

# 'A chronology of some Memorable Accidents': the representation of the recent past in English almanacs, 1648–60\*

Imogen Peck  
*University of Bristol*

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## Abstract

This article explores the ways the political upheavals of the mid seventeenth century were represented in English almanacs, and argues that study of this much overlooked printed product illuminates several facets of the mental afterlife of Britain's domestic conflicts. It contends that the prominence of political and military events from the sixteen-forties and -fifties within almanacs shows a popular demand for material that helped people remember the events of the bloody recent past and that these recollections served a range of purposes, from prognostic input to aide memoire. In addition, it suggests that the language in which the recent past was presented – primarily by almanac compilers but also by their readers – is revealing of the ways these events were interpreted and memorialized, and of some of the contests over recent memory that operated in mid seventeenth-century England.

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If, in the winter of 1658, an individual preparing for the year ahead chose to purchase a copy of John Swan's annual almanac the first thing they would have encountered on opening the cover was a list of 'Memorable Accidents': a chronology of significant events and a specification of the number of years since they had occurred. The list began with the creation of the world 5,657 years ago and was followed by a selection of biblical and historical incidents, including Noah's flood, the construction of Rome and the invention of printing. The record of the more recent past, however, was dominated by the political and military turbulence of the previous decade, and included the Irish rebellion, the battle of Edgehill and the execution of Charles I. It was, as Swan acknowledged, a highly selective enumeration of historical events, and he concluded his account with the lamentation that '*more things memorable might have been added, but I want room*', as constraints of space required him not to '*exceed the short scantling of three sheets*'.<sup>1</sup>

This need for selectivity raises some intriguing questions, not least the significance of those 'Memorable Accidents' that were considered worthy of inclusion. While earlier incidents, such as the construction of London's Royal Exchange, were not politically divisive and had featured in almanac chronologies relatively consistently throughout the sixteenth century, the same clearly could not be said of events like the battle of Edgehill. Yet Swan's almanac was far from unusual in the space it devoted to the revolutionary events of the sixteen-forties and -fifties, and, in some cases, these representations could be both more extensive and more partisan. William Eland's chronology from 1656 also

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<sup>1</sup> John Swan, *An ephemeris, or, Almanack for the year of our Lord 1659* (Cambridge, 1659), sig. A2. Note, original italics used throughout article.

began with the creation of the world and of its twenty-four events, ten related to the upheavals of 1640–51.<sup>2</sup>

This article contends that the study of the representation of the recent past in the chronologies and calendars of printed almanacs illuminates several facets of the mental afterlife of the domestic conflicts in England that, to date, have been little explored. In particular, it argues that the prominence of political and military events from the sixteen-forties and -fifties within almanacs suggests there was popular demand for material that would assist people in remembering these dramatic incidents and that these recollections served a range of purposes, from prognostic input to aide memoire. In addition, it suggests that the language in which the recent past was presented – primarily by almanac compilers but also by their readers – is revealing of the ways these events were interpreted and memorialized, and also of some of the contests over recent memory that operated in mid seventeenth-century England.

Almanacs were astronomical guides to the planetary movements of the coming year. They were published annually, usually as part of a series, with each edition updated to reflect the specific details of the next twelve months. By tracing heavenly motions, almanacs enabled astrological interpretations, though they also provided useful information on a range of more general subjects, from the dates of fairs to medical notes. John Taylor, the so-called water poet, acknowledged the importance of almanacs in everyday life when he wrote that:

For times and seasons we might grope and seek,  
Not knowing yeers, or quarters, month, or week,  
Or houres, or minutes, nor the Sabbath day,  
Nor when to eat, or sleep, or debts to pay.  
Millions of people would this knowledge lack  
Except directed from the Almanack.<sup>3</sup>

Though almanacs appeared under one individual's name – Edward Pond, William Lilly, John Woodhouse, Andrew Waterman, to name but a few – this did not necessarily mean they were the product of a sole author. In 1603, the monopoly for printing almanacs was granted to the Stationers' Company, and for the remainder of the seventeenth century writers were required to apply to this body if they wished to have their product printed and sold legally.<sup>4</sup> The Company and its printers, concerned with the commercial value of their almanacs, could amend or add material to titles as they saw fit. As a result, almanacs, and especially those produced under the mark of the Stationers, are best understood as compiled rather than straightforwardly authored. On some occasions, the

<sup>2</sup> William Eland, *Hemerologium astronomicum in annum aerae Christianae MDCLVI. Or An almanack for the year of Christ 1656* (1656), sig. C1v.

<sup>3</sup> John Taylor, *The certain travailes of an uncertain journey begun on Tuesday the 9. of August, and ended on Saturday the 3. of September following, 1653* (n.p., 1654), p. 7.

<sup>4</sup> L. Hill Curth, *English Almanacs, Astrology, and Popular Medicine, 1550–1700* (Manchester, 2007), p. 37. Though this system broke down in practice during the years of the civil war, the only legal exceptions made were for the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. In 1623 the privy council granted printers at Cambridge University the right to share in printing certain privileged books, including any almanacs which might be offered first to the university, not the Stationers' Company. In 1631 these privileges were reduced, and in 1639 the Cambridge authorities signed an agreement by which the university press undertook to print almanacs only with the written consent of the Company, in return for an annual payment of £200 and a guarantee that an adequate supply of work would be provided (see B. Capp, *Astrology and the Popular Press: English Almanacs 1500–1800* (1979), p. 37).

name under which an almanac appeared deliberately misrepresented its actual source: for example, the well-known astrologer Edward Pond authored almanacs until 1700, apparently unimpeded by the small matter of his death in 1629.<sup>5</sup>

Whatever their origins, almanacs certainly sold well. Bernard Capp estimated that in the sixteen–sixties (the earliest period for which detailed evidence survives) sales averaged around 400,000 copies annually, a figure which suggests that around one in three families bought an almanac each year.<sup>6</sup> Humphrey Blunden, who published William Lilly's *Merlini Anglici Ephemeris*, recorded a schedule of production which hints at the expansion of the genre over the course of the sixteen–forties: 13,500 copies in 1646, 17,000 copies in 1647 and 18,500 copies in 1648.<sup>7</sup> Of course, the kinds of people who actually purchased these products is harder to identify. Cheap ephemera rarely featured in inventories or wills and, in any case, the time sensitive nature of almanacs meant they were synonymous with transience. As a character in the verse *Englands Changeling* (1659) put it, 'What's that? a last years Almanack / I thought so by his look / A foolish, useless, worthless thing'.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, research into ownership conducted by Louise Hill Curth has suggested that almanacs were consumed by individuals from across the social spectrum and, as a result, she has concluded that they should be understood as 'the first form of English mass media'.<sup>9</sup>

Yet in spite of their contemporary popularity, printed almanacs have been relatively overlooked as a source by early modern historians. As Hill Curth noted, the genre contains 'a veritable wealth of material for social and cultural historians', but to date they have primarily been probed for what they suggest about astrological beliefs and practices, or, more recently, the related topic of early modern medicine.<sup>10</sup> The most notable exception to this general neglect is Bernard Capp's seminal study *Astrology and the Popular Press*, though the sheer scope of this work meant it could not tackle every feature of the almanacs in depth. Their chronologies and calendars, in particular, receive a comparatively brief overview, while Hill Curth's research on almanacs and popular medicine attended to chronologies in a single sentence, along with tide tables and schedules of university terms.<sup>11</sup> However, as Philip Benedict's work on confessional

<sup>5</sup> Edward Pond, *An almanack for the year of our Lord God 1700* (Cambridge, 1700); J. Raymond, 'Pond, Edward (d. 1629)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004) <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/22489>> [accessed 5 Oct. 2016].

<sup>6</sup> Capp, p. 23. For further work on the distribution of almanacs, see C. Blagden, 'The distribution of almanacs in the second half of the 17th-century', *Studies in Bibliography*, xi (1958), 107–16.

<sup>7</sup> L. Kassell, 'Almanacs and prognostications', in *The Oxford History of Popular Print Culture*, i: *Cheap Print in Britain and Ireland to 1660*, ed. J. Raymond (Oxford, 2011), pp. 431–42, at p. 439.

<sup>8</sup> Anon, *England's changeling or, The time servers laid open in their colours* (n.p., 1659), p. 5.

<sup>9</sup> Hill Curth, *English Almanacs*, p. 32.

<sup>10</sup> Hill Curth, *English Almanacs*, p. 52. For literature on almanacs and astrological beliefs, see F. Johnson, *Astronomical Thought in Renaissance England: a Study of the English Scientific Writings from 1500 to 1645* (Baltimore, Md., 1937); M. Nicholson, 'English almanacs and the "new astronomy"', *Annals of Science*, iv (1939), 1–33; N. Hetherington, 'Almanacs and the extent of knowledge of the new astronomy in 17th-century England', *Proc. American Philosophical Soc.*, cxix (1975), 275–9; P. Curry, *Prophecy and Power: Astrology in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1989); J. Kelly, *Practical Astronomy during the 17th Century: Almanac-Makers in America and England* (New York, 1991). For literature on medical thought in relation to almanacs, see H. Carey, 'Astrological medicine and the medieval English folded almanac', *Social History of Medicine*, xvii (2004), 345–63; L. Hill Curth, 'The commercialisation of medicine in the popular press: English almanacs, 1640–1700', *The Seventeenth Century*, xvii (2002), 48–69; Hill Curth, *English Almanacs*.

<sup>11</sup> Capp, pp. 215–23; Hill Curth, *English Almanacs*, p. 44. The author is heavily indebted to both of these works, which, as the only full-length studies dedicated to English almanacs, provide invaluable information on the genre, its authors and its readership.

memories of the French wars of religion has shown, the representation of the near past in popular historical calendars may reward closer attention.<sup>12</sup> To this end, this article considers what the calendars and chronologies embedded within almanacs can reveal about a particular historical question: the way the revolutionary events of the mid seventeenth century were represented in popular print during the sixteen–fifties. In so doing, it will also demonstrate some of the unmined potential of almanacs as a source for historians more generally.

Inspired by the recent ‘memory boom’ in modern history – and particularly the study of memories of the First and Second World Wars – the last two decades has seen the publication of a number of studies that explore the ways the British civil wars and the subsequent period of republican rule were represented and remembered during the later seventeenth century.<sup>13</sup> One of the first full-length efforts, conducted by Blair Worden, considered the ways these events were evoked and politicized in the historical writings of Edmund Ludlow, Algernon Sidney and Thomas Carlyle.<sup>14</sup> More recently, Matthew Neufeld has studied the ways the events of the revolutionary period were represented between 1660 and 1715, concluding that memory in this period functioned largely as a means of defending or contesting the Restoration settlement.<sup>15</sup> Illuminating as these studies are, the vast majority are concerned either with the period after 1660, with lengthy, elite histories or, most often, both.<sup>16</sup> They tell us little about the representation of the internecine conflicts prior to the Restoration, or the way these events were remembered in historical material that was consumed by a more general audience. This article will begin to redress this imbalance through the detailed analysis of that most ubiquitous of printed media, the almanac.

In total, 250 individual almanacs by seventy-one different ‘authors’ have been studied for this piece. These comprise the majority of extant almanacs for the period, though the poor survival rate of printed ephemera undoubtedly means it is only a fraction of the total number that were produced.<sup>17</sup> The first section of this article provides an overview of the use of the past in almanacs, and argues that the prominence of political and military incidents from the sixteen–forties and –fifties suggests there was a strong consumer

<sup>12</sup> P. Benedict, ‘Divided memories? Historical calendars, commemorative processions and the recollection of the wars of religion during the *Ancien Régime*’, *French History*, xxii (2008), 381–99.

<sup>13</sup> J. Winter, ‘The generation of memory: reflections on the “memory boom” in contemporary historical studies’, *Canadian Military History*, x (2001), 57–66. For recent work on memory of the world wars, see J. Winter, *Remembering War: the Great War Between Memory and History in the 20th Century* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 2006). The work on memory of the Holocaust is now vast and still rapidly growing. For a selection of influential studies spanning oral histories, cultural memory and memory in both Britain and America, see L. Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies: the Ruins of Memory* (New Haven, Conn., 1991); T. Cole, *Selling the Holocaust: from Auschwitz to Schindler* (New York, 1999); A. Pearce, *Holocaust Consciousness in Contemporary Britain* (New York, 2014); *After the Holocaust: Challenging the Myth of Silence*, ed. D. Cesarani and E. Sundquist (New York, 2012); J. Schandler, *While America Watches: Televising the Holocaust* (New York, 1999); P. Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston, Mass., 1999).

<sup>14</sup> B. Worden, *Roundhead Reputations: the English Civil War and the Passions of Posterity* (2001).

<sup>15</sup> M. Neufeld, *The Civil Wars after 1660: Public Remembering in Late Stuart England* (Woodbridge, 2013).

<sup>16</sup> See also J. Scott, *England’s Troubles: 17th-century English Political Instability in European Context* (Cambridge, 2000); G. Southcombe and G. Tapsell, *Restoration Politics, Religion and Culture: Britain and Ireland, 1660–1714* (Basingstoke, 2010). For studies that focus on more popular memory, albeit post 1660, see M. Stoye, ‘Memories of the maimed: the testimony of Charles I’s former soldiers, 1660–1730’, *History*, lxxxviii (2003), 204–26; A. Hopper, ‘The Farnley Wood plot and the memory of the civil wars in Yorkshire’, *Historical Jour.*, xlv (2000), 281–303; E. Legon, ‘Remembering revolution: seditious memories in England and Wales, 1660–85’ (unpublished University College London Ph.D. thesis, 2015).

<sup>17</sup> Those that have not been consulted are either too delicate to be examined or held in inaccessible archives. The author has used Hill Curth’s excellent bibliography as a guide to surviving almanacs.

demand for material that would assist people in remembering the turbulent events of the recent past. The second section goes on to consider in more detail the diverse ways these events were represented and reveals some of the contests over memory that operated in mid-seventeenth-century England. The third section shifts focus away from the printed content of almanacs to their readers, exploring some of the ways people chose to represent political and military events in their own almanac annotations.

Prior to the civil wars, the chronologies and calendars found in almanacs featured relatively few events from within living memory. Those events that did feature were fairly consistent: birth and deaths of royalty, the beginnings and ends of reigns, meteorological marvels and national triumphs over foreign neighbours or domestic plots, especially the Spanish armada and gunpowder treason. In short, they were dominated by occurrences that conformed to a patriotic, Protestant view of English history. Samuel Ashwell's almanacs for 1642 was fairly typical – it featured only four events since the turn of the century and none since the commencement of Charles's reign.<sup>18</sup> Abraham Clifford's 1642 almanac did feature some recent events, but these were mainly apolitical: an earthquake, the plague, the 'great snow' and the birth of Charles II.<sup>19</sup>

This consistency was disrupted by the outbreak of war in 1642, and by the mid-sixteen-forties almanacs had begun to include both military transactions and significant political events from the years leading up to the conflict. Nathaniel Nye's almanac for 1645 included a description of events in parliament and on the battlefield alongside its calendar.<sup>20</sup> John Woodhouse (1646) featured the battles at Brainford [Brentford] and Edgehill in its chronology, while George Naworth (1645) included a whole narrative of the wars under the title 'Memorable Occurances since the beginning of this Grand Rebellion'.<sup>21</sup> The inclusion of such events did not abate following the regicide and the establishment of republican government in 1649. Of the almanac series that survive for the sixteen-fifties, more than half of authors produced at least one edition that recorded the events of the sixteen-forties and early sixteen-fifties.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, in many of these almanacs the political and military upheavals of the recent past were significantly over-represented. John Rowley's chronology, like Eland's, featured twenty-five incidents of which thirteen related to the turbulent events of the sixteen-forties and early sixteen-fifties (the beginning of the Long Parliament, the executions of Strafford, Hamilton, Charles I, Holland and Capel, the Irish rebellion, the king leaving parliament, the raising of the king's standard, and battles at Edgehill, Newbury, York, Naseby and Dunbar).<sup>23</sup> The calendar in the 1654 edition of *Merlinus, Cambro Britannus* contained no fewer than sixty-two such events out of a total of eighty-four.<sup>24</sup> John Smith's almanac for 1652

<sup>18</sup> Samuel Ashwell, *A new almanacke and prognostication for the yeare of our Lord God, 1642* (1642), sig. B1v (mislabelled as C1 in the text).

<sup>19</sup> Abraham Clifford, *An almanack and prognostication for the yeare of our Lord God, 1642* (1642), sig. B2v [mislabelled as A in text].

<sup>20</sup> Nathaniel Nye, *A new almanacke and prognostication for the yeere of our Lord God 1645* (1645), sig. A4v–B8.

<sup>21</sup> John Woodhouse, *A new almanacke and prognostication for the yeere of our Lord God 1646* (1646), sig. A2; George Naworth, *A new almanack, and prognostication* (Oxford, 1645), sig. B7v.

<sup>22</sup> This is necessarily a rough figure, but it does give a sense of the quantity of almanacs that recorded these events. It has been calculated by 'series' (i.e., almanacs produced by the same author) to avoid the survival rates of individual editions within a series skewing the total figure.

<sup>23</sup> John Rowley, *Speculum perspicuum uranicum, or, A glasse wherein you may behold the various motions ... of the coelestiall bodies in this yeare (1652)*, sig. C4.

<sup>24</sup> Schardanus Rider, *Merlinus, Cambro-Britannus. Or the British Merlin demonstrating the true revolution of the year (1654)*, sig. B1–C4.

exhibited a similar single-mindedness; at least 119 events from a total of 159.<sup>25</sup> While some prioritization of the more recent past is perhaps to be expected, this was on a scale that was unprecedented in pre-war almanacs.

The reasons for this emphasis on revolutionary events varied, and depended in part on their form. Broadly, records of the past in almanacs were of two types: a ‘chronology of memorable things’, like Eland’s or Rowley’s, that recorded the number of years that had elapsed since various notable incidents occurred, and calendrical insertions, where important events appeared in the main calendar on the date they had taken place, alongside planetary motions (see Figures 1 and 2).

In the case of calendrical insertions, the recording of recent events could assist with the almanac’s prognostic functions, as in addition to planetary influences, incidents that had previously occurred on a particular day could inform calculations of its future outlook. It was for this reason that Joshua Childrey assured the readers of his almanac that ‘*all faithfull Histories and Chronologies, that are extant, or to be had, were perused; and all the signall occurrences in Empires, Kingdomes, States &c with their times (as near may be) were with all convenient brevity digested into Books ... For Astrology wants its History as much as any other part of Philosophie*’.<sup>26</sup> Thus, remembering and recording the recent past was partly necessary because such extraordinary events might have a direct bearing on the future. However, as we have seen, recording a large number of recent, political events was a relatively new phenomenon, and one that did not feature in all prognostic almanacs. Moreover, an author might choose to consult these events when forming his astrological predictions, thus negating the need to incorporate them into the calendar of the almanac itself (indeed, this was the process which Childrey himself appears to have favoured). It is also worth emphasizing that when the political and military transactions of the sixteen-forties and early sixteen-fifties did dominate almanac calendars they generally featured alongside records of purely factual dates, like Shrove Tuesday and the start and end of university terms, references that served a functional rather than a prognostic role. Such placement suggests their purpose was as much to assist readers in remembering the dates of events of the turbulent near past as to guide astrological calculations and understanding.

Chronologies certainly had no possible prognostic function, and therefore both their inclusion and their contents primarily reflected perceived consumer demand for this material. It is a historical commonplace that almanacs were a highly lucrative medium driven primarily by market concerns, and that compilers ‘constantly modified their texts to adjust to changing market needs’.<sup>27</sup> When the author George Wharton attempted to omit a chronology and “such other trumperies” from his almanac during the sixteen-forties they were re-inserted by his printer.<sup>28</sup> While calendars could in theory feature a large number of events, constraints of space meant that chronologies had to be selective. Table 1 shows the proportion of political and military events from the sixteen-forties and -fifties that featured in six one-page almanac chronologies from the period. Once again, the emphasis given to events of the recent revolution is striking and, when coupled with an appreciation of the commerciality of the almanac genre, suggests that some

<sup>25</sup> John Smith, *A new almanack and prognostication or the yeare of our Lord God, MDCLII* (1652), sig. A4v–B8.

<sup>26</sup> Joshua Childrey, *Syzygiasticon instauratum or, an ephemeris of the places and aspects of the planets, as they respect the sun* (1653), sig. A3–A4.

<sup>27</sup> A. Chapman, ‘Marking time: astrology, almanacs, and English Protestantism’, *Renaissance Quart.*, lx (2007), 1257–90, at p. 1259.

<sup>28</sup> Capp, p. 45.

*A short Chronology of Memorable Actions*

<b>T</b> he Creation of the World	5604
Noahs Flood	3948
The Building of the Temple	2672
Brute entred this Island	2761
The Captivity of Babylon	2260
Julius Cesar conquered this Island	1706
The Constitution of the Julian Year	1699
The Destruction of Jerusalem	1572
The Building of London	2762
The Building of Rome	2407
England received the Christian Faith	1475
Constantine the Great born in Great Britain	1245
William the Conqueror	591
Guns were invented	274
Printing was invented	195
Luther opposed the Pope	138
The Royal Exchange was built	90
The Rebellion in the North	86
The Massacre in France	83
Tilbury Camp	67
The Powder-Treason November 5.	50
The last Great Frost	47
The last Blazing-star	37
A Parliament began at Westminster Nov. 3. 1641. which continued twelve Years, five Months, and seventeen Days	15
The Rebellion in Ireland began Octob. 23.	14
Keinton Battel October 23.	13
Brainford Fight November 12.	13
Canterbury was beheaded January 10.	11
Common-Prayer voted down November 26.	11
Naseby Fight July 14.	10
Scots routed in Lancashire August 17.	7
Scots beaten at Dunbar, Sept. 3.	6
Scots routed at Worcester, Sept. 3.	4
His Highnes's Instalment at Westminster, Dec. 16.	2

A 3 January

Figure 1. Copy of the chronology in Andrew Waterman, *The sea-mans almanack and prognostication* (1655). Image reproduced by ProQuest as part of *Early English Books Online* <[www.proquest.com](http://www.proquest.com)> and ©British Library Board, shelfmark 1397.a.25, sig. A3.

compilers perceived a desire among consumers for material that memorialized – and would assist them in remembering – these events.

Incidents that appeared with particular frequency in chronologies included the battle of Naseby, the start of the Long Parliament, the battle of Newbury, the executions of Strafford, Laud and Charles I and the battle at Marston Moor. Honourable mentions are also due to the demolition of the cross at Cheapside in 1643, the Irish rebellion of 1641,

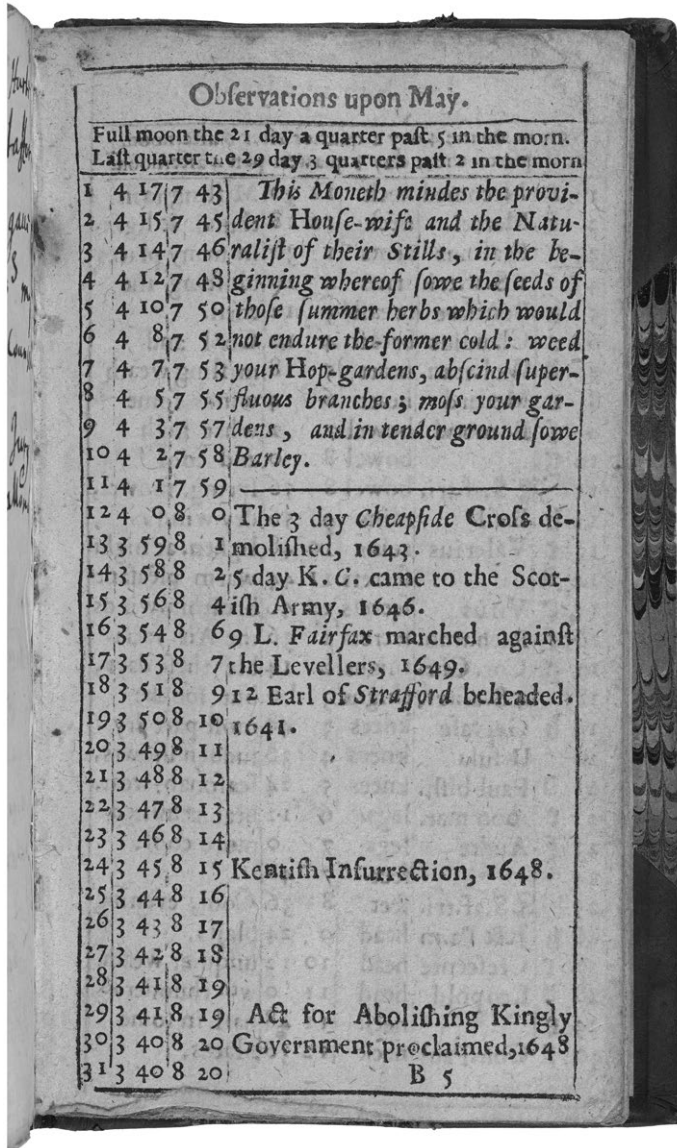


Figure 2. Copy of calendrical insertions for May in Schardanus Rider, *Me-rlinus Cambro-Britannus* (1654). Reproduced with permission of Folger Shakespeare Library, under licence CC BY-SA 4.0.

and the battles at Brentford, Edgehill and Worcester. In short, the almanacs listed events, executions and battles from the recent wars that were seen as being of national significance. Though some almanac chronologies produced prior to the civil wars had featured events of particular regional import, this tendency is not evident in the enumeration of events from the more recent past. The only possible exception that this author has identified is John Coulton’s almanac for Surrey, the chronology of which included the presence of



Table 1. The distribution of entries by subject matter and period in six almanac chronologies.<sup>29</sup>

<i>Subject matter and period</i>	<i>Harfleete</i>	<i>Waterman</i>	<i>Eland</i>	<i>Rowley</i>	<i>Leybourn</i>	<i>Hewit</i>
Biblical history and classical antiquity	—	7	2	—	4	2
Early and medieval history (Britain)	1	6	9	1	5	9
Early and medieval history (Europe)	2	2	2	2	2	2
Sixteenth century (Britain)	7	3	—	3	6	—
Sixteenth century (Europe)	1	2	—	1	1	—
Seventeenth century (other)	6	3	1	5	7	1
Political/military events of the British revolution	15	11	10	13	10	10

the Diggers on a hill in that county.<sup>30</sup> In this respect, the evidence provided by the almanacs supports Daniel Woolf's claim that printed material fostered an increasingly nationalized view of the past, even at this most popular of levels.<sup>31</sup>

The suggestion that an emphasis on the recent past reflected perceived consumer demand is lent further weight by the presentation of almanacs themselves. Several almanac compilers chose to advertise the inclusion of a chronology on their title page, while others explicitly emphasized that their almanac contained a record of revolutionary events. For example, the title page of Schardanus Rider's 1654 almanac noted that it contained 'Chronological Observations of most notable Concurrences past', while John Gadbury's 1658 almanac proudly announced that it came 'with a succinct Chronologie of The most Remarkable Accidents that have happened in this Island of Great Britain, since the commencement of our late ... Divisions'.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, George Wharton's 1648 edition advertised the fact it contained 'a compendious *Chronology* of all the Battles, Sieges, and other remarkable Conflicts, which have happened in this Kingdom, since the beginning of these unhappy Troubles'.<sup>33</sup>

A few writers were so concerned with adequately representing revolutionary events that they included calendars or potted histories that dealt exclusively with this subject and advertised these accordingly. Thus, from 1657 onwards Wharton's almanacs included

<sup>29</sup> The almanacs in which these chronologies appear are Henry Harfleete, *Aronophegmata an ephemeris for the year of Christ, 1651* (1651), sig. A4; Andrew Waterman, *The sea-mans almanac and prognostication* (1655), sig. A3; Eland, sig. C1v; Rowley, sig. C4; William Leybourn, *An almanack and prognostication for the year of our redemption 1651* (1651), sig. C8; Thomas Hewit, *Annus ab incarnatione Domini 1655, an almanack for the year of our Lord, 1655* (1655), sig. A4r.

<sup>30</sup> John Coulton, *Theoria contingentium anni aerae Christianae 1653, or, An almanack and prognostication* (1653), sig. C2v.

<sup>31</sup> D. Woolf, *The Social Circulation of the Past: English Historical Culture, 1500–1730* (Oxford, 2003), p. 295.

<sup>32</sup> Rider, sig. A1; John Gadbury, *Prognostikon, or, An astrological prediction of the various changes likely to occur in most parts of Europe this present year* (1658), sig. A1.

<sup>33</sup> George Wharton, *No Merline, nor Mercury: but a new almanack after the old fashion, for the year of our redemption, 1648* (1648), sig. A1.

a piece entitled ‘Gesta Britannorum’, which was essentially a chronicle of political events from 1600 to 1656.<sup>34</sup> Francis Pigot’s 1657 edition contained a section dedicated to the ‘many observable passages of the reign of King C. [Charles I]’.<sup>35</sup> A chronology concerned only with the revolutionary period can be found in Sarah Ginnor’s *The Woman’s Almanac* (1659), which featured an enumeration of ‘Memorable Accidents’ that began not with the creation of the world but with the sitting of the Long Parliament.<sup>36</sup> That this chronology appeared in an almanac aimed at a female readership is noteworthy, and shows that a desire to recall the political upheavals of the previous two decades was not thought to be gender specific. An appreciation of the market for memory was expressed quite explicitly by John Vicars, author of a popular civil war history produced in 1652, when he declared that his tract allowed ‘any man [who] will be informed of any remarkable passage, he may turne to the year, and so see in some measure, in what Moneth thereof it was accomplished’.<sup>37</sup>

That consumers read and engaged with these records is evident from surviving almanac annotations. For example, the anonymous annotator of John Booker’s 1648 almanac chose to correct the printed description ‘Hereford taken by stratagem’ with a single word – ‘Treacherie’.<sup>38</sup> The incident in question here was parliament’s capture of the royalist stronghold of Hereford in December 1645, which had been achieved by sneaking troopers from the nearby Gloucester garrison into the city disguised as ice-breaking labourers. While parliament immortalized the great victory in the pamphlet *A new tricke to take townes*, to royalists the loss of Hereford was the result of duplicity and betrayal, and this duality of interpretation is reflected in the contrast between the printed note and the annotator’s correction.<sup>39</sup>

Thus, it seems that the people of sixteen-fifties England, far from suffering from the reluctance to recall wartime events attributed to them by historians such as Charles Carlton, actually possessed an appetite for material that would assist them in remembering the events of the recent past.<sup>40</sup> This demand extended further down the social scale than just those who were likely to purchase lengthy, and costly, full-length histories, and is reflected in the prominence of recent military and political events in the chronologies and calendars of many Interregnum almanacs. However, which events were recorded and in what quantities is only half the story. As the anonymous annotator of Booker’s almanac suggests, the representation of the past in almanacs was not necessarily as politically

<sup>34</sup> George Wharton, *Calendarium Ecclesiasticum or, A new almanack after the old fashion* (1657), sig. D6v–G4v.

<sup>35</sup> Francis Pigot, *An almanack for the yeare of our Lord God, 1657* (1657), sig. A4–A7v.

<sup>36</sup> Sarah Ginnor, *The Womans almanack, or, prognostication for ever: shewing the nature of the planets, with the events that shall befall women and children born under them* (1659), sig. A8.

<sup>37</sup> John Vicars, *A brief review of the most material Parliamentary proceedings of this present Parliament, and their armies, in their civil and martial affairs* (1652), title page.

<sup>38</sup> University of Chicago Library, John Booker, *Uranoscopia no Wharton or Navvorth, but an almanack & prognostication or a prospective glasse for the yeare of Christ, 1648* (1648), sig. B8. The original document is part of a collection of almanacs bound in the 17th century and purchased by the University of Chicago Library in the early 20th century. The identity of both the original owner and the annotator is unknown and while it is therefore impossible to date with any certainty, the hand, the practice of almanac annotation, and the early date of the binding suggest it is probably contemporary.

<sup>39</sup> Anon, *A new tricke to take townes: or, The just and perfect relation of the sudden surprisall of Hereford; taken December 18. 1645. With a true copy of the returne of the warrant, sent by a lieutenant in the habit of a countrey-man; and the names of the six men his assistants. Published by speciall authority* (1645), pp. 1–9.

<sup>40</sup> C. Carlton, *Going to the Wars: the Experience of the British Civil Wars, 1638–51* (1993), p. 344; M. Jansson, ‘Remembering Marston Moor: the politics of culture’, in *Political Culture and Cultural Politics in Early Modern England: Essays Presented to David Underdown*, ed. S. D. Amuseen and M. A. Kishlansky (Manchester, 1995), pp. 225–68.

neutral as the straightforward list format may lead us to suppose; it is to the partisan nature of some almanacs that this article now turns.

To date, an appreciation of the partisan nature of almanacs has been confined primarily to their prognostications.<sup>41</sup> During the civil wars the predictions made in almanacs became highly politicized, and both royalists and parliamentarians attempted to harness the astrological prognostics of almanac authors in support of their cause. However, the way the recent past was represented could also have political undertones; in this respect, almanacs did not just record past events, they framed and interpreted them too.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the prevailing political climate, a number of almanacs celebrated parliament's civil war victories and the subsequent formation of a republican state, often couching these events in language that was strongly partisan. For example, Booker (1648) referred to Marston Moor as a 'great victory' and, as we've seen, his suggestion that the royalist stronghold of Hereford was taken by 'stratagem' irked at least one reader, who remembered this incident rather less favourably.<sup>42</sup> Naseby was referred to variously as a 'memorable Victory' and a success 'obtained by the honourable *Fairfax*', while Richard Saunders (1657) described how the parliamentary General Lord Essex 'at Edge-hill *did stoutly, bravely fight*'.<sup>43</sup> Saunders also sought to remind his readers of parliament's prowess, juxtaposed with royalist cowardice, when he noted beside 28 March that there had been 'a famous fight, on *Cherrington* downs this day / Where *Hopton* [Sir Ralph Hopton, royalist commander] left the field and fled away'.<sup>44</sup> Some authors deployed the language of providence, presenting parliament's victories as a sign of God's favour for their cause (which, if He directed all things, must be His cause too). Booker, for example, concluded his catalogue of parliament's military successes in his 1649 edition by expressing a desire that their opponents 'would see and admire these wonderthings' and appreciate that 'God hath smitten them [the royalists] in all places'.<sup>45</sup>

The actions of the Scots were often described particularly extensively. In the 1652 edition of *Merlinus Anglicus*, Lilly expressed a desire that people as far afield as Europe, Africa, Asia and the East and West Indies should recognize that 'the third day of *September* is memorable amongst the *English*, for two great victories obtained by the English Lord Generall over the *Scots*, one at *Dunbar* 1650 the second at *Worcester* in *England* in 1651'.<sup>46</sup> Both Eland's and Hewit's chronologies noted the exact date (as opposed to just the year) of the Scots march into England in 1648, and described this as an 'invasion' of 21,000 men precisely.<sup>47</sup> Such detail perhaps reflects the significant psychological impact that repeated Scottish invasions had on the English populace. The only other event to be marked with exact numbers was similarly traumatic: the plague outbreak of 1603, for which some authors provided an exact mortality rate.<sup>48</sup> Meanwhile, in his almanac for

<sup>41</sup> See H. Rusche, 'Merlini Anglici: astrology and propaganda from 1644 to 1651', *Eng. Hist. Rev.*, lxxx (1965), 322–33; Capp, pp. 67–102.

<sup>42</sup> Booker, *Uranoscopia*, 1648, sig. B3.

<sup>43</sup> Rider, sig. B6; William Lilly, *Merlinus Anglicus Ephemeris* (1648), sig. C4v; Richard Saunders, *Appollo Anglicanus: The English Apollo: astronomically observing and astrologically demonstrating those grand catatrophes [sic] ... designed by the heavens to be visible ... this present revolution, 1657* (1657), sig. B6.

<sup>44</sup> Saunders, sig. A7.

<sup>45</sup> John Booker, *Uranoscopia, or, An almanack and prognostication being a prospective glasse for the year of Christ, 1649* (1649), sig. C7.

<sup>46</sup> William Lilly, *Merlini Anglici ephemeris* (1652), sig. E2v.

<sup>47</sup> Eland, sig. C1v; Hewit, sig. A4.

<sup>48</sup> See, e.g., Seth Partridge, *A survey of the year 1654, or, An almanack for the year of Christ 1654* (1654), sig. B4.

1649, Booker exhorted his readers ‘never [to] forget the invasion of the Scots [into] this Kingdom’ in 1648.<sup>49</sup> Even the incursion of the Scots march into England at the express behest of parliament was remembered by some authors otherwise favourable to the parliamentary cause with some hostility. The 1657 edition of *Appollo Anglicanus* (a series that until 1659 was generally sympathetic to the Protectorate state) recorded that in 1644 ‘the Scots crosse the Tine to rob, to steal, and to theeve’ and that the ‘crawling’ Scots had acted like ‘*Lice, and blood in showers*’, feeding off the land and goods of the English populace.<sup>50</sup>

Favourable presentations of parliament’s victories might be buttressed with records of royalist wartime cruelties. Particularly prevalent were references to Prince Rupert’s storming of Bolton, during which royalist forces cornered retreating parliamentarians in the ungarrisoned town, resulting in brutal hand-to-hand combat and many civilian casualties. The event had been described by the contemporary parliamentary press as a ‘bloody and barbarous massacre’, and it was given a similarly hostile gloss in some later almanacs.<sup>51</sup> In his ‘eminent chronological observations’, Richard Saunders recalled that in May 1644 ‘*Poor Bolton storm’d, and sack’d, hard was her lot*’, while Henry Jessey utilized the rather more muted (if still clearly negative) phrase ‘*Bolton plundered by P[rince] Rupert*’.<sup>52</sup>

Other almanacs were overtly royalist in tone, though these were far fewer in number than explicitly parliamentary works, most probably because of the constraints that the Stationers’ Company’s monopoly and censorship legislation placed on their production.<sup>53</sup> It is worth noting, however, that the Stationers’ Company was not entirely steadfast in its support of the Interregnum states. Prior to 1654, the Company had actually printed some of the almanacs written by the strident royalist George Wharton, including the 1653 edition in which he predicted – not wholly inaccurately, as it transpired – that the Commonwealth state was ‘sick, and like to *Dye*’.<sup>54</sup> The hostility of Wharton’s self-published 1654 almanac was so overt that the Company lodged a complaint, though on previous occasions they had exhibited the primacy of commercial acumen over political loyalty, cheerfully remarking that “‘malignancy was the only selling subject of an almanac’”.<sup>55</sup>

In contrast to their parliamentary counterparts, these almanacs dwelt as much on the heroic deeds and deaths of particular royalists as they did on particular military engagements. The 1650 edition of Wharton’s *Hemeroscopien: the loyal almanack*, advertised its ‘many Chronologicall Notes, and other Observations, very usefull and pleasant for all but the Saints’, and these notes, inserted alongside the calendar, were dominated by the recording of royalists supporters who had been killed by parliament.<sup>56</sup> These began in

<sup>49</sup> Booker, *Uranoscopia 1649*, sig. C7.

<sup>50</sup> Saunders, sig. A7 and sig. B4; M. H. Porter, ‘Saunders, Richard (1613–75)’, *O.D.N.B.* <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/24702>> [accessed 2 May 2017].

<sup>51</sup> See Anon, *An exact relation of the bloody and barbarous massacre at Bolton in the Moors in Lancs, May, By Prince Rupert* (1644); Richard Braithwaite, *The devils whiteboyes: or, A mixture of malicious malignants, with their much evill and manifold practises against the kingdome and parliament* (1644).

<sup>52</sup> Saunders, sig. B1; Henry Jessey, *The Scripture kalendar in use by the prophets and apostles and by our Lord Jesus Christ (with our vulgar almanack)* (1653), sig. A6v.

<sup>53</sup> ‘September 1649: An Act against Unlicensed and Scandalous Books and Pamphlets, and for better regulating of Printing’, in *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642–60*, ed. C. H. Firth and R. S. Rait (1911), pp. 245–54; *Commons Journal*, vii, p. 369; *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic, 1655*, pp. 300–1, 309, 318–19.

<sup>54</sup> George Wharton, *Hemeroscopeion anniaerae Christianae 1653* (1653), sig. C2v.

<sup>55</sup> Capp, p. 45.

<sup>56</sup> George Wharton, *Hemeroscopeion the loyall almanack, for the year of Christ 1650* (1650), sig. A1.

January with the death of the king, who ‘*had Sentence of Death pronounced against Him by that bold Traytour Bradshaw*’ and was thence promoted to a Protestant martyrdom.<sup>57</sup> As Lacey Baldwin Smith has commented, ‘martyrs rarely appear singly ... they are usually a group phenomenon [reflecting] serious rifts in society’.<sup>58</sup> Charles I’s martyrdom was no exception, and other royalists who had fought for the king, refused to concede to parliament and ultimately embraced death, were commemorated with their own martyrologies. Wharton’s calendar was packed with references to these loyal martyrs and to the valiant royalist war dead more generally, ranging from ‘*Strafford Martyr anno 1641*’ to ‘*Major Pacher Murdered in Pauls Church yard, for his Loyalty and Valour*’.<sup>59</sup> Each of the monthly calendars in his 1650 edition was prefaced with a political rhyme, and these often recalled the heroic dead who had their anniversaries in the month ahead. March’s verse dwelt on the execution of Hamilton, Holland and Capel following the failed uprisings of 1648, while the verse for February evoked the death of two royalists who were executed for assisting the king – ‘*Loe here again two Martyrs on the Tree / [Burleigh and Beaumont] basely put to death*’ – and combined this with the assurance that ‘*Heav’n will revenge this blood, reward your [parliament’s] treason*’.<sup>60</sup> Indeed, the frequent use of verse in almanac glosses is itself notable, and was perhaps intended to enhance the mnemonic power of the author’s interpretation of a given event.

The royalist Richard Fitzsmith’s 1654 almanac *Syzygiasticon instauratum* also contained notable deaths, including the execution of Sir Charles Lucas and Sir George Lisle, who were shot without trial after they failed to yield to quarter at the siege of Colchester. This was an oft recited story in sixteen-fifties royalist print, not least because it was thought to showcase the apparent cruelty of the parliamentarians as well as the heroism of the royalists; as the poet John Quarles put it, ‘*this Act must be / Recorded in the Roules of Infamie / That after Ages, when they do behold / May blush, what noble Deeds were done of old*’.<sup>61</sup> Though the execution of an enemy who had surrendered to mercy was not, technically, a contravention of early modern codes of just war, it was nevertheless understood by many contemporaries to have been a barbaric and unsoldierly act.<sup>62</sup> In his record of the event Fitzsmith made sure to evoke this controversy, and noted, sardonically, that in August 1648 ‘*Colchester submitted to mercy, and Sir Cha[rles] Lucas and Sir Geo[rge] Lisle (mercifully) shot to Death*’.<sup>63</sup> By focusing on individual deaths, these calendars offered royalists a way of remembering the wars that emphasized individual heroism as opposed to military defeat; they helped to transform uncomfortable military memories into something that could be recalled, commemorated, even celebrated.

<sup>57</sup> Wharton, *Hemeroscopeion 1650*, sig. B1v.

<sup>58</sup> L. Baldwin Smith, *Fools, Martyrs, Traitors: the Story of Martyrdom in the Western World* (Evantson, Ill., 1997), p. 18.

<sup>59</sup> Wharton, *Hemeroscopeion 1650*, sig. B3v and sig. C8v.

<sup>60</sup> Wharton, *Hemeroscopeion 1650*, sig. B2v and sig. B3v [wrongly enumerated in text].

<sup>61</sup> John Quarles, *Fons lachrymarum, or, A fountain of tears from whence doth flow Englands complaint, Jeremiah’s lamentations paraphras’d, with divine meditations, and an elegy upon that son of valor Sir Charls Lucas* (1655), p. 119.

<sup>62</sup> Fairfax defended the decision, claiming that ‘by delivering upon mercy is to be understood, that some are to suffer, and the rest to go free’, but this line of argument cut little ice with the royalist press (see Bodleian Library, MS. Fairfax 36, fo. 6). On codes of just war during the civil wars, including the difference between surrendering to quarter and surrendering to mercy, see B. Donagan, ‘Atrocity, war crime and treason in the English civil war’, *Amer. Hist. Rev.*, xcix (1994), 1137–66. For an account of the siege and surrender of Colchester, see P. Jones, *The Siege of Colchester, 1648* (Stroud, 2003).

<sup>63</sup> Richard Fitzsmith, *Syzygiasticon instauratum: or, An almanack & ephemeris for the year of our Lord God 1654* (1654), sig. E1.

When the battles of 1642–51 were recorded, both Wharton and Fitzsmith included not just the usual set pieces, but engagements that were often conspicuous only by their absence in parliamentary almanacs, such as the royalist victory over Sir John Gell and Sir William Brereton at Hopton Heath in 1643. Though Wharton watered down the polemical tone of his records somewhat for the self-consciously historical ‘Gesta Britannorum’, he continued to feature these incidents, along with examples of parliamentary transgressions, like the plundering of the home of Sir Richard Minshull.<sup>64</sup> Significant parliamentary victories were recorded, but this was often done in decidedly lukewarm language – the ‘Fatal Blow’ at Naseby, or the ‘bloody fight’ at Marston Moor – and authors sought to counter the suggestion that parliament’s military victories could be equated with divine favour.<sup>65</sup> Alongside his record of the battle of Naseby, Fitzsmith warned his readers that they should ‘*Judge not a cause as it does prosper here / God with his own oftentimes is most severe*’.<sup>66</sup> Meanwhile, George Wharton’s almanac for 1655 contained a verse which noted that:

Goths, Huns, and Vandalls once had greatest Pow’r;  
The Tartars and the Turks have now much more.  
If then success be it which best depaints,  
A Glorious Cause, Turks are the only Saints.<sup>67</sup>

By drawing attention to the military successes of countries that were widely regarded by the English people as ungodly and barbaric, and particularly the Ottoman empire, Wharton attempted to cast doubt on the widespread belief that military success denoted Godly favour.<sup>68</sup>

Even descriptions of past events that do not, on the surface, seem to be politicized can, with careful reading, be understood as offering a subtly partisan interpretation of the recent past. For example, Fitzsmith’s calendar related how ‘his late Majestie (to avoid the *insolence* of the *Tumults*) left Whitehall, 1641’; Francis Pigot, by contrast, recorded the same event as ‘The K. *leaves* the Parliament, and betakes himselfe to the assistance of the Northern coast’.<sup>69</sup> While Fitzsmith’s chronology clearly implies that the king’s actions were both necessary and justified, Pigot conforms far more closely to the king-blaming narratives popular in the republican press, whereby the king deliberately chose to desert his parliament in order to raise forces in the north. In a similar vein, Wharton, in his ‘Gesta Britannorum’, recorded Charles I setting up his standard at Nottingham only after he had mentioned several other militarized transactions – including ‘Chillington house taken by the Parl[iament]’ and ‘The Parliam[ent] declared themselves necessitated to take up arms’ – a lexical ordering that served to shift culpability for starting the wars away from the king and onto parliament.<sup>70</sup>

It is perhaps also worth noting at this point that not every almanac that cast a critical eye over the events of the recent past was necessarily straightforwardly pro-Stuart. For

<sup>64</sup> Wharton, *Calendarium Ecclesiasticum* 1657, sig. E5v.

<sup>65</sup> George Wharton, *Hemeroscopeion anniaerae Christianae* 1654 (1654), p. 4; Fitzsmith, sig. D7.

<sup>66</sup> Fitzsmith, sig. D5.

<sup>67</sup> George Wharton, *Ephemeris: or, A diary astronomical, meteorological, chronological, for the year of Christ 1655* (1655), sig. Div.

<sup>68</sup> On the representation of the Ottoman empire in this period, see M. Dimmock, *New Turkes: Dramatising Islam and the Ottomans in Early Modern England* (Aldershot, 2005).

<sup>69</sup> Fitzsmith, sig. C4; Pigot, sig. A5.

<sup>70</sup> George Wharton, *Calendarium ecclesiasticum, or, A new almanack after the old fashion for the commune year of man’s creation 5607, redemption 1658 being the second from the bissextile* (1658), sig. E4.

example, while Nicholas Culpeper's posthumous 1656 almanac included the date of the death of Colonel Rainsborough (a parliamentary commander killed in cold blood by royalists while in his quarters at Doncaster) in its calendar, this was accompanied with the verse 'Now noble *Rainsborow* [*sic*] thy blood doth cry / Aloud for vengeance to the Heaven so high'.<sup>71</sup> Though apparently evoking a royalist atrocity, this couplet could also be read as a veiled critique of sections of the parliamentary alliance, for many of Rainsborough's radical sympathizers believed that the parliamentary commander Sir Henry Cholmley was implicated in his death because his troops had failed to prevent enemy soldiers from leaving Pontefract or from entering Doncaster to find the colonel's lodgings. Thus, the 'vengeance' that Rainsborough's blood clamoured for might equally well be understood to be parliamentary as royalist.

Other authors, meanwhile, chose to critique the political transitions of the sixteenth-fifties directly. In his almanac for 1654, Henry Harflete lamented the dissolution of the Purged Parliament, remarking that:

When hope and hip, when health and wealth are highest,  
Then woe and rack, sorrow and need are highest  
... Mark this O England  
These are the great spoylers of a State  
Young Council, private gaine and partiall hate.<sup>72</sup>

In the preface to his astrological text *Vox Coelorum*, Harflete had noted that he had "laboured day and night in the Parliaments service" and his almanacs express no hostility towards the parliamentary victory or king's execution.<sup>73</sup> It is therefore probable that Harflete's discontent stemmed from a commitment to parliamentary government; or, at the least, a suspicion of the engrossing of power under the sole figure of Oliver Cromwell. Such comments on the relative merits of different governmental structures were not unusual, especially following the dissolution of the Purged Parliament, an event which the one-time Leveller and member of Abiezer Cope's 'Family of Love', John Gadbury, characterized in the 1656 edition of his almanac as those 'brave senators, (sad) dissolution'.<sup>74</sup>

Thus far, this article has focused on the ways the recent past was represented by almanac authors. Their readers, however, were not simply passive receivers of information, and almanacs were designed to serve a dual purpose. On the one hand, they conveyed knowledge, while on the other they encouraged readers to record their own notes. Some editions – known as blanks – left spare pages explicitly for this purpose, while others – called sorts – required readers to insert these pages for themselves. As Adam Smyth has noted, the contents of almanacs helped to shape not only the way readers positioned their annotations, but also the kinds of notes that they made.<sup>75</sup> Blank spaces alongside calendars encouraged readers to locate their notes within the temporal scope of the page, and the kinds of items that were considered noteworthy encouraged the recording

<sup>71</sup> Nicholas Culpeper, *An ephemeris for the year 1656* (1656), sig. E4v.

<sup>72</sup> Henry Harflete, *Ouranodeisis, coelorum declaratio an ephemeris for the year of Christ 1654* (1654), sig. A8.

<sup>73</sup> E. Fernie, 'Harflete, Henry (b. 1580)', *O.D.N.B.* <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/12310>> [accessed 2 May 2017].

<sup>74</sup> John Gadbury, *Speculum astrologicum, or, An astrological glasse representing the state of the yeare of humane redemption 1656* (1656), sig. A2v.

<sup>75</sup> Adam Smyth, 'Annotators, almanacs, and life-writing in early modern England', *Eng. Lit. Renaissance*, xxxviii (2008), 200–44.

of similar subjects. We should then perhaps not be surprised, given the prevalence of political content in the almanacs of the sixteen-fifties, that some annotators were concerned not just with recording their own personal activities but with noting contemporary military and political events too. This section studies the notes of four such annotators and considers what their inscriptions may suggest about why people documented recent events, as well as the various ways in which they chose to do so.

The first subject is an annotated copy of John Smith's almanac for the year 1652, now part of Anthony Wood's collection in the Bodleian Library.<sup>76</sup> It is possible that the annotator was Wood himself, although the handwriting is not conclusive.<sup>77</sup> Like the almanac, which included a printed record of the military and political transactions of the recent past alongside the calendar, the annotations referred to a range of notable events spanning a number of years: the earliest, the death of a sheriff, is labelled 1642, while the most recent occurred during the year covered by the text.<sup>78</sup> The annotator also followed the convention established in printed almanac calendars of inserting notes next to the relevant date, and where pre-existing, printed records prevented this references were placed nearby with the date attached. The events that the annotator recorded combined affairs of international significance – the demise of the prince of Orange – with those of more local import, such as the death of a boy during a 'barring out' custom in York.<sup>79</sup>

However, not all the additions that the annotator chose to make were entirely spontaneous; in some places the handwritten notes were a direct response to the records printed in the text. The clearest example of this is an entry from September, where the printed note 'Scots routed by L. Gen Cromwell 1650' was appended with extra detail – the annotator added the words 'at Dunbar in Scotland. The same day 1651 K: Charles beaten at Worcester and the same day and same year Dundee taken Dundee stormed 1651'.<sup>80</sup> Here, the annotator's concern with chronicling military events of the previous year was stimulated by the perceived shortcomings of the printed record. The almanac calendar was treated as a starting point on which to build, one that generated further reflection on the part of the reader on the accuracy of this version of events.

A similar interaction between printed and handwritten notes is observable in the second case examined here: the annotated copies of Lilly's almanacs for the years 1647–8, now part of Elias Ashmole's collection in the Bodleian Library.<sup>81</sup> The annotator remains unknown, though we can posit two possible identities, each of which puts a quite different complexion on the purpose of the notes. The first possibility is that the notes were made by Lilly himself. The second is that they were made by an unidentified owner of the almanac, possibly the 'Mr Bousne of Marlborough', whose name appears on the title page of the 1648 edition.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>76</sup> Bodl. Libr., Wood Alm. A (18).

<sup>77</sup> Thanks are due to the staff at the Bodleian Library, and particularly Mike Webb, for his help tracing the identity of various annotators.

<sup>78</sup> Bodl. Libr., Wood Alm. A (18), sig. B7.

<sup>79</sup> Bodl. Libr., Wood Alm. A (18), sig. B7.

<sup>80</sup> Bodl. Libr., Wood Alm. A (18), sig. B5.

<sup>81</sup> Bodl. Libr., MS. Ashm. 78, nos. 2 and 3.

<sup>82</sup> Bodl. Libr., MS. Ashm. 78, no. 3, title page. Both the handwriting and the political tone of the notes imply that the annotator was not Elias Ashmole himself. There are, however, some similarities between the annotator's hand and Lilly's manuscripts, and it is known that some of the documents in the Ashmole collection were originally part of Lilly's personal papers. The political tone of the notes, which are pro-parliamentarian, are also compatible with Lilly's own views. On the other hand, there are also some clear differences in the script: the word 'Wharton', e.g., is formed entirely different in the almanacs to in MS. Ashmole 420, where it also appears.



Most of the annotations concern the political transactions of the period, and notes that refer to parliament's negotiations with the king, the military engagements against the Scots and Irish, and other incidents of domestic unrest feature with particular frequency. These are punctuated with records of the weather, and only two personal notes intrude: the payment of the chamber of London and a rather affecting reference to an 'Amy', who, after being 'delivered of a boy' in August 1647 'died 1pm the same day'.<sup>83</sup>

The notes were often supplemented with astrological symbols, inscribed at the start of a record, a practice which suggests that the annotator was as concerned with astronomical affairs as with the chronicling of recent events. This impression is reinforced by the relationship that seems to exist between the underlinings made in the monthly prognostics and the annotations, which often correspond. For example, in the prognostic for January 1648 the annotator underlined the phrase 'at home we feare some turbulent results', and then noted on the corresponding calendar 'both in London and Kent and many other places just feare of a tumult'.<sup>84</sup> Similarly, in January 1647 the phrase 'scandalous pamphlets appear' has been underlined and the words 'Lilbournes, Whartons' written on the calendar, implying that these were the pamphlets in question.<sup>85</sup> In February of the same year, a prediction of a 'sharp winter' is met with a reference to a 'woondrous snow'.<sup>86</sup>

These apparent associations between the handwritten notes and the prognostic passages suggest that the annotator recorded contemporary events with an eye to ascertaining the accuracy of the almanac's predictions. If the annotator is Lilly, these notes give an intriguing insight into the working practices of one of England's leading astrologers, diligently checking the accuracy of his own calculations. If it is not, then it appears that the annotator's concern with chronicling political, military and meteorological events was fostered by the nature of Lilly's predictions; the subjects with which the prognostications were concerned helped to cultivate the annotator's desire to record events of that type.

By contrast, the notes made by our third annotator, Isabella Lady Twysden, serve no obvious astrological purpose. Twysden (née Saunder) of Roydon Hall, Kent, was married to the antiquary Sir Roger Twysden, a royalist who was imprisoned and subjected to the sequestration of his estates during the sixteen-forties.<sup>87</sup> Copies of her annotated almanacs survive for the years 1645–51 and are now held by the British Library.<sup>88</sup> The way Twysden arranged her notes suggests that her almanacs were intended to serve a dual purpose: while the back pages of each book contained notes on domestic matters and finances, a practical aide memoire, the main body of the texts was a record of the events of that year, forming a kind of personal chronicle. These latter annotations read not unlike a diary, in the modern sense of the term, in that they included both events from Twysden's own life and those of a wider significance, sequentially, and with some regularity. The entries Twysden made were lengthier and more detailed than those of our first two annotators, often stretching to whole paragraphs rather than just single lines. The presentation and regularity of these annotations suggests that they were entered with care, certainly after some reflection and perhaps even drafting (see Figure 3).<sup>89</sup> Events that must have taken

<sup>83</sup> Bodl. Libr., MS. Ashm. 78, no. 2, sig. C1v.

<sup>84</sup> Bodl. Libr., MS. Ashm. 78, no. 3, sig. B2v–B3.

<sup>85</sup> Bodl. Libr., MS. Ashm. 78, no. 2, sig. B2v.

<sup>86</sup> Bodl. Libr., MS. Ashm. 78, no. 2, sig. B3v.

<sup>87</sup> J. Eales, 'Twysden [née Saunder], Isabella, Lady Twysden (1605–1657)', *O.D.N.B.* <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/93802>> [accessed 10 Oct. 2016].

<sup>88</sup> British Library, Add. MSS. 34169–34172, diary of Isabella, wife of Sir Roger Twysden, 2nd Bart., including notes of public affairs as well as family matters, occurrences of the civil war and movements of the armies.

<sup>89</sup> For discussion of an event that must have been added later, see Smyth, p. 234.

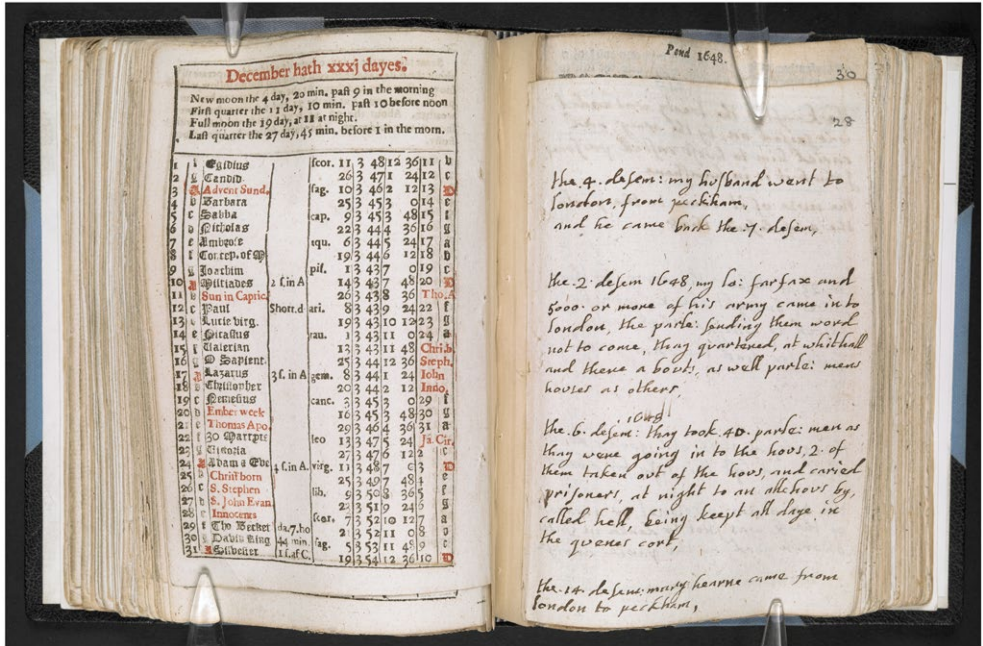


Figure 3. Isabella Lady Twysden’s annotations for the month of December in Pond’s almanac (1648). ©British Library Board, Add. MS. 34170, fo. 16.

place over the course of several days, such as the suppression of the insurrections in Kent, receive discrete, succinct entries, and there are few corrections to the notes themselves (a rare exception is an entry concerned with Lord Goring, where the number of troops has been changed from 1,500 to 3,000).<sup>90</sup>

The almanacs for 1648–51 contain references to many political and military events from across the country, including the petitions brought to parliament, Cromwell’s victories over the Scots, and the executions of Capel, Holland and Hamilton, and the king. The way Twysden chose to represent the latter event is particularly intriguing. In a richly vivid account, she describes how, on 30 January, a scaffold was erected near the banqueting house at Whitehall and that ‘betweene 1 and 2 a clock in the afternone, when he was one the scaffold a flite of wild ducks came and flew over till his head was off, then thay flew away, a drack first stoping downe and touching his bill on the block, as many sad that was thereby at the time, and some the soulder stricke, and shuts at them, but hit none’.<sup>91</sup>

What is most striking about this entry – beyond the peculiarity of the story itself – is its level of narrative detail, and also how closely the description conforms to accounts of the event circulating in the royalist press. Henry Leslie, for example, relayed how at the time of the execution the ducks ‘forsook their pond at St James, and came as far as Whitehall, fluttering about the scaffold’, and it may in fact be these kinds of text (as

<sup>90</sup> Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 34170, fo. 16 (page numbers have been inserted at a later date and do not refer to the pagination of the original text).

<sup>91</sup> Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 34171, fo. 9.

opposed to any eye witness informant) that Twysden had in mind when she referred to the ‘many thereby’.<sup>92</sup>

Nor is this the only occasion when Twysden’s description closely tracks the reports of an event in the wider media. Her record of Hamilton’s death is equally infused with language that was circulating in print, not least her assertion that he was a ‘Skoch rebell man’, something which many printed accounts also sought to emphasize.<sup>93</sup> In her description of the siege of Colchester she once again acknowledges her debt to an external source, her note concluding with the caveat ‘as is sed’.<sup>94</sup> In her annotations Twysden exhibits not only a desire to record the recent past, but also to frame and describe it – and, in so doing, she also demonstrates the extent to which the wider media could infuse and influence the form which these representations took. In writing events which she herself did not witness, Twysden had to rely on external reports, and these furnished her not just with factual information – numbers of troops, dates of engagements – but also with narratives and interpretations that in turn became absorbed into her own written chronicle.

Our final annotator is John Greene, a lawyer at Lincoln’s Inn and the son of John Greene Esquire, of Bois-hall, Navestock, Essex.<sup>95</sup> Eleven volumes of Greene’s annotated almanacs survive, ranging – with gaps – from 1636 to 1657. In addition to making inscriptions on his calendar, Greene is unique among our annotators in having prefaced each almanac with a survey of the political situation as it stood at the start of the year and his speculations on events yet to come. For example, his narrative at the beginning of his 1649 almanac displayed a characteristic English ambivalence toward the Scots, whose defeat the previous year he believed to be ‘a mistery to this day, whether it were more treachery or cowardice’.<sup>96</sup> He also expressed the view – one which recurred several times in his annotations – that the political turbulence of the period was the work of a ‘displeased God against a sinfull nation’.<sup>97</sup> He concluded his account with his belief that the king’s cause seemed now ‘without hope’, and placed his faith in God, who he thought might yet ‘out of these troubles work a perfect peace and settlement’.<sup>98</sup> In these narratives, Greene remembered the events of the preceding years only in so far as they helped him to explain the current political situation; the past was deployed as an aid to the future, albeit in a historical as opposed to astrological sense.

Greene’s references to political affairs in the course of his calendrical notes are far sparser than Twysden’s. Instead, he uses the body of his almanac to record his own movements, work and family life. Between 1648 and 1657, the only major political events to intrude on this personal chronicle are Cromwell’s appointment as lord protector and the execution of the king, and even these are referred to only briefly. Charles I’s death is dispatched in just five words – ‘The 30<sup>th</sup> the King suffered’ – a brevity that stands in sharp contrast to Twysden’s lengthy account.<sup>99</sup> It may be that the rather euphemistic phrase

<sup>92</sup> Henry Leslie, *The martyrdome of King Charles, or His conformity with Christ in his sufferings* (The Hague, 1649), p. 19.

<sup>93</sup> Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 34171, fo. 13. See Anon, *The famous tragedie of King Charles I Basely Butchered* (n.p., 1649), p. 42; Anon, *A mournfull elegy upon the three renowned vvorthies Duke Hamilton, the Earle of Holland, and the ever to be honoured Lord Capel, who were tyrannically murdered by a usurped illegall power of the wicked court of injustice* (n.p., 1649), unpaginated.

<sup>94</sup> Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 34170, fo. 16.

<sup>95</sup> E. M. Symonds, ‘The diary of John Greene, 1637–57’, *Eng. Hist. Rev.*, xliii (1928–9), 106–17, 385–94, 568–604.

<sup>96</sup> Symonds, p. 110.

<sup>97</sup> Symonds, p. 111.

<sup>98</sup> Symonds, p. 111.

<sup>99</sup> Symonds, p. 111.

‘suffered’ reflects Greene’s difficulty in adequately representing this unprecedented event. Indeed, when Greene does expand on this sentence, it is telling that he does so not by adding his own interpretation, but by copying several contemporary epitaphs into the back of his volume. Here, Greene’s representation of the recent past, like Twysden’s, was shaped by printed material, which was fashioned and incorporated into his own personal record.

This brief survey of four different annotators shows the multifarious ways that readers might choose to represent revolutionary events in their almanacs, and also some of the differing motives they may have had for doing so. While the notes in Lilly’s almanacs were brief and astrologically inflected, Twysden kept a considered, detailed catalogue that bore witness to the times. The additions to Smith’s text produced a potted, personalized history of significant events, while Greene digested the recent past into short annual narratives. Though almanacs sought to record and frame the past, they also served as platforms for reader’s own records, records which interacted both with the content of the almanacs themselves and also with other printed material.

Thus, it seems that the people of sixteen–fifties England, far from developing ‘almost a form of amnesia’ concerning revolutionary events, actually possessed a keen appetite for material that would assist them in remembering the political and military transactions of the recent past.<sup>100</sup> This demand extended further down the social scale than just those who were likely to purchase costly, full-length histories, and is reflected in the prominence of recent military and political events in the chronologies and calendars of many Interregnum almanacs. These representations served multifarious purposes, from prognostic input or aide memoire to political tool. Though clearly not every almanac was partisan, the different events that were remembered – and the way the same events could be remembered differently – in calendars and chronologies is suggestive of the contests over memory that were circulating in ephemeral print during the sixteen–fifties.

In contrast to the period prior to the sixteen–forties, when a broad consensus among English Protestants about the meaning of the past largely negated the need for glosses that explained a particular event, the controversial, contested nature of England’s civil wars generated a need for almanacs to supply not just dates, but interpretation. The meaning of the past was fragmented, and people could no longer be relied on to recall the events that they had lived through in what was considered an appropriate manner: as the parliamentarian historian Thomas May lamented ‘*Englishmen ... in all these times of trouble, have had (to the great mis-fortune of the Common-wealth) very treacherous memories*’.<sup>101</sup> Unlike in the sixteen–sixties, when the Restoration regimes largely succeeded in monopolizing printed accounts of revolutionary events, some of the republics’ opponents produced their own distinct records of this period, contributing to a mnemonic landscape in which the meaning of the recent past remained salient, but also unstable.<sup>102</sup> Moreover, the content of these almanacs shaped the kinds of annotations that their readers made, with the emphasis on political and military affairs in turn encouraging readers to document similar events for themselves. The highly contemporary and political content of many chronologies and calendars was both the product of, and a motor for, increased public engagement with recent national events.

<sup>100</sup> Carlton, p. 344.

<sup>101</sup> Thomas May, *The Changeable Covenant. Shewing in a brief series of relation, how the Scots from time to time have imposed upon England, by their false glosses, and perverse interpretations of the Covenant* (1650), p. 1.

<sup>102</sup> On the suppression of opposition memory during the 1660s, see Neufeld, pp. 2–25.

The significance of almanacs as transmitters of the near past was clearly not lost on their contemporaries. Reflecting on the execution of Charles I in 1649, the royalist Thomas Pierce wrote that next to the magnitude of this event ‘The *Spanish Fleet*, and *Powder-plot* will lack / Their usuall *mentions* in our *Almanack*’.<sup>103</sup> It has been the contention of this paper that lending a closer eye to the nature of these ‘mentions’ can cast significant light on the mental afterlife of past events, extending the field of study beyond the analysis of lengthy printed tomes and illuminating facets of early modern memorial culture that we are only just beginning to explore.

<sup>103</sup> Anon, *Caroli* (1649), p. 11.