

RELIGIOUS DISCONTENT



John Bunyan, 1628-1688, then a young enlisted man was, like most soldiers, familiar with the inns and brothels of the garrison.

A Reflection of the Times

Believing the established Church of England to be strongly influenced by Catholicism many Puritans attacked churches throughout the wars, destroying altars and ritual icons inside.

"several people in ye town call'd Puritans; these were greatly favoured by the Souldiers, and Religion by that means, got footing here"

Sir Samuel Luke

The large numbers of troops drawn from the Eastern Counties influenced the non conformist spiritual life of the town; it was a hot-bed of religious discontent, a reflection of the times. Rev John Gibbs took stand-in duties at the Parish Church of St Peter and St Paul and in 1646 replaced Rev Samuel Austin who had been Vicar since 1631. Gibbs went on to establish the United Reformed Church in the town after the Civil War.

John Bunyan, a friend of Gibbs, served in Colonel O'Hara's troop at the Garrison for 2½ years. The author of Pilgrim's Progress later used his connections with Matthias Cowley, from a family of booksellers and publishers in the town to publish his first works.



The Parish Church of St Peter and St Paul, circa 1800s.



Muster Roll of Captain O'Hara's company, Newport Pagnell on 17th June, 1647. Amongst the seventy-nine privates is the name of John Bunnion, (future author of Pilgrim's Progress).



Memorial to John Gibbs, URC

George Fox, an English Dissenter and a founder of the Religious Society of Friends, (the Quakers)

also resided in Newport Pagnell for a while. Rev Thomas Ford, a Presbyterian minister, was Governor Luke's cousin and Garrison Chaplain.

"...there were seven able divines in the town, two sermons every Sabbath, one every Thursday, and a chapter read and prayers every morning before placing of the guards. No one was allowed out of their house after 9 o'clock at night."

Sir Samuel Luke's letter of October 1644 to Mr Whittaker, Courtesy of Stowe Manuscripts

Like many towns the local parish records only list a handful of names on the births, deaths and marriage registers for the period, despite the doubling of the town's population.

