

A Plan of the Fortifications of Yarmouth in 1588

BY

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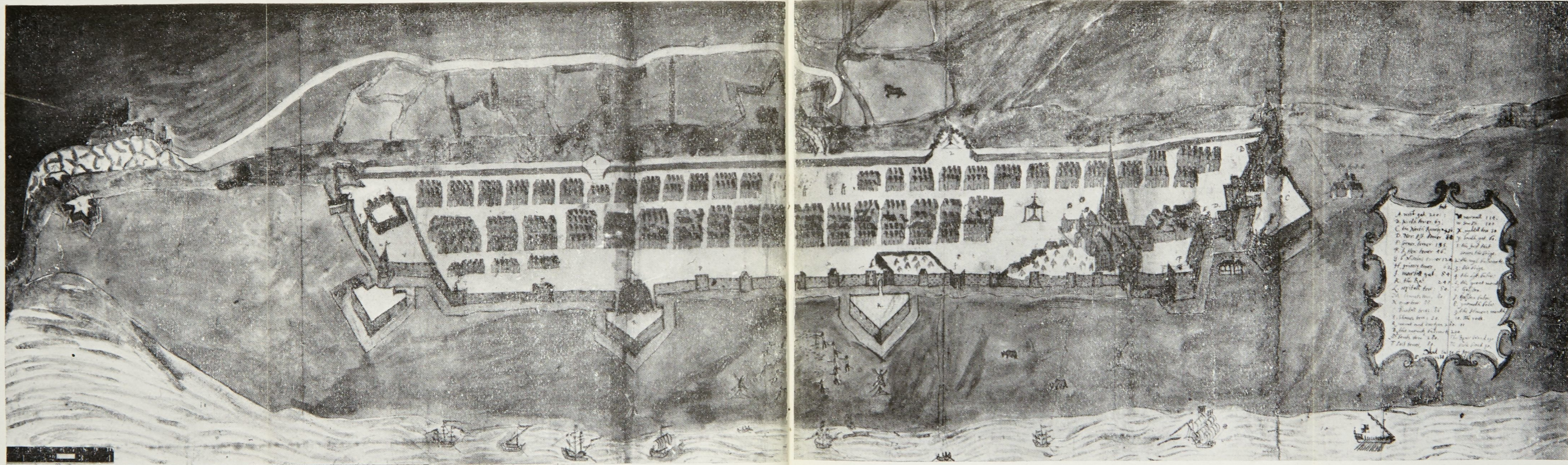
Amongst the fine collection of sixteenth-century plans in the library at Hatfield House there is one of the fortifications of Yarmouth against the threatened invasion of 1588. It is reproduced here by kind permission of the Marquess of Salisbury and of the Trustees of the British Museum, where at normal times copies may be consulted either in the Manuscript Department or in the Map Room. As in the case of the map of Weybourne Hope, recently published in these pages, both Mr. B. Cozens-Hardy and the writer simultaneously became aware of its existence.

It is on paper, mounted and coloured, with a multiple honeycomb pattern watermark. The Weybourne map, reproduced in vol. xxvii., has the same watermark; dated within a day of each other, and bearing the same initials, E.Y., the two plans are undoubtedly the work of the same draftsman and probably of the same surveyor. Though now in two separate volumes of the Hatfield collection, the earlier index numbers with which the plans are endorsed show that originally they were closely associated, together with another roughly contemporary map of the country between Yarmouth and Norwich which has not yet been published. The endorsement "Yarmouth & Waburn hope" is in a contemporary hand, while the note "Yarmouth No. 7" in a different hand, probably of the early seventeenth century, suggests that it may have formed one of a number of plans of the Yarmouth district.*

The plan has the sea at the bottom with Spanish ships and small boats, from which an invading party has been landed. A fight is in progress before the town, but there is no sign of activity or of guns within the walls. Various portions of the defences are indicated by letters or numbers from the north (right) southwards and the key runs as follows:—

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| A. west gat. 200: : | K: the Ra: 240. |
| B. North tower. 63. | L. ospital tow: 80. |
| C. the North Ravelyn: 360. | M: bennets tow. 60. |
| D. Nor: Est. tower. 84. | N. oxne tow: 88. |
| E: Corner. tower 135. | O. Pinakell tow: 86. |
| F. k. Hen: tower 46. | P. Shanes tow: 50. |
| G. S ^t Nicolas tower 120. | Q. mount and curtyns. 280. |
| H. priery tower. 62. | R. the mountes bulwark. 200. |
| J. markt g. 84. | S: bowls. tow. 280. |

* The writer is indebted to Mr. A. J. Taylor for these details, and for transcriptions which follow.



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| | |
|--|-----------------------|
| T: East tower. 80. | 5. the great mount |
| V. new wall 114. | 6: Golston. |
| W: Sow Est. 100 | 7: Golston bulw: |
| X. myddell tow. 50 | 8: Yarmoth. bulw: |
| Y: Sowth. gat. 60. | 9. the Havens mouth |
| 1: the fort. that covers the brige. | 10. The rode. |
| 2: the myl. bulwarke. | 11 |
| 3: the brige. | The River braud. 130. |
| 4: the Lyt. bulw: | The diche braud. 30. |

Mad. the 30 of Apr:

E 1588 Y

Outside the town, and close to the North Ravelin, is shown a group of buildings marked as "the ospitell." At the other end, across the river, "Golston" is shown with its houses and church steeple.

The plan shows the complete medieval enceinte of the town, which appears to have been slightly enlarged at the south, if "V new wall" may be taken as evidence. It also shows various additions to adapt these earlier defences for the use of artillery. They are all in the bastioned style, but are of primitive character, and are such as were erected at a somewhat earlier period on the continent than in Britain. The historical and topographical aspects of the map are dealt with by Mr. Stephens.

In fortifications of all periods gateways have been a source of weakness to the defence. It is, therefore, only natural that they should be the first points to receive additional protection in the new style. The ravelin outside the north gate (C of the plan) is an excellent example of this. It completely covers the gate and the road into the town has been diverted to cross its ditch and enter at its eastern angle over a bridge. A similar feature is shown in a print of the siege of Rouen of October 8th, 1591, in the writer's possession, and can be seen in other continental prints.* Similar ravelins at K ("the Ra:") and at the south-eastern corner of the town (unnamed) also cover gateways of less importance, but the other gates were left unprotected. "R the mountes bulwarks" is rightly so termed, since it is joined by solid land to the enceinte. A ravelin is a detached work, reached only by a bridge over a ditch. Presumably the mount broke the line of the enceinte and formed a weak point, needing additional protection.

On the river side there are "2 the myl. bulwarke," "4: the Lyt. bulw:" and "5 the great mount." These are primarily simple gun platforms to beat off an attack by ships, which had got past the forts lower down the river. It is interesting to see that 2 apparently has a breastwork of gabions, such as were commonly used at the time in the field as a screen for artillery.†

"1 the fort. that covers the bridge," "7 Golston bulw:," and "8: Yarmoth. bulw:" are detached forts similar in nature

* *E.g.* the plan of the siege of Chartres in the Hatfield Collection.

† What must have been a similar riverside defence was ordered for Portsmouth in 1547 (*Cal. S. P. D.*, 1547-80, p. 2).

to Black Jey Fort at Clayhaven (See Plate in vol. xxvii.), devised so that the guns of each part of the curtain cover the face of the adjacent portion with cross-fire. 1 is for defence of the bridge head against any attackers who had landed elsewhere and sought to gain access to the town on its more poorly defended side. Similarly 8 has its defences mainly away from the river, and was for defence together with the south-eastern town ravelin against a landing party south-east of the town. 7, however, with its back to the cliff, so that it could not easily be taken from behind, and facing straight towards the haven mouth, must have been the main battery to impede the progress of attacking ships coming upstream. The additional defence of a palisade in the ditch of 8 can be seen.

A recent cursory inspection of the Town Wall of Yarmouth has shown the writer that traces of only two of these later defences are now to be found, viz., "5 the great mount," now "South Mount (Site of)" on the 25 inch O.S. map and "The Mount (Site of)" of the modern map. The former was not inspected closely, but the latter still preserves its outline as the original boundary of the Hospital property. Much of its north-eastern face still appears to retain its battered revetment wall and some even of the sloping parapet can still be seen. This must be a great rarity, and is perhaps unique in England. There are difficulties in equating this work with "R the mountes bulwark," as might have been assumed from its modern name. A comparison of the spacing of the towers and gates on the Hatfield plan and on the modern map does not lead to any satisfactory solution, and a much more detailed study would be needed for the formulation of a definite conclusion on the matter. Nevertheless it may be suggested that the walling still visible is really part of "K the Ra." If this is correct, it is almost certainly the only remains of a ravelin still extant in England.

B. H. St. J. O'N.

HOW GREAT YARMOUTH PREPARED IN 1588 TO RESIST THE SPANISH ARMADA

The zeal of our Honorary General Secretary was recently rewarded by finding a note amongst the papers of the late Frederic Johnson of the existence of the plan—herewith produced—showing the fortifications of Great Yarmouth against the anticipated Spanish Invasion in 1588.

The plan was eventually found amongst the Hatfield MSS. belonging to the Marquess of Salisbury, deposited temporarily at the British Museum, and, the necessary consents having been obtained, a photograph was taken. The plan is of greater interest by reason of Robert Cecil's official position at Court when it was made.

Protection was made right along the English coast against the anticipated invasion; and naturally Yarmouth, as one of the principal Seaports of the Kingdom, a frontier town and constituting the key to Norfolk and Suffolk, received special attention from the authorities in London. Thus we find Sir Thomas Leighton appointed in 1588 to inspect the fortifications

of Norwich and Yarmouth. On his visit to the former town, the Corporation presented him with a gilt-cup and two gallons of Ypocras. The Yarmouth Assembly Books show that on the 18th April, 1588, the following Order of the Council was made:—"Sir Thomas Leighton with other Knights and Captains who are coming to Town to be entertained at the Town's charge and a committee appointed to confer with them about fortifying the Town."

The Council's Minutes of this period show that every care was taken to place the Borough in a proper state of defence and to obtain grants in aid not only from the Government but also from the County. The following Order of the 12th December, 1587, may have resulted in Sir Thomas's visit and also in the making of the plan:—"Whereas ye tyme is very dangerous in respect of the forayne enemy and also the defence of our Town very weak both about the Mount and in other places. Therefore a Committee was appointed to view the Walls and to certify the Counsel of the same that the aid of the country adjoining may be liable to the charges of fortifying the same weak places."

We find that on the 23rd June, 1588, Mr. Cotty was directed to ride to the Deputy Lieutenants, to intreat their furtherance of the contribution to be levied in Norfolk for the Town's Fortifications.

It may not be uninteresting at the present time to know that the following advice was given to the Queen's council by certain "experienced captaines" as to "the order to be taken to fight the enemy, if by force he should land on any part of the coast."

"For the manner howe to fight with the enemye, it must be lefte to the discretyon of the generall, onely we give this advise, that at his landynge he maye be impeached, yf convenyently it may be done; and yf he march forward, that the country be driven so as no victuall remaine unto him but suche as they shall carry one their backes, which will be smalle; that he be kepte waking with perpetuall allarrames, but in no case that any battaile be adventured untyll such tyme as diveres lieftennants be assembled to make a grosse armye, excepte upon spetiall advantages" (Harleian MSS. 168, fol. 110).

Let us now proceed to examine the plan which bears date the 30th April, 1588.

Its outstanding feature, without doubt, is the massive Wall with its Towers and Gateways, forming the North, South and East boundaries of the Town and the Moat situate on the three sides immediately outside the Wall.

The right to build the Wall was granted by Charter of King Henry III. in 1261. The work was started in 1284 and continued, until completed in 1396. Under the same Charter, the Moat, abutting the Wall, was also constructed.

Henry Manship, who wrote his *History of Great Yarmouth* in 1619, served the office of Town Clerk from 1579 to 1585 and continued to be a member of the Corporation until 1604. His account of the condition of the Wall and of other works of defence at that period is therefore of peculiar interest.

The Wall was not "rampired" until 1544, when the sand-hills on the Denes, blown up by the easterly wind, were used for the purpose, thereby effecting a levelling of the land outside

the Wall. In 1557, a further rampiring was undertaken. "Yet," says Manship, "were not those walls sufficiently rampired, till in the year 1587 (which was in the year before the Spanish intended invasion); at which time, they were from the Black Friars to the Market Gates, very fully and formally finished to the top, by the town, aforesaid, with earth and manure, more than 40 feet in breadth, resistable, by God's help, against any battery whatsoever."

Fifteen of the "sixteen stately towers" referred to by Manship are indexed in the margin of the plan. They are:—

| | |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| B. North Tower. | N. Oxney Tower. |
| D. North-East Tower. | O. Pinakell Tower. |
| E. Corner Tower. | P. Shane's Tower. |
| F. King Henry's Tower. | S. Bowls Tower. |
| G. St. Nicholas Tower. | T. East Tower. |
| H. Priory Tower. | W. South-East Tower. |
| L. Hospital Tower. | X. Myddell Tower. |
| M. Bennet's Tower. | |

The one not accounted for probably is the North-west Tower referred to on the plan as "A—Westgate."

It is difficult to determine the "ten spacious gates" on the map, due perhaps to some of them being barricaded and to the drawbridges over the moat being removed for defensive reasons. The most prominent of the gateways shown are:—

| | |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| A. Westgate. | L. Hospital Gate. |
| C. North Gate. | N. Oxney Gate. |
| G. St. Nicolas Gate. | W. South-East Gate. |
| J. Market Gate. | Y. South Gate. |

In order to "improve" the Town, the Corporation in days gone by swept away the gates, so that now nothing is to be seen of them. As regards the Towers, these, notwithstanding the neglect of centuries, are in a fair state of preservation. Some of them have been placed in the care of "Great Yarmouth Historical Buildings, Ltd.," so it is hoped that they are now safe from further destruction.

It is surprising with how little reverence or pride the Yarmouth man of the present day regards his heritage. For many years past, the Corporation have been advised to undertake such restoration of the old walls as is now possible, and once more, "to rampire": this time, not for purposes of defence, but because we are proud of the Town's History.

In the sixteenth century, no building was allowed to be constructed near the walls, which Order may account for the wide open space shown on the plan between the east wall and the most easterly of the three streets running north and south. This open space or street was known as the "Dene," the other two streets being called "Middle" and "Key-side."

Alas! notwithstanding the Order, an inspection of the walls at the present day reveals that some of the towers are used as store-places, over which the Corporation do not appear to have much control, and that outbuildings and even dwelling-houses have been constructed against the old wall in many places. Having regard to the unsuitability for residential purposes of many of the houses built on to or abutting the wall, one may not be too bold in expressing the hope that, before long, a

Clearance Order under the Housing Acts will be sanctioned by the Ministry of Health, whereby not only will the housing conditions be improved but, by the removal of the hovels, the wall will be once more exposed to view and the amenities of the Town will be restored.

"Q—The Mount." This was begun in 1569. Manship, who, as a Grammar School boy, assisted in the work, refers to it at length.

In 1588, the lower part of the Mount (Q) which, with the other additional defences shown in the plan, is described in Mr. O'Neil's paper accompanying this article, was, by special direction of Sir Thomas Leighton, enclosed—at the town's cost—with a wall of brick and freestone. On the top of the Mount were placed "Great pieces of ordnance" which are discernible on the map. It is possible that the "curtyens" of the map should have been "culverins."

As an additional precaution, "5, The Mount," at the south-west corner of the wall, was also built. Referred to as "The Great Mount," it was "much higher than the walls of the town, not only purposely to withstand the enemy from entering, but also to scour all along the Haven; whereon also is continually placed good store of ordnance to keep the town from being suddenly surprised."

Although the plan shows it not, the town also built in the Haven, close by the Great Mount, a "Boom" to open and shut at every tide, so that the entrance of ships into the Haven could be regulated. The plan, however, does show an impediment across the entrance to the Haven and stretching from "7, The Gorleston Bulwark," to "8, The Yarmouth Bulwark."

Situate on the southern side of the river is "1, The Fort that covers the brige." The bridge was constructed in 1553, when it was agreed that a drawbridge should be made to supersede the fixed bridge, constructed under King Henry V.'s Charter.

From the Westgate (A) to the Great Mount (5), stretching along the quayside, the plan shows a wall or barricade; this was presumably a temporary defensive measure as no other record of it has been found. It will be observed that "2, The Myl Bulwark," and "4, The Lyt Bulwark," both of which project into the Haven, are linked up with this defence.

The plan, apart from depicting the fortifications, shows—without reference—other places of interest. For instance, the two agricultural enclosures with haycocks; the one, the Priory grounds adjoining the Parish Church and bounded on the East by the Wall, in part dilapidated, and the other the land of the old Hospital extending from "J, Market Gate," to "L, Hospital Tower." In "Manship" "J" is referred to as the "Pudding Gates" and "L" as the "Market Gates."

The Greyfriars cannot be traced, but the premises of the Blackfriars immediately inside the South Gate stands out well.

On the other side of the river we have Cobholm, constituted an island by the surrounding water known as Lady's Haven. The sole occupant evidently is the virile but lonely steed.

In the Cottonian Collection in the British Museum is another map of Great Yarmouth made in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. A comparison of the two would be interesting.

W. E. S.