‘His Lands as well as Goods / Sequestred ought to be’: 
The introduction of sequestration, 1642-3.

The title of my paper is taken from a ballad called A Mad World My Masters, which was clearly written in the mid-40s but not published until the 1662 edition of Alexander Brome’s wonderful and bizarre compilation Rump. I won’t quote the whole thing¹, but these verses serve as a good introduction to my paper:

And now to such a grievous height
Are our Misfortunes grown,
That our Estates are took away
By tricks before ne’re known.

... A Monster now Delinquent term’d,
He is declar’d to be,
And that his Lands as well as Goods
Sequestred ought to be.’²

My paper this evening will be an introduction to sequestration, the process by which land, money and goods were confiscated from delinquent and recusant families during the English Civil War. It was primarily a method of redistributing wealth; reducing the revenue available for the enemy to draw upon in order to finance the military campaigns. This tactic was used by both sides, and is a brilliant example of adopting and indeed adapting elements of each other’s strategy, although with different levels of success. My paper will be split into two sections; the first will look at Parliament, and the second will briefly look at the King.

PARLIAMENT

The concept of sequestration from land and property as a legal sanction had been in use for a full half century before the Civil War broke out, so it wasn’t really a ‘trick before ne’re known’. Elizabeth’s 1593 ‘Act Against Recusants’, James’ 1604 ‘Act concerning Jesuits and Seminary Priests’ and the 1606 Penal legislation all advocated the confiscation of property and imposition of fines on non-conformists. William Laud also introduced a strand of sequestration when he began the systematic removal of obstinate priests who would not conform to his version of Christian piety in the 1630s. However, none of these policies came close to achieving the same impact as that introduced by Parliament in 1643.

To understand the significance and complexities of sequestration, it is necessary to trace it back to its source. The first piece of legislation was passed on 27th March 1643, and this is usually where references to sequestration start in the existing historiography, but that is definitely not the beginning of the story.

¹ See Appendix A for full text.
² Anonymous, A Mad World My Masters in Alexander Brome (Editor), Rump, or, An exact collection of the choycest poems and songs relating to the late times by the most eminent wits from anno 1639 to anno 1661 (London: Henry Brome and Henry Marsh, 1662), pp. 47-9 [EEBO].
I would argue that the major catalyst for its introduction was Arthur, Lord Capell of Hadham Parva in Hertfordshire.

He was born in 1604, the son and heir of Sir Henry Capell, and after his father’s death he became one of the richest men in England. Following an illustrious Civil War career devoted to the Royalist cause Parliament eventually executed him for treason outside Westminster Hall on 9th March 1649.

Ronald Hutton has described Capell as an unusually tall man, ‘prim, sober, and pious, with a rigid devotion to duty and a profound attachment to the Sacraments’; a Cavalier commander whose ‘qualifications for the post were wealth and loyalty’ rather than skill, and whose campaigns were ‘expensive, cumbersome, and predictable.’ Although he had initially been an important member of the Long Parliament and had voted in favour of the Earl of Strafford’s execution, in late 1640 and early 1641 he began to question his political allegiance. The King recognised this and bestowed a barony upon him on 5th August 1641 in a successful attempt to win his favour.

Capell was one of the Nine Lords who went to York ‘to pay a willing Obedience to His Majesty’s Command’ in May 1642, rejecting the authority of Parliament and placing themselves firmly and irrevocably within the ranks of the Royalist faction. Parliament swiftly denounced them as ‘suspected promoters of the civil war,’ and Simonds D’Ewes journal contains detailed accounts of the discussions in the Commons concerning these men. Of particular significance is his entry from 14th June, which contains the first hint of sequestration;

‘We then proceeded with the debate touching the impeachment of the 9 lords now at York with the king, in which besides the impeachment of them for their high misdemeanour of absenting themselves without license and not returning upon summons, we desired first that the lords would declare that they were causes of civil wars if any did ensue and that they would adjudge them to forfeit their estates to make satisfaction to the commonwealth.’

The Nine Lords were impeached the following day. They were accused of ‘High Crimes and Misdemeanours’ by joining the King ‘contrary to their Duty’, and their abandonment of their seats in the House of Lords was labelled contemptuous. They were tried in absentia on 19th July, were banned from sitting in Parliament, lost the Privilege of Parliament, and were to be sent to the Tower if caught. In spite of the discussion in the Commons on 14th June, the documentary evidence indicates that the forfeiture of their estates did not form part of the punishment imposed upon the Nine Lords at this time.

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3 Vernon F Snow and Anna Steele Young (Editors), The Private Journals of the Long Parliament, 2 June to 17 September 1642 (USA: Yale University, 1992) p. 64
Although there is no mention of it in the journals of the Lords or Commons, Lord Capell’s estates of Hadham and Cassiobury were raided by the Parliamentarian forces in August 1642, with the intention of confiscating all weaponry found in the houses. Lady Capell had inherited Cassiobury in 1628 upon the death of her father Sir Charles Morrison.\(^5\)

The Parliamentarians created an itemised list of all arms and armour removed from the house; a total of 315 items, including 46 muskets, 42 carbines, 24 halberds, 17 pikes, 4 barrels of powder and 2 drums, each with a pair of drumsticks.\(^6\) Details of the raid at Hadham were recorded and circulated in Sir Thomas Dacres’ pamphlet ‘A perfect diurnall of the proceedings in Hartford-shire’;

‘On munday the 29. of August a Troupe of Horse under the command of the Earle of BEDFORD, with the assistance of some Horsemen from London, marched to the Lord Capels house, where they found arms sufficient to arme about a thousand men.’\(^7\)

The raids followed the King’s Commissions of Array produced in the summer of 1642, which required ‘Persons of Honour, Reputation and Estate’ to ‘Array, Train, Arm, and Muster our Subjects’ for the defence of his person and kingdom.\(^8\) This could well explain the presence of such large quantities of arms and ammunition in the house.

The next mention of Lord Capell came in September, and I would argue that this is the origin of Parliament’s policy of sequestration. William Bushell had been travelling to Derby supposedly with the intention of presenting a petition to the King. Instead, he found himself in the Earl of Bristol’s chamber, receiving instructions to take two letters from Capell to his servants Theophilus Hide and Thomas Lad. Bushell was soon afterwards captured on the Forst Way by the Parliamentarian watch, and examined by Sir Neville Poole at Oaksey on 17th September. In a letter to William Lenthall, Speaker of the Commons, Poole described Bushell as ‘a suspicious Person’, ‘very crafty and cautious’, who had denied any knowledge of compromising documents, but was discovered to have hidden the letters by tying them ‘under his Gartering-place’. Poole enclosed Capell’s letters in his, and Lenthall presented them to the House of Lords for discussion. The first was dated 13th September, written in Derby;
‘Theophilus Hide and Tho. Lad,
I would have you deliver all such Sums of Monies as you receive, of my
Manors in the West, for Rents and Fines, and usually you bring
to Wrington, and thence to Haddam, unto such Persons as the
Marquis Hertford shall send unto you for it ... I would not have you fail to
do it.’

The second was undated;

‘I have sent another Letter to you, which is Word for Word with this,
because you may perceive I am careful that it may be done. Either of
these Letters shall be sufficient, if they come to your Hands. I think it were
fit One of you go along with the Money, when it is delivered to the
Marquis.’

Capell was instructing his servants to send the profits of his estates to bolster the
Royalist coffers. The House of Lords immediately recognised the significance of
these documents and reacted to this news of potential financial support for
Charles I by introducing the topic of sequestration;

‘Ordered, That a Conference be with the House of Commons, to
consider of some Course for the sequestering of the whole Estate of the
Lord Capell, that so the Rents may not be employed against the
Parliament.’10

On 27th September a meeting took place between representatives of both
Houses, and John Pym reported to the Commons that ‘his Rents, not only in the
West, but all England and Wales over, should be sequestered, and employed
for the Service of the Commonwealth.’

Discussion also turned to the possibility of applying sequestration to more cases
than just Capell’s; after all, he would not be the only Royalist planning to
provide Charles with financial support. On 24th September the Commons had
debated the question of delinquents’ estates, arriving at the conclusion that
they should all be used to finance the Parliamentarian cause, and relieve the
burden of taxation placed on the population;

‘Whereas this Kingdom and Commonwealth hath been put to a great
and vast Charge, by Delinquents, and an ill-affected party; which, if it
be not discharged by them and their Estates, must necessarily lie as a
Burthen upon the good subjects that have no way deserved it; it is
therefore thought fit, and Ordered, by the Commons, assembled in
Parliament, That the Houses, and Parks of Delinquents, or ill-affected

Persons, shall not be plundered, pulled down or destroyed; but reserved for the Benefit and Advantage of the Commonwealth; they being now considered rather as the Houses of the Commonwealth, than of the Delinquents; and accordingly to be preserved, as they may yield most Profit and Advantage unto it.'

However, this was easier said than done, and the Commons appointed a committee ‘to consider of some Way’ to implement it. The matter was not discussed again in any detail until 14th October, when we get a clearer picture of exactly who would be targeted by the policy;

‘Resolved, &c, That the Fines, Rents, and Profits, of Archbishops, Bishops, Deans, Deans and Chapters, and of such notorious Delinquents, who have taken up Arms against the Parliament, or have been active in the Commission of Array, shall be sequestered for the Use and Service of the Commonwealth. The Manner of the Sequestration is referred to the Committee for sequestring the Estate of the Lord Capell.’

The plans to construct a national ordinance for sequestration continued to gain strength over the following weeks, and on 22nd December ‘[a]n Ordinance for sequestring the Estates of Delinquents’ was read; this was the first draft of what would eventually become the sequestration ordinance. The committee received the following order from the Commons on 3rd February;

‘This Committee is to consider of the Sequestring and Seizing the Estates, real and personal, of all such Persons as have been, are, or shall be, in actual War or Arms against the Parliament; and have Power to sequester their Estates accordingly; and to appoint Sequestrators; and to make Allowances to such as shall be employed in this Service; and to use all other Means as shall be necessary for the effectual Executing and Performing this Service ... And have the Power to send for Parties, Witnesses, Papers, Records, &c.’

The Commons discussed the sequestration ordinance again on 2nd March, and Sergeant Wilde presented a draft copy on the 7th. Keen to press ahead with its implementation, the House voted 51 to 42 to pass it, without re-committing it for further amendment. It was presented to the House of Lords on 17th March by William Strode, who returned with the message that ‘the Lords

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will send Answer by Messengers of their own.' They did so at 3pm, informing the Commons that they would discuss the matter next Thursday morning, 'so that their Lordships may agree with the House of Commons therein', thus reassuring them of their full support.

27th March 1643 is arguably the most important day in the study of sequestration. With the approval of both Houses of Parliament, ‘An Ordinance for sequestring notorious Delinquents Estates’ was passed and became law. However, I must emphasise that sequestrations had been taking place in the weeks leading up to this, so this did not mark the complete beginning of the process, just the beginning of the formally sanctioned seizures.

The sequestration ordinance is a lengthy and detailed document of 5,300 words, divided into nine primary paragraphs addressing particular aspects of sequestration. The rest of the document contains the names of the 753 Parliamentarian peers and gentlemen, known as sequestrators, nominated to sit on the 69 regional Committees established to oversee and enforce sequestration in the counties, arranged alphabetically by location.

The Committee of the Lords and Commons for Sequestration was based in Camden House in London. For the sake of brevity I refer to this as the central committee, to distinguish it from the county committees, which were established across England, including within predominantly Royalist areas such as Shropshire and Northumberland, with one notable exception; at this stage no sequestrators were appointed within Oxfordshire, for obvious reasons. Certainly the number of sequestrators appointed within the ‘Royalist’ areas of the country were fewer in number than in the areas where Parliament enjoyed greater support – for example, 6 were appointed in Northumberland, compared with 29 in Norfolk – but credit must be given to Parliament’s desire, however unlikely it may have seemed at the time, to enforce their policy across the whole country. The membership of these county committees usually included MPs, deputy lieutenants, High Sheriffs, members of the local gentry, private gentleman and often wealthier tradesmen – all loyal to Parliament, of course. The committees would in turn appoint appraisers and agents to undertake the actual sequestrations.

Sensible of the ‘heavy pressures and calamities which now lye upon this Kingdom’ because of the ‘mischievous and restlesse designes of Papists and ill affected persons … still so prevalent with His Majesty’, Parliament was concerned that ‘nothing can be expected, but ruine and desolation.’ Consequently, and for the ‘security of all that we have or can enjoy,’ they announced that,

'It is most agreeable to common Justice, that the estates of such notorious Delinquents, as have been the causers or instruments of the publicke calamities, which have been hitherto imploied to the formenting and nourishing of these miserable Distractions, should be converted and applied towards the supportation of the great charges of the Common-wealth, and for the easing of the good Subjects therein, who have hitherto borne the greatest share in these Burthens.'

John Schroeder has claimed that ‘sequestration ... was resorted to only in cases involving the most disliked supporters of the King.’ However, the list of people who would face sequestration was a lengthy one, encompassing many different groups and not just those closest to the King; Bishops, Deans, Deans and Chapters, Prebends, Archdeacons, all other Royalist clergy, in addition to secular Royalists who have or will raise arms against Parliament, those who willingly contribute money, horses, ammunition or other goods to support the Royalist cause, those who undertake or oversee the Royalist sequestration of Parliamentarian supporters (more on this shortly) or impose taxes upon the same, and all those who have taken an oath or act of association against Parliament. Also included were all Catholics, irrespective of whether they were actively involved in the war or not. Anyone classed as a delinquent would lose their whole estates, and Catholics would lose two thirds.

The agents appointed by Parliament to oversee sequestration were ordered ‘to take and seize into their hands and custodies ... all the Money, Goods, Chattels, Debts, and personal Estate, ... Mannors, Lands, Tenements, and Hereditaments, Rents, Arrerages of Rents, Revenues, and profits of all and every the said Delinquents.’ They must also seize all documentation from the land and estates, including court rolls and account books. Similarly, a large part of their duties was to keep detailed and accurate inventories and accounts concerning all property, goods and money that passed through their hands. Conscious of the potential for fraud and embezzlement, Parliament ordered them to pay all money they received to the Guildhall in London. Their accounts would be subject to sporadic investigation, and any collector found to be negligent or disobedient would face a fine of £20, or even imprisonment, depending on the severity of the offence. The sequestrators were also given the power to call for military support ‘to compel obedience to this Ordinance, where any resistance shall be made.’

Crucially, this ordinance only refers to the confiscation of goods, estates, rents and profits, all of which would become the property of Parliament and be used to support the Commonwealth. There is nothing in this ordinance referring to the sale of this confiscated property. However, the instructions printed on 11th April and distributed to the county committees stated that,

‘Upon the seizure of the Goods, Chattells, or personall estates of any the sayd Delinquents, you are to cause an appraisement thereof to be made by indifferent persons and a true Inventory thereof to be taken, and to convey the same Goods into some safe place, or places within the County or elsewhere to be kept untill they may conveniently be sold at as great Rates as you can, with all convenient expedition, and in the Market where conveniently it may be.’

This document was produced by the central committee, not by Parliament. Presumably at some point during the fortnight between the ordinance being passed and the instructions being printed, they suddenly realised the logistical nightmare of storing all the confiscated property for long periods of time, and therefore decided to sell them. It would solve the storage problem, and also generate more money than simply confiscating rents and profits would provide.

So, if you wanted to sequester someone, how would you do it? The first step required the identification of potential targets. The county committees were in a stronger position than the central committee to gather incriminating evidence, as they could draw upon local knowledge of established recusant families, gossip concerning the political allegiance of delinquents, and the proximity of officials and tenants who could contribute financial information concerning the value of estates.

This created the opportunity for local individuals to seek financial gain by providing information which was potentially false, about as many people as possible – informants would receive a small financial reward. It also allowed personal grievances to play a role, and undoubtedly some informers used the sequestration committee as a method of seeking revenge. The system allowed anyone to present information; there was no written restriction concerning class, gender or occupation. Consequently an aggrieved tenant at odds with his landlord had the unique opportunity of denouncing them and potentially witnessing their partial or complete sequestration. After the county committee’s enquiries had been completed, and a charge of either delinquency or recusancy had been levied against the unfortunate individuals, an order was produced for the sequestration of their estate and property.

The sale of sequestered property would take place within 10 days of seizure in the nearest local market place as a deliberate spectacle of humiliation. The victim’s neighbours and perhaps even tenants would be able to purchase their belongings and revel in the entertainment of their misfortune. The sequestrators were also given the power to rent the lands, instead of selling them, to suitable

19 TNA SP 20/1, pp. 2-4.
Parliamentarian tenants. However, the rents and profits of the estates would still be gathered by the sequestrators and sent to London.

Unsurprisingly, most people weren’t too happy about having their property forcibly removed, or being thrown out of their homes. To quote a document summarising the 1643 legislation, produced by Sir William Boteler, the de facto head of the Bedfordshire county committee, ‘Any person grieved with the actions of the sequestrators or Committees may appeal to both houses of parliament, or the Committee of Lords and Commons for sequestrations.’

There is so much more I could say about this, but I shall restrain myself and only add that another sequestration ordinance was passed on 18th August 1643. The category of ‘delinquent’ was now extended to include tax evaders, anyone who had concealed delinquents, Jesuits, Catholics or their property from sequestrators, and anyone over the age of 21 who refused to take an oath renouncing the Pope’s supremacy.

However, a more positive clause was the introduction of an allowance of 1/5 of the value of the sequestered estate to the wives and children of delinquents, recognising that they should not be held accountable for the sins of others. This would not apply to women sequestered as delinquents in their own right, but the majority of women encountering sequestration would be because their husbands were sequestered. This clause had not been present in the first draft of the ordinance presented to the Commons on 6th July, but they considered it necessary and recommended its inclusion.

These are the two main pieces of sequestration legislation passed by Parliament in 1643, and they form the basis of the campaign which would continue through the war and into the Interregnum. But what did the King think about this? What was he doing?

THE KING

The short answer is, he was implementing his own sequestration policy, targeting the estates of Parliamentarian supporters. There just isn’t the same paper trail surviving, so it’s very difficult to piece together what he was doing, or how his sequestration policy was organised, but I’m going to try. I honestly don’t know exactly when it started, and he didn’t have the resources to enforce it as widely as Parliament, but nevertheless it did have an impact. I’m going to be dipping into 1644 towards the end of this section.

It’s hard to tell what he was doing in 1642, but 1643 got off to a great start with his 8th March ‘Proclamation forbidding all assessing, collecting, and paying of
the twentieth part’, in which he denounced Parliamentarians as a ‘Traiterous Association’ and warned that,

‘We are resolved to grant out Our Commissions for the seizing of the Goods, and the sequestring of the Estates of all such persons as shall rebelliously disobey us.’

He was certainly well aware of Lord Capell’s sequestration. In retaliation, and a deliberate display of irony, his response to Parliament was to appoint Lord Capell as the controller of Royalist sequestration in the strongholds of Worcestershire, Shropshire, Chester and north Wales. On 3rd April 1643 Capell produced a notice to be displayed in all towns and read in all churches within those counties;

‘... whereas there are divers Persons within the Counties and Parts abovesaid, notoriously known to be disaffected to His Majestie, his righteous Cause, and his present Service, whose Estates are obnoxious and lyable to Seizure and Confiscation ... when and as often as any such seizure shall be made, the same shall not otherwise be done but by particular Warrant and Direction of His Majestie, or such who shall have the immediate Command in Chief of the Forces of these Counties and Parts: And that due care shall be had and taken for the punctuall Inventorying and valuable Apprizing of such Moneys, Goods, Cattell, or other Estate which shall be so seized, to the end that Accompt may be given thereof to His Majestie.’

Unlike Parliament, who had ordered a general confiscation of property from a wide range of people, Capell’s notice reveals that the King was personally involved in ordering the sequestrations of individuals, and of enquiring about the accounts. Charles confirmed his involvement by producing his own proclamation five days later, in response to Parliament’s 27th March ordinance.

He condemned the ordinance as ‘pretended’ and ‘contrived’, ‘unlawfull and unwarrantable’, causing ‘great Violence, Spoyle ... and Plundering. He lamented that,

‘[T]he whole Estates reall & personal of diverse of Our Subiects, most of them not named, but described, and distinguished by marks of Loyalty, are ordained to be Seized & Sequestred.’

22 Charles I, By the King. A proclamation forbidding all assessing, collecting, and paying of the twentieth part and of all weekly taxes by colour of any order or ordinances, and all entring in protestations and associations against his Majestie. [London: 1643] [EEBO].
23 Arthur Capell, Arthur Lord Capell Lieutenant Generall under the Prince his Highnesse of His Majesties forces, in the counties of VVorcester, Salop, and Chester, and the six northern counties of VVales. To all commanders, officers, and soouldiers, and to all other His Majesties subjects whatsoever, whom these presents shall or may in anywise concern [Shrewsbury: Robert Barker, 1643] [EEBO].
The members of the central and county committees were denounced as traitors, and Charles warned his loyal supporters ‘not to presume to be assistant thereunto’, or to buy, receive or dispose of any sequestered property. He concluded by,

‘Willing and commanding all Sheriffes, Maiors, Bailiffes, Iustices of Peace, Constables, and other Our Officers, and loveing Subjects whatsoever, upon their Allegiance, and the severest paines that by the Law may be inflicted upon them, not only to obey and observe carefully these Our Commands, but to be aiding and assisting to the utmost of their power, to all such persons as shall require their Assistance or protection in this behalfe and to resist and repel by force of Armes, all such as shall oppose this Our Legall Command.’

Clive Holmes has claimed that ‘Charles was particularly slow’ to sanction sequestration, and that the language in which he did so was awkward and apologetic.24 Similarly, Ronald Hutton has declared that Charles displayed a ‘marked reluctance’ to order the sequestration of Parliamentarian estates, adding that he did so ‘very slowly.’25 With the greatest respect to them both, I’m not sure I agree, because he also warned that, ‘We intend to give Order for seizing the Estates of such as shall Rebelliously disobey Us herein,’ and that offending individuals would be arrested and tried for treason.26

He certainly did not order a general seizure of Parliamentarian estates at this point, but clearly enough were taking place to make Parliament add his sequestrators to their list of delinquents in the March ordinance. Charles actually appears to have been playing a very deliberate game of revenge with his choice of victims. In February William Strode had reported to the House of Commons that the Cavalier commander Sir Ralph Hopton and a ‘multitude’ of his ‘armed Men, Horse and Foot’ had committed ‘many and sundry Outrages, Insolencies and Villainies’ in Devon. Strode complained that his house ‘hath been plundered and robbed, and his Goods violently and forcibly taken out of his House, and carried away and sold, or otherwise disposed of.’ William Strode was one of the 5 Members Charles had accused of high treason and ill-fatedly attempted to arrest on 4th January 1642.

Parliament’s response was an order that ‘both the real and personal Estate of the said Sir Ralph Hopton shall be forthwith seized and sequestered,’ and

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26 Charles I, By the King. A proclamation prohibiting the assessing collecting or paying any weekly taxes, and seizing or sequestring the rents or estates of our good subjects, by colour of any orders or pretended ordinances of one or both Houses of Parliament (Oxford: Leonard Lichfield, 1643) [EEBO].
Strode was granted ‘such Reparation ... as may be proportionable to the Loss by him sustained.’

Charles retaliated with another high profile victim. On 10th April, only two days after his proclamation, the House of Commons sent William Strode to the House of Lords with ‘an Ordinance for the Lord General [the Earl of Essex] to take and seize the Estate of the Lord Capell, because the King hath seized the Estate of the Lord General.’

On 17th October 1643 Edmund Prideaux, a member of the county sequestration committee in Devon, reported to the Commons that his home had been plundered, ‘and his wife & children driven from there.’ The family retreated to London, and his made his grievances known to Parliament.

Charles’ sequestration policy continued well into 1644; on 8th October the Lords and Commons both agreed that Benjamin Valentine, the MP for the Cornish rotten borough of St Germans, should receive £100 as recompense because he ‘is hindered by the Enemy from receiving any Profit of his Estate in the County of Chester, whereby he is deprived of all Livelihood.’

This reference to Chester is a nice little segue into a couple of documents I found a few weeks ago at the British Library, which provide clearer details about how his sequestration policy was organised. I should point out that they’re definitely not the originals, just copies either made by or given to Randle Holme, the Royalist Mayor of Chester.

On 7th November 1643, from his court in Oxford, Charles wrote to the Mayor and Aldermen of Chester.

‘Wee doe hereby give unto you or any foure or more of you ... full power and authority ... from time to time during our will and pleasure, to seise and take into your hands and custody the Lands and hereditaments, as alsoe the goods and Chattells of ... Sir William Brereton and William Jolly and all others in actuall rebellion against us, or adhering or contributing to the Rebells, lying and being within the County of our Citty of Chester or elsewhere within our County Palatine of Chester within five miles of our said Citty and all arrerages of rents due for the same lands ... All which moneyes wee doe hereby require and authorise you, or any such foure or more of you ... to dispose and distribute to and for the maintenance of our garrison in our Citty and Castle of Chester.'

29 TNA SP 20/1, pp. 108-9.
I haven’t had time to work out what his problem was with William Jolly, and I know basically nothing about him other than that he sat on some Staffordshire county committees during the war. However, we all know who Brereton was; he was commander-in-chief of the Parliamentary forces in Cheshire, and had cleared much of the county of its Royalists in 1643. He was also actively involved with enforcing Parliamentary sequestration, sitting on the Chester, Cheshire and Staffordshire county committees. We can certainly say that Brereton was another example of Charles’ deliberate revenge targets.

Charles also assured his newly appointed sequestrators that ‘wee will take care to protect and keepe harmelesse your persons and estates for whatsoever you shall doe’, recognising that Parliamentary retaliation was highly probable.31

The next document is easily one of the most important ones I’ve ever come across. It was written by Charles on 5th February 1643/4, and addressed to ‘our deere nephew Prince Rupert’;

‘You shall give power and Authority to the said Commissioners to sequester and take into their hands for our use the Estates and Goods of all such persons within the said Counties as have bine in Armes against us and are not by us pardoned or which are now in Armes against us or that have bine Abettors Ayders and assistants to the present rebellion and to appoint Collectors and receivors of the Rents and revenues of any such person and to make sale of their Goods for the maintenance of our forces aforesaid.’

So far, so usual. However, it also contained this instruction:

‘You shall give power to the said Commissioners … to assure all such as have lent Money Armes or horses or have been otherwise Contributing or that have taken upp Armes to support the Rebellion against us of our free and Gracious Pardons … upon such Condition and for such sommes as the said Commissioners in there care of us and of our service shall Contract with the parties … for our Pardon of restitution of their Lands … and Chattells and all other Interests whatsoever.’32

Charles was offering people he had sequestered the chance to regain their property by paying a fine. He described this as ‘agreement and Composition made with delinquents.’

Anyone who knows anything about sequestration should also have heard of composition, because it became a key part of Parliament’s policy. It worked as Charles had described it; delinquents would pay a fine, say they were sorry,

31 BL Harley MS 2135, f 2r: v.
32 Ibid, ff. 60v:61r.
switch sides, receive a pardon from both Houses, and get their estates back. Parliament set up what would become the Committee for Compounding in October 1643, but it was not originally meant to deal with compositions, and initially only dealt with raising money for Scotland, and a few other financial problems. It wasn’t until June 1644 that they seem to have started accepting fines from delinquents. Charles wrote his letter to Rupert in February 1644. He seems to have copied Parliament’s idea of confiscating land and property from the enemy, but I think composition was his idea, and Parliament copied him following a revision in their legislation on 25th May 1644.

The reason they did this involves the Earl of Manchester. It was very common for individuals facing sequestration in 1643 and 1644 to use pre-existing kinship and friendship networks, particularly with MPs or members of the county committees, to ensure the charge was dropped. This was a fairly widespread issue, and Parliament was aware of it at the end of 1643. Even though Manchester had been appointed to oversee sequestrations in the counties of the Eastern Association in October 1643, there are numerous surviving documents revealing his interference. He assisted Lady Capell more than once, noting that she was a ‘worthy person, and my neer kinswoman’ – Lord Capell was his first cousin. Eventually his involvement in the Earl of Clare’s discharge was reported to the Lords, who informed the Commons, and they dispatched a letter to Manchester asking him to explain his actions. A letter from Thomas Knyvett to his wife Katherine on 7th April 1644 recorded that,

‘My Lord of Manchesters Power is much spurnd at, & great debate hath been in the house aboute him. He is much condembd for his favour & curtesy to gent: in matters of sequestration, be it right or wrong. I feare we shall have wors Justice if his power be Eclipst. God in mercy looke upon us & defend us from the Tyranny of hard harted people.’

He wrote to her again on the 12th, complaining that there had been,

‘…a great complainte yesterday, at the committe of sequestrations, against my Lord of Manchester for being to favor’able to malignants, that it was to no purpose for them to take paines, if he had power to discharge & ease at his pleasure.’

Parliament launched an investigation into his actions, and deliberated for a fortnight about the best way to stop this happening again. Recognising that they could not publicly reprimand Manchester, due to the necessity of keeping him on their side, they instead decided to amend the sequestration legislation. Their 25th May ‘Ordinance for the better execution of the former Ordinance for

33 BL Add NS 40630, f. 128r.
Sequestration of Delinquents and Papists Estates’ removed sequestrators’ ability to discharge sequestrations without the express permission of both Houses. Any sequestrations which had been discharged before this date were reinstated, and composition was introduced to provide a consistent process for everyone to go through.

Returning to Charles’ letter, it’s also extremely significant that he was giving these instructions to Prince Rupert. It shows just how important Charles considered sequestration to be as part of his general military campaign. Prince Rupert actually became known as the Prince of Robbers and Duke of Plunderland in 1644. This leads me to my final point – we need to re-evaluate what we think when we hear the term plunder. It is very common to find contemporary sources referring to soldiers plundering houses and estates as they passed through an area, and this has previously been dismissed as insubordination and theft. However, surely an alternative explanation must also be considered, perhaps not for all cases but certainly for some – what has been classed as plunder could actually refer instead to systematic and authorised sequestration carried out by soldiers and supporters of both sides.

I hope this has given a brief summary of the reasons behind Parliament’s decision to introduce sequestration in 1643, as well as the methods used by both King and Parliament to enforce their similar policies. This has been an extremely abridged version of my MA thesis, and in my PhD research I am continuing to research the development of sequestration in the years 1645 to 1660.
Appendix A

Anonymous, *A Mad World My Masters* in Alexander Brome (Editor), *Rump, or, An exact collection of the choicest poems and songs relating to the late times by the most eminent wits from anno 1639 to anno 1661* (London: Henry Brome and Henry Marsh, 1662), pp. 47-9 [EEBO].

We have a King and yet no King,
For he hath lost his Power,
For 'gainst his Will his Subjects are
Imprison’d in the Tower.

We had some Laws (but now no Laws)
By which he held his Crown,
And we had Estates and Liberties
But now they’re voted down.

We had Religion; but of late
That’s beaten down with Clubs,
Whilst that Prophanesse Authoriz’d
Is belched forth in Tubs.

We were free Subjects born, but now
We are by force made Slaves,
By some whom we did count our Friends,
But in the end prov’d Knaves.

And now to such a grievous height
Are our Misfortunes grown,
That our Estates are took away
By tricks before ne’re known.

For there are Agents sent abroad
Most humbly for to crave
Our Almes: but if they are deny’d.
And of us nothing have.

Then by a Vote ex tempore
We are to a Prison sent,
Mark’d with the Name of Enemy
Of King and Parliament.

And during our Imprisonment,
Their lawless Bulls do thunder
A Licence to their Souldiers  
Our Houses for to plunder.

And if their Hounds do chance to smell  
A man whose Fortunes are  
Of some Account, whose Purse is full,  
Which now is somewhat rare.

A Monster now Delinquent term’d,  
He is declar’d to be,  
And that his Lands as well as Goods  
Sequestred ought to be.

And as if our Prisons were too good,  
He is to Yarmouth sent  
By vertue of a Warrant from  
The King and Parliament.

Thus is our Royal Soveraigns name  
And eke his Power infus’d,  
And by the virtue of the same  
He and all His abus’d.

For by this Means his Castles now  
Are in the power of those  
Who treacherously with Might and Maine  
Do strive him to depose.

Arise therefore brave British men,  
Fight for your King and State,  
Against those Trayterous men that strive  
This Realm to Ruinate.

‘Tis Pym, ‘tis Pym, and his Colleagues,  
That did our woe engender,  
Nought but their Lives can end our Woes,  
And us in safety render.