

# PETITION AGAINST SHIP MONEY

## Berkshire Grand Jury

July 1640

The humble petition of Your Majesty's most loyal subjects, the grand jury impaneled 11 July 1640 to serve at the general assizes held for the County of Berkshire in the behalf of themselves and the rest of the County. Shows, that whereas your petitioners have been of late years, and still are, much burdened with sundry grievances of diverse natures deriving their authority from Your Majesty, but being directly contrary to Your Majesty's laws established in this, your Kingdom, the chief of these presenting themselves in a schedule hereunto annexed for redress.

Whereof, as your petitioners hoped, Your Majesty was graciously pleased about the middle of April to assemble the Great Council, commonly called the High Court of Parliament, and about three weeks after to dissolve it for want (as it seems to your petitioners) of a good agreement betwixt the two Houses. Nevertheless, since the said dissolution, to express such a fatherly care of your poor people that Your Majesty has vouchsafed by a printed declaration to invite them to the pouring out of their complaints unto your princely ear. It may therefore please Your Most Excellent Majesty to take the said particulars into your tender consideration, to give your petitioners such ease therein as in your royal wisdom be thought fit.

And whereby it may appear to all Your Majesty's subjects, and especially to those of Your Majesty's most honorable Privy Council and your officers and ministers of justice, that Your Majesty is resolved to continue unto them all their rights and liberties which they desired by their Petition of Right, and were confirmed by Your Majesty the third year of your reign. And your petitioners, as they are bound, shall continue to preserve the length and happiness of Your Majesty's said reign by their prayers and all other actions of zeal and duty.

### A Schedule of Such Grievances as Most Oppress the County

1. The illegal and insupportable charge of ship money, now these six years imposed as high as ever, though the subject was not able to pay the last year, being but a third.
2. The new tax of coal and conduct money, with the under means used to enforce the payment of it by messengers from constable.
3. The compelling some freemen, by imprisonment and threatenings, to take people's money. And others, for fear of the like imprisonment, do forsake their houses and habitations, hiding themselves in woods, whereby their families are obliged to be maintained by the parishes and harvest work undone for want of labourers.
4. The infinite number of monopolies upon everything almost the countrymen must buy. Besides the eastern part of this County, where Your Majesty's forest of Windsor is, is particularly burdened with unmeasurable inroads of the deer, which if they shall go on so for five years will leave neither food nor room for any creatures in the forest. With rigid execution of forest laws in their extremity, with the exaction of the immoderate fees by some officers under the Lord Chief Justice.

Walter Money, *The First and Second Battles of Newbury* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, and Company, 1881):100–101.