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‘Garrison City’: The Corporation of Bristol and the English Civil War, 1642–46.*

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Returning to the debate about 'localism' in relation to the English Civil War, so long after it has apparently concluded, may seem a strange decision. That said, regional variation revealed by new archival research is an essential component of civil war scholarship. Previous research on the role played by the corporation of Bristol has drawn heavily upon one set of records, the *Proceedings of the Common Council*, which provide only a very rough sketch of legislative business. By exploiting the rich seam of evidence provided by the mayoral audit books, which record the corporation's day-to-day expenditure, a fuller understanding may be reached. When analysed alongside the *Proceedings*, the audit books reveal the common set of assumptions that guided members of Bristol's corporate government. Among members, there existed a desire to defend and promote the city's interests by maintaining its self-governing independence during the English Civil War of 1642–46. A high-value asset for king and parliament, the corporation was able to negotiate the terms of Bristol's occupation with both until late in the conflict. This was identified by the Somerset-born pamphleteer William Prynne as a key reason for parliament's failure to make a military breakthrough by 1643, and he used the city's fall to the royalists as a weapon in his campaign against perceived neuters and cowards within the parliamentary ranks. Prynne's position, that a garrisoned town or city like Bristol should be dealt with only from a position of subservience to parliament's war-aims, contrasted sharply with the position taken by both the city's corporation and its parliamentary governor, Nathaniel Fiennes. This article will turn Prynne's terminology on its head, to contend that Bristol became a 'garrison city' during the first civil war. By contributing actively to each respective war-machine, while assuming responsibility for the city's defences itself, the city government was able to protect and defend its autonomy for much of the war.

I

The term ‘garrison’, in the seventeenth century as today, properly refers to the troops stationed within a particular geographical location, such as a fort, castle, or town. Towns receiving a garrison during the English Civil War are often presented, or presented themselves, as doing so passively. When the corporation of Tenby welcomed a royal force in 1643, its members pledged to ‘dutifully receive and imbrace all such armed Forces and Garrisons’ in a short statement full with the language of ‘service’, ‘obedience’, and ‘submission’.¹ Michael Braddick has recently argued that ill-fortified English towns, as ‘very obvious military targets’, had a ‘clear incentive to submit to the nearest strong military force’. Towns such as Bristol ‘allowed’ rather than ‘sought’ a military garrison.² When William Prynne, a member of the Long Parliament, used the word ‘garrison’ in his account of Bristol’s fall to the royalists in 1643, he typically used it to refer to the soldiers stationed within Bristol, rather than Bristol itself. It would have been ‘better the whole Garrison had died in defending this noble city’, he argued, than ‘that the whole Nation should perish through its surrender’.³ Discussed at greater length below (pp. 11-12), Prynne

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¹ *The Agreement of the Mayor, Aldermen, and Inhabitants of the Towne of Tenby* (Oxford, 1643) [British Library [hereafter BL], London, Short Title Catalogue II [hereafter STCII], Wing A/779]

² Michael Braddick, *God’s Fury, England’s Fire: A New History of the English Civil Wars* (London, 2008), p. 221.

³ William Prynne and Clement Walker, *A true and full relation of the prosecution, arraignment, tryall, and condemnation of Nathaniel Fiennes* (London, 1644) [BL, London, Thomason Tracts [hereafter TT], E.255[1]], p. 83.

believed that the needs of English towns and their citizens should be firmly subordinated to the military aims of their parliamentary garrisons. First and foremost, they should provide money and materiel to their occupiers. If necessary, they could be sacrificed if the wider goal - parliament's ultimate victory over the king - was imperiled. The concept of a 'garrison city' proposed by this essay, a city which negotiated the terms of its occupation and retained a high degree of political and military independence, did not exist in Prynne's vocabulary. Nonetheless, he was acutely aware that civic identities, corporate privileges, and private interests in English towns and cities may threaten the successful prosecution of parliament's war with the king. He even came close to giving this a name. When describing the discontentment felt by parliament's soldiers during the royalist assault on Bristol in 1643, he recounted how the gunners 'spiked and nayed up the touch-holes, to make their Cannons unserviceable to the Enemy, *and the City-Garrison too*'.⁴ On one level, Prynne was simply talking about the city's trained bands, under the command of the corporation of Bristol. Nonetheless, in making this comment Prynne acknowledged the existence of a rival authority to parliament's within the city, one which did not necessarily share the same goals. The concept of a 'garrison city' therefore serves as shorthand for a wider phenomenon. It represents an inversion of the normative relations between parliament and province that men like Prynne expected to be maintained in wartime, which were based on service, deference, and subordination to the former by the latter. This article aims to explore this rival authority within Bristol which, it will be argued, sought to defend its own autonomy and press the local interest at key moments during the conflict of 1642–46.

County or city studies of mid-17th century England have traditionally been conducted and expressed within the framework of a 'localist' versus 'integrationist' model. On the one hand, there were those who expressed what Alan Everitt has defined as the recognition that local identities had been increasing ever since the Tudors, that 'the Civil War period ... increased this sense of county awareness', and

⁴ Ibid., p. 44. My emphasis.

that there was an ‘inevitable collision between local and national loyalties’.⁵ By the mid-1980s, concerns were being raised that local studies were not doing enough to challenge ‘the extractive and coercive model of the relationship between local communities and the two sides in the Civil War’.⁶ West Country cities formed a key component of this reaction. MacCaffrey’s ‘perfect exposition of the localist viewpoint’, presented in his 1958 study of Exeter, was rejected in 1996 by Mark Stoye, who proposed an alternative which, he claimed, ‘casts serious doubts ... on the entire localist argument which his book helped to underpin’.⁷ David Harris Sacks’s 1986 case study of Bristol argued that any attempt to find a localist agenda was ‘meaningless’ because local and state relations were so closely interrelated.⁸ Sacks and Stoye were not isolated voices.⁹ As early as 1980, Clive Holmes had

⁵ Alan Everitt, ‘The Local Community and the Great Rebellion’, in R.C. Richardson (ed.) *The English Civil War: Local Aspects* (Stroud, 1997), p. 17. Examples of historians writing in this vein include Everitt, *The Community of Kent and the Great Rebellion, 1640–1660* (Leicester, 1966); John Morrill, *Cheshire, 1630–1660: County Government and Society during the ‘English Revolution’* (Oxford, 1974); Wallace T. MacCaffrey, *Exeter 1560–1640: The Growth of an English County Town* (Cambridge, Mass., 1958); Roger Howell, *Newcastle-upon-Tyne and the Puritan Revolution: A Study of the Civil War in North England* (Oxford, 1967).

⁶ Ann Hughes, ‘The King, the Parliament, and the Localities during the English Civil War’, *Journal of British Studies* 24 (1985), 239.

⁷ Mark Stoye, *From Deliverance to Destruction: Rebellion and Civil War in an English City* (Exeter, 1996), pp. 1–2.

⁸ David Harris Sacks, ‘The Corporate Town and the English State: Bristol’s ‘Little Businesses’, 1625–1641’ in Jonathan Barry (ed.), *The Tudor and Stuart Town: A Reader in English Urban History, 1530–1688* (London and New York, 1990), pp. 297, 300, 304.

⁹ For examples of county historians who have sought to emphasise ideological differences rather than ‘localist’ mentalities, see Stephen K. Roberts, *Recovery and Restoration in an English County: Devon Local Administration, 1646–1670* (Exeter, 1985) and Ann Hughes, *Politics, Society and Civil War in Warwickshire, 1620–1660* (Cambridge, 2002). David Underdown’s *Somerset in the Civil War and Interregnum* (Newton Abbott, 1973) is often cited as another example, but in fact strikes a tone very

suggested that ‘undue emphasis upon the localism of the county community has occasioned other misunderstandings’.¹⁰ He has had the last word – so far, at least – on the matter, stating in 2009 that the ‘interests of the locality could best be advanced, and its grievances remedied, by cooperating with central authority within the complex, multi-faceted institutions that had been spawned by the circumstances of war’.¹¹ To be accepted, this statement needs to be able to stand up to the scrutiny of the archives. It is the contention of this article that the example of Bristol demonstrates that Holmes's contention can withstand the rigour of the archival test.

Two manuscripts from the corporation records will form the backbone of this investigation: the proceedings of the common council and the mayor's audit books. The government of seventeenth-century Bristol was vested in the mayor and a common council of 43 members.¹² Its 12 aldermen also sat as councillors and, since they did not meet in a separate chamber, there are no equivalent records to London's journals of the Court of Aldermen.¹³ The mayor's audits exist in an unbroken chain from 1532 to 1785 and comprise the chamberlain's annual account of corporation incomes and expenditures. Proceedings of the council are extant from 1598 and record a summary of business and resolutions, together with a list of councillors present at each meeting. Unfortunately, they do not generally record what individual councillors actually said.¹⁴ This article is the first time that the audit books and the council proceedings have been treated with parity when assessing the corporation of

similar to Everitt and Morrill. His *A Freeborn People: Politics and the Nation in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1996) shows his movement towards the Hughes-Roberts line of argument.

¹⁰ Clive Holmes, ‘The County Community in Stuart Historiography’, *Journal of British Studies*, 19 (1980), 55.

¹¹ Clive Holmes, ‘Centre and Locality in Civil War England’ in John Adamson (ed.), *The English Civil War* (Basingstoke, 2009), p. 153.

¹² McGrath, *Bristol and the Civil War*, p. 3.

¹³ *Merchants and Merchandise in Seventeenth Century Bristol*, edited by Patrick McGrath (Bristol Record Society's Publications, 19, 1955), pp. xxxii–xxxiii.

¹⁴ *Merchants and Merchandise*, p. xxxiii; D.M. Livock, ‘The Accounts of the Corporation of Bristol: 1532 to 1835’, *Journal of Accounting Research* 3 (1965), 87–88.

Bristol's role in the English Civil War. While the resolutions of the common council are generally well known, the audit books, which record all day-to-day actions requiring a financial outlay, have received less attention. A proper account of corporation politics in these crucial years cannot omit, as one recent history of Bristol does, the sources that detail what the corporation was actually doing.¹⁵

Ian Atherton's recent research on the royalist garrison of Lichfield has revealed one important type of military garrison – the fortified strongpoint – which provided a base of operations for control of the hinterland, a safe haven for troops, and an administrative centre for the collection of money and production of weapons.¹⁶ The large and wealthy trading city of Bristol had another kind of strategic value: the financial contributions of its citizens. This article proposes that the corporation of Bristol's contribution to the war-efforts of both parliament and the king were carefully negotiated settlements. These allowed it to retain a relatively high degree of political independence, to avoid partisan purges of civic hierarchy, the free-quartering of soldiers and imposition of martial law, or absorption within a regional polity. The high-point came during the royalist occupation of 1643–45. Without access to the ready capital of the city of London, the city had to develop a strong and reliable means of raising money from its citizens, to create a central treasury, a network of collectors, a system of punishments for those who wouldn't pay, and alternatives for those who couldn't. By leveraging its strengths, in particular its capacity to supply king and parliament with considerable amounts of revenue, it rejected the model of passivity accepted by corporations like Tenby's. During the first civil war, it is here proposed, Bristol became a 'garrison city', rather than a mere *garrisoned city*.

II

¹⁵ David Harris Sacks, *The Widening Gate: Bristol and the Atlantic Economy, 1450–1700* (London, 1991), pp. 237–48.

¹⁶ Ian Atherton, 'Royalist Finances in the English Civil War: The Case of Lichfield Garrison, 1643–5', *Midland History* 33 (2008), 44–45.

On the eve of the conflict, the civic hierarchy of Bristol shared a corporate identity founded on a common economic interest. Its leaders were mainly drawn from the ranks of the Society of Merchant Venturers, which received its charter in 1552 and had a virtual monopoly on trade in the city. Bristol's government was self-appointing by co-option, a system that was far from universal among seventeenth-century English cities. In Norwich, for instance, the entire body of freemen elected the common council and aldermen, and nominated two aldermen for the position of mayor.¹⁷ In Dorchester, meanwhile, the right to vote in civil elections was afforded to all members of the Freeman's Company.¹⁸ Roger Howell has rightly warned about presenting the political dynamics of cities governed by oligarchies in simplistic terms, as a battle between 'progressive bourgeois merchants' and 'old, entrenched, conservative oligarchs'.¹⁹ Nonetheless, it would be surprising if such a narrow clique of Bristol's society did not at times act according to their shared and local interests. According to Sacks, the corporation of Bristol was 'engaged ... immediately' in the crisis of 1642, a continuation of their hostile attitudes to financial innovations of Charles I's 'personal rule'.²⁰ For Howell, however, when studying mercantile communities' reactions to the civil war, it must be presumed that 'a substantial part ... favoured accommodation', for fear of disorder and disruption to trade: 'plainly and simply some form of neutralism and appeasement'.²¹

The first part of this article, by analysing the corporation's response to the first parliamentary occupation of the city, will outline the ways in which both of these statements can be considered legitimate. Negotiation and accommodation are two-

¹⁷ John T. Evans, 'The Decline of Oligarchy in Seventeenth-Century Norwich', *Journal of British Studies* 14 (1974), 48.

¹⁸ David Underdown, *Fire from Heaven: Life in an English Town in the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1992), pp. 198–205.

¹⁹ Roger Howell, Jr., 'The Structure of Urban Politics in the English Civil War', *Albion* 11 (1979), 116.

²⁰ Sacks, 'Corporate Town', pp. 77, 105. See also Morrill, *Revolt in the Provinces*, p. 44.

²¹ Howell, *Urban Politics*, p. 117.

way processes, and from an early stage the corporation sought an accommodation with parliament which suited its own interests. In contrast to many other English towns and cities, the civil war prompted Bristol's Corporation to seek unity, rather than to leverage an opportunity to continue local factional struggles by other means.²² Describing events in Bristol around the time of the 1688 Glorious Revolution, John Miller noted that 'a sense of civil unity sometimes prevailed' over 'acute political divisions', and that Bristolians had 'the capacity to close ranks and assert their independence' during a time of crisis.²³ Civic independence was equally important in the middle of the century, but negotiations were conducted with the resource-hungry war machines of king and parliament. The stakes were far higher.

At the outbreak of civil war, Bristol's common council sought to hold out against parliamentary occupation for as long as possible, whilst urgently carrying out repairs to the city's walls and gates. This has been described by Anthony Fletcher as an 'introverted and self-interested posture', and by Lynch as a policy of 'pragmatic neutralism' which allowed the accommodation of 'competing loyalties'.²⁴ When two members of parliament arrived in Bristol on 19 October 1642 requesting a loan, councillors Thomas Colston and Humphrey Hooke were directed to decline politely.²⁵ Royalist sympathy among the councillors was surely one motivational factor. Attempts in 1640 by the freemen of Bristol to secure the franchise in parliamentary elections had been a failure, so the two men selected to represent the city in the Long Parliament are something of a gauge of the corporation's political leanings. The pair chosen in 1642, Aldermen Richard Long and Humphrey Hooke, were swiftly

²² Peter Clark and Paul Slack describe how 'one clique of town politicians replaced another' in Barnstaple, Durham, Exeter, Leicester and Rye. It is less clear that the same can be said for Bristol, also given as an example. Clark and Slack (eds), *Crisis and Order in English Towns, 1500–1700* (London, 1972), p. 25.

²³ John Miller, *Cities Divided: Politics and Religion in English Provincial Towns, 1660–1722* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 198, 217.

²⁴ Anthony Fletcher, *The Outbreak of the English Civil War* (London, 1981), p. 397; Lynch, *For King and Parliament*, p. 23.

²⁵ Latimer, *Annals*, p. 159.

removed from the Commons for their participation in a wine monopoly. Their replacements, the city recorder John Glanville and Alderman John Taylor, both withdrew to join the king at Oxford shortly after the war began.²⁶ In part, refusal to support parliament at this stage may also have reflected a reluctance to risk becoming subsumed within a regional organisation, similar to the one taking shape in the Home Counties. Earlier in October, a proposal had been made for a mutual assistance agreement with Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and Somerset, three counties united under a parliamentary committee.²⁷ The council had agreed, somewhat feebly, that it 'shall be readie to afford assistance as occasion shall require, according to our abilities' and to send 'some authorised...to agree upon further particulars'.²⁸ On 25 November, a copy of a letter from a frustrated Alexander Popham, MP for Bath, was recorded in the proceedings, which demanded to know 'whoe are for parliament or against parliament, and provide accordingly'.²⁹ The best councillors were prepared to offer was to 'give meeting' for further discussion.³⁰ John Wroughton has argued that Bristol's 'armed neutrality' was brought to an end partly by the 'crusading zeal of the gentry of North-East Somerset' under Popham, to whom the council turned when news reached them that the Earl of Essex had reached Thornbury with 2000 men on 7 December 1642.³¹ However, by holding off as long as they had, Bristol's councillors had ensured that Bristol would be engaged with the parliament directly, rather than as part of a regional polity.

While evidence from the proceedings would certainly seem to support Lynch's hypothesis of 'pragmatic neutralism', evidence from the audit books suggests that cooperation with parliament and its local forces was underway long before

²⁶ Sacks, *Widening Gate*, pp. 235–36.

²⁷ Underdown, *Somerset*, p. 45.

²⁸ Bristol Records Office, Bristol [hereafter BRO], M/BCC/CCP/1/4, Proceedings of the Common Council, 1642–49, pp. 1–2.

²⁹ BRO, M/BCC/CCP/1/4, p. 12.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

³¹ John Wroughton, *A Community at War: The Civil War in Bath and North Somerset, 1642–1650* (Bath, 1992), pp. 75–77.

Essex's arrival at the city gates. The picture of 'conciliation and non-commitment' only emerges when these sources are omitted from our analysis: in reality, the corporation adopted a thoroughly two-faced approach.³² The mayor for 1642, John Locke, has been described as a pragmatic 'political turncoat' by H.E. Nott.³³ Under his watch, corporation resources were distributed as alms to incoming refugees from Ireland, while the water bailiff was charged with searching Roman Catholics and escorting them to London, ensuring that those 'suspected to bee a Jesuite or prieste' were taken directly 'upp to the Parliament'.³⁴ There was open cooperation with Denzil Holles MP, lieutenant of the city from the outbreak of war in summer 1642, who had been tasked with raising 'all the power and forces of the several counties, as well trained bands as others'.³⁵ In August, 18s was paid for six drums and six fifes 'that went about to warn the trayned bands to appeare in the Marshe before Mr Denzell Hollis and for theyre attendance there that day at 1s 6d per man'.³⁶ £20 was expended 'for certayne men that were going to Sherbourne with provitions and other thinges', as Holles laid siege to the castle there.³⁷ Lines of communication were opened with puritan peers: 16s was used to pay for letters to Lord Bedford, the parliamentary general in the west, in early October.³⁸ The same month, a payment of £79 4s to a parliamentary committee for the acquisition of ammunition and provisions was recorded. It was simultaneously noted that previous payments for the same purpose, totalling an enormous £1000, had been made to the 'Committee of Bridgewater' earlier that year.³⁹ These actions by the corporation pre-date measures taken by the

³² John Morrill, *Revolt in the Provinces: The People of England and the Tragedies of War, 1630–1648* (London, 1999), p. 67.

³³ *The Deposition Books of Bristol, Vol. I, 1643–1647*, edited by H. E. Nott (Bristol Record Society, 6, 1935), Appendix 1, p. 252.

³⁴ BRO, F/Au/1/22, pp. 166–70.

³⁵ Lynch, *King and Parliament*, pp. 18–19.

³⁶ BRO, F/Au/1/22, p. 175.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ BRO, F/Au/1/22, p. 178.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

council to ensure that Bristol had a well-trained and well-equipped militia of its own. In December, councillors agreed to establish four companies of trained bands, to authorise the water bailiff to seize ordnance from passing ships, and to place one hundred musketeers on the city walls each night.⁴⁰

Co-operation continued in 1643 under the new mayor Richard Aldworth, whom Sacks has called a ‘politically committed member of the Long Parliament who conformed ... to the revolution’.⁴¹ In a letter of July 1643 to a London friend, Aldworth expressed hope that ‘one bout more with Gods blessing will give them [the royalists] such a blow, that their entendment for *Oxford* may be overthrowne’.⁴² When parliament passed an ordinance on 14 February 1643 to establish local assessments, it is no surprise that the mayor and his supporters formed the backbone of the committee tasked with levying, collecting and transferring the money.⁴³ In Exeter, where a parliament-supporting majority dominated the city council, the years 1642 and 1643 witnessed the withdrawal of the royalist minority from public life, and Stoye has observed that ‘Parliamentary control was only secured after many of the city’s accustomed, conservative rulers had been displaced’.⁴⁴ Under Richard Aldworth, total corporation expenditure rose to an extraordinary £16380 3s 11d in 1643, from an average of £3650 per annum in the 1640s more generally, a figure which sees Bristol’s average annual assessment for ship money in the 1630s, typically around £1000 per annum, pale by comparison.⁴⁵ With Aldworth and his allies taking the lead in Bristol’s corporation politics, parliament had little reason to worry about the political affections of those who sat on the common council, and there was no equivalent purge.

⁴⁰ *Deposition Books of Bristol, Vol. I*, p. 11

⁴¹ Sacks, *Widening Gate*, p. 245.

⁴² Richard Aldworth, *The Copie of a Letter sent From the Maior of Bristoll unto a Gentleman...* (London, 1643) [BL, London, TT, E.59[25]].

⁴³ Lynch, *King and Parliament*, p. 38.

⁴⁴ Stoye, *Deliverance*, pp. 62–63.

⁴⁵ Kevin Sharpe, *The Personal Rule of Charles I* (New Haven and London, 1992), p. 637.

All that was needed was a governor who could maximise the fruits of this relationship. Nathaniel Fiennes, MP for Banbury and son of the puritan peer Lord Saye and Sele, was the man for job. His reputation has been sullied by the fall of Bristol to the royalists in 1643, a legacy secured by William Prynne's published record of his trial. Lynch describes Fiennes as 'a lawyer and politician who owed his rank and position to family and political influence rather than any military ability'.⁴⁶ Prynne's tract sought precisely to portray him as a typical non-soldier, failing to give succour to his troops, calling them off prematurely, and being prepared to surrender Bristol at the first sign of trouble.⁴⁷ However, Fiennes's appointment was probably a diplomatic and financial move as much as it was a military one. Aldworth and the aldermen could not have been happier with the choice of governor, someone they considered a 'Gentleman of unwearied pains and watchfullnesse, not omitting any thing which may conduce to our safety'.⁴⁸ Two entries in the account books for January 1643 recorded payments totalling £1000 to Essex, guaranteed by a bill of exchange endorsed by Lord Saye.⁴⁹ In this way, Aldworth was free to leverage the economic might of his office without needing the support of the council, or the cooperation of Bristol's citizens. Fiennes provided the crucial link between a pro-parliament mayor and the puritan peer prepared to act as guarantor to his loans.

In encouraging such close personal bonds, parliament opened the door for its Bristol allies to push the local interest, to a sympathetic governor, at key moments. At his trial before the Council of War in December 1643, shortly after his surrender of the city to Prince Rupert, Fiennes argued that setting fire to Bristol's suburbs and retreating to the castle would have been an action 'so horrid, that his tender

⁴⁶ Lynch, *King and Parliament*, p. 32.

⁴⁷ *Articles of Impeachment and Accusation Exhibited in Parliament, Against Colonell Nathaniel Fiennes, Touching his dishonourable surrender of the City and Castle of Bristoll*, by Clement Walker and William Prynne (London, 1643) [BL, TT, Wing/A3856].

⁴⁸ Richard Aldworth, *A Letter Sent to the Right Worshipfull William Lenthall Esquire, Speaker in the Commons House of Parliament, From the Maior of Bristoll and others* (London, 1643) [BL, STCII, Wing/A902], p. 4.

⁴⁹ BRO, F/Au/1/22, p. 231.

conscience would no ways permit its execution'.⁵⁰ His prosecutors, the members of parliament William Prynne and Clement Walker, countered that Fiennes's core duty had been to ensure that Bristol did not fall to the royalists, 'this being the end wherefore they placed a Governour and Garrison there'. If firing the city had been necessary to defend Bristol, Prynne asserted, then Fiennes should not have thought twice about doing it. The streets could have been 'blocked up with caskes, carts, sleids, and a Piece of Ordnance or two placed at the head of every street', he suggested. The difference between Fiennes's and Prynne's perspectives were laid bare when Fiennes 'earnestly' proclaimed that he 'would rather die then not provide for his friends and their Estates as well Citizens as Soldiers', to which Prynne witheringly remarked that Fiennes would 'not die or venter his life to keep the Citie for the Parliament'. Fiennes should have remembered, argued Prynne, that he had been 'constituted Governour of Bristoll, not by the Mayor and Citizens, but his Excellency and Parliament ... for the Kingdomes safety, [rather] then security of the Malignant Citizens goods'.⁵¹ Even recently, Prynne's analysis has been held to have been essentially correct, with Malcomb Wanklyn asserting that the 'governor's nerve gave way' during the siege.⁵² The friendly relationship between the corporation and the governor is perhaps more significant. If Fiennes had fought on against the odds, engaging in bitter and destructive street-fighting, he risked not only the slaughter of his own men, but the probable sack of the entire city, as at Marlborough and Cirencester, news of which had already reached Bristol.⁵³ Cultivating a close

⁵⁰ Walker and Prynne, *True and Full Relation*, p. 63.

⁵¹ Walker and Prynne, *True and Full Relation*, pp. 31–32, 48, 64, 65, 68.

⁵² Malcomb Wanklyn, *The Warrior Generals: Winning the British Civil Wars* (New Haven and London, 2010), p. 65.

⁵³ Austin Woolrych, *Britain in Revolution, 1625–1660* (Oxford, 2004), p. 241. Reading also serves as an example of the fate that Bristol might have endured without securing good terms: Julia Topazio, 'The Impact of the Civil War on Reading', *Southern History*, 36 (2014), 22–23; *A Declaration from the City of Bristoll by the Maior, Aldermen, Sheriffes, and others of the City* (London, 1642) [BL, STCII, Wing/D589]

relationship with a sympathetic civilian governor had ultimately paid dividends for the corporation of Bristol.

When terms of surrender were negotiated with Prince Rupert, the royalist commander leading the assault on Bristol, the mayor and citizens were even afforded the chance to present their own demands.⁵⁴ Though we can't be sure what these were, they were undoubtedly reflected in the final agreement. One article guaranteed that the population 'shall be secured in their Persons, Families and Estates, free from plundering'; another that 'the Charters and Liberties of this city may be preserved'; and another that the 'quartering of Souldiers be referred or left to the Mayor and Governour'.⁵⁵ Accounts of the 'Extreme Plundering, Rapes, Murthers' that followed the city's surrender were dramatized for propaganda purposes.⁵⁶ Lynch has rightly queried the reliability of these sources.⁵⁷ The corporation had secured these relatively soft terms by assembling for war while suing for peace, and by avoiding complete absorption within the parliamentary war-machine. How could it be, questioned Clement Walker, that Fiennes had established a local garrison, paid for by local taxes 'assigned *only* for the use of that Garrison', and still allowed 'obnoxious' weak-spots to appear in the fortifications? His answer was that Fiennes had been 'as jealous of his Government [in Bristol], as any man is of his wife', and that he had allowed 'so rich a shop' to escape without bearing the 'far heavier burden' that might have been asked of it in service to parliament.⁵⁸ Walker was right that the interests of the city had been placed ahead of the interests of parliament, but Nathaniel Fiennes was merely the

⁵⁴ Walker and Prynne, *True and Full Relation*, p. 92.

⁵⁵ *A Copie of the Articles Agreed upon at the surrender of the City of Bristol* (London, 1643) [BL, STCII, Wing/C6203], p. 5.

⁵⁶ *The Tragedy of the Kings Armies Fidelity Since their entring into Bristol* (London, 1643) [BL, STCII, Wing/T2013]

⁵⁷ Lynch, *King and Parliament*, pp. 92–93.

⁵⁸ Nathaniel Fiennes, *Colonell Fiennes His Reply to a Pamphlet Entitled, An Answer to Colonell Nathaniel Fiennes Relation* (London, 1643) [BL, STCII, Wing/F877], p. 5; Nathaniel Fiennes, *Colonell Fiennes Letter to my Lord General, Concerning Bristol* (London, 1643) [BL, London, STCII Wing/F874], pp. 1–2.

most convenient target for his polemic. The corporation of Bristol had found a way to contribute actively to parliament without meekly surrendering its own autonomy: it was they who had been ‘jealous of their Government’.

III

Without the capital resources of London, royalist financial demands had to be met from within Bristol itself. This stimulated the rapid strengthening and centralization of the corporate government, which gave the corporation further space to press the local interest. In his seminal study of royalist administration, Ronald Hutton remarked that ‘Charles had originally envisaged his war effort as being maintained by local populations working voluntarily under their own leaders’ but that ‘by the end of 1643 he had abandoned this notion’, instead employing men who were both loyal to him and not the natural leaders of the populations they controlled.⁵⁹ Bristol may therefore represent royalist acknowledgement that, with regard to corporate cities, it was preferable to work with the grain of existing institutions. Continued independence for the city’s corporation was seen as being quite compatible with squeezing the local population for the royalist cause.

Bristol’s initial contribution to the king’s war effort was substantial. Lynch and Latimer have both noted that, to celebrate Charles’s visit to the city, the council agreed that £10,000 be presented in ‘love and gratefull affection’ on 28 July 1643. Despite this, Prince Rupert soon demanded a further £10,000.⁶⁰ The aldermen and councillors led by example, voluntarily pledging large amounts of their own money: Andrew Charleton gave £600; Mayor Aldworth £300; Alderman Long and John Langton £200 each; Johns Goning senior and junior both gave £150, as did Humphrey Hooke and Hugh Browne.⁶¹ Most of the others committed sums ranging

⁵⁹ Ronald Hutton, *The Royalist War Effort, 1642–1646* (London, 1999), p. 104.

⁶⁰ Lynch, *King and Parliament*, pp. 95–96; Latimer, *Annals*, p. 181; BRO, M/BCC/CP/1/4, p. 33.

⁶¹ BRO, M/BCC/CP/1/4, p. 33.

between £20 and £100. Aldermen Long, Hooke and Wallis, and James, Colston and Fitzherbert were among a committee of ten empowered to find a way of raising the rest of the money needed from Bristol's inhabitants.⁶² Latimer noted that the collection from civilians mostly came in the form of silver plate, with a mint established to convert this into cash at a rate of 4s 4d per ounce, but failed to spot that a further £1943 18s 10d was taken out of the mayoral accounts towards the total.⁶³ The corporation itself had therefore absorbed much of the cost of this gratuity.

Isolated from London, the corporation could only borrow money either on the security of future tax income or on the security of its own members. An account from January 1644 reveals that a bond of £600 was issued to a certain Mr Elbridge, and that surety of the bond had to be made by the councillors themselves: 'wherein severall men of this house stande bound'.⁶⁴ Shortly after, only £240 could be found 'to satisfie some presente warrantes of Prince Rupert', who had demanded £500, meaning that '£260 shallbee made up againe wth the first moneys that shall come in'.⁶⁵ In February, the council considered a tax on commodities to fund the weekly assessment and the purchase of a general pardon.⁶⁶ Money was also needed to fund the purchase of a charter of trade for the Society of Merchant Venturers, in pursuance of a policy dating back to the 1620s.⁶⁷ By March, it appears that the commodity tax idea had been dropped, since a new committee was established to consult on how best to levy the £150 required towards the fund for the general pardon from the general population.⁶⁸ Rationalization of these *ad hoc* systems was now a priority.

The burden necessarily fell upon the ratepayers, income from whom was balanced between providing cash for the military occupiers and continuing to fund

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Latimer, *Annals*, p. 188; BRO, F/Au/1/23, p. 25.

⁶⁴ BRO, M/BCC/PPP/1/4, p. 51.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 53.

⁶⁷ *Records Relating to the Society of Merchant Venturers of the City of Bristol in the Seventeenth Century*, edited by Patrick McGrath (Bristol Record Society, 17, 1952), pp. 9–10, 14, 15.

⁶⁸ BRO, M/BCC/PPP/1/4, p. 57.

Bristol's self-styled status as a 'garrison city'. On 15 April 1644 it was agreed that each rated inhabitant would pay one month's advance of the assessment to finance a frigate to guard the River Severn, plus arms and ammunition, totalling around £400.⁶⁹ Later that year, when the queen visited the city to receive a gratuity of £500, three quarters of the sum came from a further month's advance.⁷⁰ At the same meeting, it was also agreed that a further six weeks' payments would be advanced for finishing a bulwark and fortifications. When a further £1000 was needed for the 'saftie and defence of this Citty', the chamberlain provided the initial security for a loan to that amount, but it was stipulated that the loan would be repaid by a levy on the inhabitants on 'equale and indifferent' terms.⁷¹ These were large sums, and new fiscal machinery would have to be constructed. On 21 May, it was noted that 'unlesse more care and diligence be hereafter used in the paymente and receipte...many threatening damages in theis distracted times may suddenly happen'.⁷² Punishments were created for the offence of non-payment, including the sequestration and re-sale of property. If this was impossible, the debtor was to be 'apprehended and committed to the common prison'.⁷³ Charged with assessing the citizenry, constables or churchwardens found to be 'remiss and negligent' in their duties could be punished by imprisonment or 'otherwise as the Maior and Aldermen shall in their discrecons think meete'.⁷⁴ In this new system, the chamberlain acted as exchequer and each officer had to report their activities directly to the mayor every fourth day.⁷⁵

This new machinery was called upon extensively in 1644 and 1645, both as a means of supplying the royalists and maintaining the city's own garrison. In June 1644, £2000 was agreed for the purchase of bread, butter, cheese, beer, coal and other provisions for the city's defenders, and Alexander James was tasked with conferring

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 61.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 62.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 65.

⁷² Ibid., p. 65.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 66.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid, p. 61.

with the assessors for its collection.⁷⁶ Those who couldn't pay the onerous demands might contribute by other means. When it was agreed on 17 July that six weekly amounts were to be raised at once, it was decided that 'the rest that cannot pay this advance are to send an able labourer' who would work between 6am and 6pm on the improvement of the city fortifications.⁷⁷ The extraordinary achievement of the corporation, which had established a centralized and workable system of taxation within a single year, would ultimately afford them considerable leverage in their negotiations with their occupiers.

Hutton discovered that in other areas of the country large sums of money raised for specific purposes had the effect of removing money that would otherwise have gone towards regular taxes.⁷⁸ The corporation was aware of this effect and sought to reduce weekly commitments while increasing efficiency, to ensure that these smaller amounts were actually paid. One-off payments were preferred to long-term commitments. On 14 September 1643 Colston and Fitzherbert were sent to Oxford to negotiate a reduction in the weekly assessment to around £200.⁷⁹ Latimer noted that in May 1644, in return for taking on the task of completing and furnishing the Royal Fort, the king assented to a further reduction in the weekly assessment to £100.⁸⁰ When Prince Rupert arrived in the city in July 1645, the council hoped that he would accept a gratuity of £200 for his personal expenses in housekeeping and provisions 'in discharge and satisfaction of the weekly payment demanded for the use aforesaid', at £50 per week.⁸¹ The advantages of reducing the weekly burden in favour of large but localised expenditure were threefold. First, by retaining control of how the money was to be spent, the corporation ensured that it would be difficult for the royalists to spot arrears accruing. Second, while the city's fortifications remained unfinished by the time of the parliamentary assault of 1645, this only served to ensure

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 68.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 71.

⁷⁸ Hutton, *Royalist War Effort*, p. 96.

⁷⁹ BRO, M/BCC/CP/1/4, p. 36.

⁸⁰ Latimer, *Annals*, p. 182.

⁸¹ BRO, M/BCC/CP/1/4, p. 106.

that there could be no protracted siege warfare. A swift attack by Fairfax's men lasted only a 'few hours' and resulted in the gain of half the city.⁸² Third, the forces tasked with collecting the money were local militia under the command of city councillors, as agreed at a council meeting of 6 September.⁸³ The following March, the council once again empowered the chamberlain to use the trained bands with 'all care and diligence' to bring in outstanding debts.⁸⁴ The somewhat euphemistic phrase 'care and diligence' does not change the fact that local militia were preferable to royalist soldiers, over whom the corporation could have had little or no control.

There are signs that councillors were aware of the sacrifice that Bristol's citizens were making, in contrast to Latimer's claim that the corporation regarded Bristol's inhabitants as a 'sort of inexhaustible milch cow'.⁸⁵ On 23 March 1644 it was agreed that all those inhabitants thought capable of contributing ten pence to the fortifications and bulwarks should pay a six week advance, but it was also stipulated that 'until those six weeks shall be expended and runne out, they payinge before hand as is now ordered shall not be called on to pay againe towards that service'.⁸⁶ Eventually, the corporation had to start meeting its debts in kind rather than with cash. In October 1644, when the Committee of Somerset asked for a further £500 on top of £1000 previously demanded, the council resolved that they would have to wait until the £1000 had been collected, and that the balance would be made up with commodities.⁸⁷ When notice was received on 1 April 1645 that the king considered the city to be in arrears to the tune of £400, they decided to meet the request in provisions rather than cash.⁸⁸ Accepting Prince Rupert's offer to receive £800 in exchange for not authorising the free quartering of soldiers, payment was again made

⁸² *A True Relation of the Taking of Bristoll by Sir Thomas Fairfax* (London, 1645) [BL, STCII, Wing (CD-ROM 1996)/T3049aA], p. 3.

⁸³ BRO, M/BCC/PPP/1/4, p. 71.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

⁸⁵ Latimer, *Annals*, p. 187.

⁸⁶ BRO, M/BCC/PPP/1/4, p. 59.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

in goods and commodities.⁸⁹ Councilmen even put their own finances in peril to spare the city further burdens. On 10 October 1644, the council agreed to take up another £1000 on the security of ten named aldermen and councillors.⁹⁰

A strong corporation routinely meeting royalist financial demands was in a better position to negotiate. On 17 August 1643, a delegation of councillors were sent to mediate with the Lieutenant Governor for the ‘fredome of the inhabitants...both for their persons and estates’, a move designed to throw a protective cloak around those who had previously supported the parliament.⁹¹ In February 1644 the council secured a general pardon from the king by raising £150 from the general population, an agreement to ensure that those guilty of any past crime, from high and petty treason to murder and riot, were spared retribution.⁹² The corporation also found time to lobby on behalf of individual citizens who had been the victims of wartime excess. The pipe-maker Robert Marshman was given a certificate to prove his status as a citizen of Bristol after he had been forcibly impressed when returning from Bath, while Alderman Wallis heard the case of William Oswell, who had had his horse stolen by six royalist troopers outside Gloucester.⁹³ The corporation's measures to raise money for the war-effort came at a high price, but they bought Bristol a valuable status in return: as a ‘garrison city’, she was able to leverage her fiscal importance to extract real concessions on behalf of her citizenry.

IV

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 109.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 78.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 35.

⁹² Ibid., pp. 53, 57; ‘Free and General Pardon, 1644’, 29 February 1644, 19 Charles I, in *Records Relating to the Society of Merchant Venturers*, pp. 166–67.

⁹³ *Deposition Books of Bristol, Vol. 1*, pp. 7, 16–17.

Events ensured that this success could not and would not be sustained. In 1645, with the fall of the city to parliamentary forces, the new occupiers promised that citizens would ‘be saved from all plunder and violence’, but there were no further undertakings on how Bristol would henceforth be governed.⁹⁴ The council tried hard to demonstrate its value to parliament. On 2 October, it voted to raise a gratuity of £5000 for the parliamentary army, which was increased to £6000 on 4 October and was levied mainly on the inhabitants of the city.⁹⁵ Members of the corporation knew that a show of political support would also be necessary. Richard Aldworth, whose mayoral term in 1643 had delivered so much for the parliament, was chosen to return as an alderman in place of Alderman Taylor, one of the Bristol MPs expelled from the Long Parliament in 1642, who had died leading the trained bands in defence of the city in 1645.⁹⁶ On 12 November, the council learned that only £1500 had so far been raised and recorded that their worst fears might finally come to pass: that the remainder may end up being collected by the ‘common souldiers’.⁹⁷ Despite pleading for a few days’ forbearance, parliament had already resolved that some members of the corporation were a hindrance rather than an asset. An ordinance of 28 October 1645, read in Bristol in December, informed the council that their leaders – including Mayor Creswick, Hooke, Long, Wallis, James, Thomas Colston and Fitzherbert – were to be removed from office because they had the ‘designes of the enemy’.⁹⁸ A new mayor, John Gunning Jr., was appointed by decree and a committee, led by Aldworth, was assembled with ‘full power and authoritie’ to remove any suspected of ‘delinquency’.⁹⁹ The new council voted to give the Mayor the power to spend up to

⁹⁴ *A Copie of the Articles Agreed upon at the surrender of Bristol*, p. 5; *A True Relation of the Storming Bristol... Together with severall Articles between Prince Rupert, and Generall Fairfax*, (London, 1645) [BL, TT, E.301[5]], p. 22.

⁹⁵ BRO, M/BCC/CP/1/4, pp. 117–18; Latimer, *Annals*, p. 205.

⁹⁶ BRO, M/BCC/CP/1/4, p. 120; Latimer, *Annals*, p. 205.

⁹⁷ BRO, M/BCC/CP/1/4, p. 122.

⁹⁸ BRO, M/BCC/CP/1/4, p. 123.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

£200 on any occasion without consent or approval, which so happened to be the value of the new weekly assessment, set in December 1645. A root and branch cull finally occurred on 6 January 1646, with parliament's supporters nominated for city offices at every level, including Edward Pride of Inner Temple as city recorder.¹⁰⁰ By 1646, the corporation was packed with parliamentary placemen, who dominated it for the next fifteen years.¹⁰¹

That the corporation's independence was eventually compromised should not disguise the fact that the civil war initially stimulated a rapid increase in its authority. Its members had shown a considerable commitment to maintaining unity among themselves, successfully negotiating a series of settlements with king and parliament to maintain their autonomy. The corporation rejected the subordinate role implied by allowing a military garrison through their gates. This approach was developed during the first parliamentary occupation, found expression during the subsequent royalist occupation, and was forcibly ended only after 1645. In this sense, Clive Holmes's last word on localism, outlined at the start of this article, holds true under the pressure of the archival test – so far. We recall that William Prynne had remarked about 'malignants' in the corporation and 'City-Garrison' during the trial of Nathaniel Fiennes: what he had identified was a group of civic leaders vigorously defending their own interests when, he argued, those interests needed to be subordinated to the interests of parliament. By 1645, his wish had finally been realised.

This article has demonstrated how the corporation of Bristol sought to defend its interests and privileges, and the interests of its citizens, during the first civil war of 1642-46. That parliament sought to override and subordinate these concerns in 1645, the year the New Model Army took to the field and the Self-Denying Ordinance

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 131.

¹⁰¹ *Records Relating to the Society of Merchant Venturers*, pp. 36–37.

passed into law, should perhaps come as little surprise.¹⁰² For a long time though the corporation was successful at holding off external intrusions into its sphere of influence, and displayed a continuity of approach to both parliamentary and royalist occupiers. The language to describe this approach does not currently exist in a historiography dominated by questions of localism and integrationism, or ones of ideological conflict. It is difficult to do justice to this complex web of relationships with existing terminology, and this article has proposed an alternative. The term ‘garrison city’ fits well the example of Bristol, whose corporate leaders did not play a zero-sum game between alignment with one faction or another, and attempted extrication from the conflict engulfing the nation. Bristol’s strategic location, its considerable wealth, and its closed oligarchy, may make it a special case. It may not suit other English cities, such as Exeter or Norwich, where civic leaders were more firmly parliamentary-puritan in outlook, or Newcastle, where competition for local pre-eminence so clearly intersected with national politics, or Dorchester, where extensions to the franchise had pushed control of the corporation out of the hands of a narrow and self-selecting clique. Bristol’s leading citizens weighed up their national allegiances alongside local concerns, and sought a model of engagement which allowed competing ideologies to be accommodated. They ultimately failed because their vision ran counter to the kind of relationship between parliament and province seen as a prerequisite to the successful prosecution of the war-effort by men like Prynne. Intellectually interrogated at the trial of Nathaniel Fiennes, this model was rejected shortly after the re-capture of Bristol in 1645. The application of this term to describe the course taken by the corporation of Bristol is the product of a struggle to accommodate archival research within long-established theoretical frameworks: it is hoped that future research should be liberated from similar constraints.

¹⁰² For the changing atmosphere, see Holmes, *Eastern Association*, pp. 216-7; Mark Kishlansky, *The Rise of the New Model Army* (Cambridge, 1979), pp. 26-51; Austin Woolrych, *Britain in Revolution, 1625-1660* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 303-6.