

OPPOSITION TO THE SUPPRESSION OF THE  
NORFOLK MONASTERIES  
EXPRESSIONS OF DISCONTENT  
THE WALSINGHAM CONSPIRACY

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*The Dissolution of the Monasteries involved the largest confiscation and redistribution of land and property since the Norman Conquest, and was bound to arouse opposition on religious and economic grounds. This article attempts to trace the reactions in Norfolk.*

ON 1 August 1536 the Commissioners Sir Roger Townshend, Sir William Paston, Richard Southwell and Thomas Mildmay<sup>1</sup> were starting their survey of the monasteries coming under the Act of 1536, and had reached Buckenham. Two men, Hugh Wilkinson and John Brown of Old Buckenham returning home with John Lok from Stone Fair at Cressingham, tried to bribe him to kill the commissioners while they slept at the priory that night. The offer of "an angel noble" did not tempt Lok to do the deed. The same inducement was offered to John Parker with the same lack of response. The affair however was not brought before the justices of the peace till nearly ten months later.<sup>2</sup>

About the beginning of September an organ-maker intended to start an insurrection at Norwich but was arrested by the duke of Norfolk who also put in custody his companion, "a right ill person."<sup>3</sup>

Apparently Norfolk remained peaceful and quiet when the Lincolnshire Rising broke out at the beginning of October; and even when all the North country from the Don to the Border was up in arms in the Pilgrimage of Grace, the heads of three Norfolk monasteries, Walsingham, West Acre and Castle Acre were among the landowners appointed to stay at home to maintain order in the county.<sup>4</sup>

Lay magnates who were asked to raise troops in the emergency were the Duke of Norfolk (600), Sir Edmund Bedingfield (100), Sir Thomas L'Estrange (50), Sir John Heydon (150), Sir William Paston (150), Sir Roger Townshend (50), Sir John Tyndale (50), Sir Francis Lovel (60), Sir Edward Chamberlain (50), Edmund Wyndham (60) and Richard Southwell (60).<sup>5</sup>

The suppression of monastic houses in Norfolk was halted and the collection of the subsidy was suspended for the time being.<sup>6</sup>

When the representatives of the Pilgrimage of Grace met the duke and both sides agreed to disband their forces, many Norfolk men gladly came home from the royal army. Some of them brought back "a rebel bill," perhaps



Aske's rather vague proclamation about the purposes of the rebellion to get rid of the king's evil counsellors, to protect the Church from attempts to rob and destroy it, and to punish heresy.<sup>7</sup> A clerk of Sir Henry Fermor's<sup>8</sup> son had a copy of this document and, meeting Richard Fletcher, gaoler of Norwich, at the Bell Inn, Lynn, on 29 October, he asked him to take the paper to John Manne of Norwich. "By the advice of the company" the bill was read out aloud. The innkeeper, George Wharton, got one of Fletcher's prisoners to make two copies.<sup>9</sup>

The dangerous document and copies of it had chances of stirring up controversy and fanning rebellious feelings in three places in Norfolk—Lynn, Norwich and Walsingham. Fletcher, on his return to Norwich showed it to several people before handing it over to John Manne, who kept one copy and showed it to his own friends. Wharton lent one copy among his neighbours in Lynn and gave another copy to some Cornish soldiers calling there on their way to make a Pilgrimage to Walsingham.<sup>10</sup>

The sentiments of the northern rebels had another sympathiser at Walsingham, Henry Manser, the canon in charge of the shrine. We do not know whether he discussed the matter with those Cornish pilgrims, but he had some talk with some pilgrims from Lincolnshire<sup>11</sup> on 7 December and during the conversation it was said that if Norfolk and Suffolk could have risen when Lincolnshire and Yorkshire did they would have been able "to have gone through the realm."<sup>12</sup> Ralph Rogerson, a layman employed as a chorister at the priory, was coming home from London with John Smith of Wighton in December when Smith was alleged to have said "It shall never be well until such time as we make an insurrection against great men" and he offered to be a leader of a hundred rebels.

Early in the New Year when the northern rebels were less united and far less formidable than they had been in October, the Duke of Norfolk wrote from Kenninghall in a letter chiefly about the subsidy "religious persons remain in many houses that should have been suppressed, not a little to the King's cost"<sup>13</sup> and the commissioners were not prepared to act without further orders. The Duke therefore recommended that they should be instructed to continue with their interrupted task.<sup>14</sup> At the end of the month at least four monasteries were suppressed in a week (Coxford,<sup>15</sup> Hempton,<sup>16</sup> Crabhouse<sup>17</sup> and Blackborough<sup>18</sup>) and by 25 February the goods and chattels of sixteen Norfolk houses had been sold.<sup>19</sup>

On 15 February a fiddler, John Hogan, was in trouble for singing a seditious song at Diss.

"The hunt is up. . . .

The masters of art and doctors of divinity

Have brought this realm out of good unity

Three noblemen have 'take' [*sic*] this to stay;

My Lord of Norfolk, Lord Surrey and my Lord of Shrewsbury

The Duke of Suffolk might a make England merry. . . ."

His explanations were far less vague than the words of his song. By "the hunt is up" he meant the northern men had risen; and in the reference to the Duke



of Suffolk he implied that if this nobleman had let the Lincolnshire rebels join with the northern rebels they would have brought about a better state of things in the country. He had sung the song in the hearing of the Earl of Surrey at Cambridge and at Thetford Abbey without the earl taking offence at the reference to himself in the song.<sup>20</sup>

About the end of May a worsted weaver of Norwich, John Colke, had told a journeyman, Robert Toll, that he could not pay his share of the subsidy<sup>21</sup> because he could sell no worsted and he added "wherefore I see no remedy without poor men do rise." Later he said he denied using such words, or if he had said them he was drunk at the time.<sup>22</sup>

But at Walsingham men were prepared to go further than seditious songs, treasonable complaints and idle threats. Perhaps trouble had been brewing there since the appearance of the copy of the rebels' "bill" in November and the wishful thinking voiced both when the Lincolnshire pilgrims visited the shrine in December and in Smith and Rogerson's journey from London about the same time. About the middle of April Ralph Rogerson complained to George Guisborough that with the end of the abbeys their livelihood would suffer. Obviously his own would as "a singing man" employed at the priory, and as the convent owned most of the houses and land in the parish<sup>23</sup> its suppression would cause a considerable upheaval there. If the abbey and the shrine went, pilgrimages to Walsingham would cease and local tradesmen would suffer. He expected that Binham (about four miles away) would soon be dissolved and Walsingham and all the remaining monasteries in the district would follow. The gentry already had most of the land and cattle<sup>24</sup> and it was necessary for someone to take a stand against them. Evidently he thought that when the gentry got the monastic estates they would treat the common people more oppressively than they or the monks had been doing hitherto. Guisborough no doubt agreed with his friend who next proposed to rouse the people by firing a beacon (like the rising in the East Riding the previous October—which may have given him the idea). The two men agreed to sound others and proposed to get their supporters together by St. Helen's day (21 May).<sup>25</sup> They had five or six meetings and got together a band of between two and three dozen conspirators. On one occasion they met at a game of "shooting of the flyte and standard" at Binham.<sup>26</sup> They planned to assemble on 21 May at Shepcotes Heath and their object was at first to go to tell their grievances to the king (like the equally gullible Pilgrims of Grace).<sup>27</sup>

Apparently they won over to the scheme Guisborough's son William, Henry Capon, James Henley, Richard Henley, Thomas Howse,<sup>28</sup> Thomas Manne, Andrew Pax, Thomas Penny, John Semble, John Sellers (*alias* Taillor), John Pecock and canon Mileham (of the priory).<sup>29</sup> Others involved were Will Gybson, Richard Malyott, John Grikby (Grygeby), John Punte, Robert Hawker, John Malput, John Man, J. Tytyng, William Smyth, Richard Page and Thomas Arter,<sup>29</sup> and perhaps also William Parker, John Smith, Robert Griggis (*alias* Debyde), William Hall, Thomas Kyrton and William Betts.<sup>30</sup>

Most of the company were simple countrymen or "rude mechanicals." Howse was a lime-burner<sup>31</sup> (also known as a husbandman<sup>32</sup>—perhaps he made



a living by combining the two occupations), Semble a mason,<sup>32</sup> Thomas Manne a carpenter,<sup>33</sup> Parker a glover,<sup>34</sup> Robert Hawker a butcher.<sup>35</sup> Richard Malyott was a yeoman and had been a sailor, Griggis owned sheep,<sup>34</sup> Rogerson, in addition to his income from singing at the priory, had some property at Wighton and Thomas Kyrton was his tenant.<sup>34</sup> William Smith had lands worth £20 a year.<sup>36</sup> There was probably a rich gentleman whose name never came out at the subsequent enquiries.<sup>34</sup>

It is impossible to say how far the canons of Walsingham were in the secret. They apparently knew that the rebels were going to get together at the archery contest at Binham,<sup>37</sup> but only the sub-prior Nicholas Mileham was proved to be implicated. He seems to have been one of the ringleaders.<sup>33</sup> Apparently the Franciscan friars of Walsingham kept out of mischief; but two Carmelite friars from Burnham (six miles away) were thought to be in the plot.<sup>38 39</sup> Neither seems to have played such a leading role as some of the friars did in the Pilgrimage of Grace. Only one of those subsequently executed is described as a clerk, John Pecock. The local clergy played a part less unwilling perhaps than the churchmen who joined the northern rebellion, although in Norfolk they may only have shown sympathy with the objects of the conspiracy. The names of those supposed to have been in the plot were John Grikby (or Greggeby) rector of Longham, John Puntte or Punte rector of Waterden,<sup>40</sup> and perhaps William Betts a priest of Old Walsingham.<sup>41</sup>

Some of these clergy and the friars came from neighbouring villages, and so did some of the lay members of the plot. Richard Malyot came from Wells, Thomas Penny from Houghton, and Smyth, Griggis,<sup>42</sup> Hall<sup>42</sup> and Kyrton<sup>41</sup> from Wighton, and John Man may be the John Mann, junr. of Binham of the 1522-23 Muster Rolls, but the conspiracy evidently started in Walsingham and that village remained the centre.

As the conspiracy grew in numbers the plans developed. Sheep were to be given to those who joined, perhaps six or seven score sheep shared among them.<sup>44</sup> Any people who opposed them were to be robbed and killed.<sup>45</sup> When they encountered a rich man with two dishes on his table they would relieve him of one of them.<sup>46</sup> If anyone betrayed the plot he should die. They were hoping to force the head constables to make the parish constables master the people as for a hue and cry. A body of men were to be sent to Brandon Ferry to cut communications with London, and then they would march to join the northern rebels. (They were evidently ignorant of the failure of the Pilgrimage of Grace).

About thirty men had been won over to the scheme in about a fortnight, and nearly a month remained before the plotters were due to assemble when their plans were betrayed. The more people they approached, the greater the danger of betrayal and on 26 April John Galant of Letheringsett, a servant of Sir John Heydon<sup>47</sup> told his master about it. He named seven of the conspirators, the two Guisboroughs, Ralph Rogers,<sup>48</sup> Henry Capon, James Henley, Richard Henley and Thomas Howes and gave an outline of their scheme.<sup>49</sup>

Sir John Heydon sent the informer, with a copy of his statement, to Richard Gresham, the Norfolk born man on the spot in London, to arrange for Cromwell to learn the facts.<sup>50</sup> The same day Sir John met Sir Roger Townshend and went



to Walsingham where they arrested the two Guisboroughs and examined Robert Hawker, John Semble and Thomas Howes, but Ralph Rogerson made his escape. George Guisborough openly said that "he thought it very ill done, the suppressing of so many religious houses where God was so well served" and he admitted suggesting "an insurrection of the commons who were oppressed by the gentlemen." William Guisborough also made a confession.<sup>51</sup> The two prisoners and their confessions were sent to Cromwell under the charge of the bailiff of Walsingham.<sup>52</sup>

In reply to Sir John Heydon's first letter sent *via* Richard Gresham, Cromwell sent Richard Southwell with instructions, and he arrived between four and five on the morning of Sunday, 29 April.<sup>53</sup> Sir John told him of the measures taken so far and said "The conspirators do not pass twelve in number, all very beggars and there is no likelihood of any commotion."

That day George Guisborough was examined in London. He confessed that Rogerson and he had had five or six meetings, he mentioned Thomas Howse, John Sembley (Semble), William Guisborough and a glover whose name he forgot, but said they would not commit themselves to the plot, and he omitted all details of the plans except firing a beacon, meeting on the heath called Shepcotes and going to see the king about their grievances.<sup>54</sup> If all the rest had proved as reticent under pressure very few would have been caught.

Richard Southwell went from Sir John Heydon's house at Baconsthorpe to Sir Roger Townshend at Raynham on the Sunday and consulted about the arrest of the conspirators named by Galant. They were taken into custody the next day, 30 April.<sup>55</sup> Sir Thomas Lestrangle<sup>56</sup> caught Ralph Rogerson, perhaps on information from the prior of Burnham.<sup>57</sup>

When the prisoners were examined the justices heard for the first time of the complicity of the sub-prior, Nicholas Mileham. Sir Roger's son arrested him and they found him "a man of lewd inclination." Southwell and Sir Roger Townshend wrote to Cromwell on 3 May to suggest that fuller confessions might be obtained from the Guisboroughs and Rogerson if they were examined by Cromwell and others of the Council. Probably they did not know how little the elder Guisborough had revealed when he was so examined on 29 April.<sup>58</sup> They also wrote to warn the Duke of Suffolk to be on his guard as the shooting match at Long Stratton on the next Sunday might be used as a cloak for the meeting of rebels, as had happened at Binham. This contest at Long Stratton had been much publicised at Wymondham and other places on the previous May-day.

On 8 May the reply of the king and Cromwell was received urging the execution of all the conspirators. Two days later Southwell and Sir Roger sent to London the examinations and confessions with the remarks that they could not "bullte owte" (bully out?) any more from the prisoners and asking for orders about proceeding to the executions.<sup>59</sup>

The two Guisboroughs were brought back from London and altogether about twenty-five men involved in the plot were imprisoned in the gaol of Norwich Castle.<sup>60</sup> The ones regarded as ring-leaders, such as Mileham, Rogerson and Guisborough father and son, were kept in a different part of the prison



from the rest, but for the first two or three nights they could all see each other in the chapel where Mileham and the two friars knelt together and the rest behind them.

Some men also in the prison for other offences afterwards alleged that they heard the ringleaders refer to other plotters or sympathisers who had not been discovered by the authorities. Smith of Wighton on his journey from London in company with Rogerson had made the remarks already quoted<sup>61</sup> "It shall never be well until such time as we make an insurrection against (the) great men" and he would make one captain of a hundred men in any such rebellion. These dangerous utterances, made before Christmas indicated that Smith was in favour of a rising, but did not necessarily make him a member of the conspiracy when it was formed about four months later. In Norwich prison more such hearsay evidence came to light against Robert Gygges (Griggis, *alias* Debyde) who was supposed to have promised that the rebels should not lack sheep as long as he had any, also against William Hall, Thomas Kyrton, William Betts a priest of Old Walsingham, and Parker the glover whose name George Guisborough had so conveniently forgotten when examined in London. There was also "a rich gentleman" who was said to have promised them sheep.<sup>62</sup>

Guisborough senior and Rogerson got as far as writing down an accusation against about four of these sympathisers or fellow conspirators. Then young Guisborough dissuaded them, saying, "Father, there is no remedy but death for us, and for us to put any mo' in danger, it were pity."<sup>63</sup> To their credit they acted on his words and tore up the paper into tiny pieces and threw them away. As the bits blew about the castle one prisoner, James Biggis, saw a piece, "about the breadth of a groat" and trampled it in the water.<sup>64</sup>

On 20 May the prior of Walsingham, safe in his monastery, deemed it expedient to write to Cromwell thanking him for favours to himself and a kinsman in Cromwell's service, and enclosing a "poor remembrance" which he begged the powerful minister to accept.<sup>65</sup>

The sub-prior and his fellow conspirators were tried on Friday, 25 May.<sup>66</sup> Twelve were found guilty of treason and sentenced to death—Nicholas Mileham, George and William Guisborough, Ralph Rogerson, Thomas Howse, John Semble, John Pecok, Richard Henley, Andrew Pax, Thomas Manne, John Sellers and Thomas Penny. Three were found guilty of misprision of treason<sup>67</sup> and sentenced to life imprisonment—William Gybson (the Carmelite friar of Burnham), Richard Malyott of Wells and Robert Hawker of Old Walsingham. Perhaps the first two were on the fringe of the plot figuratively as well as geographically and for that reason John Grygeby, rector of Langham and John Punte rector of Waterden were remanded to prison without judgement. The remaining eight were pardoned, namely John Malpulton, John Man, John Tytyng, William Smith, Richard Page, James Henley, Henry Capon and Thomas Arter.<sup>68</sup>

The executions were arranged so as to impress Walsingham and the chief towns of the county. On Saturday, 26 May Norwich was the scene of the death of five of the plotters, Ralph Rogerson, Thomas Howse, Richard Henley,



Thomas Manne and Andrew Pax.<sup>69</sup> It was a fair day and the streets were crowded as the victims were drawn on hurdles to the place of execution. As they went along they confessed their wickedness and exhorted the people to profit from their example, and four of them repeated the lesson when they reached their last earthly destination, but Rogerson attempted to justify himself before the end ("according to his cankerel stomach" as the biased witness, Richard Southwell, wrote to Cromwell).<sup>70</sup> Two days later John Semble and John Sellers were put to death at Yarmouth. On Wednesday it was the turn of Canon Mileham and George Guisborough to die at Walsingham, and on the Friday William Guisborough and John Pecok met their fate at Lynn. The sub-prior, the two Guisboroughs, Rogerson, Howse and Semble were drawn, hanged, beheaded and quartered but the others had the mercy of an ordinary hanging. Thus each of the four places selected for the demonstration of the result of rebellion witnessed examples of the full ritual and of the simpler form of execution.

Norfolk people would discuss the plot and the punishments. At Houghton near Harpley<sup>71</sup> Thomas Westwood was asked by a carpenter, Thomas Wright, about the news from Norwich and replied that the wife of one of those awaiting execution fell down in a swoon which lasted an hour, but her husband got what he deserved. Wright disagreed, saying that they that did for the commonwealth were hanged up. When this remark was reported he denied having made it.<sup>72</sup>

On 8 June before four justices, Sir Roger Townshend, Sir John Jenny, Robert Holdiche and John Clere an enquiry was held at Norwich castle concerning the alleged remarks made by the "traitors" before their trial and involving other names.<sup>73</sup> Was the case to be re-opened and were further victims to be traced?

Two days later five justices, Sir Roger Townshend, Sir Thomas le Strange, William Fermor, Henry Bedingfield and William Yelverton held another enquiry and took depositions from prisoners in the castle who were facing other charges at the time of the imprisonment of the Walsingham plotters. They said that the ringleaders could not have been overheard as they were kept in another part of the prison. The men alleged to have been named by Rogerson and the others, were also questioned. William Betts, William Parker and Gyggys denied that they had been involved in the plot at all, and though Smyth admitted being in company with Rogerson on the journey from London he denied using the expressions attributed to him.<sup>74</sup>

Two of the luckiest people involved in the affair were Parker the glover whose name Guisborough had so conveniently forgotten on his examination in London, and Thomas Penny who was apparently sentenced to death<sup>75</sup> but somehow the execution was never carried out.<sup>76</sup>

In the interval between the arrest and the punishment of the plotters discontent had been voiced in other places in East Anglia. The Duke of Norfolk's controller, Wharton, told the Duke of Suffolk about a play performed on May Day somewhere in Suffolk; the subject was about how a king should rule, and one player taking the part of "Husbandry" interpolated many of his own



remarks about the gentry. He prudently disappeared and attempts to trace him failed.

Richard Bushop from Bungay in Suffolk just over the Norfolk boundary, used traitorous words on 11 May. He complained to Robert Seyman that two people could talk together in safety but if as many as three were in conversation the constables would want to know the subject of the talk or else put them in the stocks. Bushop mentioned a prophecy of a rising of the people that year or never. The king was referred to as a mole which should be subdued. There was another prophecy that "there should land at Weybourne Hope the proudest prince in all Christendom and so shall come to Mousehold Heath and there shall meet with two other kings and shall fight and shall be put down and the white lion shall obtain." This reference to a landing and Weybourne Hope might reflect hopes of foreign intervention—the Emperor; and the part about two kings might just possibly be interpreted as a vague reference to Francis I of France and James V of Scotland who had recently married the French king's daughter. If these suppositions were true three foreign kings fighting in Norfolk would be too much of a bad thing.

Bushop had also said that if two or three hundred men would rise and could depend on each other they would be able to subdue the gentlemen, "but one false knave discovered the intended rising at Walsingham." The garrulous man of Bungay repeated rumours that the Earl of Derby had joined the Northern rebels and that the Duke of Norfolk was so beset by them that he could not escape.<sup>77</sup> Bushop paid with his life for his loose tongue.

At Aylsham on 12 May Elizabeth wife of Robert Worde said to two others that it was a pity the Walsingham men were discovered and that there never would be "a good world" till blows were struck against the government.<sup>78</sup>

"And with clubs and clouted shoon  
 Shall the deed be done,  
 For we had never good world  
 Since the King reigned  
 . . . ."

Others were dissatisfied because they thought the religious changes did not go far enough. John Norgate was against the veneration of the Virgin Mary and the Cross on which Christ died and he bluntly stated that he could serve God as well with a muck fork as with a wax candle. Richard Thompson junior did not believe that the mass would benefit his soul. Thomas Rooper of Blickling had set up a wooden cross with the image of the pope with triple crown and a gilded cardinal. It is not clear whether he did this in a spirit of veneration or of ridicule but Sir James Boleyn, J.P., of Blickling Hall had the images taken down. There was evidently considerable religious unrest in the area, and John Tolwyn and his son Edward said they knew of a hundred traitors in Aylsham. There were rumours that the king would plunder the churches next and four men wanted to sell the church cross and jewels before the king's commissioners came for them. They had already sold the church lands and converted the money to their own use because they thought there was an act of parliament to give to the king any church lands not sold after May Day.<sup>79</sup>



In another part of the county, on the edge of the Fens, Sir John Bedingfield was holding an enquiry in June about events at Fincham. During Lent Harry Jervyse had regretted the failure of the Yorkshire rising because it might have restored the keeping of saints' days as holidays. After Easter he wanted men to get John Fyncham to dash from his hall by crying "Fire!" and then if he would not then do as they wished they ought to "make a cartway betwixt his head and his shoulders." He wanted to have the bells ring in every town to call out the commons.<sup>80</sup>

The justices had taken warning from the Walsingham conspiracy and they were quick to make enquiry into anything which might lead to a breach of the peace. It was on 22 May that they enquired into the assassination scheme against the commissioners at Old Buckenham on 1 August 1536, and on 3 June that they took depositions about Canon Manser's talk with the pilgrims at Walsingham in the previous December.<sup>81</sup>

At the end of August Sir Roger Townshend sent to Cromwell "a book of conjuration and a paper of prophecies" rehearsed by a pinner of Norwich.<sup>82</sup>

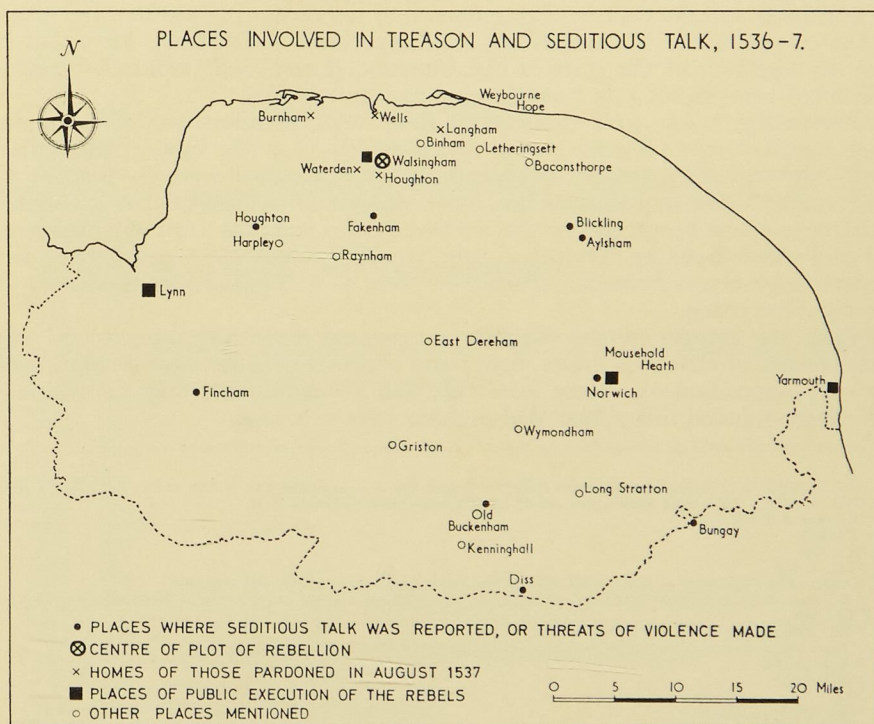
By this time however the situation was much quieter; the North was subdued. The government could afford to be merciful in Norfolk, and seven men in the Walsingham area got pardons, the three doing a life sentence for misprision, the two rectors who had been remanded to prison without judgement, Thomas Penny who had been condemned but not executed, and Will Yonger, clerk, of Walsingham, *alias* of Feltwell, who may or may not have been connected with the plot.<sup>83</sup>

Apparently the dissolution of the larger monasteries in the county proceeded with little further trouble, but the reputation of the image at Walsingham was not readily forgotten and although the statue was destroyed by the early autumn of 1538,<sup>84</sup> a woman of Wells was convinced that it had wrought a miracle since being brought to London. Perhaps she had not heard that it had been burnt. For voicing her belief in the miracle she was punished in January 1540. The Justice of the Peace, Sir Roger Townshend, had her put in the stocks on market day at Walsingham, and a placard proclaimed her "a reporter of false tales." Snow on the ground added to her discomfort. She was paraded round the township in a cart and boys and teenagers threw snowballs at her<sup>85</sup>. The display and the ridicule seem to have been effective in stilling further public talk about the influence of the image.

At the beginning of June in the same year John Walter of Griston was arrested for having said that if three or four folk with a bell would ride round at night summoning discontented people to Swaffham then there would be ten thousand by morning ready to raise the houses of the gentry. He mentioned Mr. Southwell and Sir Roger Townshend amongst others. Although these two were concerned in the suppression of the monasteries and of the Walsingham conspiracy, Walter was apparently incensed against the richer land-owners and did not mention any religious grievances. He talked of killing any people who would not join the rising and offered horses to those who would rouse the neighbourhood with bells. It was Sir Roger Townshend again who conducted the enquiry and ordered the arrest of the firebrand.



One of the few who ventured to oppose the subsequent religious policy of the king was Thomas Walpole. The Chancellor of the bishop of Norwich and a justice named Godsalve wrote to the Privy Council about having arrested Walpole for publicising a letter of Melancthon which complained against the Act of Six Articles and the imprisonment of Latimer. The prisoner was committed to the Fleet, and steps were also taken to deal with a physician named Forde (of East Dereham) who had been involved with him in more conjurations.<sup>86</sup>



Later the confiscation of the property of guilds and chantries aroused some opposition at Lynn where the townfolk organised a petition against the suppression of the guilds.<sup>87</sup>

In considering all these expressions of disapproval of the suppression of monasteries and guilds it is evident that discontent was shown in all parts of Norfolk.<sup>88</sup> It was manifest exclusively among the working classes of countryside and town, especially of the countryside. Only in the Walsingham conspiracy were a few of the "religious" involved. The gentry were not concerned at all in disloyalty; indeed they were conspicuous in stamping it out.



The rumours about intended confiscation of the church cross at Aylsham and the personel involved in the Walsingham plot remind one of the Lincolnshire rising. There are other points of resemblance to the Pilgrimage of Grace, such as the linking of economic with religious grievances and the idea of a demonstration rather than a revolt, a firm belief that bluff King Hal would set things right if his subjects could let him know their anxieties.

But in Norfolk discontent was too spasmodic and not sufficiently strong to lead to revolt. It found expression too late to be effective. It had no good leaders, no professional lawyers or able speakers like Robert Aske, above all no titled folk to take charge. The influence of the duke of Norfolk in the south of the county where his estates lay may have been a stabilizing force, but it was the vigilance of the justices like Townshend and Southwell which really prevented treasonable talk from developing into rebellion.

Prosperity, trade, and commercial links with Flanders tended to make East Anglia accept religious change more readily than the more conservative north and west. Protestant sectarianism and puritanism were to flourish in East Anglia. The monasteries here were doing less to justify their existence than those whose hospitality in the Northern dales and fells was more appreciated and whose banking services as safe depositories for plate and jewels, and lenders to gentry in financial stringencies were so well praised by the leader of the northern rising.

Thus the estates of the Norfolk monasteries were sequestered and the endowments of chantries, obits, lights and anniversaries were confiscated, and the only opposition was some loose talk and a vague conspiracy for which a few simple-minded folk round Walsingham were executed.

<sup>1</sup>S.C. 12/33/29 in I (Reference in Knowles *Religious Orders*, Vol. III, Appendix VII, p. 473) and L. & P., XII, 1, 455.

<sup>2</sup>XII. I. 1268. References shown thus are to Letters and Papers of Henry VIII.

<sup>3</sup>XI. 434 and 470.

<sup>4</sup>XI. 580.

<sup>5</sup>XI. 580.

<sup>6</sup>XII. I. 455.

<sup>7</sup>Dodds, *The Pilgrimage of Grace, 1536-37 and the Exeter Conspiracy, 1537*, pp. 175, 327.

<sup>8</sup>Sir Henry was a prominent landowner of Barsham, a magistrate, and the builder of East Barsham Manor house.

<sup>9</sup>XI. 1260.

<sup>10</sup>XI. 1260 again.

<sup>11</sup>The records do not say whether they had been involved in the Lincolnshire Rebellion.

<sup>12</sup>XII. II. 21.

<sup>13</sup>XII. I. 32.

<sup>14</sup>Ib.

<sup>15</sup>XI. 274 (Jan. 22nd).

<sup>16</sup>XII. I. 231 (Jan. 25th).

<sup>17</sup>XII. I. 243 (Jan. 26th).

<sup>18</sup>XII. I. 251 (Jan. 27th).

<sup>19</sup>XII. I. 510 and XI. 261.

<sup>20</sup>XII. I. 424.

<sup>21</sup>A penny in the £ on incomes above £20. 26 Hy VIII c. 19.

<sup>22</sup>XII. II. 13.

<sup>23</sup>Farm of houses and tenements in Walsingham Parva £86 8s. 0d. (*Valor Ecclesiasticus*, Vol. III, p. 385).

<sup>24</sup>Perhaps he meant "cattle" in the sense of "stock"—cattle and sheep. Complaints about the rich enclosing commons and robbing the poor of sheep pasture were only too common, but the Norfolk freeholders and copyholders rarely showed jealousy of the landlord's cattle, although no doubt the poor owned very few cows.

<sup>25</sup>XII. I. 1056.

<sup>26</sup>XII. I. 1125.

<sup>27</sup>XII. I. 1056.

<sup>28</sup>XII. I. 1045.

<sup>29</sup>XII. I. 1300.

<sup>30</sup>XII. II. 56.

<sup>31</sup>XII. I. 1045.



- <sup>32</sup>XII. I. 1056. House appears on the Muster Rolls of 1522-3 as an archer (*N.R.S.*, Vol. I, pp. 42-3).
- <sup>33</sup>XII. I. 1300.
- <sup>34</sup>XII. II. 56.
- <sup>35</sup>XII. II. 1150 (38).
- <sup>36</sup>*N.R.S.*, Vol. I. Muster Rolls of 1522-3, pp. 43, 52.
- <sup>37</sup>XII. I. 1125.
- <sup>38</sup>XII. II. 68.
- <sup>39</sup>One was called William Gybson, the other is not named in the records.
- <sup>40</sup>XII. II. 1150 (38).
- <sup>41</sup>XII. II. 56—see below, p. 259.
- <sup>42</sup>XII. II. 68.
- <sup>43</sup>"Muster Rolls," *N.R.S.*, Vol. I, p. 44.
- <sup>44</sup>XII. II. 56.
- <sup>45</sup>XII. I. 1045.
- <sup>46</sup>XII. II. 56.
- <sup>47</sup>Of Baconsthorpe Castle.
- <sup>48</sup>(Rogerson).
- <sup>49</sup>XII. I. 1045.
- <sup>50</sup>XII. I. 1046.
- <sup>51</sup>XII. I. 1056.
- <sup>52</sup>XII. I. 1063.
- <sup>53</sup>XII. I. 1063.
- <sup>54</sup>XII. I. 1056.
- <sup>55</sup>XII. I. 1125.
- <sup>56</sup>Of Hunstanton Hall.
- <sup>57</sup>XII. II. 602. Dr. Cox is possibly mistaken in thinking the words "one of the rankest traitors" applied to Richard Lound, guilty of offences concerning conjurations and prophecies (*Victoria Cty. Hist. of Norf.*, Vol. II, p. 257).
- <sup>58</sup>His confession was written in Wriothersley's hand, so it was evidently a thorough examination.
- <sup>59</sup>XII. I. 1171.
- <sup>60</sup>XII. I. 1300.
- <sup>61</sup>See p. 255.
- <sup>62</sup>XII. II. 56. "The rich gentleman" might be identical with Griggis.
- <sup>63</sup>mo' probably means "more."
- <sup>64</sup>XII. II. 56.
- <sup>65</sup>XII. I. 1250.
- <sup>66</sup>XII. I. 1300. Southwell's reports to Cromwell survive in the Letters and Papers, but unfortunately the Quarter Sessions records for 1537 are not extant, though others for other years about that time are preserved in the Archive Section of the Norwich City Library.
- <sup>67</sup>i.e. failing to reveal knowledge of the plot to the authorities.
- <sup>68</sup>XII. I. 1300 (2).
- <sup>69</sup>XII. I. 1300 (3).
- <sup>70</sup>XII. I. 1300 (1).
- <sup>71</sup>i.e. the Houghton from which in later days came Robert Walpole; not Houghton St. Giles near Walsingham.
- <sup>72</sup>XII. II. 13.
- <sup>73</sup>See p. 259.
- <sup>74</sup>XII. II. 68.
- <sup>75</sup>XII. I. 1300 (2).
- <sup>76</sup>XII. I. 1300 (3). XII. II. 1150 (38).
- <sup>77</sup>XII. I. 1212.
- <sup>78</sup>XII. I. 1301.
- <sup>79</sup>XII. I. 1316.
- <sup>80</sup>XII. II. 150.
- <sup>81</sup>XII. II. 21.
- <sup>82</sup>XII. II. 602. Evidently he had tried to invoke spirits and foretold misfortune, a sign or a possible cause of unrest.
- <sup>83</sup>XII. II. 1150 (38).
- <sup>84</sup>*Wriothesley's Chronicle*, Camden Soc. N.S., Vol. II, p. 83; Dug. VI. 71; XIII. I. 1177.
- <sup>85</sup>XV. 86.
- <sup>86</sup>XIV. II. 444. XVI. 349 and 424.
- <sup>87</sup>G. H. Cook, *Chantries and Chantry Chapels*, pp. 77-8.
- <sup>88</sup>cf. Map.