

**RIGBY (or Rigbie), ALEXANDER (1594-1650)**, Civil War officer and parliamentary radical, MP, 1640 (Wigan; both parliaments), was eldest surviving son of Alexander Rigby of Middleton Hall, Goosnargh, Lancashire (died 1621) and Alice, daughter of Leonard Ashawe, of Shaw, Lancashire (described as 1<sup>st</sup> wife in *Visitation of Lancashire 1664*, III, 245; and as 2<sup>nd</sup> wife in Henry Fishwick, *History of Goosnargh*, ped. opp. p. 141). Admitted to Grays Inn 1 November 1610; B.A. from St. John's College, Cambridge, 1614; M.A. 1615; called to Bar 19 November 1617. Was then Esquire of the Body to King James I (*Visitation of Lancashire, op. cit.*); Ancient of Grays Inn 4 May 1638 on same day as Thomas Hammond (later Lieutenant-General and member of the High Court of Justice). JP for Lancashire 1638 and then Deputy Lieutenant (CSPD, 16, 370/87; 383/56). Purchased by 1643 the Plough Patent at Sagadahock in New England and was owner of Ligonía, or Laconia, there by 1646 (John Winthrop, *Journal*, 1853 edition, I, 276; II, 186, 313-4, 390-1); Winthrop described Rigby as 'wealthy and religious' (*Ibid.*, II, 186). Rigby's wealth and lands in Lancashire were devastated by the war, as he related early in 1647: 'I have had by the enemy all my mansion houses extremely plundered, defaced and left uninhabitable & even almost all my goods in them & upon my lands taken away ... & yet during that time I have for the public service laid aside my profession formerly as profitable to me annually as my estate (as many of my countrymen know) ...' (Tanner MSS. 59/2, 6832). There can be no doubt that Rigby was motivated altruistically. He adds: 'I have never suffered any of my country's money to come into my own hands ... I had ... four weeks' pay ... this being all that ever I received from the public for two years' service as a commander of horse & foot & sometimes of several regiments at once.' (*Ibid.*) Elected to both parliaments in 1640, Rigby's great fame as a lawyer brought him onto his first parliamentary committee almost immediately, 3 December 1640, to consider the judicial abuses of the Star Chamber and other courts (CJ, II, 44b), for which committee he made a legal report (CSPD, 1640-1, 455-6). A fortnight later he was on a committee inquiring into Laud (CJ, II, 52a; CSPD, 1641-3, 536), and from then on Rigby was a member of so many committees that he was, whenever in London, possibly the most industrious single MP until Augustine Garland (*q.v.*) in the Rump. He delivered a speech in the House, 29 June 1641, which was printed (*Master Rigby's Speech in Answer to the Lord Finch*, 1641) in which, attacking maladministration of justice in the courts, he uttered sentiments which encapsulate the code of the radicals in the coming years: 'Shall we be so weak men, than when we have been injured and abused, will be gained again, with fair words and compliments? Or like little children, that when we have been beaten and whipt, be pleased again with sweet meats? O no, there be some birds that in the summer of a parliament will sing sweetly, who in the winter of persecution, will, for their prey, ravenously fly at all, upon our goods, nay seize upon our persons ... and now shall not some of them be hanged, that have robbed us of all our propriety? ... foolish pity, foolish pity ... (let us) become not so merciful, that to the generality [the whole Kingdom] we may grow merciless.' (*Ibid.*)

Rigby's military career began with the War itself. In company with John Moore the regicide and Ralph Asheton, his two closest Lancashire colleagues (Moore being married to his second cousin and Asheton being his immediate neighbour), Rigby announced to Speaker Lenthall, 25 June 1642, that they had secured the powder and match at Manchester, and, as Deputy Lieutenants, had mustered and trained troops in Lancashire, quickly outnumbered the royalists under Lord Strange, agreed a mutual partial disbandment with him, intercepted a royalist letter of intrigue

and hindered a plot – all on their own initiative (printed in *Several Letters from the Committees in Severall Counties ... Read ... June 27, 1642*, pp. 2-4). Rigby was commissioned a Colonel, and his military success is remarked upon by Whitelocke (*Memorials*, 1753 edition, 77b) as being ‘the more discoursed of because Rigby was a Lawyer’. For, 25 September 1643, Rigby scored a signal victory by capturing Thurland Castle and 400 prisoners, and ‘totally routing’ the royalists after a seven week siege (*A True Relation of the Great Victory Obtained ... in Lancashire*, 20 November 1643; being a publication of Rigby’s letter to Speaker Lenthall of October 17). One of Rigby’s best-known exploits was his unsuccessful siege of Lathom house, described at length by a royalist who was present (Harleian MSS. 2043, ff. 1-7), who speaks sarcastically of Rigby’s sternness in negotiation: ‘it not beseeming Mr. Rigby’s greatness to remitt any thing of his former rigour’ (*Ibid.*, f. 6). Despite Prince Rupert’s advance, Rigby appears only to have raised his siege because he was ordered to (CSPD, 1644, 174). In 1644, Rigby’s house was established as part of a postal route for parliamentary communication with Scotland (CSPD, 1644, 28-9; 1644-5, 170). Rigby was prominent on the Lancashire Committee who in 1645 were sending troops to the aid of Sir William Brereton, Bart., who was apparently a near relative of Rigby (CCC, 2389) in Cheshire (Add MSS. 11,332, ff. 33, 36b, 37a). Rigby had meanwhile been named Reader at Grays Inn and continually had to be respited (*Pension Book*, 345, 350, 364, 365, 368, 369), and from 1642 till his death never found time to teach law there as his Inn wished. In 1648, Rigby again rallied his country in defence of Parliament (Whitelocke, *op. cit.*, 307a), where he seems to have created a local force against all odds (Tanner MSS. 57/1, ff. 41-2; it was not his son who did this, as maintained in DNB). Rigby and the regicides Challoner, Scott, and Marten were on a committee of five or six MPs selected as friends of the Levellers in late 1648 to negotiate with John Lilburne about an Agreement of the People, though only Marten followed through with this entirely (*Clarke Papers*, II, 262; Gardiner, GCW, III, 535). Rigby was made Governor of Bolton (not Boston as in DNB; Clement Walker, *Independency*, I, 171). Rigby was named to the High Court of Justice to try the King but declined to attend. This by no means put him out of favour with the Rump Parliament, and 1 June 1649 he was made Baron of the Exchequer and began his career as a judge (Whitelocke, *op. cit.*, 405a). He was given special assignment not only to hold assizes but to act as parliamentary emissary in the West Country, which he did immediately, and 7 August 1649 wrote a long and remarkable letter to Speaker Lenthall saying ‘we have used our best care and endeavour to improve the interest of Parliament in these parts’, with detailed accounts of his activities, high praise for Sir Hardress Waller, suggestions that free quarter be abolished, and other helpful ideas to ‘infinitely tie and confirm the minds of the people to the Parliament’ (Tanner MSS. 56, ff. 89-90). Rigby’s judiciary travels exposed him to various raging epidemics, about which he had anxieties (*Ibid.*), and he and his fellow judge, Baron Yates, both caught a virulent disease at the assizes of Croydon, Surrey, and quickly died, 19 August 1650. Rigby left no will; administration was given to his son Edward in August 1650 (PCC Wills, Prob-6-25, p. 126). Rigby’s son Alexander was his Lieutenant-Colonel, and there was a cousin, Alexander Rigby of Burgh, Lancashire, who was a royalist. Rigby’s wife, Lucy, daughter of Sir Uriah Leigh, survived him. A fine miniature of Rigby by Oliver the Younger was engraved three times in the last century, when it was owned by a descendant (see Fishwick, *op. cit.*), but its present whereabouts are unknown.