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'Pagans or Paragons?': Images of the Cornish during the English Civil War*

IN August 1635 a traveller from East Anglia set off on a sightseeing tour of the western counties. Over the next few weeks he passed through Somerset, Dorset and East Devon, remarking upon each district with evident interest and approval. On reaching Exeter, however, the traveller decided that he had gone far enough. Next day he turned back towards the east, observing in his journal that he had 'no desire [to pass] over Tamar [into Cornwall], to [visit] ye horned-nockhole Land's-end, nor ... the rough, hard-bred and brawny strong-limbed wrastling inhabitants thereof'.¹ This early Stuart tourist's contemptuous comments perfectly illustrate how most contemporary Englishmen and -women thought of Cornwall (if indeed they thought of it at all). England's westernmost county was regarded as a craggy, pitted *Ultima Thule*, its inhabitants as uncivilized roughnecks. Few educated people had any wish to visit Cornwall, and owing partly to this lack of interest, partly to the county's sheer remoteness, historians possess little information about English perceptions of their Cornish neighbours during the early modern period.

The events of 1642-6 provide a precious window through this wall of indifference. During the Great Civil War Cornwall impinged directly and dramatically upon the national consciousness, as it had rarely done before. In late 1642 Cornwall became the one county in southern England to declare itself unequivocally for Charles I. Thereafter, the county's inhabitants supported the King with quite exceptional vigour, providing thousands of men for the royal armies. The Cornishmen's behaviour bewildered and enraged the Parliamentarians and, as the war dragged on, Roundhead resentment grew. This paper charts the development of anti-Cornish feeling among Parliament's English supporters, and shows how Roundhead propagandists drew upon old prejudices and stereotypes in order to demonize the King's Cornish followers. It shows too how the events of the Civil War itself led to new, and even more negative, images of the Cornish people being formed in many Parliamentarian minds, while, at the same time, a rival myth of the Cornish as supremely loyal subjects was being fostered in the Royalist camp. Finally, the paper explores the Cornish people's self-image during this troubled period – and asks what it was that they felt themselves to be fighting for.

* I am most grateful to G. E. Aylmer, J. Barry, G. W. Bernard, R. J. W. Evans, T. Gray, and R. E. Stoye, for their comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

1. A. Gibson (ed.), *Early Tours in Devon and Cornwall* (Newton Abbot, 1967), p.91.

Set on a jagged peninsula thrusting deep into the Atlantic Ocean, Cornwall is the most physically isolated of all the English counties. 'Nature hath shouldered out Cornwall into the farthest part of the realm', wrote the Cornish antiquary Richard Carew in 1602, 'and so besieged it with the ocean that [it is] as a demi-island in an island.' The length of this 'demi-island' Carew estimated at 'about seventy miles', while its breadth, he observed, was 'almost nowhere equal, so in the largest place it passeth not thirty [miles], in the middle twenty, and in the narrowest of the west part three'.¹ Some 90,000 people dwelt within this narrow, tapering tract of land during the early seventeenth century, the vast majority scratching out their livings from occupations connected with agriculture, tin-mining and the sea.²

The extent to which Cornwall was set apart from the rest of England by considerations other than those of mere distance has long been a subject of scholarly debate. In many ways, as writers from the medieval period until the present day have been keen to point out, Cornwall was very similar to other English counties.³ 'Cornewayle is in Engelonde', the emigré Cornish scholar John Trevisa stated flatly in the 1300s, 'and is departed in hundredes, and is i-ruled by the lawe of Engelonde, and holdeth schire and schire dayes as othere schires doeth.' Anyone disputing this simple fact, Trevisa added testily, 'wot nought what he maffleth'.⁴ Yet Trevisa protested too much, and as he himself must have known very well, there were many respects in which Cornwall differed greatly from its eastern neighbours.

Perhaps most important of all was the fact that Cornwall possessed a distinctive history. Cornwall had remained a Celtic kingdom under its own rulers long after the rest of Britain had been conquered by the Saxons. It was not until the tenth century that it came completely under English rule, and even after that date the process of Saxon colonization remained very slow. In 1200 Cornwall remained an overwhelmingly Celtic society; one in which there were no major towns, in which the pattern of settlement was very dispersed, and in which the vast majority of the population still spoke Cornish (a Brythonic language closely akin to Welsh and Breton). Admittedly, the Cornish language slowly retreated towards the west over the next 500 years, pushed back by the encroaching tide of Englishness. English continued to be a minority language in Cornwall until well into the fifteenth century, however, and

1. F. E. Halliday (ed.), *Richard Carew of Antony: The Survey of Cornwall* (New York, 1969), pp.82-3.

2. For Cornwall's population between 1600 and 1650, see K. J. George, 'How Many People Spoke Cornish Traditionally?', *Cornish Studies*, xiv (1986), 70.

3. For the most recent attempt to refute the notion of Cornish distinctiveness, see J. Chynoweth, 'The Gentry of Tudor Cornwall' (Univ. of Exeter, Ph.D. thesis, 1994), pp.17-29.

4. D. C. Fowler, *Authors of the Middle Ages: 2, John Trevisa* (Aldershot, 1993), p.1.

as late as the 1640s the district to the west of Truro was still largely Cornish-speaking.¹

The linguistic division of early modern Cornwall into a Celtic west and a more 'English' east was reflected variously. The surnames of 'the western Cornish', for example, were often very different from those of their eastern cousins, for – as Richard Carew observed – the former group made use of lengthy patronymics '[in which] they partake in some sort with their kinsmen the Welsh'.² Similarly, the characteristically Cornish sport of 'hurling' (a boisterous variant of football, which involved two teams competing for a silver ball) was played in a quite different style in the two different regions of the county.³ Weights and measures were also very different, and a survey of the 1550s found that 'the manorial customs and methods of husbandry in the manors of east Cornwall had more in common with those of Devon than with those of West Cornwall'.⁴ Yet despite these divisions – and many others like them – the ordinary inhabitants of the English-speaking districts of Cornwall clearly felt a greater identification with their western brethren than with the English proper.

In part, Cornish clannishness was founded on that sense of loyalty to one's own county which was common to all English people during the early modern period, but other factors served to strengthen the bond still further. First there was the fact that many thousands of Cornishmen were employed in an industry which was unique to their own county (and to certain parts of Devon): that of tin-mining. Tin-miners were generally very poor, their job was acknowledged to be an exceptionally hard one, and the manner in which they lived and worked set them apart from society at large. Special royal institutions known as 'Stannaries' had been set up to govern the tin-mining areas during the medieval period, and the miners fell under the jurisdiction of these bodies, rather than of the ordinary law courts. Tin-mining was probably the single biggest occupation in seventeenth-century Cornwall (even those who usually farmed or fished would dabble in tinning when times were hard), and there can be little doubt that mass participation in this distinctive industry served to bind the county's inhabitants more tightly together and to differentiate them more sharply from those who lived elsewhere in England.⁵

The Cornish sense of identity was further strengthened by an exceptionally high degree of intermarriage. Geographically isolated as they were, most Cornish men and women had little choice but to find a

1. For 'the retreat of Cornish', see George, 'How Many People Spoke Cornish Traditionally?', *passim*.

2. Halliday, *Carew*, p.125.

3. *Ibid.*, p.147.

4. *Ibid.*, p.125, and H.M. Speight, 'Local Government and Politics in Devon and Cornwall, 1509–49' (Univ. of Sussex, Ph.D. thesis, 1991), p.16.

5. For further discussion of the tinner's distinctiveness, see M. J. Stoye, *Loyalty and Locality: Popular Allegiance in Devon during the English Civil War* (Exeter, 1994), pp.16–18.

marriage partner from within the same county, and it was commonly said that 'all Cornish gentlemen are cousins'.¹ The truth of this proverb is borne out by the fact that, between 1509 and 1640, some 70–80 per cent of marriages among the lesser Cornish gentry were to Cornish brides.² Among the common people, rates of intermarriage were almost certainly higher still. A recent study of the Penwith peninsula, in the far west of Cornwall, found that parishes there experienced immigration on an exceptionally local scale during the early seventeenth century, leading the author to conclude that the communities of this region had been of an almost entirely 'closed' nature.³ Endogamous marriages were probably a little less common in the east of the county, of course, but even so Cornwall was clearly one of the most interbred counties in England.

The situation at the very top of Cornish society was rather different. The greater gentry of Cornwall – those who actually ruled the county by serving as Sheriffs, Deputy Lieutenants and Justices of the Peace – were far more likely to marry a 'foreigner' than were their social inferiors.⁴ And their willingness to look beyond the Tamar for a wife was just one of the ways in which they differed from their fellow countrymen. The greater gentry were much richer than their neighbours; they were much better educated; and they were much more concerned with national affairs.⁵ Needless to say, they were all English-speakers: indeed, there are hints that the greater gentry of eastern Cornwall felt positively contemptuous towards the Cornish language.⁶ That this should have been so is hardly surprising, for the puritan gentry families of this district were probably the most 'anglicized' group of people in seventeenth-century Cornwall, the location of their estates, their social status and their membership of a much wider godly network all serving to direct their attentions far beyond the county boundaries.⁷

During the summer of 1642 Cornwall's peace was shattered by rumours of Civil War: rumours which prompted the formation of two rival factions in the county. Under the influence of their puritan religious beliefs, many of the east-Cornish gentlemen came out for the Parliament, and by late September they had gathered a small force together at Bodmin, under the command of Sir Richard Buller.⁸ Buller's position was a precarious one, however. Parliament's Cornish supporters were

1. Halliday, *Carew*, p.136.

2. See Chynoweth, 'Gentry of Tudor Cornwall', p.91; and A. Duffin, 'The Political Allegiances of the Cornish Gentry, 1600–42', (Univ. of Exeter, Ph.D. thesis, 1989), p.72.

3. D. H. Cullum, 'Society and Economy in West Cornwall, 1588–1755', (Univ. of Exeter, Ph.D. thesis, 1994), pp.39, 273–4.

4. Duffin, 'Political Allegiance', pp.72–3.

5. *Ibid.*, *passim*; and Chynoweth, 'Gentry of Tudor Cornwall', *passim*, esp. p.29.

6. See, for example, R. Buller, *The Buller Papers* (privately printed, 1895), p.103.

7. On the puritan gentry network in east Cornwall, see Duffin, 'Political Allegiance', pp.85–7, 232–46.

8. C. E. H. Chadwycke Healey (ed.), *Bellum Civile: Hopton's Narrative of his Campaign in the West, 1642–46* (Somerset Record Soc., vol. xviii, 1902), p.20.

gentlemen rather than commoners, and their influence was largely restricted to the most easterly – and most anglicized – part of the county. Everywhere else, popular opinion was firmly on the King's side, and in the Celtic far west, support for the King was almost unanimous. This was made abundantly clear on 4 October 1642 when Sir Ralph Hopton and other leading Royalists summoned the posse comitatus (or county gathering) to appear at Moilesbarrow Down. The response was overwhelming. Local Parliamentarians stated that 'all the west part' of Cornwall had come out for the King, 'in so much as it was a rare thing to see a man about Trurow, or in any of the westerne parts'.¹ One anonymous Roundhead claimed that 'fifteene or sixteen thousand men' had appeared at the meeting, while other correspondents spoke of 25,000 or even 30,000 men having turned out.² These rumours were clearly exaggerated, but more credence should be given to the account of Richard Arundell – an experienced soldier whose father was 'one of the chiefe meanes of raising the posse'.³ According to Arundell, the meeting had attracted '10,000 men at least reddye to serve his Majestye, whereof 4,000 immediately marched in armes'.⁴

The Royalist force thus massively outnumbered its Parliamentary counterpart, and Buller, who possessed just 6–700 men, can hardly be blamed for abandoning Cornwall and fleeing precipitately across the Tamar.⁵ October 1642 did not see a contest between two well-matched groups, but the rout of a small body of Roundhead gentlemen and their retainers by a vast, and somewhat unruly, Royalist mob. This point is important, because it helps to explain why the initial Parliamentary reaction to the events of 1–4 October was to claim that a popular uprising – a 'hurly-burly', 'insurrection', or 'rebellion' – had taken place in Cornwall.⁶ Supporters of the King were often described as 'rebels' by Parliamentary propagandists, of course, but this term took on a particular significance when applied to Cornishmen. As English people knew only too well, Cornwall possessed a long tradition of rebelliousness. In 1497 the county's inhabitants had twice risen up against Henry VII. Half a century later they had rebelled again, this time to oppose the religious policies of Edward VI's government during the 'Prayer Book Rebellion' of 1549; an episode which West-Country folk termed 'the Com-motion'.⁷ By rising tumultuously in support of King Charles in October 1642 – this at a time when the rest of southern England seemed solidly

1. B[ritish] L[ibrary], Thomason Tracts [henceforth: E.] 124 (20).

2. Ibid., and BL, Add MS 11314, fo.13.

3. C[ornwall] R[ecord] O[ffice], Truro, DDT 1767. For Arundell's pivotal role, see also E.124 (29).

4. CRO, DDT 1767.

5. For the strength of Buller's forces, see E.124 (20).

6. See E.102 (17), E.124 (29), E.240 (48), and E.240 (49).

7. For 1497, see A. L. Rowse, *Tudor Cornwall* (1941), pp.114–40; I. Arthurson, 'The Rising of 1497: A Revolt of the Peasantry?', in *People, Politics and Community in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. J. Rosenthal and C. Richardson (Gloucester, 1987), pp. 1–18; and I. Arthurson, *The Perkin Warbeck Conspiracy, 1491–99*, (London, 1994), pp.162–88. For 1549, see J. Cornwall, *Revolt of the Peasantry, 1549* (London, 1977); F. Rose-Troup, *The Western Rebellion of 1549* (London, 1913); Rowse, *Tudor*

behind the Parliament – the Cornishmen had confirmed the view that they were an innately rebellious people. That the comparison between 1549 and 1642 was specifically drawn at the time is shown by the bitter reference of one local Parliamentarian to 'Cornwall's second commotion'.¹

News of the dramatic developments in Cornwall alarmed Parliament's supporters in the neighbouring county of Devon. Letters from Plymouth dated 13 October admitted that many of the townsfolk were 'afraid of Cavaliers in Cornwall', and a week later it was reported from Barnstaple that 'the Cornish Cavaliers put us here in no small fright ... some say they are 12,000 strong, others 8,000, but 5,000 is the least we heare of.'² This letter was subsequently republished in a London newspaper, marking the first known appearance of the soubriquet 'Cornish Cavaliers'. The nickname was to remain a staple of Roundhead propagandists for the next twelve months, and only fell out of general use in late 1643 – by which time everyone was presumably felt to have been apprised of the fact that Cornishmen were, by definition, supporters of the King.³ The fears of the Devon Roundheads were well-founded. By late October Cornwall had been 'brought back to complete loyalty to his Majesty', and a formidable Royalist army was preparing to take to the field.⁴ In November Hopton advanced into Devon with 2–3,000 Cornishmen, and over the next four months bitter fighting raged back and forth across the River Tamar. Despite the best efforts of the rival commanders, however, neither side was able to prevail, and in March the two warring parties agreed to a temporary truce, or cessation, one which eventually lasted throughout most of April 1643. For the moment, at least, the war in the south-west had come to a halt.⁵

Hostile stereotypes of the Cornish were well established by this time, for Roundhead propagandists had drawn on pre-existent prejudices, together with the new grievances aroused by the fighting, in order to project a negative picture of Cornwall across the country as a whole. The gibes which appeared against Cornish 'rebels' have already been noted. The charge most commonly levelled against the Cornish people during the first six months of the war, however, was that they were poor and rapacious. This accusation did have some basis in fact. Cornwall was much less fertile than its eastern neighbours and found it hard to support its growing population during the early modern period. Richard Carew,

Cornwall, pp.253–90; J. Sturt, *Revolt in the West*, (Exeter, 1987); and J. Youings, 'The South-Western Rebellion of 1549', *Southern History*, i (1979), pp. 99–122.

1. E.124 (20). See also E.17 (17).

2. E.123 (5), and E.124 (14).

3. For the continued use of this term, see E.93 (4), E.100 (20), and E.65 (24). Although the pamphleteers generally encouraged the myth of a homogeneous Cornish Royalism, they did not always do so. See E.99 (24) for a report that 300 Cornish freeholders were serving in the Parliamentary army in Devon.

4. *C[alendar of] S[tate] P[apers], V[enetian], 1642–43*, p.189.

5. For the events of November 1642 to April 1643, see E. A. Andriette, *Devon and Exeter in the Civil War* (Newton Abbot, 1971), pp.73–84.

himself a Cornishman, admitted in 1602 that 'few shires can show more ... [poor people] than Cornwall'.¹ Every year, hundreds, possibly thousands, of poor Cornish folk, took to the roads of lowland England looking for work.² This regular influx of vagrants aroused antagonism in the richer counties to the east, and resulted in Cornish people becoming associated with poverty and shiftlessness. Perhaps it is no coincidence that a popular ballad of the time, dealing with a deceitful beggar, was entitled 'The Stout Cripple of Cornwall'.³

Roundhead propagandists seized on this well-established theme during 1642–3, stressing Cornwall's poverty in order to denigrate the county's inhabitants and excite fears of plunder in the hearts of prosperous Englishmen. Cornwall itself was described in the bleakest possible terms: as '[a] barren country', 'a mountainous country', and a 'country [not] of itself ... very fertile'.⁴ Cornish soldiers were depicted in a similarly negative way. In November 1642 it was remarked that Hopton's soldiers were 'poore Cornish men most of them', while a few months later his forces were described as '4,000 almost starved pore Cornish'.⁵ When Hopton's 'ragged regiments of foot' occupied Crediton, Devon, in early 1643 the Parliamentarians reported that the town had been 'miserably pillaged' by the 'beggarly Cavaliers'.⁶ The link between Cornishmen and beggars was specifically made here. The comment of another Roundhead correspondent – that the Cornish prisoners taken at Modbury were 'such ragged lowsie varlets that we esteeme them not' – also hints at a mental association between Cornishmen and vagrancy.⁷ It was important for the pamphleteers to reinforce the view of the Cornish as a race of beggars, because this allowed them to imply that Cornishmen were serving the King simply out of a desire for plunder. It could then be argued that, by resisting the 'Cornish Cavaliers', ordinary English people were protecting their own property.

Allegations of poverty and rapaciousness dominated Parliamentary accounts of the Cornish during the opening stages of the war, but the county's inhabitants were portrayed in other ways too. Some pamphleteers pushed the view of the Cornish as dupes: ignorant rustics who had been 'seduced into the quarrell against the Parliament' by Royalist agitators.⁸ Others depicted them as quasi-Catholics: religious conservatives who were hostile to the radical Protestantism associated with the Parliamentary cause. This point was touched on in January 1643, when a

1. Halliday, *Carew*, p. 139.

2. On the frequency with which Cornish vagrants were arrested in Devon during the 1630s, see A. L. Beier, *Masterless Men: The Vagrancy Problem in England, 1560–1640* (London, 1985), p. 34.

3. See M. A. Courtenay, *Folklore and Legends of Cornwall* (Exeter, 1989 ed.), pp. 200–3.

4. E. 128 (11), and E. 8 (29).

5. E. 100 (20), and E. 126 (35).

6. W. C. and C. E. Trevelyan (ed.), *Trevelyan Papers*, vol. iii (Camden Soc., Old Ser., vol. cv, 1872), p. 230; and E. 84 (36).

7. E. 92 (8).

8. E. 126 (35).

commentator noted that the King '[finds] his partie is most ... [in Cornwall] it being a place full of ... popishly affected persons'.¹ The links between the Cornish tin-mining industry and Royalism were also quickly identified, one pamphleteer commenting that Hopton's 'footmen of Cornwall [are] most miners, being very good pioners and better indeed with the spade and shovell then with the pike and musket'.² By early 1643 an alarming composite picture of the Cornish had already been established in many English minds: they figured as a race of poverty-stricken, popish ignorants, who periodically issued forth from their 'lurking holes' in the tin-mines in order to pillage and plunder.³

Roundhead attitudes towards the Cornish were to become yet more negative following the collapse of the south-western peace talks in April 1643. Predictably enough, the Parliamentarians blamed their opponents for the failure of the cessation, claiming (somewhat hypocritically) that the Cornish had never intended to make peace in the first place, but had simply entered into negotiations in order to gain themselves time to reorganize and regroup. Accordingly, the word 'traitor' was added to the growing lexicon of anti-Cornish abuse. A Parliamentarian declaration of 12 April described Hopton's adherents as 'rebels, traitours, Cornishmen and others' (a phraseology which implied that simply being a Cornishman was disreputable in itself), while further references to 'the treacherous Cornish' appeared in subsequent Roundhead news-letters.⁴

The end of the truce and the renewal of the fighting led to disaster for the Parliamentarians. On 16 May Parliament's western army was decisively defeated at the battle of Stratton, in Cornwall, and the Royalists then went on to win a whole string of victories in Somerset, Wiltshire, Dorset and Devon. By late 1643 the Cornishmen had captured almost all of south-west England for the King. These developments put the Roundhead pamphleteers in a somewhat uncomfortable position, for they made it clear that, however 'poor', 'ignorant' and 'treacherous' the Cornishmen might be, they were also doughty fighters. This discovery should have come as little surprise, for the county's inhabitants had long possessed a supremely martial reputation. During the 1590s Burghley had been informed that the miners of the Western Stannaries were 'twelve thousand of the roughest, most mutinous men in England', and forty years later Cornwall was still reputed to be 'prolific in the most warlike men of the Kingdom'.⁵ During the initial stages of the Civil War, Parliamentary pamphleteers tried to play down this unhelpful aspect of

1. E.86 (3).

2. E.128 (11).

3. For a Roundhead gibe that Hopton's men had fled to their 'lurking holes in Cornwall', see Andriette, *Devon in the Civil War*, p.75.

4. Bod[leian] L[ibrary], Oxford, Wood Pamphlets, 376, No.6. See also H[istorical] M[anuscripts] C[ommission], *Portland MSS*, vol. i, p.111; and E.100 (6).

5. Rowse, *Tudor Cornwall*, p.62; and *CSPV*, 1642-43, p.101.

the Cornishmen's pre-war reputation. Some reports accused the Cornish soldiers of cowardice, and one pamphleteer even went so far as to claim that Hopton's troops '[are] pore Cornish men most of them, that are ... easily vanquish'd'.¹ Such statements carried little conviction, however, and when an Exeter shopkeeper heard that two local men were setting out to fight the Royalists in November 1642, he advised them 'to go home againe to their wives for the Cornish would sett wyldfire in their tayles'.² Throughout the rest of the war, observers continued to express the greatest admiration for the Cornishmen's fighting abilities.

When the Royalist captain Richard Atkyns encountered the Cornish army at Chard in 1643, he declared that they 'were the best foot that ever I saw, for marching and fighting'.³ A month later the Roundhead general William Waller was forced to acknowledge that, although his troops had initially occupied a very advantageous position at the battle of Lansdown, the 'Cornish hedgers' had eventually beaten them from it.⁴ (The term 'hedgers' was probably used here first to allude to the Royalists having beaten their enemies from hedge to hedge, and second to imply contempt for the 'beggarly' Cornish – hedges being almost invariably associated at this time with those who slept under them.⁵) The storming of Bristol boosted the Cornishmen's military reputation still further, and during the siege of Lyme it was reported that the Cornish were 'more terrible to [the Parliamentary defenders]' than any other of the King's forces'.⁶ By mid-1643 Roundhead propagandists had effectively given up trying to pretend that Cornishmen were cowards. Henceforth, little more was to be said on the subject in the Parliamentary press, though from time to time comments did appear hinting at an exaggerated respect for the Cornishmen's fighting abilities. Significantly, when 100 Royalist soldiers were captured near Plymouth in 1645, a pamphleteer specifically underlined the fact that three of the captives had been 'Cornishmen'.⁷

By 1644 a combination of propaganda, pre-existent prejudice and their own military success had established the Cornish as Parliamentary *bêtes noires*. The depth of hatred which was now beginning to be felt for them was made clear in April 1644, when Prince Maurice arrived before the Dorset port of Lyme with a Royalist army. Almost the first action of the Roundhead garrison was to send out a message declaring 'that they would give no quarter to any Irish or Cornish'.⁸ It is unclear whether these bloodthirsty words were ever translated into actions, at

1. E.126 (35).

2. D[evon] R[ecord] O[ffice], Exeter; Exeter Quarter Sessions Order Book, 64 (1642–60), fo.22.

3. N. Tucker and P. Young (ed.), *Military Memoirs: The Civil War* (Hamden, Conn., 1968), p.12.

4. Bod. L., Tanner MS 62, fo.164.

5. For the disreputable associations of hedges during the early modern period, see *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v.

6. See A. R. Bayley, *The Great Civil War in Dorset*, (Taunton, 1910), p.139.

7. E.258 (28).

8. G. Chapman, *The Siege of Lyme Regis* (Lyme Regis 1982), p.32.

least as far as the Cornishmen were concerned, but the fact that the Cornish could now be mentioned in the same breath as the hated Irish shows just how much Roundhead attitudes towards the county's inhabitants had hardened. And it was against this background of growing hatred and intolerance that a new Parliamentary invasion of Cornwall took place. In July 1644 the Earl of Essex, fresh from raising the siege of Lyme, led a large Roundhead army over the Tamar – and immediately ran into trouble. The entire adult male population took to their heels, causing Essex to note with bewilderment and growing alarm that 'through many townes and villages where my army passes, there is none but women and children left'.¹ Infuriated by this reception (and no doubt keen to settle old scores as well), Essex's soldiers embarked on an orgy of rapine, 'vaunt[ing] over the poore inhabitants of Cornwall as if they had bin invincible'.² Meanwhile Royalist forces under the King and Sir Richard Grenville were massing in Devon and West Cornwall, and in August they began to close in on Essex's army.

The ensuing weeks were nightmarish for the Parliamentarians, who found themselves trapped in a hostile countryside. On 2 August Essex complained of 'the country rising unanimously against us' and two weeks later he was in despair, crying out that 'intelligence we have none, the country people being violent against us; if any of our scouts or soldiers fall into their hands, they are more bloody than the enemy'.³ Another Roundhead lamented that 'the [people here] are so base . . . that if any of our soldiers chance to stragle abroad . . . a great number of the countrey meete with them [and] . . . cut their throates'.⁴ Royalist sources told the same story, observing that 'the country people were so incensed against [the Roundheads] . . . that they could not straggle out of their quarters but they were presently slain or taken'.⁵ The Cornish also held back food from the invaders. It was reported in London that 'the Cornish men will not bring victuals . . . [to Essex's army] but hide it'.⁶ Local sources confirm this claim, a Roundhead minister observing in his diary that provisions had had to be shipped into Cornwall from Plymouth 'since all that countrye is so rotten, and would bring in noe provisions to our Army'.⁷ It is clear that the Cornish people – already deeply hostile to the Parliamentary cause – had now been driven to fury by the excesses of the Roundhead soldiers.

Late in August Essex came to realize that his position was hopeless. Hemmed in by the King's forces and the enraged local population, he no longer had any hope of leading his army out of 'the Cornish mouse-

1. E.4 (30).

2. C. E. Long (ed.), *Diary of the Marches of the Royal Army during the Great Civil War, Kept by Richard Symonds* (Camden Soc., Old Ser., vol. lxxiv, 1859), p.67.

3. M. Coate, *Cornwall in the Great Civil War and Interregnum* (London, 1963 ed.), pp.140, 147.

4. E.8 (12).

5. E. Walker, *Historical Discourses on Several Occasions* (London, 1705), p.51.

6. E.6 (16). See also *CSPV, 1643–47*, p.137.

7. BL, Add MS 35297 (John Sym's Day Book), fo.41.

trap'.¹ On 30 August he ordered his horse to break through to the east. Next day Essex himself, accompanied by most of his senior officers, embarked for Plymouth in a fishing boat. There was to be no escape for the Roundhead foot soldiers, however, who were left behind to make the best terms they could with the advancing Royalists. What was left of Essex's army surrendered to the King at Fowey on 2 September. The terms were relatively favourable: all able-bodied men were to be allowed to march back to the east under the protection of a Royalist convoy, while the sick and wounded were to be transported by sea to Plymouth.² Unfortunately, neither the Royalist soldiers nor the Cornish people were prepared to let their enemies get away so lightly. No sooner had the disarmed Parliamentary soldiers set off on their march than the King's troops began to rob and abuse them. Worse was to come, for when the dejected Roundheads reached the town of Lostwithiel they were set upon and mobbed by 'the inhabitants and the country people'.³ A crowd of 'Cornish dames' attacked the Parliamentary camp followers, stripping them of their clothes.⁴ Similar scenes were enacted 'in other towns' on the Roundhead line of retreat, the Cornish women again proving especially violent.⁵ Terrified, the Parliamentary soldiers fled for the Tamar, 'never thinking themselves secure till they were got out of this county of Cornwall'.⁶ These accounts all emanate from Royalist sources, and make it impossible to doubt that the defeated Roundheads were treated with quite exceptional severity by the Cornish. The campaign as a whole took a terrible toll of Essex's men. Of the 6–7,000 foot soldiers who originally marched into Cornwall, only 1,000 made it back to the east.⁷

The events of summer 1644 outraged the Parliamentarians, and in the immediate aftermath of Essex's defeat denunciations of the Cornish in the London press became almost hysterical. The county's inhabitants were reviled in the most bitter terms – as 'cruel Cornish', 'perfidious Cornish' and 'cursed Cornish' – while their mistreatment of the Parliamentary soldiers was described in vivid detail.⁸ One newsbook described how Essex's soldiers had been stripped to the skin by the 'heathenish Cornish, who pillaged our foot, yea and commanders too ... and stript many to their shirts, and pulled off their boots, shoos and stockings ... and made them go barefoot'. The writer went on to complain about the treatment accorded to 'the sick and maimed souldiers that were left behind', alleging that 'the Cornish women came and

1. E.12 (12).

2. Coate, *Cornwall*, p.151.

3. Long, *Diary*, p.67.

4. BL, Add MS 35331, Fo.241.

5. E. Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, *The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England*, ed. W. Dunn-Macray (6 vols., Oxford, 1888), iii. 405.

6. Walker, *Historical Discourses*, p.80.

7. E.13 (14); and Coate, *Cornwall*, p.152.

8. See E.13 (20), E.9 (1), E.8 (4), and E.12 (23).

stript their shirts off their backs and took away many of their clothes, and left them so lying, naked on straw ... under hedges'. Finally, he noted the Cornish people's continued refusal to supply Essex's men with food, observing that 'the country would not bring in any provisions at all, so they were forced to march 30 miles without a bit of bread'.¹

Further accounts in a similar vein soon followed, most notably *A True Relation of the Sad Passages Between the Two Armies in the West* (first published in London on 2 October). This pamphlet, which gives a vivid, blow-by-blow account of events in Cornwall, and contains many impassioned attacks upon the local populace, is worth quoting from at length. 'When we came from the King's Army to Listithiel', its author begins, 'the poore souldiers were assaulted with ... [great] crueltie by the townsmen and women ... who stripped many men stark naked.' 'I saw them strip a [newly delivered] woman of our partie to her smock', he adds, 'they tooke her by the haire of her head, and threw her into the river, and there ... almost drowned her; the woman dyed within twelve houres after.' The writer is at pains to stress that this incident had not been an isolated one and that 'divers other men and women were served in the like nature'; indeed he claims that 'it is not five sheets of paper will contain the ... tragedies of this kind. They so coursed and harried our soldiers that many fell down under their merciless hands'.² Those in the Parliamentary quarters who read this account can have been left in little doubt that the Cornish were a bloody, barbarous people. Indeed, the *True Relation* closely resembles the lurid pamphlets which appeared in the wake of the Irish Rebellion of 1641 (even including the same vivid motif of Protestant women being thrown off bridges by inhuman Celts) and, like them, was clearly calculated to arouse popular hatred against an 'alien' people.³ This underlying motive is made clear by the *True Relation's* ominous concluding words: 'as they have done to others, so shall it be done to them'.⁴ By late 1644 the Parliamentary desire for revenge against the Cornish was overpowering.⁵

On 8 October it was reported that Essex's soldiers at Portsmouth 'Cry "Revenge, Revenge" for the perfidious dealings of the enemy'.⁶ A week later, letters from Plymouth aver that the defenders 'hope to be revenged of the Cruell Cornish'.⁷ Shortly afterwards it is claimed that the Parliamentary soldiers who have been almost starved in Cornwall 'mean either to give the Cornish a dieting in requitall here, or send them

1. E.8 (34).

2. E.10 (27).

3. A contemporary illustration of a massacre committed on a bridge in Ireland is reproduced in J. Morrill (ed.), *The Impact of the English Civil War* (London, 1991), p.12.

4. E.10 (27).

5. See, for example, E.8 (34), E.10 (7), E.12 (4), E.12 (23), and E.13 (12).

6. E.12 (5).

7. E.13 (20).

to Break-fast in another world'.¹ Such reports were not simply propagandist inventions. Colonel Martin Pindar wrote to Speaker Lenthall from Reading on 24 October, informing him that the Parliamentary forces were moving to intercept the King's army as it returned from the West, 'nothing more [animating the soldiers and] overcoming the difficultyes of the march than hopes to fight with their Cornish enemies, whose barbarisme will never be pardoned untill some proportionable requitall [has been obtained]'.²

The Roundhead soldiers finally got their chance on 27 October, when the King's army – now stiffened by a number of Cornish regiments – clashed with the forces of Essex and Waller at Newbury. The engagement proved indecisive, but the fighting was bloody and vindictive. One Parliamentary writer crowed that 'ours gave no quarter to any whom they knew to bee of the Cornish', and another source confirmed this, boasting that 'very few of that country had quarter afforded'.³ A group of wounded Royalists found sheltering in a nearby manor-house after the battle were slaughtered out of hand by the Parliamentarians. Royalist propagandists later reproached the Roundheads for their inhuman conduct, but such protests fell on deaf ears.⁴ Even two weeks after Newbury, by which time one might have expected the Roundhead blood-lust to be sated, Essex's soldiers were still 'exclaim[ing] against Cornwall'.⁵ All things considered, it was probably just as well for the Cornish who had marched east with the King that they were ordered back to the west again in November 1644.

During 1644–45 Parliamentary resentment against the Cornish reached its peak. At the same time Roundhead propagandists became both more vindictive and more imaginative in their treatment of the county's inhabitants, resurrecting ancient slurs and gibes against the Cornish, while simultaneously pressing new ones into service. As a result the collection of negative stereotypes already associated with the Cornish people was developed and expanded, leading to the formation – or perhaps one should simply say the enunciation – of an intriguing complex of interconnected images.

By 1644 the view of the Cornish plunderer, so fiercely asserted during 1642–43, had become an established national stereotype. A pamphleteer sneered that the King's commanders 'have French to ravish, Welsh to thiefe [and] Cornish to . . . plunder'.⁶ Even so, specific references to the Cornish propensity for plunder became much less frequent after 1643. Why was this? It was partly because the pamphleteers now had much

1. E.13 (15).

2. HMC, *Portland MSS*, vol. i, pp.188–9.

3. See J. Vicars, *The Burning Bush Not Consumed: England's Parliamentarie Chronicle* (London, 1646), p.59; and E.14 (16).

4. E.22 (5).

5. H.G. Tibbutt (ed.), *The Letter Books of Sir Samuel Luke, 1644–45* (London, 1963), p.71.

6. E.16 (4).

more heinous crimes of which to accuse the Cornish. Yet it was also because they had discovered a nickname which made the link between Cornishmen and plundering implicit. Throughout the early modern period the cliffs of western Britain were frequented by the red-legged crow (*Pyrrhocorax*), then known as the 'Cornish Chough'. This bird appeared in the Cornish coat of arms and its close association with the county eventually led to the nickname 'choughs' being jeeringly applied to Cornish people. Writing in 1602 Carew observed that the chough was 'the ... slander of our county'. He went on to give a description of the bird, a description which concluded – most significantly – with the comment that the chough's 'condition ... is ungracious, in filching and hiding of money and such short ends'.¹ The kleptomaniac reputation of the Cornish chough was a gift to the Roundhead pamphleteers. Just as the nickname 'Cornish Cavaliers' had been used to suggest that all Cornish people were Royalists, so the nickname 'Cornish Choughs' could be used to imply that all Cornish people were plunderers.

The London pamphleteers took some time to recognize the potential of the soubriquet, but scathing references to Cornish soldiers as 'chaftes' became increasingly common during 1644, and by the end of that year the term had passed into general use.² Once the link between Cornishmen and crows had been established, the way was open for the propagandists to make many new sneers and sallies. Remarking on Cornish desertion from the Royalist armies in late 1644, one writer remarked that 'the Cornish Choughs have taken their flight home again', while, after a group of Cornish soldiers had allegedly fled from battle, the same author exulted: 'Now I see the Choughs are but a craven brood'.³ By referring to the Cornishmen as crows, the pamphleteers were essentially dehumanizing them, suggesting to their readers that Cornish people were scarcely people at all. And this same motive clearly underlay the production of a whole series of similar images during 1643–5, all of which equated the Cornish with birds and animals. One variant of 'Cornish Choughs' was the nickname 'Cornish Cormorants'.⁴ Cormorants, like choughs, were closely associated with Cornwall at this time and, like them, possessed a bad reputation, their voracious eating habits having made them a byword for greed.⁵ Once again, the pamphleteers had found an image which could be used to mock the Cornish, while at the same time denouncing them as plunderers.

Another well-known creature of the south-western shoreline offered itself up for this sport: the crab. In the wake of the Royalist defeat at Cheriton, it was sneered that 'the Western Choughs ... [had] turn'd into

1. Halliday, *Carew of Anthony*, p.121. The nickname was still current in the 1670s: see Gibson, *Early Tours*, p.132.

2. See, for example, BL, Burney Collection, 19A, *A Perfect Diurnal*, 1–7 July 1644.

3. E.12 (19), and E.16 (4).

4. Bod. L., Ashm. 721, vet.A.3e, 1762 (J. Vicars, *Gods Ark*), fo.29.

5. For the use of the term 'cormorant' to denote 'an insatiably greedy person' during the early modern period, see *OED*, s.v. It is interesting to note that a Cornish giant called 'Cormoran' features in

Crabs, and crawl'd backwards'.¹ Almost certainly, this image of the Cornish as crabs was a pun upon the contemporary perception of Cornwall as a 'crabbed [i.e. cross-grained] peninsula'.² Cornishmen were also compared with moles, and once again this allegory worked at several levels.³ The mole's subterranean life-style resembled that of the tin-miners, of course. Yet the mole was also notoriously short-sighted, and therefore served as fitting emblem for 'the blinded and seduced Cornish', who had, according to the pamphleteers, been so completely taken in by Royalist agents.⁴ Yet another animal nickname appeared in 1645, when a writer, describing the bloody repulse of a Royalist attack on Plymouth, gloated that 'the Cornish blood-hounds have had their bellies full'.⁵ It is not clear if the term 'bloodhound' possessed any specific associations with Cornwall, but the comparison of Cornish soldiers with bloodthirsty dogs was certainly a vivid and insulting one.

Newsbooks occasionally alluded to the sports which were associated with Cornwall as well. Only one reference to 'hurling' has so far been encountered in the pamphlet literature of the Civil War: a comment of 1643 that Hopton's soldiers had managed to escape over the fields after the battle of Modbury because 'many of them . . . [were] Cornish Hullers [*sic*], who were nimble of foot'.⁶ Much more frequently referred to (probably because it was more widely known) was the Cornish sport of wrestling. Prior to 1642 Cornishmen had been renowned as the greatest wrestlers in the kingdom, and as the war dragged on, propagandists on both sides made increasing use of wrestling imagery when referring to Cornwall and its inhabitants.⁷ This trend may have been initiated by the Royalist journal *Mercurius Aulicus*, which noted in 1643 that Waller's forces had 'lately received a Cornish hugge' at the hands of Hopton's men.⁸ A Cornish hug was a type of wrestling throw – once described as 'a cunning close with . . . [a] fellow combatant, the fruits whereof is his . . . fall' – and from 1643 onwards the term was used by Royalist writers to allude to defeats inflicted on the Roundheads by Cornish soldiers.⁹ Thus when Sir Thomas Fairfax, commander of Parliament's New Model Army, was advancing on Cornwall in 1645, a Royalist pamphlet expressed the hope that 'his Excellency of 1645 [i.e. Fairfax]' will find 'that there is as much danger in a Cornish hugge, as was to his Excellency in 1644 [i.e. Essex]'.¹⁰

the contemporary ballad 'Jack the Giant Killer': see I. H. Evans (ed.), *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* (1991 edn.), p.270.

1. Bod. L., Ashm. 1027 (3), *Mercurius Brittanicus*, 10–17 Feb. 1645.

2. E.330 (14). Crabs, like choughs, were notorious scavengers. I owe this point to Todd Gray.

3. E.2 (13).

4. E.49 (32).

5. E.25 (10).

6. E.91 (25).

7. For Cornish wrestling in general, see Halliday, *Carew of Anthony*, pp.150–1.

8. E.69 (18).

9. *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, p.271.

10. Bod., Hope Adds. 1133, *Mercurius Academicus*, 2–7 Mar. 1646.

Parliamentarian writers, understandably, turned this wrestling imagery on its head. In the Roundhead newsbooks, a Cornish hug (or 'hop') became a defeat inflicted *on* the Cornish, rather than a victory obtained *by* them. One account of the battle of Newbury describes how the Parliamentary soldiers, having attacked the King's forces and captured their cannon, 'were no sooner possest of the ordnance (which were a part of those which were lost in Cornwall) but our western sparks, with exceeding great joy, hug'd and kist them and cryed out "Now will wee shew them a Cornish hop"'.¹ The fact that, in the subsequent battle, the King's Cornish soldiers received no quarter is significant. It suggests that, in Parliamentarian hands, the term 'Cornish hug' had become invested with a new and much more sinister meaning: now implying nothing less than the administration of the *coup de grâce* to an individual Cornishman. Such suspicions are confirmed by a report from Plymouth, dated 1645, which nonchalantly describes how a raiding party 'went [out] to ... [the Royalist quarters] and gave eight or ten of them the Cornish hug'.²

That the killing of these men should have been regarded as a fit subject for humour is one more indication of the sheer depth of hatred which the Parliamentarians had now come to feel for the Cornish – and a further cluster of propagandist images helps to explain how this pitiless attitude had come about. It has already been noted that, from the very beginning of the war, occasional references to the religious conservatism of the Cornish people had appeared in the London press; but from 1643 onwards these references were increasingly accompanied by accusations which placed the Cornish still further beyond the religious pale. In March 1643 a report appeared alleging that Cornish soldiers had profaned a church in Devon by using it as 'a jakes', or latrine.³ Thereafter, references to the irreligious and 'prophane Cornish Cavaliers' became commonplace. In March 1644 one pamphleteer lamented 'that the men of Cornwall are very heathens, a corner of ignorants and atheists, drained from the mines'.⁴ This reference to the tin-mines shows how Cornishness, irreligion and tin-mining were all inextricably linked together in Parliamentarian minds.

The events of summer 1644 confirmed the Roundhead opinion of Cornwall as a 'heathen' county, and when *Mercurius Aulicus* (correctly) reported that Essex's men had damaged a church there, one Roundhead propagandist affected not to believe it. 'I... question whether there were any church in that Pagan Principality, or not', blustered the editor of *Mercurius Britannicus*, 'it may very well be questioned, whether they ever had any church or gospell there; if you knew but the carriage and

1. See E.15 (1); and Vicars, *Burning Bush*, p.59.

2. Bod. L., Hope Adds. 1132, *The Weekly Account*, 2–9 Apr. 1645.

3. See E.93 (4).

4. E.35 (24).

demeanour of that wretched blinde generation [you would doubt it]'.¹ He went on to refer to the Cornish as the King's 'westerne pagans', a term which was now coming into general use.² Letters from Plymouth, written at about the same time, spat venom at the 'cursed Cornish' and went on to aver that 'they are as very heathens as the ignorant Welch that know no religion, nor God'.³ Several other writers suggested that it was monarchy, rather than divinity, which was worshipped in Cornwall and that 'the Cornishmen ... know no other God but a King'.⁴

From seeing Cornwall as an intrinsically irreligious place it was only a small step to seeing it as an intrinsically evil one. Cornwall began to be associated with malignant spirits (references to 'Cornish elfe[s]' reminding us of the present-day obsession with 'Cornish piskies'), and even with hell itself: witness the reference of the Roundhead propagandist John Vicars to 'heathenish, I had almost said Hellish, Cornwall'.⁵ The composite picture of Cornwall which the pamphleteers had built up by 1644 was a hellish one indeed; and the constant emphasis which they laid on the tin-miners' Royalism was surely no coincidence.⁶ In the 'Cornish mettal-men' – 'those subterraneous spirits of 'darknesse' who had been 'raysed' (note the significance of this word) from the fiery pits and shafts of the Western Stannaries in order to fight against Parliament's armies – the pamphleteers had found a race of men who could be credibly presented as living demons.⁷

So far, this paper has concentrated on Parliamentary images of the Cornish. But there was an alternative, Royalist, viewpoint as well, and needless to say it was an extremely favourable one: Charles I's supporters repeatedly commented on the remarkable enthusiasm with which the Cornish people had embraced his cause. Such comments became particularly frequent during mid-1644, when the King's army was campaigning in Cornwall. Even before crossing the Tamar in pursuit of Essex, the Royalist soldiers had been told that 'they were now entering a country exceedingly affectionate to his Majesty'.⁸ They were not to be disappointed. As soon as the King marched into Cornwall the able-bodied men who had hidden themselves from Essex came flocking to join him.⁹ Clarendon speaks of 'the general conflux and concurrence of the whole people of Cornwall' to the King.¹⁰ Edward Walker, the King's secretary, was equally impressed. Indeed, he saw the strength of popular

1. See E.13 (10); and for the original comment in *Mercurius Aulicus*, E.13 (9).

2. E.12 (23); see also E.33 (27).

3. E.12 (23).

4. E.12 (16); see also E.12 (23).

5. See E.16 (25); and Vicars, *Burning Bush*, fo.9.

6. See, for example, E.13 (15), E.16 (4), E.18 (7), E.19 (3), and E.128 (11).

7. Bod. L., Wood, 622, *A Full Answer to a Scandalous Pamphlet* (1645).

8. Walker, *Historical Discourses*, p.49.

9. Long, *Diary*, p.49.

10. Clarendon, *History*, iii. 387.

support for the King in Cornwall as unique, commenting that

not till now were we sensible of the great and extraordinary advantage the rebels have over his Majestie's armies throughout the kingdom by intelligence ... which by the loyalty of the [Cornish] people, the rebels here were utterly deprived of, no country in his Majestie's dominions being so universally affected to his Majesty.¹

Richard Symonds, an officer in the King's lifeguard, confirmed Walker's statement, noting that 'divers of the country people came to the King with much joy to tell him of his enemyes, where they lay, and please his worship'.²

Reports like these led Royalist propagandists to paint the Cornish people in the most glowing colours. Two themes in particular – the military prowess of the Cornishmen and their affection for the Crown – were constantly stressed by the King's apologists. *Mercurius Aulicus* frequently praised the fighting qualities of the Cornish, variously describing them as 'brave', 'stout', 'valiant', 'gallant' and 'resolute'.³ '[He] is no Cornishman', *Aulicus* once sniffed disdainfully, after a Royalist officer had behaved in an unsoldierly way.⁴ The theme of loyalty was pushed more strongly still. *Aulicus* extolled the county's inhabitants as 'the most loyall Cornish', while the King himself sent an open letter to the people of Cornwall in 1643, specifically thanking them for their loyalty.⁵ Sir John Berkenhead, editor of *Mercurius Aulicus*, never tired of repeating that it was loyalty to the monarchy which had spurred the Cornish on. In July 1644 he declared that '[the] gallant Cornish ... are all resolved to spend their lives for his Sacred Majestie', and a month later he noted that 'tis impossible to express that heartinesse and welcome which his Majestie's Armie finds in this county of Cornwall'.⁶ Such comments reached their apogee with Berkenhead's claim that 'no Prince in Christendom hath better subjects [than the Cornish]', to which he added the dramatic aside that 'they still value their honour and their consciences above their blood'.⁷ Whether Berkenhead may have overstated the extent to which an abstract loyalty to the Crown was the chief motivating force behind Cornish Royalism is a subject which will be returned to below. What is certain is that, by praising the Cornish people to the skies, Berkenhead goaded the London pamphleteers into excoriating them still further. It is no coincidence that, of all the Roundhead journals, it was *Mercurius Britannicus* – a publication entirely devoted to rebutting *Aulicus* – which was most virulent in its attacks on the Cornish.

1. Walker, *Historical Discourses*, p.50.

2. Long, *Diary*, p.47.

3. See E.104 (21), E.9 (5), E.16 (24), and E.7 (10). See also E.72 (1).

4. E.9 (5).

5. See E.104 (21), E.3 (19), and E.68 (4). The King's declaration is reproduced in Coate, *Cornwall*, p.357.

6. E.6 (25), and E.8 (2).

7. E.8 (2).

The violent hatreds engendered during the first two years of the war helped to ensure that, despite growing unrest in those parts of Cornwall where Parliamentary sentiment had always been strong (St Ives, for example, and the area around Stratton), most of the county's inhabitants remained solidly behind the King – or at least solidly against the Parliament – during 1645.¹ This was in marked contrast to the situation elsewhere in England, where war-weariness and the undisciplined behaviour of the King's troops had steadily reduced the commitment of many naturally Royalist communities.² As late as September 1645 Cornish 'country people' were still prepared to rise up against the Roundhead raiding parties which descended on their coasts. In one such skirmish the Roundhead sailors killed three Cornish women.³ Continued outrages like these doubtless help to explain why, in December 1645, with the King's cause faltering almost everywhere else, the Royalists were still able to count on the support of 2,400 men of the Cornish trained bands as well as 2–3,000 regular Cornish soldiers.⁴ These men were not just unwilling conscripts. In January 1646 a Royalist officer assured a friend that 'at the rendezvous this afternoon the Cornish were very cheerful and expressed much forwardness to fight'.⁵ One may doubt that the Cornish soldiers were 'cheerful' (in the modern sense of the word, at least), but one need not doubt that they were committed. As the King's territory shrank, and as the New Model Army moved inexorably closer to the Tamar, Cornishmen must have been steeling themselves to protect their homes and families from the long-predicted Roundhead revenge.

That Cornwall was eventually subdued without a bloodbath was chiefly thanks to the foresight shown by the Parliamentary leaders. Confident of military victory, their thoughts had by now turned to the need to secure a stable peace. It was clear that this would be impossible to achieve without the grudging consent of the King's Celtic supporters, and Roundhead commanders on the ground were therefore encouraged to adopt a more conciliatory manner. Efforts had already been made to woo the Welsh with kindness during 1644–5, and at the very end of the war this same strategy was applied in the south-west.⁶ As Fairfax's army advanced across Devon during 1646, great care was taken to conciliate the Cornish. Following the capture of Dartmouth each of the Cornish soldiers who had been taken prisoner there was released and given 2s. for his journey home. Cornish prisoners taken at the battle of Torrington

1. For St Ives, see Coate, *Cornwall*, p.194. For the disturbances in north-east Cornwall, see E.266.24 and E.266.27.

2. On this subject generally, see S.C. Osborne, 'Popular Religion, Culture and Politics in the Midlands, 1638–46' (Univ. of Warwick, Ph.D. thesis 1993), p.291 and *passim*.

3. BL, Add MS 35297, fo.82r.

4. For the strength of the Cornish trained bands at this time, see Clarendon, *History*, iv. 113.

5. HMC, *Portland MSS*, vol. i, p.334.

6. For Massey's attempt to win over the Welsh in 1644, see J. R. Phillips, *Memoirs of the Civil War in Wales and the Marches* (2 vols., London, 1874), ii. 211.

received similarly favourable treatment.¹ Meanwhile Fairfax was making careful arrangements to facilitate the regular payment of his troops when they finally entered Cornwall. This, he hoped, would prevent them from plundering the populace, 'whereby the opposition that people might make would, in all likelihood, be taken off'.² Fairfax also ordered his troops to eschew all thoughts of revenge against the Cornish. He was anxious that they might disobey this command, however, and noted in a letter: 'truly, I doubt the souldiers (especially those that were formerly strip't) will hardly overcome a passionate remembrance of the same'.³

The Parliamentary advance into Cornwall finally began in February, the victory at Torrington having cleared the way. Even now, and despite Fairfax's best efforts, Cornish people clearly remained terrified of the invaders and, just as in 1644, a panic-stricken flight of the civilian population took place. The Roundhead chaplain Joshua Sprigg reported that, during the first stage of their march, the Parliamentarians 'had much cause to observe the people's frights, [they] quitting their habitations in fear of the army, the enemy [having made them believe] that no Cornish was to have quarter at our hands'.⁴ The same line was taken by John Vicars, who claimed that the Cornish 'were made believe by the enemy that the Army would give no quarter to any Cornish man or woman, which they did for the most part believe'.⁵ All the blame for the atmosphere of terror was laid at the door of the Royalists. One would never guess from these accounts that Cornish fears of vengeance had initially been aroused by the bloody threats, and actions, of the Parliamentarians themselves.

Once his forces were firmly established in Cornwall, Fairfax set about allaying the people's fears. Cornish soldiers captured at Launceston were released and sent home, just as their comrades at Dartmouth had been. Parliamentary sources noted that 'the townspeople of Launceston were much affected with such merciful usage', and it is clear that, as the peaceable demeanour of Fairfax's troops became obvious, local fears subsided.⁶ By 5 March relieved Parliamentary writers were able to report that 'the Cornishmen ... generally relinquish the busines, will fight noe longer, begin to confess how they have bin deluded'.⁷ Ten days later the King's forces in Cornwall surrendered, effectively bringing the war in the south-west to an end. Throughout this period Cornish people continued to assert that they had been 'misled'. The Roundhead preacher Hugh Peters – who was himself a Cornishman and conducted

1. P. Q. Karkeek, 'Fairfax in the West, 1645–46', *Transactions of the Devonshire Association*, viii (1976), 137, 140.

2. *Ibid.*, 133.

3. *Ibid.*, 140.

4. J. Sprigg, *Anglia Rediviva: England's Recovery*, (Oxford, 1854 edn.), p.208.

5. Vicars, *Burning Bush*, p.375; see also p.379.

6. Sprigg, *Anglia Rediviva*, p.208.

7. Derby Record Office, Gell Papers, 1232 m/o, 65. I owe this reference to Todd Gray.

several open-air meetings at this time in order to convince his fellow countrymen of the error of their ways – noted that ‘many of them confessed that they were deceived by ill reports brought of the Parliament and the cruelties of this army’.¹ There was doubtless some truth in this claim, but it also served as a convenient excuse.

Cornish Royalism was not founded on deception and delusion alone, and many other factors had contributed to the strength of Royalist feeling in the county. Crucially important had been religious conservatism. Joseph Jane – a local gentleman, who later wrote a brief account of the county’s history during the Civil War – considered that it was ‘zele for the establishit liturgie’, which had chiefly ‘stirred upp’ the Cornish people in support of the King.² Hugh Peters agreed, laying great stress on the contribution of ‘their lude and ungodly ministers [who] ... councelled and exampled them to the greatest part of their misery’.³ The activities of local Royalist gentlemen had also been important, although their influence upon the common people should not be exaggerated.⁴ In addition the Cornish had been greatly flattered ‘by the King’s and Prince’s personall appearance among them; and by their promises ... honouring them’, while (in contrast to the Roundheads) the King’s forces had generally treated Cornish civilians well.⁵ Religion, deference, propaganda, experience: these are all common explanations for popular allegiance during the Civil War; but important as they undoubtedly were, they are not enough in themselves to explain the unique intensity of popular hostility towards the Parliament in Cornwall. To understand fully this hostility, we must conclude by examining the Cornish self-image.

The aim of this paper has been to show that the Cornish were regarded as *different* at the time of the Civil War. What has not yet been made sufficiently clear, perhaps, is that this difference was perceived in specifically national, even racial, terms. The English saw the Cornish as foreigners: witness the words of a Devon Royalist who was later alleged to have been ‘an incorriger of the King’s partie comming out of Cornwall, saying that, though God had brought his people low, yet ... rather than his people should fall he would bringe forraigne Nations for their ayde’.⁶ It is probably no coincidence that the early campaigns between the Parliamentarians in Devon and the Royalists in Cornwall were described, to a much greater degree than those fought elsewhere in England, in terms of ‘invasions’ and ‘frontiers’.⁷ Parliamentary appeals to the inhabitants of one English county (Devon) to oppose those of

1. Karkeek, ‘Fairfax in the West’, 144.

2. A. C. Miller, ‘Joseph Jane’s Account of Cornwall during the Civil War’, *ante* xc (1975), 98.

3. Karkeek, ‘Fairfax in the West’, 145.

4. See Stoye, *Loyalty and Locality*, ch. 7, *passim*.

5. See Karkeek, ‘Fairfax in the West’, 144; and Walker, *Historical Discourses*, p.49.

6. Bod. L., J. Walker MS, IV, fo.156.

7. See, for example, HMC, *Portland MSS*, vol. i, p.100; E.101 (6); and E.240 (45).

another (Cornwall) in February 1643 were unusual, and again hint at the conceptual framework of a war waged between two nations.¹ The fact that thousands of irregular Devon 'Clubmen' did eventually turn out against the Royalists suggests that this perception of the Cornish as foreigners was shared at the popular level and was not just a propagandist invention. (For many years before 1642, Englishmen had been specifically enjoined to rise with clubs in the event of foreign invasion, an interesting point in view of the fact that so many of the Clubman risings of the Civil War were sparked off by the depredations of foreign troops.)² Further evidence of the extent to which the Cornish were regarded as foreigners is provided by the frequency with which pamphleteers spoke of them in the same breath as the French, the Irish and the Welsh – and by the fact that Cornish prisoners, like other 'alien' captives, were sometimes slain out of hand.³

If the English saw the Cornish as foreigners, is it not likely that the Cornish reciprocated this feeling? The county's inhabitants certainly possessed a strong sense of identity at this time. Throughout the Civil War, Cornish soldiers constantly feuded with Royalist units drawn from other parts of the country. Hopton's Cornish infantry 'many times let fly' at Prince Maurice's cavalry in 1643, while disputes with the King's foreign troops were even more common.⁴ According to Parliamentary sources, the Cornish were unwilling to allow the 'beastly, bugging' Frenchmen of the Queen's Guard to enter their county in mid-1644, and earlier that same year the Dorset town of Beaminster was burnt to the ground 'by reason of a falling out between the French and the Cornish'.⁵ The Cornish reserved a particular hatred for the Irish, and in 1643 a Parliamentary newsbook reported 'great contention' between the Cornish and Irish regiments in Hopton's Army; 'the English-Irish forces upbraiding the Cornish with the title of Cornish Choughes . . . the Cornish againe calling them Irish Kernes'. If this source is to be credited, the dispute eventually resulted in several deaths, prompting 500 of the Cornish to 'withdr[a]w themselves and . . . [return] to their native county'.⁶ English Royalists quarrelled with foreign elements in the King's army as well, of course, but the Cornish were especially prone to do so. A quite unusual degree of antipathy towards outsiders of all sorts clearly existed in this one small corner of the kingdom.

Just how strong this Cornish sense of identity was is suggested by the fact that, unlike Royalist soldiers raised elsewhere in England, the King's

1. See E.99 (15).

2. The inhabitants of Plymouth, for example, were instructed to keep clubs ready 'for times of strife' during the sixteenth century: see R. N. Worth (ed.), *Calendar of the Plymouth Municipal Records* (Plymouth, 1893), p.55.

3. See, for example, E.12 (15), and E.16 (14). I hope to explore Parliamentarian depictions of the Welsh in a future paper.

4. Young and Tucker, *Military Memoirs*, p.12.

5. See E.2 (19), E.2 (11), E.2 (13), E.2 (15), E.2 (16), and Sprigg, *Anglia Rediviva*, p.66.

6. E.79 (17).

Cornish soldiers tended to serve in exclusively Cornish regiments, under the command of their own officers.¹ The more one examines the evidence, in fact, the more forcefully one is struck by the impression that the Cornish were fighting as a people, rather than simply as supporters of Charles I. It is intriguing to note that – despite *Aulicus*'s boasts about the supreme loyalty of the Cornish – hints occasionally appeared that the Royalists suspected them of possessing their own agenda. In November 1644, for example, Sir Samuel Luke informed the Earl of Essex that the Cavaliers at Oxford 'exclaim against Cornwall as much as your forces do, and it is believed that now the King has armed them they will suffer neither his Majesty's nor his Excellency's forces to come amongst them'.² This suspicion that the county's inhabitants meant to use their support for the King as a stepping-stone towards their own independence was aroused again in 1645, when the Cornish commander Richard Grenville proposed that the Prince of Wales, then titular commander of the King's forces in West Devon and Cornwall, should seek a separate peace with Parliament, effectively establishing Cornwall as an autonomous state.³

Were the Cornishmen fighting chiefly in defence of their own country and their own identity? Such a theory would certainly help to explain why Cornwall acted so completely differently from the rest of southern England in 1642, and why the county's inhabitants later showed such intense commitment to the Royalist cause. It would also help to explain why support for the posse in October 1642 was strongest in the far west of Cornwall. It was in this district that the old Cornish culture and language lingered on, and that a secret hostility against the English continued to fester. Richard Carew observed that 'these western people do yet ... retain ... a fresh memory of their expulsion long ago by the English ... bitter[ly] repining at their fellowship ... and this the worst sort express in combining against [them] and working them all the shrewd turns which ... they can devise'.⁴ The 'insurrection' of October 1642 (and, indeed, the earlier Tudor rebellions of 1549 and 1499) were surely encouraged by this vague, inchoate, yet still very powerful, desire to 'work the English a turn' and strike a blow in defence of the old Cornish culture.⁵

1. See P. R. Newman, 'The 1663 List of Indigent Royalist Officers Considered as a Primary Source for the Study of the Royalist Army', *Historical Journal*, xxx (1987), 895.

2. Tibbutt, *Letter Books of Samuel Luke*, p.71.

3. For Grenville's original proposal, see T. Carte, *A Collection of Letters and Papers Concerning the Affairs of England* (London, 1739), pp.102–6. For discussion, see Coate, *Cornwall*, pp.196–7; and A. C. Miller, *Sir Richard Grenville of the Civil War* (London, 1979), pp.128–30. As Coate observes, Grenville's scheme was 'rooted in the particularism of a Cornishman'. I am currently writing a paper on this intriguing episode.

4. Halliday, *Carew of Anthony*, p.139.

5. For a presentation of the rebellions of 1497 and 1549 in just this light, see P. Payton, *The Making of Modern Cornwall* (Truro, 1992), pp.58–60. I am grateful to Jonathan Barry for drawing this important work to my attention.

Why should this ancient antagonism towards the English eventually have been converted into support for the King, rather than for Parliament? Religion was probably the vital factor here. In Scotland and Ireland attachment to non-Anglican faiths was, at least in part, an expression of national independence, of resistance to the military, political and cultural hegemony of England. When these faiths were perceived to be under serious threat, as in Scotland in 1637 and Ireland in 1641, religious and racial tensions combined together to form a Molotov cocktail of hate. It seems probable that in Cornwall, too, a particular brand of religious faith – in this case conservative 'anglicanism' – was seen as an integral part of national identity, and that, when this faith was threatened by Parliament, racial anxieties combined with religious ones to ensure that the bulk of the population fell in behind the King. Allied to this was the fact that the two secular institutions which most clearly served to set Cornwall apart from the rest of England – the Stannaries and the Duchy of Cornwall – were also inextricably linked to the Crown.¹ If, as seemed all too likely, Parliamentary attacks on the King led to the abolition of these institutions, then the Cornish people would lose two more of the planks on which their cherished sense of identity was built. (They would also, of course, lose the very considerable economic benefits which sprang from those institutions.²) More generally, it is easy to see why a people who felt that their ancient identity was under threat should have rallied to a monarchy which was closely associated with 'the old wayes'.³ It is tempting to conclude that particularist sentiment in Cornwall attached itself to the King, rather than to Parliament, because, while Charles I was seen as the King of Great Britain, the defender of the rights and privileges of all his subject peoples, the Parliamentarians were identified with a narrowly English interest.⁴ Obviously, one should not take such conjecture too far, and hard evidence about the underlying motivation of the Cornish peasantry is almost impossible to find. Nevertheless Hugh Peter's comment that in 1646 there was 'a common muttering among [the Cornish] that their country was never conquered' is intriguing, and again suggests that many of the county's inhabitants saw the Civil War as a fight between England and Cornwall as much as a conflict between King and Parliament.⁵

There is, moreover, a postscript to this story. In May 1648, just two years after Cornwall had finally been subdued by the New Model Army, yet another 'insurrection' broke out in the county. Once again it took place in the far west of Cornwall, and once again it was in support

1. The importance of these institutions in affording 'a certain aura (and indeed reality) of territorial semi-independence' is noted *ibid.*, p. 56.

2. See Stoyke, *Loyalty and Locality*, pp. 157–8.

3. For the popular association of the Royalist cause with the 'old wayes', see E.7 (30).

4. I owe this point to George Bernard.

5. Karkeek, 'Fairfax in the West', 144.

of the King. On 25 May a Parliamentarian gentleman wrote to a friend from Launceston, telling him that he had lately been informed of 'some sturrings about Penzance and those western heathen partes', adding: 'the spirit it seemes of malignancy is so prevalent with them, yt it will not suffer their disaffected spiritts to be at quiet, although their sturring is irrational and tend[s only] to their owne confusion'.¹ This sentence is fascinating, not only because it reiterates the view of West Cornwall as intrinsically 'heathen' and Royalist, but also because it shows that the precise motivation of those Cornish commoners who rose in support of the King continued to baffle their Parliamentary enemies long after the Civil War had come to an end. Were the 'irrational' motives of which this English-speaking gentleman so testily complained connected to the desire of Cornish-speaking commoners to defend what was left of their own culture?² And did this same desire contribute, not only to the county's original declaration for the King in 1642, but also to the frequency of rebellions in Cornwall throughout the early modern period?

The answer, in both cases, is surely yes. Many of the participants in the 1648 rising came from St Keverne in the extreme south-west of Cornwall, a parish which had a long history of rebelliousness. It was here that the insurrection of 1497 had broken out, here that attempts had been made to initiate another rising in 1537, and here that many of those who participated in the 'Cornish Commotion' of 1548 had lived.³ The fact that St Keverne was also a stronghold of the Cornish language, and was, indeed, one of the last few parishes in which Cornish was spoken after 1700 seems unlikely to be mere coincidence.⁴ If it was the presence of the tin-miners which provided the physical potential for rebellion in south-west England during the early modern period, it was surely the sense of a culture under threat, of embattled Cornishness, which provided the emotional charge. Like the Tudor rebels before them, Charles I's Cornish soldiers were fighting, at least in part, to defend the privileges and peculiarities which helped to set Cornwall apart from the rest of England: rather than pagans or paragons, they might better be described as patriots.

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1. Buller, *Buller Papers*, p.103.

2. The fact that the gentry of Cornwall had become almost entirely 'anglicized' during the late medieval period, while many of the common people had not, is of crucial significance. I would argue that it is this social divergence which explains why the picture of Cornwall presented in Duffin, 'Political Allegiance of the Cornish Gentry', contrasts so markedly with that which is presented above. Examined through the eyes of the local gentry, Cornwall appears as just another English county; examined through the eyes of the common people, it becomes something rather different. The two views complement, rather than contradict each other, therefore. Dr Duffin's thesis is shortly to be published, and will make a major contribution to Cornish studies.

3. For 1497, see Rowse, *Tudor Cornwall*, p.121. For 1537 and 1548, see R. Whiting, *The Blind Devotion of the People: Popular Religion and the English Reformation* (Cambridge, 1991), pp.71, 76.

4. See M. F. Wakelin, *Language and History in Cornwall* (Leicester, 1975), p.93.