

SIX REASONS OF THE CINQUE PORTS

SHOWING WHY THEY SHOULD CONTINUE EXEMPT
FROM PAYMENT OF SUBSIDIES.

BY THOMAS ROSS, Esq.

THE following extracts from the Black Book of the Cinque Ports (1614), shewing "why they and their members should continue exempt from payment of subsidies to his ma^{tie} according to their auncient libertyes, having never heretofore bene questioned for any such charge, and being exempt from the same by their auncient charters of graunts and conformacions made unto them by divers Kings of this Realme, and confirmed by Acte of Parliam^t," may be interesting to our numerous subscribers, who may be glad to read from the records of the Brotherhood and Guestling the position of that ancient body, as described by themselves 250 years back, in which they give a statement of their grievances as well as the services rendered by them against the formidable Armada, &c.

CONCERNING THEIR SERVICES UPON THE SEAS FOR THE DEFENCE
OF THE REALME. 1614.

THE CINQ PORTS AS APPEARETH IN THE BOOK OF ENTRYES.

And by their auncient ch^{res} are bound to fynd yearlye to the king upon fourtye dayes sumons, seven and fiftye shippes, and in them one thousand two hundred fourtye and fowre men, warelike appointed and victualled, at their owne coste, by the space of fyftee dayes, and afterwarde soe longe as the kinge shall please, upon the king's auncient allowance and futer entertainment.

This navye was aunciently called the king's navye, and was the onely navye w^{ch} the king had, and was trusted wth the transporting of the king's person when he passed the seas, and of his armyes and forces, and at the excessive charges of the Cinq Ports, in the reigns of sundry kings of this realme. This navye hath often-

tymes p^r formed very great and memorable services, and obteyned famous victoryes against the enemyes of this kingdome, and in defence and to the hono^r of the kinges and realme, as is sett forth in the chronicles, yt. being aunciently a rare thing, if the raigne of any king passed wthout some acceptable service p^r formed by the Cinq Ports by their said navye.

And in the tyme of the late most worthy Queen Elizabeth of famous memory viz., in the yeare of our Lord 1588, they did, at their owne charge, furnishe out to the sea against the Spaniards, in her then ma^{ties} service, six good servicable shippes of warre, every of them above eightye tonne, and one pinnace of thirtye tonne, upon her highness commandment, well appointed wth men and ammunicion, at their charge of foure thousand and three hundred pounds.

It^m In the yeare of our Lord 1595,¹ in the voyage unto Cales [Cadiz], they were charged to p^rvide and furnishe to sea, at their charge, foure serviceable shippes of warre, every of them of the burthen of one hundred and three score tonnes, well manned and victualled, by the space of fyve monethes, at their charge of four thousand pounds or thereabouts.²

It^m They were greatly charged wth the lodging, victualling, and transporting of sondries, at the voyage into Portugall, under General Norris and Sir Francis Drake, and into France, under the Lord Willowbye, and afterwarde under the Earle of Essex, and also at the siege of Callace.

It^m They were greatly charged in keping greate and warlike watches, and in a sort garrisons in their severall townes, viz., in some townes fiftye, and in some sixtye, in the nyght tyme, and then furnished them wth powder, shott, and other weapons, and to make fortifications against their severall townes.

It^m Upon commandem^t diverse smale fisher boates of the five ports have bene furnished wth men to sea, to search and to espye where the enemye was, and to discover what number of shippes were at sea.

The services of the five Cinq Portes, wth their navye, have bene soe profitable and acceptable to the kings of this realme, as that by the same kings the ports have bene heretofore allowed to make diverse, not dwelling in the ports capiable of the liberties of the ports, w^{ch} would contribute to the charges of the navye of the ports. But these contribucions have bene long since restrayned, and ever synce the wholl charges thereof resteth upon the ports onely.

¹ "At an assembly held in October, 1596, fyve Shippes and one pinnace are offered to Her Ma^{tye} to suppress her enemyes in suchwise as heretofore hath byn already offered with their several Burthens, Ordinance, powder and shott for that purpose.

"Rye one Shipp, 100 tonne; powder, 1000 weight; Ordnance 2 Sacres, 4 Mynions, 3 Falkons, and for every piece 20 Shott of all sorts. One Pynnace of Thirty Tonnes; Ordnance 4 Falkons; powder 300 weighte; Shott Twenty of all sorts for every piece."

I give the above because it was the largest Ship sent by the ports—it is evident that after the firing of 20 shot a return to harbour was necessary to obtain a fresh supply.

1597. They "sent out 8 Shippes and a Hoye" in Her Majesties late service towards Spayne."

In a petition to the Lord Warden in 1627, is the following—"and whereas o^r late Sovereigne Ladye Queene Elizabeth for the better maintenance of the Navye of the Cinque Ports and in consideration of the good services w^{ch} the Barons of the ports at their owne chardgs p^rformed in 1588 and 96 did by her letters patents in the 43 year of Her Raigne grant for Herself her heirs and successors, to the Barons of the said Cinque ports Townes and Members and their successors; that then their Reciants and Advocants should have and be allowed in the Exchequer out of every Fifteene granted or to be granted the some of £500 and noe more."

² One of these ships of the ports, at the taking of Cadiz, was commanded by Thomas Lake of Hastings: see Suss. Arch. Coll., vol. xiv., p. 101.

2. Concerning their services and charge of the p'vision of the king and realme.

The p'vision for fresh fyshes for the king's house, the Cittye of London, and other partes of the realme is made upon the seas betweene England and France by the fishermen of the Cinq Ports, whose fishing hath bene long tyme by the French disturbed. And of late, since his ma^{ties} raigne, by the unconscionable, unlawfull, and unreasonable fishing of the French, the same fishing hath been very much spoyled and decayed; for reformacon whereof, for the defence and maintenance of the said fishing, they of the said five Cinq Ports have bene constrained at their owne coste and charge to furnishe shippes of warre and boates to take the said Frenchmen to suppress their said disorderly fishing.

3. Concerning their services and charge upon the land in their owne townes.

The Cinq Portes being all of them frontier townes of the kingdome and nearest unto the ports beyond the seas—that is to saye, some of them being within three houres' sayle of Callice and Bulloigne, and w^{thin} foure or fyve houres sayle of Dunckerke, Neweporte, and they are, and always have bene, constrained, in tymes of danger, at their private charges to maintaine great watches, and to have in readiness great quantities and stores of powder, matche, shott, and extraordinarye quantities and numbers of armes and weapons from the charges whereof the most inferior inhabitants there are not exempted. And at this tyme greatlye charged continually by releeving infinite numbers of souldiers comynge out of Denmarke, Holland, Zealand; and further, alsoe some of the chiefest inhabitants of every of the saide ports and townes are daylye constrained to attend the arrival and going out of all passengers, neglecting their owne business, by w^{ch} service they have apprehended, and doe daily apprehend, diverse dangerous p'sons to the state, and sometymes are privately charged to send awaye the said p'sons, and to maintayne them whilst they stayd amongst them.

4. Concerning the services and charges in places remote upon the land.

The p'vision of this wholl kingdome and other nations for hearings being yearlye made upon the seas at Yarmouth, in Norfolk, for w^{ch} purpose the fishers of all the parte of this realme doe yearlye resort thither in the tyme in the free fayre there, to the end that the fishermen resorting thither may not bee burthened or unjustlye charged or oppressed by the people of Yarmouth, or any other, during there fishing there, the Cinq Ports, at there own charges by there auncient ch^{res} and libertyes, confirmed by actes of p'liament, doe send, and always have sent, two bayliffes of the sayd Cinq Portesmen, fittfull for the most parte in the marrine causes and knowen to the fishermen, whoe, together wth the bailiffes of Yarmouth, have the government of the said towne during the said free fayre.

5. Concerning the p'ticular and ordinarye charges of the severall townes of the said Cinq Ports.

The said townes lying alongst the sea coast in the narrowest and most dangerous places of the sea where it hath the greatest rage by the continuall violence thereof, have always susteyned great hurtes and losses, especially wthin the yeares last past have suffered greate inundacions and breaches of their sea banks, besyde the continuall choaking and stopping upp of their havens, harbours, and Creekes; for reparacion whereof, and to p'vent like future dangers (if it may be), they have bene constrained to bestowe very exceeding greate sumes of money about the making and repayring of the sayd sea bankes, and defending the same, and the making of other workes for the safty of the said walles, and the keping open of the said havens, w^{ch} charges, as they have bene heretofore continuall, although at some tymes more than at others, soe are they continually to be expected to happen both to the walles and havens. Besydes the said ports being for the most p'te sea townes and places of

fishing, the trade of merchandize being in manner utterlye decayed there, an excessive multitude of poore people doth daylye encrease there. And the said townes not having soe great quantities of land as other townes wherein the countreys have to helpe towards the maintaynance of their said poore by land taxes, and their abilityes by the want of trafique being greatlye decayde, the inhabitants are excessively charged wth the maintenance of their poore, farre more than any other p'tes of the Realme.

6. The inconvenience w^{ch} of necessitye must followe, if the ports be compelled to paye subsidies.

The trade of merchandize, and the libertyes and priviledges of the Cinq Ports w^{ch} were auncientlye graunted unto them by the kings of this land, to encourage men of abilitye to inhabite there for the defence of this realme, and maintaynance of the navye of the same ports; and that the inhabitants there should not be drawne from there for any affayres or services either of their owne or of the comon wealth to the weaking of the coastes, were the onely means whereby the said charge of the navye and all the said other charges and services of the said portes, by reason that the trade of merchandize there is utterlye decayed, and all the merchandize of the kingdome in substance monopolized in London, and by reason that the libertyes of the ports (the exemption from subsidies and fiteenes onely exempted), are of noe valuable benefitt, if to their sayd decayes it be added that they shalbe subject to subsidies, unto w^{ch} the portes were never heretofore pressed in the tymes of the greatest necessities of the state and kingdome, and most sercitty of peace. The consequence moste needes of necessitye followe that from thenceforth noe men of abilitye will come to inhabite so dangerouslye where they should fynde soe extraordinary charge, accompanied wth often feare of spoyle and losse of their whole estates. And those that are nowe dwelling shall be constrained to abandon their habitations to avoyde these inconveniences, and then the most dangerous frontyer coaste of the realme shalle waste the most weake p'tes of the realme and subverte to the pleasure of all foreine enemies, w^{ch} is not so safe at this tyme to be offered to the state of Fraunce and the lowe countreyes, especially in the dominions of the Archduke, standing upon noe certaintye of any settled peace; besydes those places of the Cinq Ports shall be in manner doubly charged than any other p'tes of the kingdome.

1626. Whereas the Cinq Ports and their members are injoynd by Lres from the Lords of the Councell by his ma^{ty} speciall commandment, to sett to sea two shippes of 200 tonns apeece, at their owne charge, to serve in these coastes. Three months to be ready on the last of July instant, as by their Lres appeareth. This assembly therefore, have noiated these p'sons as comitees to consider uppon the charge and course of an orderly p'ceding in p'formance of this service and p'vision of the same shippes, as also to noiate two persons to travell about the business, &c.—

Hasting.....	Mr. Brian.	Seaford.....	Mr. Elicke.
Winchelsea ...	Mr. Butler.	Pevensea ...	{ Mr. Bayliffe,
			{ W. Tompson, Gent.
Rye.....	Mr. Maior. (R. Cockeram)	Lydd	Mr. Milcocke.
Romney	Mr. Godfrey.	Fordw ^{ch}	Mr. Lukin.
Hith	Mr. Lambe.	Folkstone.....	Mr. Rennett.
Dovor.....	Mr. Pringle.	Fev'sham.....	Mr. Thurston.
Sandw ^{ch}	Mr. Wilson.	Tent'den	Mr. Beech.