

DOVER in the REIGN of ELIZABETH the FIRST 1558-1603

Ivan Green, BA., FCCed.

QUEEN ELIZABETH reigned for some 48 years, a record until the time of Queen Victoria. She was the complete opposite of her half sister, the infamous Bloody Mary, and in her reign England became firmly established as a world power. Elizabeth was indeed England, and she constantly referred to the country as 'my country' and to her subjects as 'my people'.

'Her people' included the great sea captains, Hawkins, Drake, Grenville and Frobisher among others. Even the Spaniards, who had until then been a predominant sea power, admitted that: 'the sea was full of English ships, Englishmen came and boarded at the haven's mouth, for the English are become lords and masters of the sea and need care for no man'.

Cecil, one of the queen's great ministers of state, divided maritime enterprise under three heads- trading, fishing, piracy - whereof the third is detestable and cannot last. But not only Drake and others of his kind but, it must be admitted, Cinque Port ships, including those of Dover, did indeed practise all three.

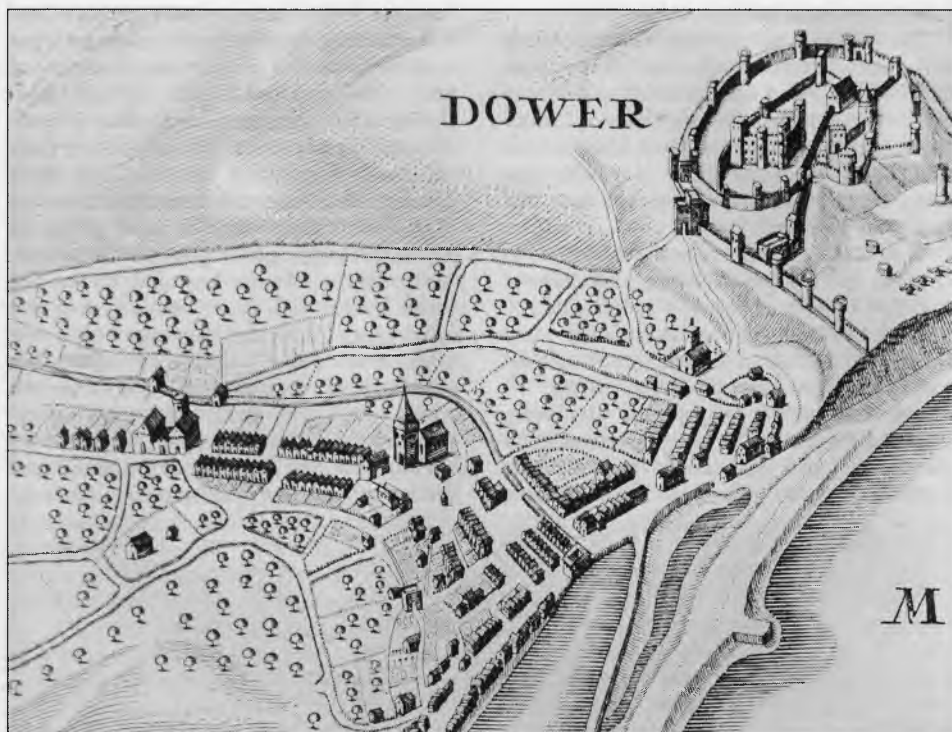
English trading companies were formed to exploit trade with Baltic and Mediterranean countries, and those on African shores, and Gilbert even ventured to America and took possession of Newfoundland.

In the 1570's Raleigh sent three expeditions to the American coast, Virginia was founded, the special care of Sir Edwin Sandys of Northbourne, one of the villages making up the present Dover District. His epitaph reads: *IN GRATEFUL MEMORY OF SIR EDWARD SANDES, 1561-1629. MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT, TREASURER OF*

THE VIRGINIA COMPANY, WHO IS BURIED NEARBY. HE OBTAINED ROYAL ASSENT TO A CONSTITUTION WHICH LATER SERVED AS A MODEL FOR THE CONSTITUTIONS OF OTHER AMERICAN COLONIES WHEREBY THE PEOPLE OF VIRGINIA SHOULD ONLY BE GOVERNED AND TAXED WITH THEIR OWN CONSENT AND SHOULD HAVE AN ASSEMBLY MODELLED ON THE HOUSE OF COMMONS TO REGULATE THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF THE COLONY. THIS ASSEMBLY FIRST MET AT JAMESTOWN IN 1619 AND WAS THE EARLIEST EXAMPLE OF A DOMESTIC PARLIAMENT WHICH WAS AFTERWARDS CHERISHED THROUGHOUT AMERICA AS THE DEAREST BIRTHRIGHT OF FREE MEN. ERECTED BY THE AMERICAN AND BRITISH COMMONWEALTH ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES IN 1957 THE 'THREE HUNDRED AND FIFTIETH YEAR SINCE THE FOUNDING OF VIRGINIA'

At home there was a great flowering of the new knowledge, in which were intellectual giants like Bacon, Marlowe, Hooker and the immortal William Shakespeare, all of them using the magnificent language of the time, which unfortunately we are still bemeaning. It was a restless, venturesome society, unique among the nations of the time. But how did Dover fit into the scheme of things? The town was unique in many ways. As a principal member of the Cinque Ports, Dover had never been subject to the overlordship of the mediaeval church or members of the baronage. It had always been a free self-governing town under royal protection and therefore no stranger to its own independence.

Dover had a viable surviving shipping industry and her mariners, besides working the Channel Crossing, and engaging in fishing and various less



A drawing of the 1590's. St Mary's church is prominent with its tall spire, and the market place with the market cross is below it, but old St Peter's church has been demolished. The largest building at the left is the Maison Dieu and, above it, are two water mills spanning the river. These are recorded in old documents. The castle is clearly shown, as is its old windmill shown on the extreme right. Some of the old castle buildings no longer survive, but many foundations remain under the surface. Old St James' church, with its west tower, is shown just below the castle entrance. Castle Hill is not shown since it was not constructed until the 19th century.

praiseworthy activities, expanded trade with Baltic and Mediterranean ports. Many of her men, some of them experienced masters of ships sailing constantly in the often treacherous waters of the Channel, served in Elizabeth's new, rapidly expanding navy which was based at Chatham, or joined crews sailing under Drake, Hawkins, Frobisher, and other adventurers and explorers. Dover ship building, carried out on the beaches, was progressing, producing good ships such as their new 'Elizabeth' named after the queen, of 120 tons burden and with a crew of 70 men.

The regulations for Dover were recorded. They were: to maintain the

queen's peace and good order by night and by day. Unlawful games were to be suppressed, and the mayor had to be informed of the death of any non-Dovorian (this was a health requirement, to track down immigrants who died of disease brought from the continent). The watch and ward was reinforced both by day and by night, and the trained band, a kind of early local Territorial organisation was reinforced.

Internal discipline was enforced by the use of the town's instruments of correction, the stocks, whipping post, cage, cucking stool, and the 'mortar for scolds'. There were two prisons, one for 'foreigners' (non Dovorians) and the

22 other for errant locals.

In 1561 a flood of refugees from Alva's religious persecution in the Low Countries arrived in Sandwich, and some of these reached Dover, among them paper makers. The early records of paper making on the River Dour date from that time, so it seems very possible that this indicates its origin in River.

In 1565 the town was reported to contain 358 houses, 20 ships and crayers, and 120 vessels of about 4 tons, with 130 men involved in merchandise and shipping. At that time the great annual herring harvest was still in full swing.

In the 1570's the queen was busy showing herself to her people, travelling a great deal, and this caused considerable problems for her courtiers. Lord Cobham,

the Lord Warden, wrote to the Lord Chamberlain as follows (the spelling is the original): "I doe herewythe recommend unto your good lordship the state of Dover Castle. The lodgings whereof have seen, and doe ffynde them, by reason they have not been longe tyme lyon in, to be both dampysse and thereffure verey necessarye that some sent downse to make ffyers in the saide lodgings a good while beffore her magy come thether and to see the same bothe well ayred and sweeted ffor otherwyse the wilbe noysome unto her highnesse". She obviously had her standards of living and insisted on them!

In 1573 the queen's great perambulation of Kent took place, having been postponed for some time because of several plagues of smallpox in places on



Part of a drawing of 1595AD. At top left is Archcliffe Fort with its many guns, one of Henry the 8th's additions to Dover's defences. No.30 is Paradise Pent, very badly shaped.

To the right are five circular buildings with smoke pouring from them. These are working lime kilns situated in the old Lime Kiln Lane, now of course re-named as Limekiln Street, though the kilns have long since disappeared.

the route. The queen, an excellent horsewoman, rode most of the way, but her maids and personal servants must have had an uncomfortable time travelling in their unsprung wagons. The story of the length of her entourage, still climbing up from Folkestone when she had reached Dover, has been told so many times we need not enlarge upon it here.

They passed over the top of the cliff, on the old cliff top track which then connected Dover and Folkestone (there was then no Folkestone Road), and entered Dover through the Cow Gate which then stood at the top of the present Queen Street. The queen led the way into the Market Square, where she was ceremonially received by the mayor, Thomas Andrews, who wore a new velvet suit and stood on a stool with a covering to match his suit. The meeting took place beside the old market cross which stood near the present site of the fountain.

The queen was tired and soon wearied of Thomas's overlong oration. After all, it was his great day and he was making the most of it. Interrupting him, she said: "Most gracious fool. Get off that stool". He then handed her the town's present.

She was then introduced to Lord Cobham, deputy governor of the castle, where she stayed for a week. He gave her: 'a petticoat of yellow satten, layed all over with a parement of silver and lined with Tawney Sarcenet' (again the original spelling).

All this time Dover was in considerable difficulty over the state of the harbour. The entrance was being continually blocked by shingle and many reports, including that of Sir Walter Raleigh, emphasised the need to rectify the problem. It remained unsolved until Elizabeth's Great Pent was made in 1583. The subject is far too lengthy to deal with here, however, as are the continuing disagreements among the town's administrators, which Elizabeth solved by putting William Hannington in temporary charge of the town.

In 1583 there was an earthquake, but there seems to be no surviving record of any damage caused in the town itself. The castle, however, did suffer. Parts of the cliff and the seaward end of the castle were demolished and that damage is still to be seen today. It is not known whether that same quake demolished part of the east end of St. Mary in Castro, or the top of the tower of Lydden Church, or whether they were quite separate disasters.

In 1584 there was a scandal in the town. The queen had granted the derelict old St. Peter's church, which stood in the Market Square where Lloyds bank now stands, to the corporation to be disposed of, the money so raised to be used for harbour projects. It was actually demolished. Later, the mayor, Thomas Allyn, was called upon to account for the money so raised, but he secretly left the town by night. His name does not appear on any of the subsequent old records, so presumably he decamped with the money and was not seen again.

In 1588 the long feared Spanish Armada sailed towards England. It is significant that while the King of Spain retired to his private chapel to pray, Queen Elizabeth travelled down to Tilbury, to encourage and wish success to much of her defending force which was preparing to sail.

The story of the defeat of this great Armada is not one for a short article, but we must at least detail Dover's contribution. The port of Dover sent her marvellous new ship, the Elizabeth, of 120 tons burden, with a crew of 70 men, victualled for 50 days, and several pinnaces. The squadron took part in the action off Gravelines.

In addition, the town prepared six fire ships, which Francis Drake did not use, sacrificing several of his own to save time. The Dover Select Band took up positions in the town to be ready to deal with any possible invasion.

In 1598 the town bought a painting on wood of the queen which still remains in

24 the town's possession. It is a great treasure.

This brief account does not deal with the construction of the Great Pent, of Elizabeth's appointment of William Hannington or the presentation of the old long gun to the castle. These will be covered in later articles.

THE 'GREAT GUN'

A note enclosed among several old papers regarding the Queen's stay in Dover records that she gave orders that a wooden carriage should be made for the great gun. This 'Great Gun' refers to the one in the castle now known as 'Queen Elizabeth's Pocket Pistol'. This a popular name for the fine old sixteenth century gun which for many years stood out in the open and in the illustration (picture front cover) it is shown in 1861 on the top of the cliff, pointing out to sea. This picture was published by Rock and Co. of London, the publisher of many fine pictures of Kent in the 1860s.

The gun, 24 feet long, is a muzzle loader, and was described in detail in 'the Gentleman's Magazine 1767'. John Bavington Jones copied parts of this article in his book 'Annals of Dover'.

As shown in the later illustration, looking down the barrel it contains a wealth of raised decorative detail, including 'IAN TOLHUYS VAN UTRECHT 1544', which is thought to be the founder and date of the casting.

There is much other fine decorative detail including an armed woman carrying a spear, a palm branch and the word Victoria, the arms of England, DIEU ET MON DROIT, and the following inscription: 'BRECH SCURET AL MUER ENDE WAL BIN ICH GEHETEN DOER BERGH EN DAL BOERT MINEN BAL VAN MI GESMETEN' which has been translated as: 'O'er hill and dale I throw my ball. Breaker my name of sound and wall'.

There are several accounts of it, but no hard proof. One says that it was cast in Utrecht for the Emperor Charles the Fifth to be a present for King Henry the Eighth

to commemorate their alliance for an attack on France, but that they fell out before the gun could be presented and that, many years later, Queen Elizabeth the First made an alliance with the Orange Party of the Netherlands and that the old gun, never having been presented to Henry, was later presented to his daughter.

Some writers suggest that the decorative detail of a queen holding a spear and the word 'Victoria' suggest the celebration of the defeat of the Spanish Armada in Elizabeth's reign, but this is ruled out because its date of 1544 is well before Elizabeth's reign.

It has been stated that in the war between King Charles the First and Parliament the old gun formed part of a siege train and that it reached as far north as Leeds. However, this seems doubtful, especially as there were several other great guns in the country at the time.

In 1757 the monarch's Master of the Ordnance, the Duke of Wellington, ordered the present iron carriage, carrying that date, should be cast from guns salvaged from the Battle of Waterloo.

Whatever doubts there may be about its early history, there can be no doubt whatever that it was a stupendous achievement by its maker, Ian (or Jan) Tolhuys, who cast it in Utrecht in 1544, and there is also no doubt that it would have been a marvellous present for Henry the Eighth, a great authority on gunpowder, if he could indeed have received it.

It is possible that such an advanced piece of work could only have been produced in Utrecht at that time, as it was then the world leader in such techniques.

Such guns were of bronze, an alloy of copper and tin, an alloy very familiar to all craftsmen throughout Europe as bell metal and therefore one which presented foundries with no special founding problems apart from the sheer physical one of smelting it in the large amount required, which must have been daunting.

However, the moulds into which the molten metal was poured were a different



matter, since all the raised decoration would necessarily have been incorporated in them. Such elaborate moulds were probably a combination of sand moulding and some form of wax, but that secret is lost.

Such great guns were cast in the vertical position in great wells in the earth and the cooling of filled moulds was carefully controlled to limit the risk of

fracture or distortion. In fact, one fine old gun does have a fault. It has a kink in the middle of the barrel. There were then no means to bore out barrels to give the required size and accuracy.

For anyone specially interested in early guns, a fine Elizabethan example of a later carriage is to be seen in Pevensea castle and Chatham has a number of gun barrels, many designed for use afloat.