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978-1-107-01645-3 - The Papers of the Hothams, Governors of Hull

During the Civil War: Camder Fifth Series: Volume 39

Edited by Andrew Hopper

Excerpt

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INTRODUCTION

This volume publishes the papers and correspondence of the Hotham family during the civil wars and interregnum. The head of the family and first baronet, Sir John Hotham, is well known in the national narrative because of his critical role in denying the king entry to Hull on 23 April 1642. This episode ignited much contemporary controversy, raising the stakes in a pamphlet war between the king and his parliamentary opponents, and making armed conflict far more likely. It has attracted considerable attention from constitutional historians who have debated its legal ramifications, while political and military historians have recognized that the king's failure to seize the large arms magazine at Hull badly undermined the royalist war effort. Yet, despite their national importance in 1642, the Hotham family's papers have only rarely been utilized by academics. Late twentieth-century historians such as J.T. Cliffe, Barbara English, and Peter Roebuck drew upon the collection to inform their work on the wider theme of Yorkshire gentry landowners,¹ but few others have been to Hull to access the archive. This also reflects a relative neglect of northern England in civil war historiography. There has been no biography of either of the Hothams, and their most recent family histories date from as long ago as the First World War.² This is unfortunate, because Sir John Hotham and his eldest son were extremely colourful and enigmatic figures, whose letters reveal much about the cultural attitudes of the English gentry in the 1640s.

This volume seeks to redress this imbalance and restore the centrality of the Hotham family to the parliamentary cause. Reuniting the Hotham archive with surviving letters in other collections will deliver a comprehensive edition, making their papers fully accessible for the first time. The papers constitute an outstanding primary source for the build-up to war and the allegiance dilemmas faced

¹J.T. Cliffe, *The Yorkshire Gentry from the Reformation to the Civil War* (London, 1969); B. English, *The Great Landowners of East Yorkshire, 1530–1910* (Hemel Hempstead, 1990); P. Roebuck, *Yorkshire Baronets 1640–1760: families, estates and fortunes* (Oxford, 1980), pp. 62–69.

²P. Saltmarsh, *History and Chartulary of the Hothams of Scarborough in the East Riding of Yorkshire, 1100–1700* (York, 1914); A.M.W. Stirling, *The Hothams: being the chronicles of the Hothams of Scarborough and South Dalton from their hitherto unpublished family papers*, 2 vols (London, 1918).

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by Yorkshire's inhabitants before the king raised his standard at Nottingham on 22 August 1642. They detail the war's conduct in the north, illuminating the government of Hull and the parliamentary administration of the East Riding. At the same time, they are useful for historians of allegiance because they richly demonstrate the family feud with the Fairfaxes of Denton, and an increasing dissatisfaction with the parliamentary cause.³

The present work includes transcriptions of all of the papers in the DDHO/1 classification of the Hotham family archives. These are supplemented with letters written by or to the Hothams that are now held in other archives, principally the British Library, the Bodleian Library, and the Hull city records. Most of the letters written by Sir John Hotham were penned in Hull and sought to protect the town and his estates to the north of it, either by pleading for reinforcements, pay, and supply from his Westminster contacts, or through clandestine negotiations with the enemy general, the earl of Newcastle, to spare the East Riding from a royalist occupation. His correspondents included William Lenthall, Speaker of the House of Commons, and such prominent MPs as John Pym and John Hampden. The other papers written by Sir John were connected to his trial in December 1644 for attempting to betray Hull to the royalists. He penned several drafts of a defence, interrogatories for the witnesses, and a general autobiographical account of his governorship of Hull.⁴ These papers were retrospective, written during his imprisonment in the Tower of London. Their purpose was to save his life and their audience encompassed Sir William Waller and the members of the court martial who were judging him, as well as other members of parliament to whom Sir John might appeal.

The letters by Sir John Hotham's eldest son, John Hotham, were written from his military headquarters in Cawood and Beverley, and during his campaigning in Durham, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, and the North Riding of Yorkshire. The majority of them were addressed to the earl of Newcastle and they constitute a nationally important source for the English gentry's politics of honour. These will prove of wider interest to literary scholars and cultural historians because they utilized a language of honour to court Newcastle's affections. They raised the prospect that the Hotham family would change sides as soon as they could do so without betraying their trust

³A. Hopper, 'The self-fashioning of gentry turncoats during the English civil wars', *Journal of British Studies*, 49 (2010), pp. 236–257; *idem*, "'Fitted for desperation": honour and treachery in parliament's Yorkshire command, 1642–1643', *History*, 86 (2001), pp. 138–154; *idem*, 'Black Tom': *Sir Thomas Fairfax and the English Revolution* (Manchester, 2007), pp. 61, 163–165, 240.

⁴HHC: Hotham MS, U DDHO/1/31–46.

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or impugning their reputations. There are several further letters and papers penned by Sir John's fifth son, Durand Hotham, who defended him during his trial, and his grandson John Hotham, his successor as second baronet. These were largely concerned with preserving the family estates after the executions of John and Sir John Hotham on 1 and 2 January 1645 respectively.

The Hotham family

As one of the leading county families in the East Riding of Yorkshire, the Hothams were a natural choice to head the parliamentary war effort in the region, and their careers are ably summarized by David Scott's entries in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Sir John Hotham was born in 1589, the son of John Hotham of Scarborough, esq. and Jane, the daughter of Richard Legard of Rysome. During the 1580s John Hotham had served as high sheriff of Yorkshire and MP for Scarborough and Hedon. In 1609 Sir John succeeded to his father's large estates and he was knighted on 11 April 1617. He gained brief military experience serving under Count Ernst von Mansfeldt in the Rhineland in 1619 and may have served at the Battle of the White Mountain in 1620. By 1621 he had returned to Yorkshire, where he was quickly appointed a justice of the peace, and he purchased a baronetcy in 1622. He soon became a patriarch, fathering many children, including his eldest son, John Hotham, the parliamentary lieutenant-general, born in 1610.⁵

Sir John and his eldest son had married eight times between them before the outbreak of civil war. They may have enlarged the family estates through these marriage settlements to embrace a swathe of land across the Yorkshire Wolds stretching from Beverley to Driffeld. Like most East Riding gentry, their wealth was rooted in agricultural rents. The gross annual rental of Sir John's estates on the eve of war reached an impressive £3,000, making him one of the richest men in Yorkshire. It included land in Allerston, Beswick, Fylingdales, Hutton Cranswick, Howsham, Lockington, Scarborough, Pickering, Risam, and Wilton.⁶ Their virile loins, large family, and numerous offspring placed the two men at the head of a remarkably wide kinship network of northern parliamentary gentry (see Figure 1), and their early activism for parliament influenced many of these gentry into falling in behind them. Sir John's administrative experience was vast. He

⁵D. Scott, 'Sir John Hotham (1589–1645)' and 'John Hotham (1610–1645)', *ODNB*; Stirling, *The Hothams*, I, pp. 25–26.

⁶Roeback, *Yorkshire Baronets*, p. 64; English, *Great Landowners*, p. 102.

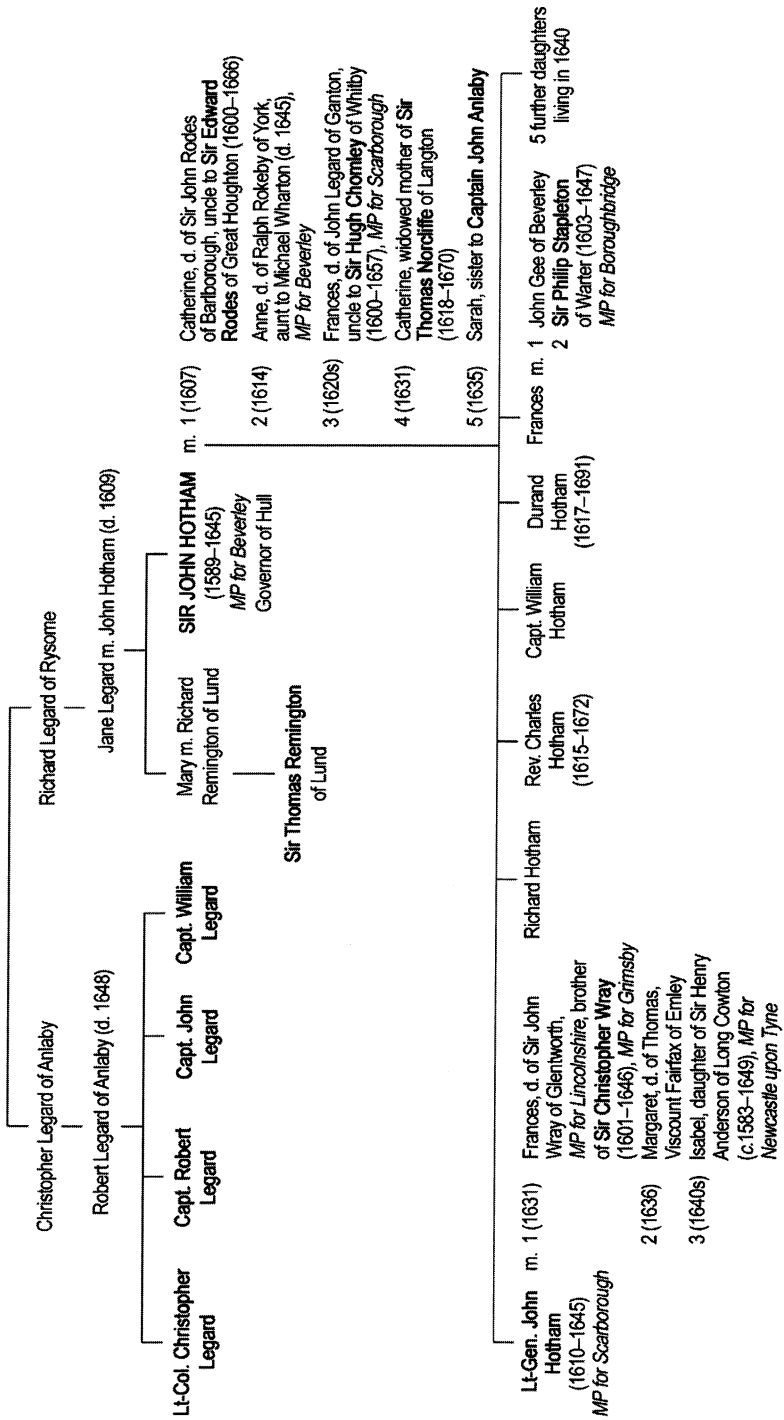


Fig. 1 The kinship network of the Hotham family, 1642-1643. Names in bold denote parliamentary officers.

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had served as MP for Beverley since 1625, and was governor of Hull during Charles I's wars in 1628. He was added to the North Riding bench in 1631,⁷ and was high sheriff of Yorkshire in 1635, proving an energetic collector of ship money. He was colonel of a regiment of East Riding trained bands during the First Bishops' War in 1639.⁸ He was also governor of Hull that year, but was personally affronted when the king entrusted the Hull magazine to Captain William Legge.⁹

Despite his support for the Caroline regime in the 1630s, Sir John Hotham had also crafted a reputation for himself as a champion of 'country' liberties. He was removed from the commission of the peace and imprisoned for refusing to pay the forced loan in 1627. He grew irritated by the king's increasing demands upon Yorkshire to raise, billet, and pay for the royal forces during the Bishops' Wars. By 1640 his opposition was vocal. Alongside Sir Hugh Cholmley, he led opposition to ship money in the East Riding. His speeches as MP for Beverley during the Short Parliament of April 1640 attracted the censure of the Privy Council and he was ejected from all his commissions and briefly imprisoned in the Fleet from 8 to 15 May.¹⁰ During the Second Bishops' War that summer, he solicited petitions concerning Yorkshire grievances, provoking the king to warn that if Hotham did not desist he would hang him.¹¹

Sir John remained MP for Beverley during the Long Parliament and became one of its most active members. David Scott has shown that he was named to over 100 committees between November 1640 and March 1642, often allying himself with John Pym and other leading opponents of the king.¹² During 1641 he participated in the dismantling of the Council of the North and other instruments of royal prerogative power, easing the burden on his locality when the royal army was finally disbanded and Hull's garrison and governor were discharged.¹³ Despite his identification with opposition politics, several contemporaries noted his distaste for puritans. Sir Henry Slingsby commented that Hotham 'was manly for the defence of liberty of the subject and privilege of Parliament, but was not at all

⁷J. Broadway, R. Cust, and S.K. Roberts (eds), *A Calendar of the Docquets of Lord Keeper Coventry, 1625-1640*, List and Index Society, special series, 34 (2004), p. 65.

⁸*CSPD, 1638-1639*, p. 310.

⁹D. Scott, "'Hannibal at our gates': loyalists and fifth-columnists during the Bishops' Wars - the case of Yorkshire', *Historical Research*, 70 (1997), p. 280.

¹⁰Saltmarshe, *History and Chartulary of the Hothams*, p. 113.

¹¹Scott, "'Hannibal at our gates'", pp. 277-281; J. Binns (ed.), *The Memoirs and Memorials of Sir Hugh Cholmley of Whithy 1600-1657*, YASRS, 153 (2000), pp. 102, 125n.

¹²Scott, 'Sir John Hotham'.

¹³The governor in 1640-1641 was Sir Thomas Glemham: Stirling, *The Hothams*, I, p. 38.

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for their new opinions in Church government'.¹⁴ Sir Hugh Cholmley noted Hotham's antipathy to puritan ministers and even Clarendon conceded that Hotham was 'not disturbed by any fancies in religion'.¹⁵ Although he was no friend to the Godly, his virulent anti-Catholicism and hatred of the earl of Strafford could be counted upon by the opposition grandees. He gave evidence against Strafford and on 19 July 1641 supported a parliamentary proposal to geld priests and Jesuits.¹⁶

In addition to the context of Sir John's pre-war political activities, a familiarity with contemporary notions of honour is essential to a thorough understanding of the Hotham papers. By 1642, an increasing variety of notions of honour influenced gentry behaviour. Older, traditional conceptions stressed ancient lineage, blood, pedigree, outward display, and hunting. These ideas persisted alongside a more recent tradition that emphasized virtue, education, sobriety, restraint, magistracy, godliness, and public service.¹⁷ Yet these traditions were not mutually exclusive and were often blended or appropriated for different purposes and audiences. Richard Cust has recently contended that, by the 1620s, Renaissance humanism, classical republicanism, and English Calvinism had melded to generate an image of the virtuous, incorruptible 'public man'. Drawing upon the writings of the Stoics, such as Plutarch, Seneca, and Cicero, this political culture stressed virtue and constancy, remaining steadfast to one's principles and conscience, as paramount determinants of nobility. In theory, the gentry were supposed to refrain from private interests and to prioritize their duty to serve the public.¹⁸

The Hotham letters suggest that by 1642 both father and son had dabbled in this fashion for neo-Stoic ideas. Their self-fashioning espoused restraint, duty, and constancy, but they could not eschew the traditional stress on blood, pedigree, and lineage. This is no surprise, because the Hothams boasted an unbroken lineage of direct succession from father to son stretching back to the twelfth century.

¹⁴D. Parsons (ed.), *The Diary of Sir Henry Slingsby of Scriven, Bart* (London, 1836), p. 92.

¹⁵Binns, *The Memoirs and Memorials of Sir Hugh Cholmley*, pp. 128–129; W.D. Macray (ed.), *The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England Begun in the Year 1641 by Edward, Earl of Clarendon*, 6 vols (Oxford, 1888), III, 526.

¹⁶C. Russell, *The Fall of the British Monarchies, 1637–1642* (Oxford, 1991), p. 340.

¹⁷R. Cust, 'Honour and politics in early Stuart England: the case of Beaumont v. Hastings', *Past & Present*, 149 (1995), pp. 60, 91; M. James, *English Politics and the Concept of Honour, 1485–1642*, *Past & Present* supplement, 3 (1978), p. 92.

¹⁸R. Cust, 'The "public man" in late Tudor and early Stuart England', in P. Lake and S. Pincus (eds), *The Politics of the Public Sphere in Early Modern England* (Manchester, 2007), pp. 119, 126, 129.

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Such continuity of lineage was held to prove a family's virtue, as longer, purer pedigrees concentrated levels of noble blood.¹⁹ In part because of this, they were notoriously sensitive to perceived slights. When Sir John Hotham took offence to a change in the order of precedence of justices at the East Riding quarter sessions, he retired to write a hostile account of proceedings.²⁰ The earl of Strafford had cautioned the king against upsetting Sir John, considering him 'extreme sensible of honour, and discourtesies perhaps a little overmuch', while in 1642 the parliamentary leaders John Pym and John Hampden had to send placatory letters reassuring Sir John that his reputation remained unquestioned.²¹ This temperament led Sir Hugh Cholmley to comment that, in later life, Sir John became 'so much wedded to his own humour, as his passion often overbalanced his judgment'.²² This trait, so evident in the letters, did much to bring about his death. On the scaffold he was required to orate that for 'rash words, anger and such things, no man has been more guilty'.²³

Hull and the East Riding in 1642

The East Riding was an overwhelmingly agricultural county. Anthony Fletcher characterized it as a 'basically centralized county', comparable to Essex.²⁴ With a population of up to 80,000 it was the smallest and least populated of Yorkshire's three Ridings.²⁵ It consisted of three geographical regions: the low-lying, fertile plains of Holderness east of the river Hull, the rich sheep pastures of the Yorkshire Wolds in the centre, and a lowland area of no predominant character to the west, bounded by the Ouse and Derwent rivers, the Howden marshes, and the limestone hills north-east of York.²⁶ The burden of taxation to maintain the Hothams' network of garrisons

¹⁹R. Cust, 'Catholicism, antiquarianism and gentry honour: the writings of Sir Thomas Shirley', *Midland History*, 23 (1998), p. 49; Stirling, *The Hothams*, I, p. 21.

²⁰F. Heal and C. Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales, 1500–1700* (Basingstoke, 1994), p. 171.

²¹Saltmarsh, *History and Chartulary of the Hothams*, p. 112; HHC: Hotham MS, U DDHO/1/8.

²²Binns, *The Memoirs and Memorials of Sir Hugh Cholmley*, p. 131.

²³Stirling, *The Hothams*, I, pp. 96–97.

²⁴A. Fletcher, *Reform in the Provinces: the government of Stuart England* (New Haven, 1986), p. 100.

²⁵The North Riding numbered 120,000 and the West Riding 220,000: J.D. Purdy, *Yorkshire Hearth Tax Returns*, Studies in Regional and Local History, 7 (University of Hull, 1991), pp. 50, 69, 95, 123. Barbara English advanced the more conservative estimate of 53,000 as the population of the East Riding in 1600: English, *Great Landowners*, p. 3.

²⁶English, *Great Landowners*, pp. 2–3.

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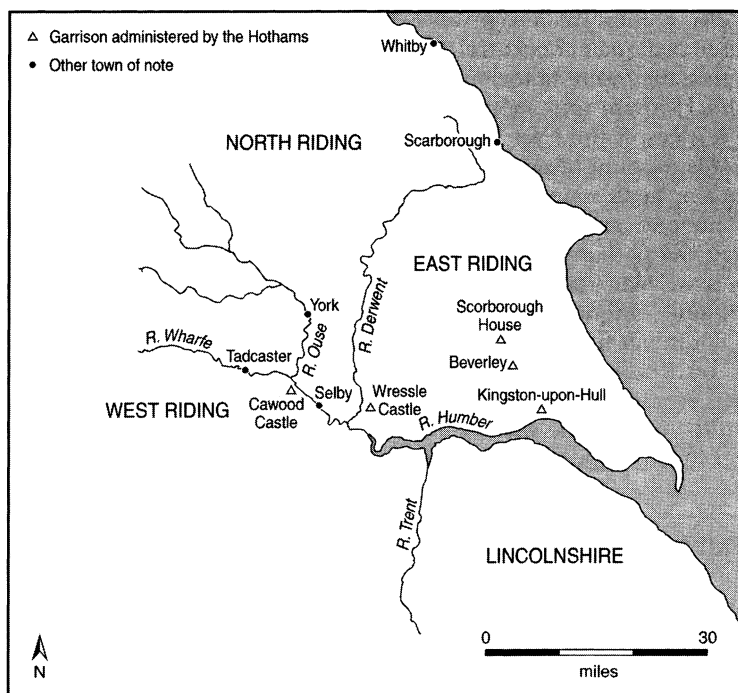
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Map 1. The garrisons administered by the Hothams, 1642–1643.

fell most heavily upon Holderness and the Wolds. The wapentake of Holderness was separated into three divisions – north, middle, and south – while the Wolds were encompassed within the wapentake of Harthill, which was separated into four divisions: Holme Beacon, Hunsley Beacon, Bainton Beacon, and Wilton Beacon.²⁷ Each of these divisions in Holderness and Harthill was headed by a high constable responsible to the high sheriff for collection of ship money and to the deputy lieutenants for mustering the trained bands. Sir John Hotham had experience in dealing with such office-holders in both of these capacities, and the survey of all the foot arms in the East Riding was taken before him in 1636.²⁸

²⁷G.C.F. Forster, *The East Riding Justices of the Peace in the Seventeenth Century*, East Yorkshire Local History Society, 30 (1973), pp. 9–10.

²⁸ERRO: DDRI 2,960, fo. 73.

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Beverley, with its soaring minster and brick gatehouses, was the East Riding county town, with a population of just three thousand.²⁹ Its tiny electorate of twenty-six facilitated Sir John's long incumbency as one of Beverley's two MPs.³⁰ Although the Quarter Sessions occasionally still met at Pocklington, by the mid-seventeenth century the court usually met in the sessions' chamber in Beverley's Hallgarth.³¹ No wall protected Beverley, but the medieval town ditch was broadened in 1642, with footbridges installed at the end of each lane into Westwood.³² In October 1642 the corporation ordered the bars to be repaired, as well as locked and guarded each night.³³ Despite lacking fortifications, Beverley was important to the Hothams as a place to quarter their soldiers. It also played a critical role as a fund-raising centre, as discussed in Appendix II.

Six miles southward lay the independent borough of Kingston-upon-Hull, a separate county in its own right. Its population had reached seven thousand, making its size second only to York in all Yorkshire.³⁴ The extensive river networks of the Trent and Ouse formed a lucrative hinterland and facilitated the export of cloth from the West Riding through Hull into continental Europe.³⁵ The inhabitants took civic pride in Hull's walls, their municipal liberties, and the achievements of the corporation.³⁶ As a consequence of the Bishops' Wars, Hull was arguably the strongest fortress town in England. Its natural defensive situation at the confluence of the rivers Humber and Hull was enhanced by the possibility of exploiting the high Humber tides to flood besieging forces. Hull's medieval walls were protected by twenty-five towers and modern fortifications that included an outer ditch, the 'Bush Dyke', along with angled bastions, blockhouses, earthworks, forts, and half moons that were rare for England in 1642. A drawbridge had recently been constructed outside the Beverley Gate. Across the river Hull, the town's eastern side was protected by the castle, linked on either side to two blockhouses by a

²⁹Purdy, *Yorkshire Hearth Tax Returns*, p. 129.

³⁰J. Binns, *Yorkshire in the Civil Wars: origins, impact and outcome* (Pickering, North Yorks, 2004), p. 2.

³¹Forster, *The East Riding Justices of the Peace*, p. 30.

³²K.J. Allison (ed.), *The Victoria History of the County of York, East Riding. Vol. VI: the borough and liberties of Beverley* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 178–179.

³³ERRO, BC II 7/4/1: Beverley Minute Book 1597–1660, fo. 74v.

³⁴Purdy, *Yorkshire Hearth Tax Returns*, p. 129.

³⁵R. Davis, *The Trade and Shipping of Hull, 1500–1700*, East Yorkshire Local History Society, 17 (1964), p. 23.

³⁶C. Cross, *Urban Magistrates and Ministers: religion in Hull and Leeds from the Reformation to the civil war*, University of York: Borthwick Papers, 67 (1985), p. 2.

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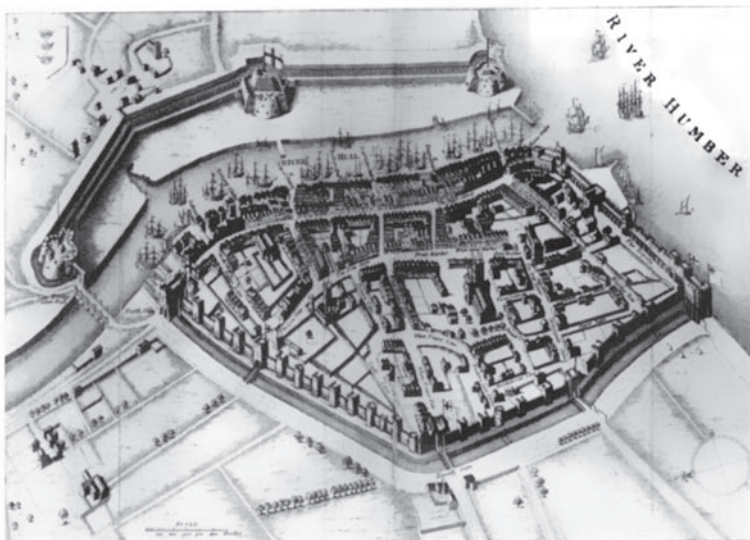


Fig. 2 Wenceslaus Hollar, engraving of Hull, 1640.

massive wall that was twenty-four feet high and fifteen feet thick.³⁷ The town could be supplied and reinforced by sea, while the crews and artillery of naval vessels could contribute to its defence. Furthermore, Hull housed England's second largest magazine, with arms for 20,000 men, 7,000 barrels of powder, and 120 pieces of artillery. Plans were originally formulated in February 1642 to send this magazine to equip government forces against the rebels in Ireland, but both parliament and king soon sought to acquire it for their forces in England.³⁸

In contrast to the divided situation in the rest of Yorkshire, the MPs in the south of the East Riding all sided with parliament. Hull returned two MPs to Westminster, as did the East Riding boroughs of Beverley and Hedon. Sir John Hotham and Michael Wharton sat for Beverley, Sir Philip Stapleton and John Alured for the small town of Hedon, and Sir Henry Vane the younger and Peregrine Pelham

³⁷A. Howes and M. Foreman, *Town and Gun: the 17th-century defences of Hull* (Hull, 1999), pp. 23–26; Binns, *Yorkshire in the Civil Wars*, p. 27.

³⁸A. Fletcher, *The Outbreak of the English Civil War* (London, 1981), p. 185; R. Armstrong, 'The Long Parliament goes to war: the Irish campaigns, 1641–3', *Historical Research*, 80 (2007), pp. 88, 90.