

Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and Natural History.

THE ISLAND OF LOTHINGLAND, 1584.

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 thorough agayne without anie 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

*S. P. Dom. Eliz. Vol. 171, No. 62, I and II, 63.

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 commaundement to repayre to the Isle 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 Blockhouses, 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 commaundement and in discharge of our dueties, so farre as we could be enhabled by our selves and suche other good helpes 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 commaundementes 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 peopling this Islande with men truly fearing God, duetifully serving her Majestie, and ioyning together 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 convenient speede as we might made a certificatt: wherein your Lordships maye at large se the state of that place. And because it seemeth unto us that your Lordships would have us to enforme what by our enquirye we thinke further to be done for the mayntenaunce of this Isle in good government and sueretic against all events: we are not able to consceyve (the Bulwarkes 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 Lordships a true (though rude) platte of the whole Islande wherein it may please you to consider the better of all our several informacions, both of sea, freshe water, and firme land.

Our certifieng your Lordships 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 consideration of thes 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 comforte of Her Majestie and the contynuaunce of this our happie peace both in Church 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 Lordships ever verie
duetifull and at commaundement.

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

ADVERTISEMENTS FOR THE ISLAND OF LOTHINGLAND VIDELICET.

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 containeth 16 Paryshes: it is environed nere 20 miles towardes the lande with a greate 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 depthe 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 deaper 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 abowte 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 shoote 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 selfe, 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 sufferaunce of the Islande, yf it bee planted for defence, as it was in Kinge Henrie the eighte 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 ancyent 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 adjacent. 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 stoared with a convenient proportion of Ordinaunce) cannot (in our pore judgements) but make a stronge resistance against all attempts of Invasion from Sea. Which Ordinaunce we are humble suitors for the Islande unto all your good Lordshippes that you will be meanes for them unto Her Majesty that they maie bee once furnyshed 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 unservisable.

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, twoe 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 cuntrye 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 pollitique 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 copyholder (as we are likewyse enfourmed). We thincke the Councill of that honorable man worthie observance and we cannot allowe the practise of that copyholder. An other Beacone 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 confederates did plot to possesse it for their owne saffetie, and for bringine in of forren powre. And they appointed to make a forte in a specyall place of yt. And Noller seated himselfe nexte to the stoare house for powder in Yarmouthe, 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 knowen 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 Religeon.

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 speciall 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 dangerous 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 governe-
ment as they growe very bolde in common and apparaunt Ryott.

He hath inquired how many honeste professors there be of
Religion in Leystofte, 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 emboldneth 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
Seminarie prieste 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
accounte 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.

[Signed]: Rob[er]te Jermyn, Rob[er]t Ashfeld, Thomas Poley,
Robt Wrote.

[Endorsement]:

27 June, 1584.

From Sr Roberte Jermyn,
Sr Roberte Ashfield
and others.

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

[Addressed]:

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