barnsley, 2012).

- ¹² Gaunt, 'Oliver Cromwell's last battle', *passim*. For other modern accounts of the campaign and battle, see several of Malcolm Atkin's books, including *Cromwell's Crowning Mercy: The Battle of Worcester* (Stroud, 1998) and *Worcester 1651* (Barnsley, 2008), and parts of his broader studies of *The Civil War in Worcestershire* (Stroud, 1995) and *Worcestershire Under Arms* (Barnsley, 2004).
- ¹³ All the accounts listed in note 2 explore Cromwell's military career during the main civil war. There are many broad military histories of the war, providing a wider context, but amongst others, see the classic account of Peter Young and Richard Holmes, *The English Civil War. A Military History of the Three Civil Wars, 1642-1651* (London, 1974), Malcolm Wanklyn and Frank Jones, *A Military History of the English Civil War* (Harlow, 2005) and Peter Gaunt, *The English Civil War. A Military History* (London, 2014). Cromwell's movements and itinerary throughout his military career, in England and Wales, Scotland and Ireland, are reconstructed and charted in Peter Gaunt, *The Cromwellian Gazetteer* (Stroud, 1987).
- ¹⁴ The neatest, most succinct and most recent iteration of this interpretation is Clive Holmes, *Why Was Charles I Executed?* (London, 2006), chapter 4.
- ¹⁵ For a good, recent attack upon the resource-based explanations and an argument in favour of exploring operational factors (though it does not go into great detail on that alternative, operational interpretation), see Wanklyn and Jones, *Military History of the English Civil War*, chapter 2.

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