THE ISLAND OF LOTHINGLAND.
The fear of a Spanish invasion filled the minds of Englishmen in the momentous year, 1584, which saw the death of the Duke of Anjou and the murder of William, Prince of Orange. Events forced the queen and her privy council to make enquiries into the strength of coast defences and as to the disposition and character of the inhabitants dwelling in districts where an attempt to land might be made by Parma's troops.

The recent disturbances of Throgmorton and Noller in Norfolk and Suffolk, therefore, caused the sending of commissioners to enquire into the strength of the defences of the island of Lothing, and as to the support which disaffected persons might there give towards the attempts at landing likely to be made by an enemy. The council elected as commissioners men who on many similar occasions had shown great zeal in the prosecution of enquiries as to the supporters of the old religion and their doings. In Suffolk few had given greater support to the new doctrines and its advocates than the Jermyns of Rushbrooke, the Ashfields of Stowlangtoft and the Poleys of Boxted. It is not
surprising, then, to find that the commission appointed for the above purpose consisted of Robert Jermyn of Rushbrooke, his brother-in-law Robert Ashfield of Stowlangtoft, Robert Wrote of Gunton and Thomas Poley, of whom one, only, Wrote of Gunton, was a resident of the island.

Ministers, churchwardens, bailiffs and constables of every town and parish within the island were summoned to appear that the commissioners might learn what defences the island possessed and how it might be protected against "an offending enemy," by peopling the same with Godfearing loyal subjects. Bulwarks, blockhouses and beacons were examined, re-erected or restored, and a survey, or "plat," was made of the whole island to accompany the commissioners' report, issued from the home of the Jermyns, 27 June, 1584.

The report is here printed as in the original* both in spelling and punctuation. Some of the expressions used are of peculiar interest, e.g., "the streightest and sholdest places bine Navigable," for the narrowest and shallowest places are navigable: "Meteth them within a flighte shoote" for joins them within an arrow's flight: "cutt thorowgh agayne withoute greate charge," for cut through without any great difficulty: "Eaten up of the sea," for eaten up by the sea; "to be reared of Newe," for to be reared anew.

Henry Jerningham, owner and occupier of the late priory of St. Olave's, Herringfleet, and its possessions, had power and influence over all the recusants of the island. John Jerningham had assisted in the Norfolk rising and had concealed the Jesuit, Edmund Bedingfield, at Corton in a house then occupied by John Wentworth. John Hubbard of Pakefield, also one of

the leaders in the Norfolk rebellion, dwelt within the island at Pakefield. These appear to have been the leaders of the Roman Catholics of the district. The commissioners seem to have looked with the greatest suspicion upon John Jerningham of Belton, and speak of his doings with particular emphasis.

Finally the commissioners emphasise the fact that the safety of Yarmouth depended upon the safe keeping of the island.

V. B. Redstone.

[Survey of the Musters and Military Defences of the Island of Lothingland, 1584.]

We receyved (right honorable) your letters of the 14 of Maye, by which yow gave us in commandement to repayre to the Islande of Lothingland, to enquire what number of able persons of all sortes be residing within that Islande, and what Armor and weapons they have for the defence of the same; what Leaders or captaynes they have that are men of skyl; what officers there be that beare rule in that Isle; what persons are newe come into that Islande; and of what disposition they be towards the service of Her Majesty; and how they stand affected to Religion, what Blockhowses, Bulwarkes, Beacons or other defences ther have bene, what nowe are and by whom the same should be maynteyned and by whose defalte they are grown in decaye.

We according to your honorable commandement and in discharge of our dueties, so farre as we could be enhabled by our selves and suche other good helps as we assumed unto us; have made enquire, not secretly or with a fewe, but conventing all the Ministers and Churchwardens, all the highe and petit constables of everye towne within that Islande before us, and by them and our owne views considering all the particularities of your Lordshippes commandementes as well for the Scite of that Isle, the weakness and the strength of yt, howe it is, and howe it may be made, and with howe little charge, for defending it self and offending the enemye, as well by the inwarde means of popeling this Islande with men truly fearing God, dutifullly serving her Majestie, and ioyning togerther in love, readye even with one harte upon any attempte to defend themselves and their Countrie: as by all outward devises
of natural or forced strengthe: Have nowe and that with as con-
venient speede as we might made a certificatt: wherein your Lord-
shipps maye at large se the state of that place. And because it
seemeth unto us that your Lordshipps would have us to enforme
what by our enquirye we thynke further to be done for the mayn-
tenaunce of this Isle in good governement and sueretie against all
events: we are not able to consceyve (the Bulwarke Blockhowse
and Beacon being erected and furnished the people taught by good
Ministers governed by good Justices served by good inferior
officers and God being with it) that the enemye can prevayle against
yt.

We have also sent herewith unto your Lordshipps a true (though
rude) platte of the whole Islande wherein it may please you to con-
sider the better of all our several informacions, both of sea, freshe
water, and firme land.

Our certifieng your Lordshipps of places strong or weake, and
wayes to repayre and contynue the same we deliver upon our owne
view and knowledge. Our informacion of persons we have receyved
from the reporte of men worthie creditte and that under their hands
and hand wrighting. And so leaving the more weightie considera-
cion of theses Causes to your graver wisdomes and praying God to
bless all your Counsells and endeavours turning the issue of them to
the glory of His name, the conforte of Her Majestie and the con-
tynuauence of this our happie peace both in Churche and common
weale We recommend our selves and our best services to your
contynuall commaundements and so verie humbly do take our
leaves. From Rushbrooke this 27 of June 1584.

Your good Lordshipps ever verie
duetifull and at commaundement.

Rob[er]te Jermyn [of Rushbrooke]
Robt Ashefild [of Stowlangtoft]
Robt Wrote [of Gunton]
Thomas Poley [of Boxted]

ADVERTISEMENTSFOR THE ISLAND OF
LOTHINGLAND VIDE LICET.

The sceat of ye Islande and the strength it hath by nature.

Im primis the islande is in circuite betwene 29 and 30 myles yt
contayneth 16 Paryshe: it is environed nere 20 miles towards
decede with a great ryver and other freshe waters, which be in
some places aboute eighte score yardes over, and some places more,
and some places less. And in the wyde waters, the depth of some places foure fadome, most of twoe or three fadome, some places are sholder. But the streightest and sholdest places bine Navigable for lighters of greate burden. Other parte thereof is environed with Yermothe Haven which ebbeth and floweth and meteth with the saide freshe waters, and is in some place a myle broade, and in some places deeper and in other some sholder. But Navigable as afforesaide, where it is most shold. And where the waters be sholdest yt is compassed with Marshes of greate breadth on both sydes the River. And the mayne Sea environeth the saide Ilande abowe sixe myles, and meteth with the saide waters at the one ende of the Islande, and meteth them at the other ende within a flighte shooote where the ground is verie lowe and was an havens mouthe sometime. And maie (as yt semeth) in a shorte space be cutt thorowgh agayne without anie greate charge. And the passages in to and owte of the Islande, are verie easely to be kepte. And so the Islande semeth to be of verie greate defence, for yt selue, both agaynst the Sea and the lande. For none canne come to yt from the Sea in the nighte tyme, neyther in the daie time, without sustenaunce of the Islande, yt it bee planted for defence, as it was in Kinge Henrie the eights his daies, by reason of the sandes in the Sea, which be as a wall to the same havenge a Roade for shippes within.

Meanes for further defence.

The meanes for owtewarde defence, in the judgement of the wiser sorte are to have the places of defence reduced to their ancyyent strengthe, even such as were in Her Maiesties Fathers daies, provyded to be contynued videlicet—the thre olde Bulwarks to be reared of newe, at the Charge of the Islande, and Countrie adiacent. The blockehouse likewise (beinge now eaten up of the sea) which was so planted, as yt did beate the southe and north roade to be builte of newe and so planted, as yt maie serve most to annoye, and then the Bulwarks and Blockehouse (beinge storred with a convenient proportion of Ordinaunce) cannot (in our pore judgements) but make a stronge resistaunce against all attempts of Invasion from Sea. Which Ordinaunce we are humble suitors for the Islande unto all your good Lordshippes that you will bemeanes for them unto Her Majesty that they maie bee once furynshed of, and they bee bounde for ever after to mayntayne them at their owne and the Countries charge because their olde are verie few, and utterly unservisible.

There were by the Lorde Marques of Northampton (his direction being sent thether, in E.6 his daies to vieue the estate of that Islande as we are informed), sett up upon the Clyffe by Laystofe, next the
sea, twое Beacons, to this ende that yf there were a decerninge of a number of sayle at sea, that then onelye one Beacon shoulde be fyred, that the countrie mighte but putt themselves in readiness. But yf the sayd number of sayles made offer to lande then both shoulde bee fyred that then they mighte come prepared to resyste which was a verie politique and necessarye devyce. But now one of them is pulled downe (beinge indeede verie olde and rotten as is infourmed), and a wyndemyll set upp in the place of it by a copy-holder (as we are likewyse enfourmed). We thincke the Councell of that honoroble man worthie observance and we cannot allowe the practise of that copyholder. An other Beacon therefore in that place for the former reason wee thinck verie necessarye.

The number of able men there residing.

The number of the men between sixty and sixteen are 727 and their names and qualitye of service shall appeare unto your Lordships by the books of musters which we send you herewith.

Their armor and weapon.

The armour and weapon which they are charged with by Statute and supplie are corseletts furnyshed 26, Almayne Ryvetts and Coats of plate furnyshed 39, callivers furnyshed 46, bowes furnyshed 81, besides much broken armour and weapon as maie appeare by the books.

Captaynes.

Captaynes or Leaders fitt to be credited with that Charge, dwellinge in the Islande and being men of skill we know none but one Mr. Ruthall.

The fertility of the Islande.

The Island is verie fertile and yeldeth stoare of Corn Cattall and other victuall able to mauntayne itself and to helpe others, so as the strength is greater to the possessor.

Traytors have sought to possesse this Islande.

The strength and fertility of this Islande are suche, as Throckmorton, Noller and manie other their confererates did plot to possesse it for their owne saffetie, and for bringinge in of forren powre. And they appointed to make a forte in a specyall place of yt. And Noller seated himselfe neste to the stoare house for powder in Yarmouth, to the ende, that when he saw the forren power readye to invade, he might set fyre on that stoar house, that it shoulde neyther have bine an ayde to the Towne nor the Islande. This was confessed by one of the confederates (as we are infourmed).
The chief possessioners in that Islande.

The Islande is half a hundred of itselfe, and Henrie Jerningham Esquier is lord thereof, and hath one great house that was an abbey, and divers manours, namelye Lastofe and others there and all the recusants of that Island bee within his distresse.

John Jernyngham of Somerlayton, whoe was indighted for the late treason in Norfolk, and pardoned for yt, was well housed in the saide Islande, which was sithens conveyed to Edmunde Bedingfelde esquier, whoe is known to be a Recusant. And that house is nowe possessed by one John Wentworthe, a common attorney, whether as fermour or owner the countrye knoweth not.

James Hubbarde [of Pakefield] whoe was a confederate of the Treason in Norfolk and was condemned for misprision of treason, hath inheritance in this Islande.

Robert Jetter, an obstinate Recusannte, hath his house, and almost all his living there.

George Harvye, late steward to the lord Morley, that fledde owte of the Realme, hath his living there, and verie evill accompted of concerninge Religion.

One Robert Baspole of Popish behaviour, and latelye charged with hearinge of mass, hath his cheife living there.

John Hoo gentleman, John Wentworth gent. Mr. Bate, a notorious evyll man, Mr. Malyne, John Baker, Mr. Drurie, Mr. Rookwood, Mr. Waters and Anthony Mighills, men suspected in religion, which have lately come into this Islande there to inhabit.

Ye governemente of ye Islande.

Ther is a Justice of peace dwelling in the same Islande, named John Jernegam of Belton esquire. In tyme of his governing there, Religion, and the honest professors of yt, have had no comforte by him, but rather greavaunces. Sone after he was made a justice, he displaced and vexed a chief Constable named John Arnold, a man of good deserte, allowed and commended by all other Justices of the Shire, and placed in the same Islande, by the consent of more than theirtie justices at one great Assemblie, aboute specialls service of Her Majestie, and by the liking and good allowaunce of the late Lord Keper.

He hath greatly favoured the evyll sorte of people, and hath neglected to punishe common Ryoters, when he hath bene enformed of their evyll dealings.

He placed one Frenche who is a conning daangerous man of Popish affection in the office of cheif Constable which Frenche is also greatly suspected, of conveighing of Bolte the Bishoppe of Norwich his man a trayterous Seminarist.
The loose lyvers have gotten such comforte under his government as they growe very bolde in common and apparaunt Ryott.

He hath inquired how many honeste professors there be of Religion in Leystoffte, and hath spoken of a number certeyne, and misliked that any of them, should beare any office in the church or in the town.

He greatly favoureth Mr. Hoo and other evyll men, and when matters falle evyll owt against them, he then perswadeth and draweth quietness for them without correction, or regard of glory to God, honour to Her Majesty or happiness to the people. And thereby he enboldneth the lewde sort, that one of Hoo his men did strike a constable upon the face in his presence. And Hoo sued a constable, for comyng into his howse, who came at the intreaty of Hoo his man (being arrested with proces for the peace) that Hoo might undertake for his forthcoming.

He tooke the examinacions of Frenche for the scape of Bolt the Seminariye prieete but never certified them.

For Yearmouth.

This Islande is so to helpe Yearmouth being a friend, or so to hurt it being an enemye, as that Yearmouth semeth to be of small accompte without it for in our Judgements (and some experience ther was in the Norfolk Rebellyon in Edward the sixte his reigne that might justifie our opinion) if the enemye should possess this Island, Yearmouth coulde not holde out one daye.


[Endorsement]:

From Sr Roberte Jermyn,  
Sr Roberte Ashfeld  
and others.

They have taken a survey of the Islande of Lothingeland and send a plotte thereof unto their Lordshipps.

[Addressed]:

To the right honorable etc ; our very singular good Lords: the Lords and others of her Majesties most honorable privy Councill.