

26. Estimate; E. 101/474/18, printed in full in J. Bayley: *History of the Tower*, 1821, Vol. I.
- 26a. Account; E. 101/474/13.
- 26b. Bodleian, *Rawlinson MS.*, D. 775; and for Gabriel Coldam see D. Knoop and G. P. Jones, "The Sixteenth Century Mason," from *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum*, 1937.
- 26c. Bodl., *Rawlinson MS.*, D. 780; the extracts from both these MSS. in the Bodleian were kindly made by A. J. Taylor.
27. "A true and exact Draught of the Tower Liberties, 1597," published by the Society of Antiquaries, 1742.
28. Coloured bird's-eye plan, c. 1660; H.M.O.W. Registry, E. 6. 1606.
29. Plan, 1702, H.M.O.W. Registry, E. 6. 1578; Plan, 1725, British Museum, K. 24, 23a.
30. Plan. c. 1681-89; printed in *Vetusta Monumenta*, Vol. IV; Plan, 1692, H.M.O.W. Registry, 1960.
31. *Calendar of Treasury Books*, Vol. V, Pt. II, pp. 1151-52.
32. *Cal. of Treasury Books and Papers*, 1731-34; pp. 410, 459, 607.
33. Prints in British Museum, King's Library; K. 24, 23.
34. Plan, 1741, H.M.O.W. Registry, E. 5. 1544. Bowles's print, 1753. Plan, 1789, H.M.O.W. Registry, O. 5, 226.
35. Plan, 1800, H.M.O.W., Drg. No. 105/7. Drawing of c. 1810-30, H.M.O.W. Registry, E. 6, 1580.
36. Lord de Ros: *Memorials of the Tower*, 1867, quoted in appendix to the *Diary of Lt.-Gen. Adam Wilkinson, 1722-47*, Royal Historical Soc., 1912.
37. *Notes and Queries*, 7th S., Vol. III, 1887, p. 172.
38. H.M.O.W., Drgs., Nos. 105/9 and 10.
39. Plans and Elevations to accompany letter of 6 Nov., 1845, H.M.O.W. Registry, E. 6, 1581.
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PIRATES OFF MARGATE IN 1315

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THE narrow seas that separate England from the continent of Europe have been during the great World War the scene of very much fighting, and our airmen and naval men and merchant seamen have performed prodigies of valour both in attack and defence. The miracle of Dunkirk was only made possible by the use of dozens or even hundreds of boats of all sizes to bring off again and again boatloads of soldiers to safety. Our freedom from invasion both now and in the previous world war has been largely due to our age-long tradition of the sea; and one can look back to almost every era in our nation's story to see evidence of seamanship, courage and daring which are finding their parallel to-day. Here is the unvarnished tale of a Hendon merchant who lost his ship to pirates off the town of Margate, and of the steps which were taken to give him compensation.

The insular position of our country has always made the control of the narrow seas of vital importance to its inhabitants, and the invasions of Roman, Saxon, Dane and Norman were a warning of the dangers involved in an inadequate fleet. Full justice has never been done to King Alfred the Great as the real founder of the English Navy and the controller of the narrow seas. It was but slowly that any control was exercised by the Crown over the ports, and the coasts for many years were generally unsafe for honest folk even in peace time. Little was done to deal with pirates and freebooters who frequented the shores and creeks, which were uncharted, unlit and unbuoyed. The association of Normandy with England, and the starting of the Crusades made it necessary for some maritime policy to be developed, and Richard I's Articles of War, and the more famous Laws of Oleron helped to organise both the Navy and the Merchant Services.

In John's reign the sovereignty of the seas was claimed by the English government, and, to justify the claim, greater efforts were made to police the narrow seas more effectively. Lawlessness was not diminished by the growth of the power of the Cinque Ports, which in some parts of the reign of Henry III were little better than nests of chartered sea-robbers. The King, in his charter of liberties, undertook to safeguard the rights of foreign merchants trading with this country, and during the French wars trade between the two countries was not seriously bothered; though the French sometimes made spasmodic attacks on English shipping and the English retaliated. The rivalry between the shipmen of different parts of England was, however, in many cases quite as important and disastrous.

The reigns of Henry III and Edward I were also noteworthy for lawlessness at sea, sometimes between the shipmen of different parts of England, sometimes between the English and the Flemings or the French. The traders of Yarmouth and Lowestoft had an agelong feud with those of the Cinque Ports, and this internecine quarrelling had disastrous results on the strength of the English Navy. When English ships were damaged or captured by a foreign enemy then the survivors endeavoured to make amends by reprisals, sometimes securing letters of marque from the King. The Cinque Ports were the nearest to the most probable enemies, and their services secured many charters and privileges from Edward I, who favoured

their famous Admiral Gervase, one of the well-known Winchester family of Alard. It is often alleged that it was Edward I who formally claimed the sovereignty of the narrow seas, which had certainly been made informally by his predecessors, and in the reign of his successor this claim was acknowledged. It was not till the time of Edward III that this tentative claim was really established by the victory at Sluys, where the French fleet was almost annihilated, and that of "Les Espagnols sur Mer," when the Spaniards were crushingly defeated.

In Edward II's reign, especially after the defeat at Bannockburn, there was constant piracy in the North Sea and Channel. Ships from Holland, Hainault and Norway committed acts of aggression with impunity, and the fleet of the Cinque Ports preyed upon shipping with complete impartiality. Trade was handicapped, but the scarcity of food in 1315 and 1316 caused the King to offer special privileges to foreign merchants to induce them to import food to make up the deficit. There was always danger from pirates, as there was no central power in England or elsewhere strong enough to control these salt water brigands.

The Close and Patent Rolls are full of allusions to wrecks and piracy and not infrequently one led to the other, especially off the coast of Cornwall, where in the Middle Ages as in later years wrecking was practised to the gain of the savage inhabitants. An indignant writer complains that "it chaunceth that sometyme in many places there are inhuman felars, more cruel than dogs or wolves enraged, the whiche murder and slay the poor sufferers, to obtayn theyr money or clothes or other goodes." Dwellers on the coast cared little whether the victims of storm were foreigners or their own countrymen, and it is not surprising that there were frequent reprisals. In Edward I's reign the seamen of the Cinque Ports used impudent language to the King and threatened the King's Council "that if wrong or grievance be done to them in any way against justice, they will forthwith forsake their wives and children and all that they possess, and go to make their profit upon the sea, where-soever they think they will be able to acquire it."

In the first 6 years of the reign of Edward II there are in the *Calendar of Close Rolls* nearly 120 references to attack upon merchants, most of them involving piracy. In 1315 the Santa Maria of Fontarabia was wrecked off Dungeness, and goods to the value of over two thousand pounds, destined for Gascony,

were stolen by the seamen of the Cinque Ports, and the Warden of the Cinque Ports was prevented by force of arms from holding an enquiry into the matter. It is not surprising that foreigners tried to effect reprisals and to get something of their own back. Attempts to recover property by process of law were slow and uncertain, and even when claims were acknowledged it was often impossible to recover the goods.

In 1309, Fleming merchants seized at Portsmouth 91 casks of wine belonging to merchants of Weymouth and Avelcante, and in spite of a decision of the Flemish courts in favour of the English the wine was not returned. (*Foedera* ii, 75.)

The ships of the period were considerably improved in several directions, notably in the number of masts, in the construction of high stern-stages, known as *bellatoria*, and in the practice of sail-furling. If we can, to any extent, rely on the illustrations of the period, it would seem that naval warfare consisted in making your ship ram its rival, or in hurling Greek fire, stones and other big missiles from one ship to another. A later development was the building of a *bellatorium* in the forepart of the ship, the origin of the modern forecastle; and a better shaped rudder was an important improvement. Still further changes were a better organisation of the naval resources of the Crown incorporated in the rules of the *Black Book* of the Admiralty, and the gradual introduction of additional armament—"springalds, haubeyeans, bacinets, bows, arrows, jacks, doublets, targets, pavises, lances and firing barrels." Considerable interest is aroused by the list of ports and the number of ships provided by each of them in various expeditions. Contrary to what one might have expected, London does not figure at the head of the list either in the number of ships or of personnel. It is sixth in the first and fourth in the latter, while Margate, which is also to figure in our story, is more than halfway down the list.

It is of interest to note that a London merchant belonging to a Hendon-Finchley family figures in the records of loss of merchandise due to piracy in the North Sea.

William Bidyk, of the family of Sir Henry de Bidyk, who figures in the Black Survey of Hendon, was, like his relatives, interested in the wool trade. Adam le Bidyk (possibly William's father) was the King's tailor, and he married Joan de Hadestoke, and was thus related to the important London families of Basing, Hadestoke and Le Waleys (all of whom had property

in Edgware, Hendon or Finchley). All the others of the name of Bidyk are descended from Adam de Bidyk, and his grandson Thomas was Lord of the Manor of Finchley.

William, mentioned above, combined with a dozen other London wool merchants in 1315 to charter a ship to go to Antwerp. Simon of Abingdon supplied 4 serplers of wool worth £40. Thomas of Abingdon supplied 3 and William Bidyk 5, and the total value was £600. There were other merchants with names showing their place of origin to be Thame, Berkhamstead and Warwick (*Close Rolls*, Ed. II, 1318-27, pp. 9 and 13). Their ship was called "La Petite Bayard," and was hired from John le Priair. It sailed down the Thames without mishap, but off Margate it got into trouble with pirates who at that time infested the narrow seas. It will be remembered that Chaucer's merchant hoped that the sea would be kept free from pirates from Middleburg to Orwell, while his shipman from Dartmouth had indulged in piracy himself. The ship, in whose cargo Bidyk held shares, was attacked in peacetime by the Admiral of Calais with 22 armed ships. "La Petite Bayard" was lying upon land near Margate owing to the ebb of the tide, probably on the Nayland Rock between Margate and Westgate. The London seamen were taken unawares, thinking that their assailants were friends, and some were wounded and some slain. Those who could escaped into Margate taking with them the sail and the rudder, but the Admiral pursued them, seized the equipment, the ship and tackle, valued at £40, or, including the cargo, 2000 marks, and carried off the whole booty to Calais. This occurred in the late summer of 1315, and on 2nd November Edward II sent complaints to the King of France demanding satisfaction and compensation. Other ships were from time to time seized by pirates from Flanders and in the months and years immediately after this incident "Le Bon An," with wine from Bordeaux, then in English hands, and "La Swallewe," with a mixed cargo of wine and wool, were both attacked off Margate and seized, the latter with almost complete loss of the crew.

Further complaints had no effect, and so after nearly three years of patience the King, in August, 1318, sent to the Mayor and Sheriffs of London, and after rehearsing the whole story, ordered that goods to the value of 2000 marks were to be seized from French merchants in London. As the King of France

had promised to do justice and give compensation for this flagrant piracy, the seizure was to be delayed until All Saints' Day; and any goods already seized were to be restored. Similar instructions were sent to the bailiffs of Southampton, Great Yarmouth and Ipswich, who had suffered in the same way, ships from the two latter ports having evidently been seized between Middlebury and Orwell. By the 10th September, 1318, no steps had been taken by the French, so the English King demanded satisfaction from W. de Castillan, Constable of France, who called the parties concerned before him and ordered the ship to be returned, without any success.

As further complaints brought no compensation King Edward instructed the Sheriffs of London to seize goods from Amiens to the requisite amount. This was quite in accord with the usual practice of allowing reprisals to be made and of issuing letters of marque, in order to establish the principle of joint responsibility. Either goods to the value of the loss sustained were ordered to be seized, or the injured party was allowed to recoup himself by an act of piracy. For instance, in 1306, a Norwich merchant asked for reprisals on ships at Yarmouth and Lynn to compensate for a loss of £80 brought about by Norwegian piracy; and in 1311 merchants of La Rochelle made similar demands against the English. (*Rot. Parl.* i. 200 and *Foedera*, ii, 146).

An earlier example in 1304 records a loss of £260 by a Yarmouth merchant due to murder and robbery on the part of a Zeelander. As no redress was offered, ships and goods to the requisite amount were seized among Zeeland property in Yarmouth, Lynn, Boston, Kingston-on-Hull and London (*Cal. Close Rolls*).

There were several other ways in which compensation could be arranged, either by lending money on the security of a ship or by the practice of insurance, which is said to have been first tried by the Count of Flanders at Bruges in 1310. An early effort to protect our overseas trade was made in the time of Edward I, when a species of coastguard lugger was first tried. Edward II was therefore well within his rights in insisting on reprisals, and he had been very moderate in his demands.

In the *Calendar of Chancery Warrants*, Volume I, 1244-1326, there is a note (p. 434) to the effect that "Simon de Swanlond has prayed the King that as he sent 12 sarples of wool to Brabant to make profit, and some evil doers of the town of

Calais took the wool by force in the Thames before Margate and carried it to Calais, and still detain it, the King will aid him to recover it; and the King wishes to aid the merchants of his realm as he should in reason." A mandate is to be issued praying the Constable of France, the captain of the town of Calais, and the good people of the town to help Simon. (This in French.)

He had yielded to the French King's demand for delay, but, as nothing had happened within three years, he now asks that immediate satisfaction shall be made to William de Bidyk or two other of his friends, who were acting as attorneys for all the partners. A further delay of 4 months occurred and then Edward ordered the sheriff to arrest French goods to the value of £402 11s. 10d., goods from Rouen and Amiens worth £197 8s. 2d. having already been collected. Patience suggested still more procrastination, but at last on 28th August, 1320, almost exactly five years after the first complaint had been sent to the French King, and a few months before the compilation of Hendon's Black Survey, a final order came through from the King to the Sheriffs and adequate goods were seized to compensate Bidyk and his friends. (*Cal. of Close Rolls*, 1318-27, pp. 52 and 259.)

William de Bidyk was evidently a man of position in London, as on 6th June, 1325, he was witness to a deed to which the other witnesses were the Mayor and Sheriffs of London and a certain Richard le Chaucer. (*Cal. of Close Rolls*, 1323-27, p. 376.) Possibly much more can still be discovered as to his doings, but even if not this brief glimpse of a Hendonian engaged in overseas trade and having his financial prospects imperilled by high seas piracy gives us a rather different idea of manorial life from that usually emphasised by the text-books. It has given the writer particular pleasure to link up in the early fourteenth century Margate, the place of his birth, with Hendon, the place of his adoption, and for forty years his home.