

A Supporter of the Grand Remonstrance

By Mark Wareham, July 2011

Whilst there would no doubt have been many of my ancestors who were supporters of the puritan party in Parliament and who believed in the sentiments of the Grand Remonstrance, I have so far found only one name of an ancestor of someone who signed in support of it. This ancestor is John Rimes of Alhampton a hamlet in the parish of Ditchheat in Somerset, my great x 8 grandfather on my mother's paternal line.

More than anything this Remonstrance helped divide opinion and create two sides, those for Parliament and those who were Royalists. David Plant describes the Remonstrance on his website about the Civil War (<http://www.british-civil-wars.co.uk>) -

“The Grand Remonstrance was a long, wide-ranging document that listed all the grievances perpetrated by the King's government in Church and State since the beginning of his reign. Rather than blaming the King himself, the Remonstrance emphasised the role of bishops, papists and "malignant" ministers and advisers who were alleged to have deliberately provoked discord and division between King and Parliament.”

A taste of the strength of feeling in the document can be seen from this passage –

“The root of all this mischief we find to be a malignant and pernicious design of subverting the fundamental laws and principles of government, upon which the religion and justice of this kingdom are firmly established. The actors and promoters hereof have been:...the Jesuited papists, who hate the laws...the Bishops, and the corrupt part of the clergy who cherish formality and superstition as...supports of their own ecclesiastical tyranny and usurpation...Such Councillors and courtiers [who] for private ends have engaged themselves to further the interests of some foreign powers...”

It was strongly anti-Catholic in tone and blamed Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Charles by implication for having appointed him, at the heart of a Catholic plot. It was passed by a narrow margin of just 11 votes in November 1641.

Due to the King being slow to response in early December 1641 it was printed and circulated and at this time signatures of support were sought and in Somerset lists of names of knights, gentry, clergy and freeholders who supported it still survives and one of those who signed was my ancestor John Rimes. Despite the pressure the King rejected the Remonstrance on 23rd December 1641. The King and the so called roundheads were set for further bitter dispute which would lead to war.



Ditchheat Manor house

However the fact that John Rimes signed the Remonstrance does not indicate that he took sides against the King when it came to the war. Ditchheat was the home of Sir Ralph Hopton who built the manor house in the village. Sir Ralph was strongly Protestant and supported the Remonstrance. Indeed he formed part of a

delegation to the King to present it to him. However in all other respects he was a loyalist and whilst firmly anti-Catholic he chose to support the King's attempts to arrest the five members of Parliament in 1642 and was later imprisoned by Parliament as a result. When



Lord Hopton 1598-1652

released he joined the King in York when he raised his banner of war and Sir Ralph became one of the King's main commanders in the west country. Hopton led the King's forces at the important victories at Lansdown near Bath and Roundway Down in Wiltshire and but suffered defeat at Cheriton in Hampshire..

John Rimes may well have taken the lead of his more illustrious neighbour, Lord Hopton, and he may have played an active part in the war on the King's side if he did. John would have been 27 years old in 1642. If he did fight for either side there is no evidence of his involvement and he survived till 1667.

The line from my grandfather to John Rimes is shown on page 51.

