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# Networks, News and Communication: Political Elites and Community Relations in Elizabethan Devon, 1588-1603

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**Networks, News and Communication:  
Political Elites and Community Relations in  
Elizabethan Devon, 1588-1603**

by

**Ian David Cooper**

A thesis submitted to Plymouth University  
in partial fulfilment for the degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy**

School of Humanities and Performing Arts  
Faculty of Arts

In collaboration with  
Devon Record Office

**September 2012**

*In loving memory of my grandfathers, Eric George Wright and Ronald Henry George Cooper, and my godfather, David Michael Jefferies*

## **Copyright Statement**

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# Abstract

Ian David Cooper

'Networks, News and Communication: Political Elites and Community Relations in Elizabethan Devon, 1588-1603'

Focusing on the 'second reign' of Queen Elizabeth I (1588-1603), this thesis constitutes the first significant socio-political examination of Elizabethan Devon – a geographically peripheral county, yet strategically central in matters pertaining to national defence and security. A complex web of personal associations and informal alliances underpinned politics and governance in Tudor England; but whereas a great deal is now understood about relations between both the political elite and the organs of government at the centre of affairs, many questions still remain unanswered about how networks of political actors functioned at a provincial and neighbourhood level, and how these networks kept in touch with one another, central government and the court. Consequently, this study is primarily concerned with power and communication. In particular, it investigates and models the interconnected networks of government within late-Elizabethan Devon and explains precisely how the county's officials (at every level) shared information with the Crown and each other. The *raison d'être* of this study is, therefore, to probe the character and articulation of the power geometries at the south-western fringe of Elizabethan England. The closing years of the reign of Queen Elizabeth I represent a decisive phase in the evolution of the English nation state, one that saw the appointment of lord lieutenants on a more widespread and long-standing basis, the consistent training of certain sections of the county militias, the expansion of the pre-existing government post-stage service, a heightened degree of dealings between every echelon of administration and an obvious increase in the amount of information that flowed from the localities into the capital. The primary causes of each of these developments were the Elizabethan war with Spain (1585-1604) and the rebellion in Ireland (1594-1603), and it is demonstrated throughout this thesis that Devon, a strategically essential county during this period of political turmoil, provides an excellent case study for evaluating the impact that each had on the Crown's ability to control the periphery whilst being spatially anchored at the court. Furthermore, by examining each of these developments the thesis fundamentally undercuts the tenacious assertion that geographically marginal regions of Tudor territory were inward-looking, remote and disconnected from events that were unfolding on a national and international level.

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## List of Abbreviations

Original spelling, punctuation and grammar have been retained throughout in quotations from manuscripts. Insertions are indicated by italics and deletions are represented by strikethrough line. Modern translations of unusual spellings have been included in square brackets. The letter 'j' is maintained as a variant of the letter 'i', the letters 'v' and 'u' remain interchangeable and the letter 'y' is kept to represent a 'th' sound. Dates are given in Old Style, but the year is taken to begin on 1 January. Roman numerals are kept in quotations, but otherwise presented in Arabic form; monetary sums of pounds, shillings and pence are given as £ s. d.. In the footnotes dates are presented in a shorthand day / month / year format. All figures have been produced by the author.

AO 1	The National Archives, Auditors of the Imprest and Commissioners of Audit: Declared Accounts
APC	John Roche Dasent, ed., <i>Acts of the Privy Council of England</i> , vols. i-xxxii (London: HMSO, 1890-1907)
BIHR	<i>Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research</i>
BL	The British Library, London
Cal. Carew MSS	J. S. Brewer and William Bullen, eds., <i>Calendar of the Carew Manuscripts</i> , vol. iii (Nendeln: Kraus, 1974).
CP	Cecil Papers, Hatfield House, Hertfordshire
CSPD	<i>Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series</i>
CSPV	<i>Calendar of State Papers Relating to English Affairs in the Archives of Venice</i>
CUL	Cambridge University Library, Cambridge
CUP	Cambridge University Press
DRO	Devon Record Office, Exeter
E 407	The National Archives, Records of the Exchequer of Receipt: Messengers Accounts, 1558-1603
ECA	Exeter City Archives
<i>Econ. HR</i>	<i>The Economic History Review</i>
<i>EHR</i>	<i>The English Historical Review</i>
<i>GJ</i>	<i>The Geographical Journal</i>

GRO	Gloucestershire Record Office, Gloucester
Hasler, <i>Commons</i>	P. W. Hasler, ed., <i>The History of Parliament: The House of Commons, 1558-1603</i> , vols. i-iii (London, HMSO, 1981).
<i>HJ</i>	<i>The Historical Journal</i>
HMC, <i>Bath</i>	Historical Manuscripts Commission, <i>Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Marquis of Bath</i> , vol. ii (Dublin, 1907)
HMC, <i>Foljambe</i>	Historical Manuscripts Commission, <i>Fifteenth Report, Appendix, Part V. The Manuscripts of the Right Honourable F. J. Savile Foljambe</i> (London: HMSO, 1897)
HMC, <i>Portland</i>	Historical Manuscripts Commission, <i>Thirteenth Report, Appendix, Part II. The Manuscripts of the Duke of Portland</i> , vol. ii (London: HMSO, 1891)
HMC, <i>Rutland</i>	Historical Manuscripts Commission, <i>Twelfth Report, Appendix, Part IV. The Manuscripts of his Grace the Duke of Rutland</i> , vol. i (London: HMSO, 1888)
HMC, <i>Rye</i>	Historical Manuscripts Commission, <i>Thirteenth Report, Appendix, Part IV. The Manuscripts of Rye and Hereford Corporations; Captain Loder-Symonds, E. R. Wodehouse, MP, and others</i> (London: HMSO, 1892)
HMC, <i>Salisbury</i>	Historical Manuscripts Commission, <i>Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Marquis of Salisbury, K.G.</i> , vols. i-xv (London: HMSO, 1883-1930).
HMC, <i>Somerset</i>	Historical Manuscripts Commission, <i>Fifteenth Report, Appendix, Part VII. The Manuscripts of the Duke of Somerset etc.</i> (London: HMSO, 1898).
HMSO	His/Her Majesty's Stationery Office
<i>HR</i>	<i>Historical Research</i>
<i>JBS</i>	<i>Journal of British Studies</i>
<i>JHG</i>	<i>Journal of Historical Geography</i>
<i>JHS</i>	<i>Journal of Historical Sociology</i>
JPs	Justices of the Peace
<i>JTH</i>	<i>Journal of Transport History</i>
NDRO	North Devon Record Office, Barnstaple

ODNB	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i>
OUP	Oxford University Press
<i>P&amp;P</i>	<i>Past and Present</i>
PROB 11	Prerogative Court of Canterbury and Related Probate Jurisdictions: Will Registers
PWDRO	Plymouth and West Devon Record Office, Plymouth
QS	Quarter Sessions Order Book
SP 1	State Papers, Domestic, Henry VIII
SP 3	Lisle Papers
SP 10	State Papers, Domestic, Edward VI
SP 11	State Papers, Domestic, Mary I
SP 12	State Papers, Domestic, Elizabeth I
SP 14	State Papers, Domestic, James I
SP 15	State Papers, Domestic, Addenda
SP 40	Signet Office: Warrant Books
SP 63	State Papers, Ireland, Elizabeth I to George III
SRO	Somerset Record Office, Taunton
<i>TDA</i>	<i>Transactions of the Devonshire Association</i>
TNA	The National Archives, Kew
<i>TRHS</i>	<i>Transactions of the Royal Historical Society</i>
UP	University Press

## Acknowledgements

This thesis is the product of more than three years of research on Tudor government, Elizabethan warfare, sixteenth-century post and communication, and early modern news. The project was conceived in the first instance by my supervisors, Professor James Daybell and Professor Mark Brayshay at Plymouth University, and John Draisey at Devon Record Office. Indeed, without their visionary thinking, expert knowledge and ability to write a superb funding application to the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) this collaborative venture would simply not have been possible. The AHRC must also be thanked for their generous financial support over the last three years which has enabled me to dedicate my entire working life to this thesis and provided me with financial peace of mind – something which should never be underestimated, particularly in this current economic climate. I would also like to thank Devon County Council and Plymouth University for the additional monetary support that both institutions have granted me over the last three years for numerous research trips within and beyond Devon.

My passion for everything early modern began one October afternoon in 2007 when I encountered for the first time Professor James Daybell. Having left my job as an Insurance Broker in the City of London following the realisation that a career in business and commerce was not for me, I moved back to my native Cornwall and promptly enrolled at Plymouth University to undertake a masters degree in history. Fortunately James was chosen as my supervisor and it was not long before his excitement and enthusiasm for the subject rubbed off on me. Indeed, it is James who has been the driving force behind the early stages of my career in academia. His expert knowledge, generosity of time, unwavering support and sustained encouragement have been the hallmarks of his supervision over the last five years. What is more, the two of us have become good friends and I thank him here also for the sage advice he has given me on non-historical matters, as well as the numerous cups of coffee, slices of cake, pints of beer and dinners that he has bought me both in a work and social context. I am also extremely fortunate to have had Professor Mark Brayshay as my other academic supervisor. Mark's unrivalled knowledge in matters pertaining to early modern post and communication has been invaluable over the last three years. He has been able to impart clearly his knowledge on very technical matters and provided numerous photocopies of useful articles that have further enriched my work. Moreover, both he and James have spent a large quantity of time reading through multiple drafts of this thesis and I thank them both wholeheartedly for their excellent advice on how to improve my work.

In the course of writing this thesis I have also received advice and support from many other scholarly individuals. Among these are Gemma Allen, Kenneth Austin, Alan Bryson, Matthew Clark, John Cooper, Rebecca Emmett, Claire Fitzpatrick, Andrew Gordon, Todd Gray, Steven Gunn, John Guy, Paul Hammer, Steve Hindle, Jack Holding, Richard Huzzey, Kevin Jefferys, Jennie Jordan, Samuli Kaislaniemi, Diarmaid MacCulloch, Svante Norrhem, Florence Roberts, Stephen Roberts, Alan Stewart, Mark Stoye, Joel Swann, Tom Squire, Liz Tingle, Simon Topping and Alison Wiggins. They all have my sincere gratitude and admiration. I am also grateful for the comments on papers delivered at conferences and seminars. In particular I would like to acknowledge

the audiences of the 'Early Modern Exclusions' conference held at the University of Portsmouth on 14 September 2010 and the 'Cultures of Correspondence' conference held at Plymouth University over three days in April 2011.

The thesis has taken me to and brought me into contact with a number of archives within and beyond Devon. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to thank the staff and curators at Bedfordshire Record Office, The British Library, Cambridge University Library, Gloucestershire Record Office, The National Archives, North Devon Record Office, Plymouth and West Devon Record Office, Somerset Record Office, Staffordshire Record Office and Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre for their expert advice, assistance and patience. Above all though, it is the staff at Devon Record Office (DRO), past and present, to whom I am profoundly grateful and, in particular, John Draisey and John Brunton. Both Johns have been exemplary in the time and support they have given me. John Draisey has granted me 'behind the scenes' access to the strong rooms at DRO and has assisted me greatly in cataloguing the Seymour of Berry Pomeroy Manuscripts (the archival element of this collaborative doctoral project), while John Brunton provided me with his vast technical knowledge of the CALM computer software programme which I have used to produce an electronic version of the Seymour Manuscripts catalogue.

Finally, I must acknowledge the help and support that I have received from my friends and family. Working on a single project for the last three years could easily have been a lonely affair. Fortunately I have been able to count on a number of people to relieve my solitude. Most notably, Jason Higgs has provided me with stoic friendship and I am especially thankful to him for listening to me rambling on about Tudor postal arrangements during day-long walks to Looe and Bodmin. My brother, Neil, also has taken an intent interest in my work and I am grateful to him for reading through drafts of this thesis so as to provide me with a non-specialist perspective. To my mother and father, Elaine and Clive, I would like to express my love and respect. They have been a constant source of support throughout my life and have selflessly assisted me in realising my ambitions. However, most of all, I must acknowledge the enduring love, affection and friendship that I have received from my dear wife, Trudy, and the joy that we share thanks to our newly born son, Oscar. Both provide me with the most important thing in life: happiness.

IDC  
*Liskeard*

## Author's Declaration

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has the author been registered for any other University award.

This study was financed with the aid of a studentship from the Arts and Humanities Research Council and carried out in collaboration with Devon Record Office.

Relevant history seminars and conferences were regularly attended at which work was often presented.

### Seminars attended

Annual Christopher Durston Memorial Lecture, Plymouth University  
Peninsula Arts History Lecture Series, Plymouth University  
History Research Seminar Series, Plymouth University

### Conferences attended

'Working With Archives', Collaborative Doctoral Award Network, Flat Time House, London, 29 January 2010  
'Music, Literature, Illustration: Collaboration and Networks in English Manuscript Culture, 1500-1700', University of Southampton, 16-17 February 2010  
'The Postgraduate Society Short Conference Series', Plymouth University, 18 March 2010  
'Early Modern Exclusions', University of Portsmouth, 14 September 2010  
'Cultures of Correspondence in Early Modern Britain, 1550-1640', Plymouth University, 14-16 April 2011

### Papers presented

'Networks, News and Communication: Political Elites and Community Relations in Elizabethan Devon', 'The Postgraduate Society Short Conference Series', Plymouth University, 18 March 2010  
'Overcoming Geographical Exclusion in Elizabethan Devon: the Correspondence Network of Sir Edward Seymour of Berry Pomeroy', 'Early Modern Exclusions', University of Portsmouth, 14 September 2010  
'Circulating News Locally and Nationally: the Intelligence Network of Elizabethan Devon, 1588-1603', 'Cultures of Correspondence in Early Modern Britain, 1550-1640', Plymouth University, 14-16 April 2011

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# 1

## Introduction

Concentrating on the years 1588 to 1603, this thesis examines political-military networks, social connections, postal arrangements, letter production and the circulation of news and intelligence within and beyond Elizabethan Devon and represents the first major socio-political study of the county for the late-Tudor period. Intricate networks of personal relationships and social connections formed the bedrock of power in early modern England; but while much is already known regarding the linkages between both individuals and institutions at the epicentre of the realm, a great deal remains to be revealed and understood about networks operating at regional and local levels, and how these were linked with each other, central government and the court. This study engages directly with issues of connectivity and governance in an English county. It focuses on late-Elizabeth Devon, a county that was spatially distant from London yet, between 1588 and 1603, noticeably pivotal in national affairs and questions of security. Simply put, the thesis explores the interlocking structures of governance within late-Elizabethan Devon and articulates the ways in which the county community interacted and communicated with central political and social hierarchies.

The study therefore investigates the sinews, dynamics and operational mechanics of Elizabethan political networks through the prism of a county-based case study. Concentrating on the Armada years, it examines what John Brewer has described as the 'sinews of power' at the south-western periphery

of the Tudor state.<sup>1</sup> The final fifteen years of the Elizabethan era is arguably a crucial period in the development of the English nation state, one that witnessed the establishment of the office of lord lieutenant on a more permanent basis, the improvement and professionalisation of the county militia, the widespread engagement of an Exchequer-funded royal post-stage service, an increased level of interaction and communication between all levels of government, and an apparent rise in the circulation of news and intelligence from the provinces into London. The Elizabethan war with Spain (1585-1604) and the Nine Years' War in Ireland (1594-1603) were the main catalysts for these developments and it is argued throughout this thesis that Devon – a frontline county during both conflicts – provides an ideal case study for analysing the impact that each had on central government's ability to govern the realm from the confines of Whitehall.

This thesis examines the connectedness of the ruling elite in Devon, a county on the periphery of Tudor territory, in the period from the Spanish Armada (summer 1588) until the Stuart accession (spring 1603). The recently discovered Seymour Manuscripts have formed the central archive for this thesis, highlighting relations between Queen Elizabeth I, her Privy Council, the Lord Lieutenant of Devon, his deputies, local landed and civic elites and the wider county community in the 1590s, and in particular their activities in mustering, training and levying the county's militia during the Elizabethan war with Spain and the Nine Years' War in Ireland. Viewed alongside other locally and centrally held collections (all of which are outlined in detail below) the study exploits these papers to recover and interpret evidence of the networks that existed amongst those who contributed to the governance (in its widest sense)

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<sup>1</sup> John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State, 1688-1783* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990).

of the county's affairs, and who provided a connection with the centre through their willingness to serve at national level.

The interconnectedness of ruling elites is explored at all levels of government, from the national and regional political scene down to a community, neighbourhood and parish level, revealing how links were maintained, channels opened up, bonds created and alliances cemented. It stresses the importance of the informal in the political, emphasising the significance of the personal relationships and social connections of Devon's Lord and Deputy Lieutenants in a political system where the line between the public and the private was so blurred. Furthermore, it examines the function of Devon's lieutenancy in relation to the maintenance of the county militia and unravels the extent to which central government was able to acquire the consent and cooperation of the wider county community for their incessant military demands. Central is the issue of what motivated the inhabitants of Devon to behave in particular ways: whether individuals operated independently or as a part of distinct groups; how far they were influenced by self-interest or wider utilitarian responsibilities; the extent to which they acted in accordance with factional lines, according to ideological or religious principles, or were acquisitive and motivated by financial remuneration. Moreover, through an analysis of the Tudor south-west's royal post-stage service, Devon's intra-county postal arrangements, travel conditions, secretaries, letter-writing, chain copying and the circulation of news and intelligence (oral and scribal), the study explores the degree of connectivity between different tiers of government spanning the centre and the periphery as well as within the county itself. How far Devon was connected to events at the centre is thus a fundamental area of

investigation as is the extent to which local issues and grievances found representation and redress at the Elizabethan court.

By pursuing these lines of enquiry the thesis aims to contribute fundamentally to the reassessment of the traditional view of the early modern south-west as an introspective, distant and cut-off region of Tudor territory. Helen Speight has argued that during the 1530s ‘the counties of Devon and Cornwall formed a fairly distinctive province on the periphery of the realm. It was both introverted and conservative in character.’ Furthermore, she suggests that ‘Cornwall, in particular, where cultural and linguistic differences accentuated the geographical isolation of the county, the line of command and communication between central government and the county was especially attenuated.’<sup>2</sup> In contrast, research reported in this thesis will show that the inhabitants of late-Elizabethan Devon were highly integrated and co-opted into a national political framework, a phenomenon which can be seen most markedly in the contribution that the county’s inhabitants made to England’s war effort. This study therefore neatly fills the gap between research conducted by Mary Robertson and John Cooper on early Tudor Devon, and research conducted by Mary Wolffe and Mark Stoyale on seventeenth-century Devon, to provide a new insight into Devon’s political and social connectivity during the Armada years.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Helen Speight, ‘The Politics of Good Governance’: Thomas Cromwell and the Government of the Southwest of England’, *HJ*, 37:3 (September, 1994), 623-38 (p. 624).

<sup>3</sup> Mary L. Robertson, ‘The Art of the Possible’: Thomas Cromwell’s Management of West Country Government’, *HJ*, 32:4 (1989), 793-816; John P. D. Cooper, *Propaganda and the Tudor State: Political Culture in the Westcountry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003); Mary Wolffe, *Gentry Leaders in Peace and War: The Gentry Governors of Devon in the Early Seventeenth Century* (Exeter: Exeter UP, 1997); Mark Stoyale, *Loyalty and Locality: Popular Allegiance in Devon During the English Civil War* (Exeter: Exeter UP, 1994); id., *Exeter in the Civil War* (Exeter: Devon Archaeological Society, 1995); id., ed., *From Deliverance to Destruction: Rebellion and Civil War in an English City* (Exeter: Exeter UP, 1996); id., *Devon and the Civil War* (Exeter: Mint Press, 2001).

## **'New' Tudor political history**

In the context of existing historiography the thesis thus makes a substantial contribution to what Professor Patrick Collinson defined as 'new' Tudor political history during his inaugural lecture as Regius Professor of Modern History at the University of Cambridge in November 1989. For Collinson, 'new' Tudor political history had three key objectives: 'to explore the social depth of politics'; 'to find signs of political life at levels where it was not previously thought to have existed'; and 'to disclose the horizontal connections of political life at those lower levels as coexistent with the vertical connections which depended upon monarchy and lordship and which have been the ordinary concerns of political history'.<sup>4</sup> The underlying motivation behind this concept was both to vanquish the view put forward by Sir Geoffrey Elton 'that the only political units worthy of study are sovereign and separate states' and destroy any misguided belief that the counties of early modern England were 'hermetically sealed' autonomous political units whose political culture consisted of 'a thinnish carpet with no underlay, [and] no social depth'.<sup>5</sup> However, as Stephen Alford, Natalie Mears and, indeed, Collinson himself have acknowledged, this seemingly abrupt new departure for Tudor political history was, in reality, the product of a much more gradual historiographical process.<sup>6</sup> As Mears puts it, Collinson's views eloquently

tapped an existing vein of dissatisfaction with the perceived failure of revisionist history to deal with questions first raised by Conyers Read

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<sup>4</sup> Patrick Collinson, 'De Republica Anglorum: Or, History with the Politics Put Back', in *Elizabethan Essays*, ed. by P. Collinson (London and Rio Grande: The Hambledon Press, 1994), pp. 1-30.

<sup>5</sup> Collinson, 'De Republica Anglorum', pp. 9, 11 and 22.

<sup>6</sup> Stephen Alford, 'Politics and Political History in the Tudor Century', *HJ*, 42:2 (1999), 535-48; Natalie Mears, 'Courts, Courtiers, and Culture in Tudor England', *HJ*, 46:3 (September, 2003), 703-22.

and Sir John Neale in the early twentieth century about the role of ideology and social connections in politics.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, there exists a substantial corpus of research dating from both before and after Collinson's seminal lecture which bears many of the hallmarks of the 'new' Tudor political history that he advocated. In relation to central government and the court, scholars have been increasingly eager to emphasise the importance of personalities and social connections in Tudor politics. In a series of landmark publications between 1977 and 1987, David Starkey unearthed the personal and social nature of Henrician politics by highlighting the significance of the chief gentlemen of King Henry VIII's Privy Chamber and revealed the vital role that they played as informal intercessors between the King and the formal institutions of Tudor government.<sup>8</sup> Eric Ives similarly focused on the role of the personal in the political in his pioneering study, *Faction in Tudor England*, depicting a political system 'where relationships and events are determined by groups thinking mainly of personal advantage'.<sup>9</sup> Subsequent research on the court of Queen Elizabeth I has attached the same importance to personalities, ideology and social dynamics. Simon Adams has conducted seminal research on the personality and patronage of the Queen's most famous favourite, Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, while other historians have identified the increasingly abrasive and uncompromising character of Leicester's step-son, Robert Devereux, second Earl of Essex, as being crucial

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<sup>7</sup> Mears, 'Courts, Courtiers, and Culture', p. 704.

<sup>8</sup> David Starkey, 'Representation Through Intimacy: a Study in the Symbolism of Monarchy and Court Office in Early-Modern England', in *Symbols and Sentiments: Cross Cultural Studies in Symbolism*, ed., by I. Lewis (London: Academic Press, 1977), pp. 187-224; id., 'Court and Government', in *Revolution Reassessed: Revisions in the History of Tudor Government and Administration*, ed. by C. Coleman and D. Starkey (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), pp. 29-58; id., 'Intimacy and Innovation: the Rise of the Privy Chamber, 1485-1547', in *The English Court: from the Wars of the Roses to the Civil War*, ed. by D. Starkey et al. (Harlow: Longman, 1987), pp. 71-118; id., *The Reign of Henry VIII: Personalities and Politics* (London: George Philip, 1985; reprinted 2002).

<sup>9</sup> Eric Ives, *Faction in Tudor England* (London: Historical Association, 1979), p. 2.

in the formation of factional groupings at the Elizabethan court during the 1590s.<sup>10</sup> Gender has provided a particularly fruitful avenue of enquiry for 'new' Tudor political historians. Barbara Harris and James Daybell in particular have revealed that aristocratic Tudor women often acted as important informal political actors and have therefore successfully exploded any notion that women were mere bystanders who watched passively from the political sidelines.<sup>11</sup> Natalie Mears has subsequently embellished this premise via a study of the role of the chief gentlewomen of Elizabeth I's Privy Chamber, arguing that these women provided politicians with an informal 'point of access' to the Queen in much the same way as the chief gentlemen of King Henry VIII's Privy Chamber did during his reign.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, it is not just in relation to Tudor England that historians have sought to explore the social depth of sixteenth-century politics. Sharon Kettering, in particular, has produced numerous publications on French 'political clientelism' which she has defined as 'a system of patron-broker-client ties and networks that dominate a society's politics and government.'<sup>13</sup>

Elements of Collinson's 'new' Tudor political history can also be found in research conducted on England's local administration. A. G. R. Smith, for

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<sup>10</sup> Simon Adams, *Leicester and the Court: Essays on Elizabethan Politics* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2002); John Guy, ed., *The Reign of Elizabeth I: Court and Culture in the Last Decade* (Cambridge: CUP, 1995).

<sup>11</sup> Barbara J. Harris, 'Women and Politics in Early Tudor England', *HJ*, 33 (1990), 259-281; id., *English Aristocratic Women, 1450-1550: Marriage and Family, Property and Careers* (New York: OUP, 2002); James Daybell, *Women Letter-Writers in Tudor England* (Oxford: OUP, 2006); id., 'Women's Letters of Recommendation and the Rhetoric of Friendship in Sixteenth-Century England', in *Rhetoric, Gender and Politics: Representing Early Modern Women's Speech*, ed. by J. Richards and A. Thorne (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 172-90.

<sup>12</sup> Natalie Mears, 'Politics in the Elizabethan Privy Chamber: Lady Mary Sidney and Kat Ashley', in *Women and Politics in Early Modern England, 1450-1700*, ed. by J. Daybell (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 67-82 (p. 76); id., *Queenship and Political Discourse in The Elizabethan Realms* (Cambridge: CUP, 2005). See also, Pam Wright, 'A Change in Direction: The Ramifications of a Female Household, 1558-1603', in *The English Court*, pp. 147-172.

<sup>13</sup> Sharon Kettering, 'The Historical Development of Political Clientelism', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 18:3 (Winter, 1988), 419-47 (p. 419); id., 'Clientage During the French Wars of Religion', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 20:2 (Summer, 1989), 221-39; id., 'Patronage and Kinship in Early Modern France', *French Historical Studies*, 16:2 (Autumn, 1989), 408-35; id., 'The Patronage Power of Early Modern French Noblewomen', *HJ*, 32:4 (December, 1989), 817-41; id., 'Brokerage at the Court of Louis XIV', *HJ*, 36:1 (March, 1993), 69-87.

example, dedicated an entire chapter of his book, *The Government of Elizabethan England*, to local government in recognition that 'it is difficult today, in an age of ever-increasing centralization, to appreciate the enormous importance of the agencies of local government in sixteenth-century England.'<sup>14</sup> Similarly, Penry Williams included in his study, *The Tudor Regime*, a chapter entitled 'The Chains of Command' which sought to answer the question: 'who made up the links in the chains of command that ran between the central government and the regions?'<sup>15</sup> This paved the way for Alfred Hassell-Smith, Wallace MacCaffrey, Peter Clark and Diarmaid MacCulloch to begin to unpick the intricate tapestry of county politics and thereby expose the social depth of its underlay through the prism of four exceptionally detailed county-based case studies.<sup>16</sup> The participation of the counties' inhabitants in a national political culture has received a similar level of scholarly attention, especially during the two decades that have followed Collinson's clarion call.<sup>17</sup> Specifically, 'new' Tudor political historians have looked to expose political participation and uncover the sinews of governance at an increasingly localised level. In particular, Steve Hindle and Eamon Duffy have delved right down to the ground floor of Tudor government; excavating the extent of popular political participation at a parish level.<sup>18</sup> In doing so, they have underlined that

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<sup>14</sup> A. G. R. Smith, *The Government of Elizabethan England* (London: Edward Arnold, 1967), pp. 85-98.

<sup>15</sup> Penry Williams, *The Tudor Regime* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), pp. 407-20.

<sup>16</sup> Alfred Hassell-Smith, *County and Court: Government and Politics in Norfolk, 1558-1603* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974); Wallace T. MacCaffrey, *Exeter, 1540-1640: The Growth of an English County Town* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard UP, 1975); Peter Clark, *English Provincial Society from the Reformation to the Revolution: Religion, Politics and Society in Kent, 1500-1640* (Hassocks: The Harvester Press, 1977); Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Suffolk and the Tudors: Politics and Religion in an English County, 1500-1600* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986).

<sup>17</sup> For example, see Steven Gunn, *Early Tudor Government, 1485-1558* (Basingstoke and London: MacMillan, 1995); David Loades, *Power in Tudor England* (Basingstoke and London: MacMillan, 1997); Michael J. Braddick, *State Formation in Early Modern England, c.1550-1700* (Cambridge: CUP, 2000).

<sup>18</sup> Steve Hindle, 'Hierarchy and Community in the Elizabethan Parish: The Swallowfield Articles of 1596', *HJ*, 42:3 (September, 1999), 835-51; id., *The State and Social Change in Early Modern England, c. 1550-1640* (Basingstoke and London: MacMillan, 2000), pp. 204-30; id., *On*

governance and power in Tudor England was negotiated, a cooperation between those who occupied government positions at court and those who assumed political office on a regional, county, civic and parish basis.

What then is left to explore and verify for the current crop of 'new' Tudor political historians? Existing theories on the importance of the personal, informal and social elements of sixteenth-century politics at the centre of affairs need to be more extensively applied to the local political scene in order to understand the nature of Tudor politics more fully. Additional scrutiny on how intra-county political networks and structures functioned and interacted must be pursued to appreciate further the consent and cooperation that was needed in the provinces for the Crown to secure popular political allegiance throughout the realm. Detailed reconstructions of the post and communication network that facilitated and underpinned the ever increasing interaction between political actors at all levels of Tudor government (from the national and regional political scene, all the way down to a community, neighbourhood and parish level) are essential to clarify exactly how the channel of communication between Whitehall and the parishes was made possible. And forensic examinations of local news and intelligence networks are necessary in order to underscore the importance of the provinces in servicing the centre with vital pieces of information that could be used to modify and develop central government policy. Of course this is not an exhaustive list, it merely re-emphasises the avenues of enquiry that this thesis pursues in relation to late-Elizabethan Devon.

A more in-depth focus on local power structures and their interaction with central government and each other is particularly relevant for the late-Elizabethan era because by then, as David Loades puts it, 'the importance of

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*the Parish? The Micro-Politics of Poor Relief in Rural England, c. 1550-1750* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004); Eamon Duffy, *The Voices of Morebath: Reformation and Rebellion in an English Village* (Newhaven: Yale UP, 2001).

great private households, so conspicuous in the fifteenth century, [had] steadily ebbed away under the pressures of royal policy. In their place appeared a much broader ruling class, the 'political nation'.<sup>19</sup> This erosion of bastard feudalism has been identified by Steven Gunn as commencing in the early Tudor period when 'even the greatest ... peers seem to have found that any administrative and political talent they found amongst the gentry leached too rapidly for comfort out into royal service and an independent role in county politics.'<sup>20</sup> Late-Elizabethan government consequently encompassed a broad range of society; from the leading members of the aristocracy who assumed positions at the apex of central and local government, all the way down to the lower level ranks of the gentry and yeomanry who occupied positions at a neighbourhood and parish level. The power and authority of successive early modern regimes therefore became increasingly reliant upon the ability of the Crown to secure and maintain the allegiance and goodwill of 'the political nation', a feat that it achieved with varying degrees of success from era to era and county to county.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Loades, *Power in Tudor England*, p. 4.

<sup>20</sup> Gunn, *Early Tudor Government*, p. 47.

<sup>21</sup> Diane Willen, 'Lord Russell and the Western Counties, 1539-1555', *JBS*, 15:1 (Autumn, 1975), 26-45; Steven G. Ellis, 'A Border Baron and the Tudor State: The Rise and Fall of Lord Dacre of the North', *HJ*, 35:2 (June, 1992), 253-77; Helen Speight, 'Local Government and the South-Western Rebellion of 1549', *Southern History*, 18 (1996), 1-23; Ethan H. Shagan, 'Protector Somerset and the 1549 Rebellions: New Sources and New Perspectives', *EHR*, 114:455 (February, 1999), 34-63; Mark Stoye, 'The Dissidence of Despair: Rebellion and Identity in Early Modern Cornwall', *JBS*, 38:4 (October, 1999), 423-44; id., *West Britons: Cornish Identities and the Early Modern British State* (Exeter: Exeter UP, 2002); id., 'His Majestie's Sea Service in the Western Parts: Maritime Affairs in Cornwall During the English Civil War', in *A New Maritime History of South West England* (Exeter: Exeter UP, 2011); Alan Bryson, 'Edward VI's 'speciall men': Crown and Locality in mid Tudor England', *HR*, 82:216 (May, 2009), 229-51.

## Historical research on early modern Devon

With regards to Devon in the 1530s, Mary Robertson has sought to delineate 'the actual mechanics of interaction between centre and locality'. This, she argues, revolved around 'Thomas Cromwell's management of the two western counties of Devon and Cornwall'. Accordingly, she has revealed how Cromwell painstakingly endeavoured to establish a network of contacts amongst Devon's political elite which could be utilised to assist central government in its efforts to control the wider county community. Cromwell's Devon 'address book' included Devon MPs with whom he had served in Parliament, legal practitioners with whom he had practised law in London but who had subsequently returned to their native Devon, courtiers originally from Devon who occupied ceremonial or administrative positions at court but nevertheless retained a high degree of power and prestige within the county and servants from Cromwell's own household who had family connections in Devon. As a result, these contacts 'could with proper management provide the critical link between their local community and the central government.'<sup>22</sup> However, whereas Cromwell's management of early Tudor Devon was achieved through an informal mechanism of personal contacts, this thesis will reveal that, by the late-Elizabethan era, Cromwell's successors in central government were able to rely on the formal institution of the lieutenancy to achieve a similar result.

John Cooper has also studied early Tudor Devon in his insightful monograph, *Propaganda and the Tudor State: Political Culture in the Westcountry*. The central premise of Cooper's work is that Tudor propaganda promoted a 'popular culture of loyalism' to the Crown within both Devon and

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<sup>22</sup> Robertson, 'Cromwell's Management of West Country Government', pp. 793, 799 and 800.

Cornwall. However, he also argues that ‘the exposure of the region to foreign attack, and its dependence on the monarchy for defence, generated feelings of patriotism and loyalty towards the centre.’ Indeed, Cooper observes that ‘anxiety about invasion encouraged the provinces to look to the centre for military protection’. He therefore suggests that the south-western rebellions of 1497 and 1549 ‘reflected short-term political crises rather than a regional or cultural predisposition towards insurgency.’ Such loyalty was felt no more acutely than amongst Devon’s political elite during the Elizabethan war with Spain when the threat of invasion was most severe. This thesis will therefore show that the inhabitants of late-Elizabethan Devon were highly ‘integrated within the allegiance demanded by the English state’ as a result of their perennial fear of foreign invasion.<sup>23</sup>

There has also been detailed research conducted on seventeenth-century Devon. Mary Wolffe, for example, has illustrated the extent to which the county’s political elite provided King Charles I with loyal service in the years that immediately preceded the English Civil War whilst at the same time remaining candid over the tensions caused within the county by the King’s abrasive policies. The primary focus of Wolffe’s study, however, is on the role of Devon’s JPs. This she attributes to the fact that there is ‘no core body of material on the deputy lieutenants in Devon’ for the twenty-five years with which she is concerned (1625-1640). Consequently, she has argued that in the seventeenth-century it was Devon’s JPs who ‘gradually became the most important means of furthering the King’s interests in the county.’<sup>24</sup> In contrast, this study shows – with the aid of a newly discovered body of primary material – that for the late-

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<sup>23</sup> Cooper, *Propaganda and the Tudor State*, pp. 25, 51, 171 and 237.

<sup>24</sup> Wolffe, *Gentry Leaders in Peace and War*, pp. 47 and 132.

Elizabethan era it was the county's Lord and Deputy Lieutenants who served as the most important means of furthering the Queen's interests in the county.

Mark Stoye has similarly looked at Devon before, as well as during, the English Civil War in his monograph, *Loyalty and Locality: Popular Allegiance in Devon During the English Civil War*. However, his primary concern was not the political elite; rather it was to conduct a forensic examination of the patterns of popular allegiance within the county. As a result, he acknowledges that his findings contain relatively little on high politics or state affairs. Instead 'it is the people of Devon who take centre stage' in what is an exceptionally lucid analysis of why the inhabitants of some areas of Devon were sympathetic to the royalist cause, while others were staunchly parliamentarian. In the midst of this, Stoye depicts a county ruptured by civil war: 'minor skirmishes took place everywhere'; 'full-scale battles occurred at Modbury, Torrington and Sourton'; 'Exeter and Dartmouth were each besieged and taken on two separate occasions, and Barnstaple on three, while Plymouth endured intermittent siege throughout the period 1642-46.'<sup>25</sup> This thesis therefore provides an important precursor to Stoye's work because it outlines a county that was by and large unified by the war with Spain. As a result, it highlights the seismic shift that took place in relation to Devon's, and indeed the nation's, political unity over the course of just one generation and underlines the relative success of the Tudors and failure of the Stuarts in securing widespread popular allegiance to the Crown on the south-western periphery of the realm.

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<sup>25</sup> Stoye, *Loyalty and Locality*, pp. 3 and 27.

## Methodologies and sources

It may therefore be argued that this thesis bridges the gap between Robertson and Cooper's work on early Tudor Devon, and Wolffe and Stoyles's work on early Stuart Devon, and offers a new analysis of the county in late-Elizabethan time. In doing so, the thesis fundamentally contributes to a re-evaluation of the nature of Tudor politics at a local and national level, arguing that by the end of the sixteenth-century Devon's governors – from the Lord Lieutenant and his deputies at the apex, to the constables of the parishes at a 'ground floor' level – were much more embedded in a national political culture than the county's geographical remoteness on the periphery of the Tudor state would suggest. This perspective is achieved by viewing events predominantly from the periphery rather than the more traditional view of only from the centre. Such a new and controversial approach to the understanding of Tudor government and the formation of the British state was pioneered by Steven Ellis in the context of Tudor Ireland and the English borderlands. In 1985 Ellis noted that 'a perspective which focuses on interaction between English and Irish within Ireland is too narrow' and as a consequence the 'Westminster-centred history' which had prevailed neglected the fact that 'Irish history was not shaped by events outside Ireland, [rather] it tended to be the sum of regional histories and their interaction'.<sup>26</sup> In other words Ellis was arguing that

the traditional approach of historians to the problems of Tudor politics and government reflects too much a view of events as seen from 'the centre' and needs to be balanced by a more sensitive treatment of the problems of the 'periphery'.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Steven G. Ellis, *Tudor Ireland: Crown, Community and the Conflict of Cultures, 1470-1603* (London and New York: Longman, 1985), pp. 13 and 16-7.

<sup>27</sup> Ellis, 'A Border Baron', p. 253. For more recent work by Ellis which has adopted the same 'centre-periphery' methodology see Steven G. Ellis, *Tudor Frontiers and Noble Power: the Making of the British State* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995); id., 'Civilizing Northumberland: Representations of Englishness in the Tudor State', *JHS*, 12:2 (June, 1999), 103-27.

Methodological inspiration has been drawn in this study from Ellis's groundbreaking approach and accordingly it provides a fresh perspective on the nature of government in the Tudor south-west at the end of the sixteenth-century.

However, it must be stressed that applying Ellis's 'centre-periphery' methodology would not have been possible in the context of late-Elizabethan Devon without the existence of the Seymour Manuscripts. Presently deposited at Devon Record Office, Exeter, the Seymour Manuscripts include the lieutenancy papers of Edward Seymour of Berry Pomeroy (deputy lieutenant of Devon, 1596-1613). It is these papers that have provided the crucial archival springboard from which this thesis has developed; highlighting as they do relations between Queen Elizabeth I, her Privy Council, the Earl of Bath (lord lieutenant of Devon, 1586-1623), his deputies, Devon's local landed and civic elite and the wider county community during the 1590s.<sup>28</sup> As is customary with many sixteenth-century manuscript collections, Seymour's lieutenancy papers have had an interesting archival 'afterlife'.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, the relevant papers utilised throughout this study were not deposited at Devon Record Office (hereafter, DRO) as one single corpus of documents; instead they exist as part of two distinct collections deposited separately at DRO over a thirty-eight year period (1965-2003).

The first collection was initially deposited by Sir William Pennington-Ramsden at Cumberland, Westmorland and Carlisle Record Office. It was then transferred to DRO on 18 January 1965 and assigned the reference number

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<sup>28</sup> By contrast, the main bulk of the Earl of Bath's lieutenancy papers were destroyed in 1787 during a fire at Tawstock Court (the Earl's primary residence). For more information see Todd Gray, ed., *Devon Household Accounts, 1627-59. Part II, Henry, fifth Earl of Bath and Rachel, Countess of Bath, 1637-1655* (Exeter: Short Run Press, 1996), p. xii.

<sup>29</sup> For more on the 'afterlife' of documents, see James Daybell, *The Material Letter in Early Modern England: Manuscript Letters and the Culture and Practices of Letter-Writing, 1512-1635* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), ch. 8.

1392M. Additional deposits were received by DRO on 27 October 1975 and 23 April 1982.<sup>30</sup> 1392M consists of some title and estate records; however, its most important feature in the context of this thesis are the 129 items which relate primarily to the military activities of Devon's Lord and Deputy Lieutenants between 1593 and 1603. Correspondence forms by far the largest proportion of the papers. Unsurprisingly, as lord lieutenant of Devon, the Earl of Bath features prominently with a substantial number of letters signed by him and addressed to his deputies present in either original or copied form. Fortunately, there are also large numbers of copied letters written to Bath from the Queen and her Privy Council. These letters were enclosed within the Earl's own correspondence to his deputies in order to convey precisely the wishes of central government. Edward Seymour's fellow deputy lieutenants also feature as significant correspondents, especially Sir William Courtenay, Sir John Gilbert I, Sir George Cary, Sir Thomas Denys, Sir Ferdinando Gorges, Sir Richard Champernowne and Sir William Strode. Furthermore, some of Seymour's correspondence with the civic authorities of Plymouth, Dartmouth and Totnes is present providing a foundation from which this study has pieced together the dealings of Devon's Lord and Deputy Lieutenants with the wider county community as well as with central government and each other. It is also important to note that summer 1599, when Devon's governors worked hard to make ready the county's militia in the midst of a prolonged Spanish invasion scare, is the best documented period with thirty-four out of the 129 items dated between July and August of that year. The remainder of the items are chronologically distributed accordingly: 1593, one item; 1595, eight items; 1596, twenty-eight items; 1597, four items; 1598, nine items; 1600, four items; 1601, seventeen items; 1602,

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<sup>30</sup> I am grateful to John Draisey for providing me with this information.

twelve items; 1603, one item; undated, eleven items. This periodic distribution is largely mirrored by the second Seymour collection (discussed below). Consequently, the last eight years of this study's time period (1595-1603) is documented significantly better by the Seymour Manuscripts than the first six years (1588-1594). Nevertheless, other primary material deposited in both local and central archives (outlined in detail below) has been used to supplement wherever possible this chronological shortfall.

The second Seymour collection, which relates directly with many of the items in 1392M and is similarly utilised throughout this thesis, was deposited at DRO much more recently. Originally deposited as part of a larger collection by John Seymour, nineteenth Duke of Somerset, at Wiltshire Record Office in 2003, all of the Devon related material was duly transferred to DRO on 3 September of that year and assigned the reference number 3799M-3.<sup>31</sup> There it remained largely untouched until October 2009. Since then the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) has funded a collaborative doctoral award – of which this thesis forms the academic research element – to sort, catalogue and prepare the documents for public access. It should be noted that the Historical Manuscripts Commission (HMC) did publish John Scanes' calendar of both collections when they were housed as one archive at the Seymour family's primary residence of Maiden Bradley, Wiltshire, in 1898 as part of their fifteenth report.<sup>32</sup> However, as with all HMC calendars, the level of detail is variable and the degree of accuracy is questionable. It is therefore of significant importance that the original manuscripts are now accessible. While both collections are chronologically similar, 3799M-3 differs to 1392M in that it is made up of a much broader selection of document genres. Thus, as well as a

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<sup>31</sup> John Draisey, 'An Exciting Discovery in Wiltshire', *DRO Newsletter*, 32 (November, 2003), p. 5.

<sup>32</sup> HMC, *Somerset*.

comparable amount of lieutenancy correspondence, 3799M-3 includes a significant number of muster papers, military accounts and manuscripts which itemise the minutes of meetings that took place between the Earl of Bath and his deputies periodically throughout the 1590s at Plymouth, Okehampton and Exeter. The latter of these are crucial as they have enabled this study to gauge the extent to which orders from Whitehall were actually implemented within Devon as well as illuminating the mechanisms which were put in place to achieve this. In particular, the minutes of lieutenancy meetings reveal the existence of an extensive, complex and highly organised intra-county postal network which was used to convey correspondence, messages, news and intelligence between all tiers of county government – from the Earl of Bath at the top, all the way down to the ranks of minor officials at parish level. Indeed, by combining this information with postal endorsements written on certain lieutenancy correspondence and draft precepts written by Edward Seymour to the constables living adjacent to his south Devon residence it has been possible to reconstruct with a fair degree of accuracy the postal arrangements which were employed to transmit orders from Whitehall throughout the parishes of late-Elizabethan Devon.

An interrogation of the evidence contained in the Seymour Manuscripts (1392M and 3799M-3) thus reveals the high level of communication and interaction that occurred between the Queen, her Privy Council, the Earl of Bath, his deputies, local landed and civic elite and the wider county community in two key areas: the mustering, training, mobilisation and levying of the county's militia during the Elizabethan war with Spain and the Nine Years' War in Ireland; and the acquisition and broadcasting of news and intelligence concerning the whereabouts and intention of the Spanish fleet. Furthermore, the

collection provides a rare and invaluable insight into the intra-county postal network which underpinned and facilitated this connectivity. It therefore illuminates the prominent role that Devon played as a frontline county during the Armada years and answers hitherto unanswered questions about how the county's overlapping networks of governors and administrators were able to communicate with each other as well as with the centre. Indeed, the emphasis of the Seymour Manuscripts on the office of lieutenancy, the county militia, the war with Spain and the circulation of news and intelligence enables this study to elucidate the operational mechanics of Devon's government during the late-Elizabethan era in a manner which is simply not possible for the majority of other counties.

In addition to the Seymour Manuscripts, a broad range of other locally held manuscript sources have been used to examine the inner-workings of government in late-Elizabethan Devon including the Exeter City Archives, borough records (Barnstaple, Dartmouth, Okehampton, Plymouth and Totnes), family papers (Reynell of West Ogwell) and quarter sessions order books. Of particular note are the receivers' accounts of Barnstaple, Dartmouth, Exeter and Plymouth.<sup>33</sup> These accounts illuminate a great deal of the annual financial expenditure of late-Elizabethan Devon's civic authorities. In relation to this study they are an invaluable primary source because they specify money spent on gifts and dinners for the county's political elite, payments made to individuals for the conveyance of messages and letters within and beyond the county, and wages bestowed upon shipmasters and scouts for proactively seeking out information concerning the whereabouts and intention of the Spanish fleet. They have therefore greatly assisted chapter two's aim of recovering the social and

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<sup>33</sup> NDRO, B1/3972; DRO, DD. 61619; DRO, ECA, Receivers' Rolls; PWDRO, 1/132, Widey Court Book.

personal connections of Devon's Lord and Deputy Lieutenants, chapter five's reconstruction of Devon's intra-county postal arrangements and chapter six's examination of Devon's news and intelligence network. However, it should be noted that one drawback of using receivers' accounts is that their content can vary dramatically.<sup>34</sup> The level of detail in each set of accounts depends largely on the town or city where the accounts were made. Thus, while some authorities appear to have frequently withdrawn money from their civic coffers, others seem to have either had less reason to, been less inclined to, or been less able to do so.<sup>35</sup> In addition, the level of detail in an individual set of accounts can vary greatly from one year to the next because each individual elected to a town's or city's receivership – an office which customarily spanned from Michaelmas to Michaelmas – conducted their duties with varying degrees of diligence. Consequently, some years of account are extremely detailed because the incumbent receiver endeavoured to itemise individually many of the expenses that they disbursed throughout the year, whereas other years are frustratingly short on detail because the incumbent receiver decided to group expenses together at the year's end with little description as to what those expenses related to.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, some expenses seem to have failed to

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<sup>34</sup> It should be noted that in some locations a receiver was known as a steward, chamberlain or treasurer. Despite possessing different names, all carried out the same function: overseeing the annual financial expenditure of their civic authority. However, to save confusion the term 'receivers' accounts' has been used throughout this thesis to describe all forms of borough accounts.

<sup>35</sup> Gloucester, Ipswich, Leicester, Lincoln, Salisbury and Shrewsbury all have detailed receivers' accounts for the late-Elizabethan period. For a printed version of Ipswich's see John Webb, ed., *The Town Finances of Elizabethan Ipswich* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1996).

<sup>36</sup> For example, the extent of Plymouth's receivers' accounts for the years between Michaelmas 1587 and Michaelmas 1603 vary from as much as eight pages (1587-8) to as little as three pages (1592-3). Of course this can partly be explained by the fact that during some years the threat from Spain was more acute and therefore necessitated a higher degree of civic expenditure. However, during 1598-9 Plymouth's incumbent receiver, Walter Mathewe, produced just five pages of accounts despite the considerable military mobilisation that took place within Devon in August 1599 as a result of a Spanish invasion scare. It is thus highly probable that Walter Mathewe was less diligent in recording his financial expenditure within Plymouth's receivers' account book in comparison to Anthonye Goddarde in 1587-8 (PWDRO, 1/132, Widey Court Book, ff. 72-146).

make the receivers' account book altogether because the incumbent receiver evidently decided that a loose note of receipt would suffice. Nevertheless, despite these drawbacks, late-Elizabethan Devon is unusually well endowed with a set of highly detailed receivers' accounts which, when viewed together, provide an important and substantial body of evidence for exposing the county's community relationships, intra-county postal arrangements and news-gathering activities.

These local sources are supplemented by material in central archives, such as the State Papers (domestic and foreign), which contain countless letters and reports from the Earl of Bath, his deputies, JPs, muster commissioners, mayors and so on, detailing their work and interaction with the Privy Council.<sup>37</sup> The *Acts of the Privy Council* also contain a great deal of material relating to Devon, providing many of the orders and directives that the Council dispatched to the county's governors.<sup>38</sup> So do the Cecil Papers at Hatfield House which have been crucial in further exposing the work of Devon's political elite and their dealings with the country's leading politicians.<sup>39</sup> In addition, postal endorsements located on the outside panel of certain letters written by Devon's governors to central government (which are now located within the State and Cecil Papers) have been utilised in tandem with the Declared Accounts of the Master of the Posts to analyse the structure, speed and efficiency of the Tudor south-west's royal post-stage service.<sup>40</sup> Postal endorsements were customarily written by royal post-masters on the address panel of official correspondence. The Declared Accounts of the Master of the Posts make it plain that royal post-masters were periodically funded by the

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<sup>37</sup> SP 1, 3, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 40, 63.

<sup>38</sup> *APC*, vols. i-xxxii.

<sup>39</sup> CP 24, 33, 35-6, 40-5, 48-9, 50-1, 54, 56, 58, 60, 63, 66, 68-9, 70-3, 76, 78, 81, 83, 85-6, 88-9, 90, 92, 94-5, 101, 117, 138, 141, 172-3, 175-6, 180-3, 185, 199, 214, 250.

<sup>40</sup> AO 1/1950/2A; AO 1/1951/9-11.

Exchequer when speedy and regular communication between the centre and periphery was paramount (for example, during times of Irish rebellion or political tension with Spain) to operate a network of post-rooms along the major highways of Tudor England. These post-rooms were usually located between eight and twenty-five miles apart in towns and cities through which the main highway ran. Relays of post-boys were employed to ride post-horses to and from these post-stages carrying official correspondence to and from central and local government officials. When a royal packet or letter arrived at a post-room the time of arrival (to the nearest quarter-of-an-hour), the date and the name of the post-stage were customarily scribbled on the outside panel of the dispatch by the post-master before he forwarded it on to his counterpart at the next stage. Fortunately, a sufficient number of postal endorsements survive to allow one to calculate a reasonably accurate mean travel time between Devon and London during the late-Elizabethan period. Chapter four therefore utilises a sample of 335 postal endorsements from a collection of seventy-three letters that were dispatched along the Tudor south-west's royal post-stage route between 1595 and 1603 to determine the speed in which Devon's governors could 'contact' their superiors in London. Consequently, the chapter makes a substantial contribution to the pioneering work of historical geographers such as Professor Mark Brayshay who, in the 1990s, re-defined contemporary views on early modern post, communication and connectivity by utilising postal endorsements instead of anecdotal evidence to measure the efficiency of the early modern royal post-stage service.<sup>41</sup>

As well as utilising the key primary material deposited at DRO, Plymouth and West Devon Record Office, North Devon Record Office and the National

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<sup>41</sup> Mark Brayshay, Philip Harrison and Brian Chalkley, 'Knowledge, Nationhood and Governance: the Speed of the Royal Post in Early-Modern England', *JHG*, 24:3 (1998), 265-88.

Archives this study has made use of a variety of other manuscript sources. In particular, a small selection of state and personal correspondence located at the British Library, London, among the Additional, Cotton, Harley, Lansdowne and Sloane Manuscripts have helped to broaden understanding with regards to the political and government profile of late-Elizabethan Devon. Relevant wills and probate inventories of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury have been accessed to help gauge the personalities, social connections, local prestige and horse ownership of the Earl of Bath, his deputies, their families and associates. And the Hengrave Manuscripts at Cambridge University Library have provided vital information concerning the Earl's early life and career away from Devon.<sup>42</sup> The thesis thus integrates the broad range of local Devon sources with the relevant material housed in central archives in order to recover and interpret evidence of the political networks that existed amongst those who contributed to the governance (in its widest sense) of the county's affairs, and who provided a connection with the centre through their willingness to serve at a national level.

### **Elizabeth I's 'second reign'**

Finally, further clarity should be provided for this study's choice of period. Essentially, this thesis spans the Elizabethan war with Spain, which broke out openly in the Netherlands during summer 1585, but did not arrive on England's doorstep until the Armada crisis of 1588. For the remainder of the Elizabethan era England was at war. Matters worsened in 1594 with the onset of the Nine Years' War in Ireland and from thenceforward the Crown was forced to split its military resources, levying more and more troops for service in Ireland while at

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<sup>42</sup> BL, Additional MS., 12506-7; BL, Cotton MS., Otho E. XI; BL, Harley MS., 168, 286, 295, 6995-7, 7002, 7022; BL, Lansdowne MS., 58, 68, 71, 78, 81; BL, Sloane MS., 33; PROB 11; CUL, Hengrave MS., 88/1-3.

the same time maintaining homeland security through the auspices of the lieutenancies and county militias. By 1603 the rebellion in Ireland was all but over and although hostilities between England and Spain did not officially end until August 1604 with the signing of the Treaty of London, the intense military activity that defined the last fifteen years of Elizabeth's reign ended with her death in March 1603.

Unsurprisingly, this period has attracted a great deal of scholarly attention. Peter Clark, for example, has described the 1590s as a period of 'European Crisis', while John Guy has defined the years after 1588 as Elizabeth I's 'second reign'. Both Clark and Guy cite a number of developments which set the last fifteen years of the Elizabethan age apart from the first thirty.<sup>43</sup> The war with Spain and the Nine Years' War in Ireland were the most obvious of these developments; however, the country also endured six years of plague (1592-8) and three years of abject famine (1594-7).<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, the continuity and stability that Elizabeth enjoyed throughout the first thirty years of her reign with regards to her chief ministerial advisors came to an abrupt end following the deaths of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester (1588), Sir Walter Mildmay (1589), Sir Francis Walsingham (1590) and Sir Christopher Hatton (1591). The only heavyweight politician from Elizabeth's early years to survive into the 1590s was William Cecil, Lord Burghley, who, before his own death in 1598, sought to secure the position of his son, Sir Robert Cecil, as Elizabeth's most trusted political advisor. This coincided with the meteoric rise of Robert Devereux,

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<sup>43</sup> Peter Clark, ed., *The European Crisis of the 1590s: Essays in Comparative History* (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1985), pp. 3-22; John Guy, 'The 1590s: The Second Reign of Elizabeth I?', in *Reign of Elizabeth I*, pp. 1-19. See also Alexandra Gadja, 'Political Culture in the 1590s: The 'Second Reign of Elizabeth'', *History Compass*, 8:1 (2010), 88-100.

<sup>44</sup> Charles Creighton, *A History of Epidemics in Britain from A.D. 664 to the Extinction of the Plague* (Cambridge, 1891), pp. 351-60; Andrew Cunningham and Ole Peter Grell, *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: Religion, War, Famine and Death in Reformation Europe* (Cambridge: CUP, 2000), pp. 234-6.

second Earl of Essex, whose own political ambitions and ideology placed him increasingly at odds with the Cecils. Consequently, the 1590s have also been explored by historians in the context of political faction, or, to borrow a phrase from Paul Hammer, 'the polarisation of Elizabethan politics'.<sup>45</sup> Thus, for those wishing to expose the inner workings of Tudor government, the final fifteen years of the reign of Elizabeth I offer very significant advantages and opportunities because the participants in local political networks, and the postal links between them, and with Whitehall, were particularly active during this time of acute political uncertainty, social deprivation and sustained foreign threat. In particular, Devon, as a key frontline county during both the war with Spain and the rebellion in Ireland, but nevertheless spatially distant from the court, provides an ideal case study for testing the degree of interconnectedness of local political networks and their linkages within and beyond a sixteenth-century English county.

To summarise, this thesis engages directly with issues of governance and connectivity in a late-Elizabethan English county by examining the nature of political networks, the inner-workings of Elizabethan government and the circulation of news and intelligence. Chapter two undertakes a detailed analysis of the personalities and social connections of late-Elizabethan Devon's Lord and Deputy Lieutenants. In doing so, the chapter not only looks at the structure of local Elizabethan government through an examination of the office of lord lieutenant, but also conducts a detailed analysis of the informal and personal

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<sup>45</sup> Paul Hammer, *The Polarisation of Elizabethan Politics: The Political Career of Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex, 1585-1597* (Cambridge: CUP, 1999).

elements of local Elizabethan politics. Consequently, the chapter reveals that, when viewed as a group, Devon's lieutenancy not only possessed a strong affinity to the Crown, they also held an array of commercial interests, family ties, land, local influence, marital alliances and other public offices within the county. This provided both the Privy Council and the county community with a small, elite network of power brokers who had a vested interest in ensuring that central government policies were articulated and implemented throughout Devon while at the same time promoting local concerns and protecting local interests at the centre of affairs. Whereas chapter two looks primarily at the character of Devon's lieutenancy, chapter three shines a light directly on how it functioned. This is achieved through an analysis of the county militia and the pivotal role played by Devon's Lord and Deputy Lieutenants in overseeing the county's defences during the Elizabethan war with Spain and the Nine Years' War in Ireland. Of particular concern is the extent to which they were able to secure the consent and cooperation of the wider county community for the Privy Council's relentless military demands. Furthermore, by investigating the intricacies of how the militia system worked in late-Elizabethan Devon the chapter depicts a county of high strategic value on the frontline of England's war with Spain. A central theme that chapter three makes plain is that the need to co-ordinate and make ready Devon's land-defences in response to the persistent threat that Spain posed throughout the 1580s and 1590s engendered an increased level of interconnectedness at all levels of government – from the national and regional political scene down to a community, neighbourhood and parish level. In light of this, the primary objective of chapters four and five is to reconstruct the postal networks that maintained this connectivity, allowing one to appreciate the operational mechanics that enabled the lieutenancy and other local political

networks to function. Thus, chapter four is concerned with the structure, speed and efficiency of the Tudor south-west's royal post-stage service. When, why and for how long was it engaged? How quickly were dispatches customarily posted between Devon and London? What were the Privy Council's expectations in relation to the efficiency of the service? To what extent were these expectations met? The chapter is therefore focused exclusively on the form and function of the channel of communication that connected the Crown with the political elite at the apex of Devon's government. Accordingly, chapter five is concerned with postal arrangements and letter production on an intra-county level. It exposes how orders from the Queen and her Privy Council were relayed along the hierarchical chain of command to every parish in Devon and how certain political networks within this chain were able to communicate and share information with each other. The chapter thus pinpoints the different methods of letter delivery available to the members of certain strands of local government. Furthermore, the chapter underlines the vital role that personal secretaries played in the context of Devon's post and communication arrangements. Finally, chapter six supports the proposition that Devon was a key frontline county during England's war with Spain by conducting an examination of the county's news and intelligence network. Chapters two to five make it plain that Devon's governors, and the postal links between them, and with the Privy Council, were particularly active throughout the conflict. Chapter six is therefore geared to analysing in detail one of the primary causes for such activity – namely, that the ports of south Devon served as vital hubs for receiving information concerning the whereabouts and intention of the Spanish fleet with daily advertisements from the continent arriving in the county aboard merchant shipping. As a result, the county's governors were in constant contact

with each other, as well as with the centre, in an effort to pool information and formulate a response to the Spanish threat. Thus, the chapter is designed to encourage a reassessment of the current London-centric model of early modern news networks which has tended to focus on the dissemination of news that emanated outwards from the capital. Instead, a new focus is proposed, one which is equally sympathetic to the more complex sets of news networks that operated in the first instance at a local level, but which also had connections with the centre.

# 2

## The Character of Devon's Lieutenancy:

### Personality Politics and Social Networks

This chapter not only looks at the structure of local Elizabethan government through an examination of the office of lord lieutenant, it also conducts a detailed reconstruction of the personalities and social networks of Devon's Lord Lieutenant, William Bouchier, third Earl of Bath, and the fourteen men who were appointed as his deputy lieutenants during the late-Elizabethan era. To achieve this the chapter utilises what Steven Gunn has defined as the sort of primary material that 'one might call the biographical' in order to obtain 'evidence of the personal affairs and interrelationships of the political actors' of Tudor England who operated within 'a political system in which the boundaries of public and private activity were so blurred.'<sup>1</sup> Consequently, the chapter reveals that a complex, multi-layered, intertwined network of commercial, familial and social connections existed between Devon's Lord and Deputy Lieutenants on the one hand, and the wider county community on the other; a network which underpinned and facilitated the functioning of the county's government. Indeed, it is argued that, when viewed as a group, the strong affinity to the Crown felt by the members of Devon's lieutenancy (all of whom occupied their prominent position at the apex of county society purely as a result of the Queen's patronage) was mirrored by an equally fervent bond to the county in which they lived. This was crucial to the success of the Elizabethan regime as it provided those at the centre of affairs with a small, elite network of

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<sup>1</sup> Steven Gunn, 'The Structures of Politics in Early Tudor England', *TRHS*, Sixth Series, 5 (1995), 59-90 (p. 71).

loyal local agents who could be utilised to communicate and negotiate with the wider county community (enabling the Privy Council to articulate and implement their policies) while at the same time allowing the inhabitants of Devon to respond with any concerns that they might have felt in relation to policies (thereby providing an important release valve for any civil unrest that might otherwise have ensued).

This chapter's principal concern is therefore to uncover the informal mechanisms of power in late-Elizabethan Devon. In doing so it depicts the office of lord lieutenant (a formal organ of local Tudor government) as dependent on the personalities of those who occupied the office and the social networks that they managed to cultivate. Such a study is essential as it provides a new way of explaining why, in the words of A. G. R. Smith, the Elizabethan lieutenancies served as 'a vital link between the central government and the localities, presenting the views of their districts to the [Privy] Council and conveying its opinions and orders to their shires.'<sup>2</sup> The chapter thus enriches and clarifies some of the fundamental propositions put forward by the predominantly structural analyses of the institution that have hitherto been written.<sup>3</sup> In particular, it explains precisely how the Earl of Bath and his deputies collectively functioned as one of the principal conduits of interaction between the centre and the county. Thus, whereas Sir Geoffrey Elton has demonstrated that Parliament, the Privy Council and the Court provided those living on the periphery of the Tudor state with three useful 'points of contact' at the centre of

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<sup>2</sup> Smith, *The Government of Elizabethan England*, p. 90.

<sup>3</sup> For example, see Gladys Scott Thomson, *Lords Lieutenants in the Sixteenth Century* (London, 1923); Smith, *The Government of Elizabethan England*, pp. 86-90; Williams, *The Tudor Regime*, pp. 416-7; id., 'The Crown and the Counties', in *The Reign of Elizabeth I*, ed. by C. Haigh (London: MacMillan, 1984), pp. 125-46; Neil Younger, 'War and the Counties: The Elizabethan Lord Lieutenancy, 1585-1603' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Birmingham University, 2006); id., 'Securing the Monarchical Republic: The Remaking of the Lord Lieutenancies in 1585', *HR*, 84:224 (May, 2011), 249-65; id., *War and Politics in the Elizabethan Counties* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2012).

affairs, this chapter will reveal in detail how Bath and his deputies were able to provide those at the centre (politicians and courtiers alike) with a vital 'point of contact' in Devon; one that could be used to facilitate a dialogue between the centre and the overlapping political, personal and social networks of county society.<sup>4</sup> First, however, it is necessary briefly to outline the development, role and remit of the office of lord lieutenant in order to appreciate why the personalities and social networks of the men who occupied the office played such a pivotal role in the government and politics of late-Elizabethan England.

### **The evolution of the office of lord lieutenant, 1549-1588**

In the words of Mark Fissel, it is 'something of a misnomer to write of [the] lieutenancy's "inception", for monarchs traditionally delegated authority, particularly during [military] campaigning, to a trusted noble.'<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, the first time the institution was utilised in a guise that would have been recognisable to late-Elizabethan society can be dated to 1549 when the Crown responded to the social and political unrest that ensued after the Prayer Book and Kett's rebellions. Indeed, it is Gladys Scott Thomson's contention that while there were very similar forerunners to and even namesakes of the lieutenancy prior to 1549 it is 'true to say that dating from that year there was a much wider conception of the possibilities of the office.'<sup>6</sup> *Prima facie*, the Crown's use of the office of lord lieutenant during the reign of Edward VI was solely to deal with specific necessities (in other words, to quell rebellious behaviour in the

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<sup>4</sup> G. R. Elton, 'Tudor Government: The Points of Contact. I. Parliament', *TRHS*, 24 (1974), 183-200; id., 'Tudor Government: The Points of Contact. II. The Council', *TRHS*, 25 (1975), 195-212; id., 'Tudor Government: The Points of Contact. III. The Court', *TRHS*, 26 (1976), 211-28. See also David M. Dean, 'Parliament, Privy Council, and Local Politics in Elizabethan England: The Yarmouth-Lowestoft Fishing Dispute', *Albion*, 22:1 (Spring, 1990), 39-64.

<sup>5</sup> Mark C. Fissel, *English Warfare, 1511-1642* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 51.

<sup>6</sup> Thomson, *Lords Lieutenants*, pp. 24-30.

provinces) and is outlined as such in the following extract from 'An Acte [of Parliament] for the punyshment of Unlawfull Assemblyes and rysinge of the Kinges Subjectes' which was passed in November 1549:

yf the Kinge shall by his *lettres patentes* make anye Lyveten'nte in anye Countie or Counties of this Realme, for the suppressinge of any comocion rebellion or unlawfull assemblye, ... all Inhabitanτες and subjectes of anye Countye Cittie Boroughe or Towne corporate within everie suche Countie, shall ... be bounde to gyve attendaunce upon the same Lyveten'nte.<sup>7</sup>

Nevertheless, during the last four years of Edward VI's reign (1549-1553) the Crown deemed it appropriate summarily to deploy multiple lord lieutenants into the counties each summer.<sup>8</sup> In 1551 this was no doubt partly due to the civil unrest that had flared up in Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Rutland.<sup>9</sup> That said, due to the timing of the commissions, it is also likely that Edward and his advisors began to utilise their lord lieutenants to supervise the mustering of the county militia as well as expecting them to protect and promote the Crown's interests in the shires more generally.<sup>10</sup> However, when Mary ascended to the throne in 1553 she ended the Crown's policy of annual appointments and chose instead to engage lord lieutenants only during times of 'pressing necessity': Wyatt's Rebellion in 1554; in response to the threat from Scotland in 1555; the war with France in 1558. Furthermore, lord lieutenants were only assigned to the counties that were under the most acute threat.<sup>11</sup> Thus, when Elizabeth became queen in 1558 the lieutenancy was very much an office to which the Crown turned in times of national emergency – to maintain order, to levy troops,

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<sup>7</sup> 3<sup>o</sup> & 4<sup>o</sup> Edward VI, ch. 5, *Statutes of the Realm*, vol. iv, pt. i (1819), pp. 104-8.

<sup>8</sup> *APC*, iii, pp. 258-9; *APC*, iv, pp. 48-50 and 276-8.

<sup>9</sup> Samuel Haynes, *A Collection of State Papers...*, 1542-1570 (London, 1740), pp. 114-6.

<sup>10</sup> For example, on 15 June 1552 the Privy Council instructed all lord lieutenants to deal with the problem of counterfeit money (*APC*, iv, p. 80).

<sup>11</sup> Thomson, *Lords Lieutenants*, pp. 36-9; SP 11/13 f.16: 20/5/1558.

and to coordinate the realm's land defences against invasion – but, it was by no means a permanent institution.

The Crown's policy of appointing lord lieutenants only during times of crisis seems to have continued throughout the first twenty-five years of the Elizabethan era. This is despite the rather deceptive portrait that Thomson paints of the lieutenancy during this period:

Examining ... the first thirty years of the [Elizabethan] reign, it will be found that except only for the year 1561, during which no Lieutenants were apparently appointed at all, there were always some Lieutenants in some counties.<sup>12</sup>

Unfortunately, Thomson's misconception has been repeated by some historians when writing their own analysis of Tudor local government.<sup>13</sup> However, Neil Younger rightly points out that 'no evidence has been found to suggest that lieutenancies had a continuous existence during the 1560s, 1570s and early 1580s.' Furthermore, he stresses that, prior to the 1580s, lord lieutenants seem to have been commissioned only three times: for two years following Elizabeth's accession in 1558; in response to the rebellion of the Northern Earls between November 1569 and September 1570; and during a Spanish invasion scare in 1574.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, even the Elizabethan chorographer, William Harrison, acknowledged the office of lord lieutenant to be a sporadic expedient used only during periods of political strife:

Over each of these shires in time of necessity is a several lieutenant chosen under the prince, who, being a nobleman of calling, hath almost regal authority over the same for the time being in many cases which do concern his office.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Thomson, *Lords Lieutenants*, p. 46.

<sup>13</sup> For example, see Smith, *The Government of Elizabethan England*, p. 87; Williams, *The Tudor Regime*, p. 417.

<sup>14</sup> Younger, 'War and the Counties', pp. 17-9: HMC, *Salisbury*, i, p. 443; SP 15/18 f.235: 30/6/1570; SP 12/97 f.1: 6/1574.

<sup>15</sup> William Harrison, *The Description of England* (originally published 1577, 1587; ed. Georges Edelen, Washington D.C. and New York: The Folger Shakespeare Library and Dover Publications, 1968, reissued 1994), p. 88.

The turning point in the evolution of the office of lord lieutenant came in July 1585 when eighteen counties were assigned lord lieutenants. From then on, as J. C. Sainty has pointed out, 'lieutenants, once appointed, continued to act until their death or replacement.'<sup>16</sup> Twelve out of the eighteen counties that were assigned a lord lieutenant in 1585 can be regarded as 'maritime'. This zone included all of England's southern counties – from Cornwall in the west to Kent in the east. The main catalyst for such an extensive engagement was the long-running hostility between England and Spain which finally erupted as open war in summer 1585.<sup>17</sup> Following the deaths of both the Duke of Anjou and the Prince of Orange in 1584, the Dutch offered their sovereignty to Henry III of France. However, Henry rejected the offer and by March 1585 it was considered inevitable that Elizabeth would have to agree to become the protector of the Dutch in order to prevent the Spanish from acquiring a greater foothold in the region. Events then spiralled out of control: in April Elizabeth suspended English trade with the Spanish Netherlands; in May Philip II placed an embargo on all foreign ships in Spanish ports – an act considered by the English to be targeted directly at them; on 1 July Sir Francis Drake was authorised to attack Spanish vessels in the North Atlantic; on 18 July Elizabeth agreed to dispatch a military taskforce to the Netherlands; and during August and September the articles for the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of Nonsuch were drafted and agreed upon.<sup>18</sup> Thus, in the midst of this escalating situation the Crown deemed it prudent to appoint lord lieutenants, especially for the 'frontline'

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<sup>16</sup> J. C. Sainty, 'Lieutenants of Counties 1585-1642', *BIHR*, Special Supplement no. 8 (1970), p. 1. See also John Guy, *Tudor England* (Oxford: OUP, 1988), pp. 315-6.

<sup>17</sup> Neil Younger has also outlined two other factors that need to be considered. Namely, the positive attitude that Lord Burghley and other chief ministers harboured for the reintroduction of the lieutenancies as early as February 1585 and the need to buttress internal security in light of the threat posed to Elizabeth by Mary, Queen of Scots, and other malcontents (Younger, 'War and the Counties', pp. 25-6; id., 'Securing the Monarchical Republic').

<sup>18</sup> Younger, 'War and the Counties', pp. 24-5.

counties running along England's south coast, in order to prepare for a likely Spanish invasion attempt.

Ultimately, all lord lieutenants owed their position to the Queen, a fact that is illuminated by the trouble that Lord Burghley (one of Elizabeth's most senior ministers) had in securing a lieutenancy commission prior to 1587.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, an important question that needs answering is what criteria did the Queen and her advisors use when selecting candidates to serve as her lord lieutenants? On the one hand the Queen could choose a leading magnate from within the county or region in question. The positives of this approach were that the Crown could exploit not only the local magnate's influence to facilitate the implementation of central government policies, but also his local knowledge in order to appreciate the particular characteristics of that locality which would help the Crown to avoid confrontation with both the county's administrators and the general population. Moreover, the antipathy felt towards 'outsiders' in Tudor local government was potentially extremely destructive to the social and political harmony of a county or region. That said, the obvious disadvantage of appointing a magnate with a tangible local standing was that if the interests of the Crown and the county diverged then he might experience a divided sense of loyalty and could well have been inclined to favour the interests of the county over those of the Crown. Therefore, surely it was equally preferable to appoint an 'outsider': an individual who would, above all else, protect and promote the Crown's interests, being ruthless if necessary in order to bring the Crown's policies to fruition. However, the problem with the 'outsider' option was that he would inevitably face opposition, being viewed as an intruder in the county's affairs. Such circumstances in fact arose following the appointment of Lord

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<sup>19</sup> Younger, 'War and the Counties', p. 33.

Hunsdon as lord lieutenant of Norfolk in 1585. In theory, Hunsdon, a privy councillor with military experience and a cousin of the Queen, was the perfect candidate. However, he enjoyed little influence in Norfolk and soon fell foul to the problems outlined above.<sup>20</sup> In the end the Queen decided to set aside the 'outsider' option and adopt the practice of appointing individuals – the vast majority of whom were privy councillors – who held a local interest in the county or counties to which they were appointed. Whether or not this was directly influenced by the Hunsdon experience in Norfolk is uncertain. However, what is certain with the benefit of hindsight is that it created an institution that promoted consent and cooperation – the two cornerstones of Elizabeth's system of government in her realm – and, in doing so, created an effective channel of communication between the Crown and the localities. Indeed, the fact that each lord lieutenant was recognised as having a manifest vested interest in the success of the county or counties where they were appointed was arguably the key to the well attested success of the lieutenancy system.<sup>21</sup>

The expansion of the lieutenancies into all but one of the counties in England and Wales by summer 1588 is indicative of the extensive defence preparations that were being rolled out across the realm in anticipation of the Spanish Armada.<sup>22</sup> It is therefore pertinent not only to outline the remit of the office of lord lieutenant in light of the threat posed by Spain, but also to flag up the varying geographical jurisdictions that different lord lieutenants were granted

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<sup>20</sup> Hunsdon was also appointed lord lieutenant of Suffolk (a county where he did hold land) and was thus considered by Diarmaid MacCulloch to have been 'an appropriate choice' (MacCulloch, *Suffolk and the Tudors*, p. 273). In contrast, Alfred Hassell-Smith has described Hunsdon as 'a stranger to both counties' who delegated his duties to his deputy lieutenants (Hassell-Smith, *Government and Politics in Norfolk*, p. 50).

<sup>21</sup> The pros and cons of appointing a local or an 'outsider' as a lord lieutenant have been inspired by the discussion in Younger, 'War and the Counties', pp. 34-6. See also Younger, 'Securing the Monarchical Republic'.

<sup>22</sup> The only county in England and Wales not to be assigned a lord lieutenant by 1588 was Middlesex. However, by 1590 the county was duly appointed Sir Christopher Hatton as its lord lieutenant (Sainty, 'Lieutenants of the Counties').

by the Crown. In terms of remit, the lord lieutenants were given six core duties: to muster and train the county militia; to lead forces to suppress rebellious behaviour; to lead forces to defend the Queen and enforce peace; to oppose all traitors and rebels; to coordinate defence against foreign invasion; and to appoint muster-masters and a provost-marshal to assist in these tasks.<sup>23</sup> However, it must be stressed that these substantial powers were confined to the specific geographical unit outlined in a lord lieutenant's commission. In the mid-Tudor period it was customary to appoint one candidate to the lord lieutenancy of multiple counties – that is, more than three.<sup>24</sup> However, by the late 1580s it had become much more usual to appoint an individual to the lord lieutenancy of just one and occasionally two counties.<sup>25</sup> This shift in policy is indicative of the fact that the purpose of lord lieutenants had significantly changed during the second half of the sixteenth-century. Indeed, what had been a fleeting emergency measure, where the appointment of one individual to the lord lieutenancy of multiple counties would suffice, shifted to being a long-term central government expedient that required each lord lieutenant to forge a durable relationship with the county or counties under his control in order to implement the Crown's wishes. It is this shift which no doubt prompted the Crown also to appoint lord lieutenants to jurisdictions other than the county.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, in the words of Younger, 'the county remained the basic [jurisdictional] unit'.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Younger, 'War and the Counties', pp. 41-2.

<sup>24</sup> Thomson, *Lords Lieutenants*, pp. 19 (fn. 1 and 2), 23 and 26 (fn. 1).

<sup>25</sup> However, it was by no means the rule. For example, when the Earl of Pembroke was appointed lord lieutenant of Wales in 1587 he was responsible for twelve Welsh shires in addition to holding the lord lieutenancy of Somerset and Wiltshire which had been granted to him in 1585. Furthermore, some counties were appointed more than one lord lieutenant. This included the lieutenancy of Hampshire which in 1585 was jointly appointed to the Marquess of Winchester and the Earl of Sussex (Sainty, 'Lieutenants of Counties').

<sup>26</sup> See footnote 87.

<sup>27</sup> Younger, 'War and the Counties', p. 47.

## Devon's Lord Lieutenant, 1586-1623

Having briefly placed the office of lord lieutenant in a national context it is now possible to shift focus to the individual who became Devon's Lord Lieutenant in autumn 1586 – William Bouchier, third Earl of Bath. John Roberts has been hyper-critical of Bath in his two-part biography of the 'Armada Lord Lieutenant'. Bath is described in the introduction of part one as a man who had a 'lack of force' in character and is chastised for 'the ineffective nature of his rule over the county', Roberts continues in the same vein throughout; finishing his account by declaring that 'the story of William Bouchier, 3rd Earl of Bath, is not typical of Elizabethan leaders, local or national, and is in some ways pathetic'.<sup>28</sup> In contrast, Mark Stoye has sought to restore Bath's historical reputation arguing that 'Bath took his military duties seriously' and was 'prompt and efficient in carrying them out'. Stoye also points out that after an inauspicious start the Earl 'worked hard to maintain peace and good order' in Devon and that on his death in July 1623 'the Crown lost a valued servant'.<sup>29</sup> How might these two conflicting assessments be reconciled? This section will argue that Bath was indeed somewhat weak in character, particularly when compared with his mother, Frances Bouchier, and his father-in-law, Francis Russell, second Earl of Bedford. Furthermore, it will be shown that he lacked personal power and prestige both at the Elizabethan court and on a regional basis in the south-west. In fact, Bath was peculiarly dependent on his position as Devon's lord lieutenant as the overriding source of his political and social standing. Thus, notwithstanding the flaws and weaknesses in his character and ability, the Earl

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<sup>28</sup> John Roberts, 'The Armada Lord Lieutenant: His Family and Career', parts i and ii, *TDA*, 102-3 (1970-1), 71-85 and 103-22.

<sup>29</sup> Stoye, *Loyalty and Locality*, p. 19.

of Bath inevitably took his duties as lord lieutenant very seriously and as a result became a 'valued servant' of the Crown on the periphery of the realm.

William Bouchier was the son of John Bouchier, Lord Fitzwarren (1529-1557), and Frances (d.1586), daughter of Sir Thomas Kitson (1485-1540). In all likelihood William was born at Hengrave Hall near Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, on an unknown date in 1557. By that time, Hengrave Hall had become the centre piece of the Kitson family estate that included land in the West Country as well as Suffolk. The land had been amassed by Sir Thomas Kitson (William Bouchier's maternal grandfather) following a lucrative career as a merchant adventurer that included a stint as sheriff of London and a knighthood in 1533.<sup>30</sup> At his death in 1540 Kitson made plain that it was his desire for all of his fortune to be granted to his wife, Margaret Kitson (William Bouchier's maternal grandmother). The only condition was that, should the unborn child that Margaret was carrying at the time of her husband's death be a boy, then he would inherit his father's wealth on reaching his majority. Margaret gave birth to a boy, Thomas, on 9 October 1540; he was William Bouchier's uncle and later played a pivotal role in securing his nephew's controversial first marriage. Nevertheless, at the time of her first husband's death in 1540, Margaret Kitson became a very wealthy widow. Her wealth became even greater in 1544 following the death of her father, John Donnington of Stoke Newington, Middlesex.<sup>31</sup> As the beneficiary of two substantial estates, Margaret was well-placed both to expand the influence of her family in West Suffolk and to obtain advantageous marriages for herself and her four Kitson daughters. For Margaret this initially involved a brief marriage to the influential courtier Sir

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<sup>30</sup> Much of the biographical information concerning the Kitson family has been obtained from Joy Rowe, 'Kitson family (*per.* c.1520–c.1660)', *ODNB* (Oxford: OUP, 2004) <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/73910>> [accessed 27 Feb 2012].

<sup>31</sup> Donnington was a merchant, member of the Salters' Company and a citizen of London. Margaret was his sole heir.

Richard Long of Shingay, Cambridgeshire (c.1494-1546).<sup>32</sup> Long was a senior member of King Henry VIII's Privy Chamber and was thus able to assist Margaret in furthering her family's interests at court, an initiative which bore fruit in March 1543 when King Henry stood as godfather to Henry Long, the only son to be born from Margaret's second marriage.<sup>33</sup> In September 1546 Margaret again benefited financially following the death of her second husband, receiving a jointure from his estate. Soon after, she began her courtship with John Bouchier, second Earl of Bath (William Bouchier's paternal grandfather). By 1548 the couple were engaged in marriage that hinged on Margaret securing the marriage of Frances Kitson – her last remaining unmarried daughter from her first marriage – to the second Earl of Bath's heir, John Bouchier, Lord Fitzwarren.<sup>34</sup> Negotiations between the two couples proved successful and culminated in a joint marriage ceremony on 11 December 1548, thus unifying the Bouchier and Kitson dynasties.

Tawstock Court, situated just a few miles south of the north Devon port of Barnstaple, had been the Bouchier family's primary residence since the fifteenth-century.<sup>35</sup> It was therefore the likely birthplace of John Bouchier, second Earl of Bath (c.1500-1562).<sup>36</sup> Bouchier began his public career in 1519 with his appointment as sheriff of Somerset and Dorset. A knighthood followed in c.1523; however, it was not until 1539 that Bouchier, then aged forty,

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<sup>32</sup> Long became a gentleman usher to King Henry VIII in 1535, was knighted on 18 October 1537, stood as MP for Southwark in 1539, and by the 1540s enjoyed a certain degree of intimacy with the King (Michael Riordan, 'Henry VIII, privy chamber of (*act.* 1509–1547)', *ODNB* (Oxford: OUP, 2004; online edn., May 2009) <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/70825>> [accessed 27 Feb 2012] (para. 9-11 of 18)).

<sup>33</sup> The marriage also produced three daughters.

<sup>34</sup> Margaret had secured the marriage of Katherine Kitson to Sir John Spencer of Wormleighton, Warwickshire, Dorothy Kitson to Sir Thomas Pakington of Hampton Lovett, Worcestershire, and Anne Kitson to Sir William Spring of Cockfield, Suffolk (Walter C. Metcalfe, ed., *The Visitations of Suffolk* (Exeter, 1882), pp. 48-9).

<sup>35</sup> Bridget Cherry and Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Devon* (Newhaven and London: Yale UP, 1989), p. 791.

<sup>36</sup> Much of the information concerning John Bouchier, second Earl of Bath, and his son, John Bouchier, Lord Fitzwarren, has been obtained from Vicary Gibbs, ed., *The Complete Peerage*, vol. ii (London, 1912), pp. 16-7.

succeeded to the earldom of Bath.<sup>37</sup> The second Earl of Bath, described by Diarmaid MacCulloch as a ‘sound Catholic and conscientious Marian official’, owed his greatest political success to his decision to be one of the first to support Mary Tudor’s claim to the throne in 1553.<sup>38</sup> Thus, for periods during the 1550s, he was a JP in Suffolk and Norfolk, a privy councillor, and the governor of Beaumaris Castle in Anglesey.<sup>39</sup> The second Earl of Bath’s marriage to Margaret Long was his third following the premature deaths of his first two wives. The Earl’s heir, John Bouchier, Lord Fitzwarren, resulted from his second marriage to Eleanor, sister of Thomas Manners, first Earl of Rutland, and daughter of George Manners, Lord Ros. Fitzwarren was knighted on 17 November 1549 and was one of the hostages demanded by France at the conclusion of peace in 1550. However, his death at the age of only twenty-seven on 28 February 1557 meant that he made little further impact. It is uncertain whether Lady Fitzwarren had already given birth to William at the time of her husband’s death. What is certain is that as a newborn baby William had become his grandfather’s heir.

According to the Devon biographer, John Prince, William was born at Tawstock Court on an unknown date in 1558.<sup>40</sup> However, given the date of his father’s death, 1557 must be the true year of his birth. Furthermore, it seems likely that William was born at Hengrave Hall – a notion that is supported by the fact that his father, grandfather and grandmother were all buried there.<sup>41</sup> The second Earl of Bath outlived his son by four years, dying on 10 February 1562.

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<sup>37</sup> John Bouchier’s father (also named John) was created first Earl of Bath on 9 July 1536, just under three years before his death on 30 April 1539.

<sup>38</sup> MacCulloch, *Suffolk and the Tudors*, p. 181.

<sup>39</sup> CUL, Hengrave MS., 88/1/41; 88/1/113; 88/1/139.

<sup>40</sup> Prince’s biography of the Bouchier family did not make the printed edition of his *Worthies of Devon* in 1810. However, the manuscript remains extant at PWDRO under the reference 373/1.

<sup>41</sup> Evidently following their marriage with Margaret Long and Frances Kitson both John Bouchiers regarded Suffolk and specifically Hengrave Hall as their adopted home. This certainly makes sense when one considers the fact that the second Earl of Bath was a JP in Suffolk and Norfolk and a privy councillor.

Thus, at the age of just four, William Bouchier became the third Earl of Bath. Of course, the young Earl could not obtain his grandfather's estate until he reached his majority and, as a minor, he was subject to the laws of wardship. Evidence that the dowager Countess of Bath petitioned the Queen for the wardship of her grandson exists in a draft letter that she wrote to an unknown courtier beseeching them to be 'a meane to the Quenys Majestie that we maye have the only bringinge vppe of him duringe these his tender yeres'.<sup>42</sup> Evidently the dowager Countess was successful in her petition because her will granted custody of Tawstock Court together with all 'suche stuffe and ymplementes of houshoule' to Lady Fitzwarren until her son reached the age of twenty-one.<sup>43</sup>

Lady Fitzwarren's inclination was to raise and educate her son in Suffolk and Cambridgeshire, a decision which must have been influenced by her controversial second marriage to a Suffolk man, William Barnaby of Great Saxham, in September 1557.<sup>44</sup> Thus, Bath attended school at Bury St Edmunds and then Ely before spending four years at Cambridge University (1573-7).<sup>45</sup> In December 1577 he was still attending university when the first well-documented controversy of his life occurred. According to an account written by his uncle, Sir Thomas Kitson, Bath was invited to Hengrave Hall on Tuesday 9 December with the intention of finding him a suitable bride. Kitson had inherited his father's estate on reaching his majority in 1561 and had married Elizabeth, daughter of

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<sup>42</sup> CUL, Hengrave MS., 88/3/89.

<sup>43</sup> The dowager Countess also bequeathed to her grandson £100 to be held in trust by his mother and 'his grandfathers Ringe withe a sealle of Armes' (PROB 11/45: 10/12/1561).

<sup>44</sup> William Barnaby was the second Earl of Bath's land agent. Lady Fitzwarren's marriage to a man of such low social status apparently caused 'great offence' amongst her friends (Gibbs, *Complete Peerage*, ii, p. 17). Furthermore, in a letter that Sir Thomas Pakington wrote to his mother-in-law, the Countess of Bath, on 21 September 1557 it is revealed that Lady Fitzwarren had 'chosen her hosbonde w<sup>th</sup> owt y<sup>e</sup> consent' of her parents (CUL, Hengrave MS., 88/1/105). Nevertheless, at the time of the dowager Countess' death in December 1561 Barnaby seems to have been on good terms with his mother-in-law. Indeed, he was an associate executor of her will in which he was bequeathed £100 and 'a ringe of goulde withe a dyamonde' (PROB 11/45).

<sup>45</sup> John Venn and J. A. Venn, eds., *Alumni Cantabrigienses: A Biographical List of All Known Students, Graduates and Holders of Office at the University of Cambridge, From the Earliest Times to 1900*, pt. i, vol. i (Cambridge: CUP, 1922), p. 187.

Sir Thomas Cornwallis of Brome, the year before. The Cornwallis family were renowned Catholics who inevitably benefited under Mary and suffered under Elizabeth. Indeed, Sir Thomas Cornwallis had also declared the right of Mary to succeed in 1553 and thus joined the second Earl of Bath as a privy councillor during the Marian regime.<sup>46</sup> Kitson sympathised with his step-father's and father-in-law's Catholic beliefs and enjoyed tutelage from the latter in navigating the intricacies of county politics in Elizabethan Suffolk.<sup>47</sup> Thus, it may well have been in gratitude to his father-in-law that Kitson had arranged for his unmarried sister-in-law, Mary Cornwallis, to be present at Hengrave Hall when the Earl of Bath arrived in order to obtain an advantageous marriage alliance for the beleaguered Cornwallis family.<sup>48</sup>

Initially, Bath was supposedly troubled by the suggested match because of the identity of Mary's father, 'of whose deuotion and religion he much misliked'. However, on Thursday 11 December 1577 'not longe after dynner' the Earl signified to his uncle that 'his good will towards the gentlewoman was verie much increased' and by Saturday 13 December Mary was similarly 'better inclyned then before' to marry the Earl. Thus, according to Kitson, the only stumbling block to the marriage was Lady Fitzwarren who he claimed 'thought soe evill of S<sup>r</sup> Thomas Cornwaleys, me selfe, and my wife'. Accordingly, because 'it was verie vnlikelie to atteyne his mothers good will' and not wanting his nephew to 'fall into strangers handes wh<sup>ch</sup>' would abuse his simplicitie to

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<sup>46</sup> At the end of 1558 Elizabeth removed Cornwallis from the Privy Council as a result of his Catholicism. Cornwallis remained on the Suffolk recusant rolls until his death on 24 December 1604 (Ann Weikel, 'Cornwallis, Sir Thomas (1518/19-1604)', *ODNB* (Oxford: OUP, 2004; online edn. Jan 2008) <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/6343>> [accessed 27 Feb 2012] (para. 3-4 of 4)).

<sup>47</sup> Both Cornwallis and Kitson were JPs in Suffolk for periods in the 1550s and 1560s respectively (MacCulloch, *Suffolk and the Tudors*, pp. 362 and 384).

<sup>48</sup> All dates and details relating to Bath's clandestine marriage to Mary Cornwallis have been obtained from a document entitled: 'A Briefe abstracte of the proceedynges of S<sup>r</sup> Thomas Kitson Knyght w<sup>th</sup> William Earle of Bath his Nephewe, touchynge the maryage betwene him and Marie Cornwaleys daughter to S<sup>r</sup> Thomas Cornwaleys Knyght' (CUL, Hengrave MS., 88/3/18).

ther owne gayne' Kitson encouraged Bath to marry Mary covertly. Bath responded positively to his uncle's chivvying and on the night of Sunday 14 December 1577, 'in the p<sup>r</sup>esence of diuerse gentlemen and others', the young couple married. Unsurprisingly, on her discovery of this clandestine ceremony, Lady Fitzwarren was none too pleased and promptly dispatched her son 'secretlie into the west partes' before proceeding vigorously to contest the validity of the marriage – a dispute which continued well into the seventeenth-century. According to Sir Thomas Cornwallis in a letter that he wrote to Sir Robert Cecil on 10 June 1601 it had been upon 'the earnest desire & affection of the Earle' to marry his daughter.<sup>49</sup> Indeed it was Cornwallis' contention that Bath had 'diuerse dayes both before and after the marriage' gone to bed with Mary and had even bragged 'w<sup>th</sup> great loy' on his return to Cambridge that he had married her. These accusations were completely denied by Bath in the immediate aftermath of the marriage with the Earl claiming, evidently under the direction of an infuriated Lady Fitzwarren, that he had been 'made insensible with drink and at once put to bed with Mistress Mary'.<sup>50</sup> Lady Fitzwarren appears to have viewed her son's marriage into an infamous Catholic family as political suicide and sought vigorously to have the union annulled during the subsequent court case, apparently offering £500 as a bribe to one of the judges. When that failed Lady Fitzwarren escalated the matter, obtaining the help of the Queen's favourite, Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, to have the case retried using a handpicked commission of judges. Unsurprisingly the new commission ruled the marriage to be invalid leaving Mary Cornwallis destitute, a fact that encouraged Sir Thomas Kitson to bequeath his sister-in-law £300 when he wrote his will in June 1601 in guilty recognition of the role that he had played in

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<sup>49</sup> CP 182/48.

<sup>50</sup> Roberts, 'Armada Lord Lieutenant', pt. i, p. 78.

procuring the marriage.<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless, Mary was viewed by her family as the rightful Countess of Bath until her death in 1627.<sup>52</sup>

Bath therefore relocated to north Devon in 1578 not because he chose to but because, in the midst of controversy, his mother ordered him to. Lady Fitzwarren, having become a widow once again, joined her son at Tawstock soon after.<sup>53</sup> Having played such a prominent role in securing the annulment of her son's first marriage it is highly likely that Lady Fitzwarren was equally prominent during the negotiations for the Earl's second marriage in 1582 to Elizabeth, daughter of Francis Russell, second Earl of Bedford (1527-1585).<sup>54</sup> Bedford was the powerhouse of West Country politics during the first half of the Elizabethan era owing mainly to the fact that he had inherited large swathes of land in the region from his father and had acted as lord lieutenant of Dorset, Devon and Cornwall on an intermittent basis from 1557.<sup>55</sup> However, it was not until 1577 that Bedford chose to reside on a more permanent basis in Devon, dividing his time between his mansion house in Tavistock, his town house in Exeter and Bedford House in London.<sup>56</sup> Bedford, described by Wallace

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<sup>51</sup> Kitson's bequest reads: 'Item whereas partely by my meanes and procurement, there was a mariage had and solemnized betwene the right honorable the Earle of Bathon and my Sister in lawe mistres Marie Cornewalleis, whiche afterwarde did prove moste vnfortunate and to her great hindraunce, I doe therefore giue and bequeath vnto her the saide marie, three hundred pounds of lawfull english money' (PROB 11/101).

<sup>52</sup> CUL, Hengrave MS., 88/3/47.

<sup>53</sup> The date of William Barnaby's death is unknown. However, he was still living in December 1577 (CUL, Hengrave MS., 88/3/18).

<sup>54</sup> For more on the role of a parent in Tudor marriage negotiations, see Christine Peters, 'Gender, Sacrament and Ritual: The Making and Meaning of Marriage in Late Medieval and Early Modern England', *P&P*, 169 (November, 2000), 63-96.

<sup>55</sup> Wallace T. MacCaffrey, 'Russell, Francis, second earl of Bedford (1526/7–1585)', *ODNB* (Oxford: OUP, 2004) <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/24306>> [accessed 27 Feb 2012] (para. 4 of 26). John Russell, first Earl of Bedford, had been granted 30,000 acres of land (drawn primarily from the former monastery of Tavistock in west Devon) by King Henry VIII on 4 July 1539 in order to promote his influence in the region following his appointment as lord president of the council of the west (Diane Willen, 'Russell, John, first earl of Bedford (c.1485–1555)', *ODNB* (Oxford: OUP, 2004; online edn., Jan 2008) <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/24319>> [accessed 27 Feb 2012] (para. 12 of 23)).

<sup>56</sup> Bedford's career highlights prior to 1577 included a captaincy in the royal army at Boulogne (1544); standing as MP for Buckinghamshire (1545 and 1547); a knighthood (1547); joining Elizabeth's Privy Council (from 1558); obtaining the governorship of Berwick and the wardenship of the east marches (1564); a decade as a courtier (1568-1577).

MacCaffrey as 'a stalwart and outspoken supporter of a vigorous evangelical Protestantism', also sought to align himself and his family with those who shared similar religious sentiments, marrying off his eldest daughter, Anne, in November 1565 to Ambrose Dudley, Earl of Warwick (elder brother of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester).<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, the numerous bequests that Bedford made in his will to powerful politicians and senior members of the nobility confirms that he enjoyed an extensive network of influential friends and associates at the Elizabethan court who could be called upon to defend his interests and those of his family.<sup>58</sup> Thus, the marriage that took place at St Stephens, Exeter, on 7 August 1582 between the Earl of Bath and Bedford's daughter, Lady Elizabeth Russell, must have been agreed by the young Earl and his mother at least partly in the belief that they too would benefit from Bedford's personal power and prestige.<sup>59</sup>

In 1585 the alliance between the two families was further cemented by the marriage of Bath's cousin Elizabeth, daughter of Henry Long, to Bath's brother-in-law, Sir William Russell (c.1553-1613). In that same year Russell took part in the Earl of Leicester's military expedition to the Netherlands, serving

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<sup>57</sup> The Earl of Warwick and the Earl of Leicester were 'inseparable' with the latter's 'continued protection for protestant nonconformity' no doubt a joint endeavour. In contrast to her sister, Bedford's other daughter Margaret – 'a zealous puritan' – married one of her father's wards, George Clifford, third Earl of Cumberland – the 'spendthrift' courtier and privateer who earned the nickname 'Elizabeth's 'rogue'. This information has been obtained from Simon Adams, 'Dudley, Ambrose, earl of Warwick (c.1530-1590)', *ODNB* (Oxford: OUP, 2004; online edn., Jan 2008) <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/8143>> [accessed 27 Feb 2012] (para. 11 of 15); Simon Adams, 'Dudley, Robert, earl of Leicester (1532/3–1588)', *ODNB* (Oxford: OUP, 2004; online edn., May 2008) <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/8160>> [accessed 27 Feb 2012] (para. 62 of 101); Richard T. Spence, 'Clifford Margaret countess of Cumberland (1560-1616)', *ODNB* (Oxford: OUP, 2004) <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5655>> [accessed 27 Feb 2012] (para. 2 of 4); Peter Holmes, 'Clifford, George, third earl of Cumberland (1558-1605)', *ODNB* (Oxford: OUP, 2004; online edn., Jan 2008) <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5645>> [accessed 27 Feb 2012] (para. 2 of 13). See also Ian W. Gowers, 'Puritanism in the County of Devon Between 1570 and 1641' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Exeter University, 1970).

<sup>58</sup> The individuals to whom Bedford made bequests included Sir Thomas Bromley, Lord Chancellor of England, Henry Hastings, third Earl of Huntingdon, Ambrose Dudley, Earl of Warwick, Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, Sir Francis Walsingham, Secretary of State, Sir Walter Mildmay and Edward Fiennes de Clinton, first Earl of Lincoln (PROB 11/69: 7/4/1584).

<sup>59</sup> John Lambrick Vivian, ed., *The Visitations of the County of Devon: Comprising the Heralds' Visitations of 1531, 1564 and 1620* (Exeter, 1895), p. 107.

as the lieutenant-general of the horse. It seems that Bath also joined the expedition, no doubt to ingratiate himself with his formidable father-in-law – whose religious views made him an ardent supporter of the expedition – while at the same time using it as an opportunity to forge friendships and alliances with the up-and-coming members of the late-Elizabethan aristocracy.<sup>60</sup> Having demonstrated ‘outstanding valour in the battlefield’, Russell assumed the governorship of Flushing on 1 February 1587 – a position that he held for over two years.<sup>61</sup> In contrast, Bath gained no military acclaim during the campaign and by summer 1586 he had returned to Devon to assume his commissions as a JP and vice-admiral – his first two notable positions in local government.<sup>62</sup>

Much had changed during Bath’s absence in relation to the government of the county owing to the death of the second Earl of Bedford on 28 July 1585.<sup>63</sup> Bedford’s death left a significant power vacuum in the West Country with no one individual able to replicate his regional eminence.<sup>64</sup> Coupled with the escalating conflict with Spain it appears that Elizabeth no longer deemed it prudent to place the western counties of Dorset, Devon and Cornwall under the command of just one lord lieutenant. By the end of December 1585 it was Lord

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<sup>60</sup> Of Bath’s involvement in the Netherlands Expedition, Prince writes: ‘he soon after applied himselfe to the warrs. And among other eminent Personages, he accompanied ... Robert Earl of Leycester, then General of the English Auxiliaries into the Netherlands, for the assistance of the Dutch against y<sup>e</sup> Spaniards’ (PWDRO, 373/1). The ‘other eminent Personages’ included Robert Devereux, second Earl of Essex, George Touchet, Lord Audley, Roger, Lord North, Peregrine Bertie, Lord Willoughby, Sir Thomas Cecil, Sir Edward Norris, Sir John Norris, and Charles Blount – who later became Lord Mountjoy (Adams, *Leicester and the Court*, pp. 176-95).

<sup>61</sup> John McGurk, ‘Russell, William, first Baron Russell of Thornhaugh (c.1553-1613)’, *ODNB* (Oxford: OUP, 2004; online edn., Jan 2008) <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/24342>> [accessed 27 Feb 2012] (para. 4 of 11).

<sup>62</sup> The exact date of Bath’s return to the county from the Netherlands is uncertain, however, he was definitely back in Devon on 11 June 1586, writing to the Privy Council from Torrington in connection with the examination of some mariners that he had conducted on behalf of the Court of Admiralty (SP 12/190 f.56).

<sup>63</sup> Bedford died of gangrene aged 58 at his London residence. He was subsequently buried at Chenies – his Buckinghamshire residence – on 14 September 1585 (Gibbs, *Complete Peerage*, ii, p. 76).

<sup>64</sup> Bedford’s eldest son, Edward Russell, had died without issue in c.1571. Bedford’s second eldest son, John Russell, died in July 1584 also without issue. Bedford’s third eldest son, Francis Russell, was mortally wounded on the Scottish border and died just hours before his father on 27 July 1585. However, Francis did have a son, Edward Russell. Thus, at the age of just thirteen, Edward became the third Earl of Bedford (Gibbs, *Complete Peerage*, ii, pp. 76-8).

Burghley's desire to assign the lord lieutenancy of Devon and Cornwall to the Lord Admiral, Charles Howard of Effingham, and the lord lieutenancy of Dorset to William Paulet, third Marquess of Winchester.<sup>65</sup> However, the Queen was not to be rushed in her appointments and decided to allow the Deputy Lieutenants of Devon and Cornwall – who had always shown great 'zeale' in the execution of the Crown's orders – to oversee the mustering and training of the militia in their respective counties on an interim basis without a lord lieutenant.<sup>66</sup>

This situation lasted less than a year: by autumn 1586 the lord lieutenancy of Dorset had been granted to the Marquess of Winchester; Cornwall's to Sir Walter Raleigh; and Devon's to the Earl of Bath. However, on account of Bath's 'young years' and inexperience, Devon's Deputy Lieutenant's maintained some of their privileged status with Bath being ordered by the Privy Council to 'use the counsel of the gentlemen named in your commission to be by you appointed to be your deputies'.<sup>67</sup> John Roberts has placed much stock on this seemingly unique order, arguing in his biography of Bath that it demonstrated 'the critical attitude of the government towards the county's sole earl'.<sup>68</sup> However, before one views Bath with similar derision it is important to point out that to have governed a large frontline county such as Devon during wartime without following the advice and obtaining the cooperation of the Deputy Lieutenants – the majority of whom exercised substantial influence in their local regions of the county – would have been foolish. Furthermore, in spring 1586 Lady Fitzwarren, who had played such a pivotal role in Bath's

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<sup>65</sup> SP 12/185 f.91: 31/12/1585.

<sup>66</sup> This was made known to the Deputy Lieutenants of Devon (Sir William Courtenay, Sir Robert Denys, Sir John Gilbert I, Sir Arthur Bassett and Sir John Chichester) and Cornwall (Sir Francis Godolphin and Sir William Mohun) in a letter signed by the Queen on 2 February 1586 (SP 12/186 f.102).

<sup>67</sup> HMC, *Foljambe*, p. 19; *APC*, xiv, pp. 239-40.

<sup>68</sup> Roberts, 'Armada Lord Lieutenant', pt. i, p. 80.

upbringing, died.<sup>69</sup> Thus, the Privy Council's order for Bath to follow the advice of his deputies may well reflect their sympathy and their prudence rather than any specific lack of confidence or personal criticism of his supposed abilities or personal qualities. However, the prestige that Bath enjoyed following his appointment as lord lieutenant was soon overshadowed by the ordeal of having to bury his first two sons, John and Robert, on 12 March 1587 and 27 May 1588 respectively. Both had been baptised just fifteen months prior to their deaths with the baptism of Robert and the burial of John tragically separated by just nine days.<sup>70</sup> Fortunately, the Earl and Countess had a third son, Edward, who was baptised on 1 March 1590. He survived to succeed to the earldom on his father's death in 1623.<sup>71</sup>

The late 1580s and early 1590s were thus turbulent years for the Earl and Countess of Bath. Indeed, the infant deaths of their first two sons may well have provided the root cause for the hostility that existed between the couple.<sup>72</sup> On 16 April 1594 Anne Dudley, Countess of Warwick, wrote a scathingly critical letter to her brother-in-law from the court in complaint of the maltreatment that he had offered her younger sister.<sup>73</sup> The Countess also threatened that should

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<sup>69</sup> Lady Fitzwarren was buried in Tawstock Parish Church on 4 April 1586 (Gibbs, *Complete Peerage*, ii, p. 17).

<sup>70</sup> Robert Bouchier was baptised on 3 March 1587. His brother, John Bouchier, was buried on 12 March 1587. Both ceremonies took place at Tawstock Parish Church (Gibbs, *Complete Peerage*, ii, p. 18).

<sup>71</sup> Nevertheless, Edward Bouchier's childhood was not without health scares. Indeed, in a letter that William Bouchier wrote to his daughter, Frances, on 6 June c.1604 he noted that a 'chang of ayer and company may doe to mend his infirmity' (HMC, *Bath*, p. 54). Edward succeeded his father as the fourth Earl of Bath on 12 July 1623. He died on 2 March 1637 aged 47 (Gibbs, *Complete Peerage*, ii, p. 18).

<sup>72</sup> Other possible causes of friction may have been the Countess' apparent feeling of isolation at Tawstock which she seems to have expressed in a letter to Sir Julius Caesar on 11 February 1592 (BL, Additional MS., 12506 f. 101) or the seemingly prominent role that she played in relation to the Earl's trade operations – a role which is revealed by four letters that she wrote to Caesar, who was a judge in the Court of Admiralty, between 1589 and 1604 (BL, Additional MS., 12506 ff. 195, 215 and 217; BL, Additional MS., 12507 f. 118).

<sup>73</sup> Anne, Countess of Warwick (1549-1604), was described by her niece and goddaughter, Lady Anne Clifford, as 'a mother of affection' to her siblings following the early death of their mother. Thus, it is of no surprise that she fought so vehemently for her sister's interests (Simon Adams, 'Dudley, Anne, countess of Warwick (1548/9-1604)', *ODNB* (Oxford: OUP, 2004; online edn.,

her brother-in-law not amend his behaviour she would inform the Queen in a bid to obtain the couple's separation:

you are become soe voyd of judgment and discretion to offer such abuses still unto her ... yow shall well knowe that she hath frends who will not suffer her anie longer to be thus abused without cause, and therefore if that which I heare be true, I purpose to acquainte her Majestie therwith ... and indeed unless yow had more government of your selfe I will seeke that my sister may have her portion and go lyve from yow ... I pray for your amendement.<sup>74</sup>

Evidently Bath's marital problems were a hot topic of conversation at court because just a day after the Countess of Warwick had written her letter Robert Devereux, second Earl of Essex, wrote to Bath with his own views on the matter.<sup>75</sup> Essex reminded his friend that having 'rashly allmost intangled yourself in bonds thatt ware nott worthy to hold you' (a reference to Bath's first marriage to Mary Cornwallis) he had been lucky enough to obtain a match 'in a very noble house with a Lady both of greatt honor and frends'. However, he went on to warn the Earl that the Countess of Bath's friends were 'far greater' than his and that 'her cause will make her more frends' if she continued to suffer.<sup>76</sup> Both letters are invaluable in shedding light on Bath's troubled domestic life. However, they also underline the importance of personal relationships and social connections in the Elizabethan political system. Specifically, they reveal that Bath – a nobleman residing at the distant periphery of the realm – struggled in the 1590s to cultivate the necessary social network of powerful friends and associates at the court to defend his reputation and uphold his personal interests. Indeed, even Bath himself acknowledged the disadvantage of living so far away from the centre of affairs in a letter that he

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Jan 2008) <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/69744>> [accessed 27 Feb 2012] (para. 3 of 6)).

<sup>74</sup> HMC, *Portland*, p. 19.

<sup>75</sup> Essex and Bath had no doubt become acquainted during their time in the Netherlands in 1585/6.

<sup>76</sup> HMC, *Portland*, pp. 19-20.

wrote to one of his deputy lieutenants, Edward Seymour, on 12 September 1596. Within the letter Bath demonstrated an interest in becoming lord warden of the stannaries – a position thought to be vacant owing to a rumour that Sir Walter Raleigh was dead. However, Bath also revealed that he had little confidence in being chosen by the Queen to succeed Raleigh because he believed that ‘her Majestie will laye *it* vppon some person nearer to the Courte and of more sufficiencye then my self.’<sup>77</sup>

Having established that Bath lacked both political and social standing at the Elizabethan court during the 1590s – a fact that partly reflected his perennial absence from the centre of affairs – one would be forgiven for thinking that he possessed substantial regional eminence instead. However, when comparing the parliamentary borough influence enjoyed by his father-in-law, the second Earl of Bedford, during the elections for the first four Elizabethan parliaments with that of the Earl of Bath’s in the last five it becomes clear that this was not the case.<sup>78</sup> P. W. Hasler estimates that for the first four Elizabethan parliaments 138 (40%) of members out of the 346 returned by Cornwall, Devon and Dorset (the highest regional concentration of parliamentary seats in the country) owed their seats either to Bedford’s direct nomination or his indirect influence.<sup>79</sup> In contrast, Bath’s influence during the final five Elizabethan parliaments (save for a sole nomination for Dartmouth in 1589) was restricted to Barnstaple where he held the nomination for just one of the two members that the borough was

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<sup>77</sup> DRO, 1392M/L1596/9.

<sup>78</sup> In all there were ten parliaments during the reign of Elizabeth I. These commenced in 1559, 1563, 1571, 1572, 1584, 1586, 1589, 1593, 1597 and 1601 (Hasler, *Commons*, i, p. 6).

<sup>79</sup> Hasler, *Commons*, i, p. 60. MacCaffrey has attributed such widespread and persistent interference to Bedford’s desire as a privy councillor to utilise his position as an important regional magnate in order to place malleable members in Parliament who could be used to further the purposes of central government, or, more specifically, of his friend and associate William Cecil, Lord Burghley (MacCaffrey, ‘second earl of Bedford’, para. 20 of 26).

enfranchised to elect.<sup>80</sup> Thus, Bath's nominations for the last five Elizabethan parliaments came to just seven. For Barnstaple these were Thomas Hinson (1586, 1588 and 1597), George Chittinge (1593), George Peard (1597) and Edward Hancock (1601); and for Dartmouth Roger Papworth (1589).<sup>81</sup> Put another way, Bath's parliamentary borough influence within Devon stood at just under 9% compared with Bedford's 40% in all three western counties.<sup>82</sup> What personal power and prestige Bath enjoyed in Devon was therefore localised in the north of the county and centred in particular on Barnstaple. Indeed, John Roberts has described the young Earl as having 'almost undisputed sway' in the town from 1586 onwards. By the 1590s Bath was the town's recorder and as such he sporadically commanded a certain degree of respect from Barnstaple's townsmen, particularly when they were in need of his legal aid and assistance.<sup>83</sup> Indeed, Bath would undoubtedly have resided for considerable amounts of time at his Barnstaple town house during periods when the townsmen were seeking his favour.<sup>84</sup> Furthermore, there are frequent entries in Barnstaple's receivers' accounts of payments relating to gifts and dinners that were bestowed upon

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<sup>80</sup> The only occasion when Bath was allowed to nominate both Barnstaple members was in 1597 and was noted by the town's clerk, Adam Wyatt, in his chronicle of Barnstaple. The relevant passage reads: '*The 24<sup>th</sup> of Sept. Mr Thomas Hinson ... and Bartholomew Harris were elected burgesses for the Parliamt to be holden the 29<sup>th</sup>. of october next coming. Afterwards, because ther was some misliking by the Earle of Bath, of the choice of Bartholomew Harris to joyn with Mr Hinson, a new election was made by consent of the whole burgesses and therupon George Peard of this towne was made a free burgesse of this towne and then imediately [‘elected’ inserted] for one of the burgesses of the Parliamt in the Roome of Mr Harris*' (Todd Gray, ed., *The Lost Chronicle of Barnstaple, 1586-1611* (Exeter: The Devonshire Association, 1998), pp. 80-1).

<sup>81</sup> Hasler, *Commons*, i, pp. 143-5.

<sup>82</sup> Between 1586 and 1601 there were eight parliamentary boroughs within Devon: Barnstaple, Bere Alston, Dartmouth, Exeter, Plymouth, Plympton Erle, Tavistock, and Totnes. Each borough was enfranchised to elect two MPs making a total of sixteen borough MPs. Therefore, a total of eighty borough MPs were elected from Devon during the elections for the last five Elizabethan parliaments, just seven (8.75%) of which were nominated by the Earl of Bath.

<sup>83</sup> John Roberts, 'The Parliamentary Representation of Devon and Dorset, 1559-1601' (unpublished master's thesis, London University, 1958), p. 274. A recorder was a town's legal representative and was required to protect and uphold the town's interests. This involved petitioning the Privy Council and other central government institutions on behalf of the town.

<sup>84</sup> Bath's Barnstaple residence was situated just outside the town's south gate on the road that led to Tawstock Court. The house later became the Golden Lion Hotel (Roberts, 'Armada Lord Lieutenant', pt. i, p. 82).

Bath and his followers by the town's mayor and chief inhabitants no doubt in order to lubricate relationships and obtain Bath's support for the town's causes.<sup>85</sup>

Thus, in assessing certain aspects of the Earl of Bath's early life and career this section has endeavoured to underline that William Bouchier was not what one might regard as a typical lord lieutenant. During the first section of this chapter two types of lord lieutenant were outlined. First, the local magnate who held a vested interest in the success of the county or counties where he was appointed, an interest though that might make him inclined to neglect the interests of the Crown should those interests diverge from the interests of the county or counties under his lieutenancy. And second, the 'outsider' who had no vested interest in the county or counties assigned to him and, as a result, could be ruthless in protecting and promoting the Crown's interests but who probably suffered from a lack of consent and cooperation from those who inhabited the area under his control. Bath, uniquely, was neither of these; rather he was a hybrid of the two. He was a local magnate living in Devon and as such held a vested interest in the success of the county, but at the same time he was an 'outsider' having spent his formative years in Suffolk and Cambridgeshire and he thus enjoyed only a moderate level of local influence and esteem in Devon especially when compared to his father-in-law, the second Earl of Bedford. Consequently, the Queen's choice of Bath no doubt largely respected the fact that following Bedford's death there was no other viable alternative: Bedford's heir was a minor; Sir Walter Raleigh had been appointed lord lieutenant of Cornwall; and Lord Admiral Howard was an 'outsider'. Nevertheless, in Bath the Crown benefited from an individual who depended on his lord lieutenancy for

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<sup>85</sup> NDRO, B1/3972, ff. 128, 130, 133, 137, 141-2, 149, 156, 158 and 162.

the vast majority of his power and prestige and therefore endeavoured to fulfil his duties to the best of his ability. Furthermore, he was able to rely heavily on the advice and assistance of his Deputy Lieutenants, the majority of whom were influential power brokers in their specific regions of the county.

### **Deputy lieutenants**

According to Neil Younger 'deputies were seldom appointed in counties where the lord lieutenant was very clearly a "country" peer, without major office at court and therefore available to be in his county when necessary.'<sup>86</sup> It has been demonstrated in the previous section that the Earl of Bath was one of these 'country' peers who lacked major office at court; however, the fact that he also lacked an appropriate level of prestige within Devon may well have been a key factor in the Crown's decision to appoint five deputy lieutenants to advise and assist him when he assumed the lord lieutenancy of Devon in autumn 1586. That said, Bath's lack of regional status was not the only or probably even the primary reason for the existence of a deputy lieutenancy within Devon. Indeed, it has been revealed that the second Earl of Bedford – a man who commanded substantial regional esteem – had five deputy lieutenants of his own at the time of his death in 1585. Thus, the Crown's decision to appoint deputy lieutenants in Devon regardless of the fact that the county had a resident lord lieutenant from 1577 onwards was doubtless made chiefly for operational and strategic reasons rather than being a personal criticism of Bath. After all, Devon is one of England's largest counties and its location on the frontline of England's war with Spain and the rebellion in Ireland made it strategically vital.

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<sup>86</sup> Younger, 'War and the Counties', p. 265.

Customarily the social standing of a deputy lieutenant was that of senior gentry. Furthermore, unlike some lord lieutenants, deputies were ordinarily appointed to serve within just one county, city, or regional jurisdiction.<sup>87</sup> In terms of its size and membership the deputy lieutenancy differed greatly from the commission of the peace, with the latter, in the words of Alfred Hassell-Smith, being 'in a constant state of flux'.<sup>88</sup> Indeed, as early as the mid-sixteenth century the commission of the peace had started to attract criticism in some quarters due to its ever expanding membership.<sup>89</sup> In particular, the Secretary of State, Sir Thomas Smith, explained to William Cecil in July 1549 that it would be much better to have 'one or two responsible gentlemen in each shire to enforce the King's proclamations'.<sup>90</sup> According to Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes, Cecil held much the same view, and was a firm believer that the 'multiplication of magistrates ... only enhanced the inefficiency of local administration ... by muddying the lines of communication between the centre and localities, and by diluting the authority of the individual justice and eroding ... [their] personal responsibility'.<sup>91</sup> Thus, whereas it was the general trend for the identity of JPs within each county constantly to change, and their numbers consistently to

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<sup>87</sup> As well as counties, the cities of Bristol, Exeter and Gloucester were also appointed a lieutenancy. For Gloucester see GRO, GBR H2/1 f.3. The original lieutenancy commission infringed the town's charter. Thus, Gloucester Corporation obtained a new commission requiring Lord Chandos, lord lieutenant of Gloucestershire, to commission deputy lieutenants for the City of Gloucester in accordance with the charter. Similarly, on a regional jurisdictional level, Roger, Lord North, lord lieutenant of the Isle of Ely, Cambridgeshire, was granted a deputy lieutenant to operate there on his behalf (*APC*, xxviii, p. 630).

<sup>88</sup> Alfred Hassell-Smith, 'Justices of the Peace from 1588-1688', *BIHR*, 32:86 (1959), 221-42 (p. 225). The Earl of Bath similarly noted the ever-changing nature of Devon's commission of the peace in a letter that he wrote to the Lord Keeper on 22 August 1595 (BL, Harley MS., 6997 ff. 88-9).

<sup>89</sup> Kent's commission of the peace increased from a fifteenth-century average of 24-8 to 44 by 1562, 63 by 1636 and 153 by 1702; Norfolk increased from 15, to 19, to 52, to 111; Warwickshire from 8, to 16, to 22, to 57; and Yorkshire (North Riding) from 11, to 17, to 39, to 75 (Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales, 1500-1700* (London and Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1994), p. 167). In 1592 Devon had 55 JPs, the identity of whom has been listed in A. H. A. Hamilton, 'The Justices of the Peace for the County of Devon in the Year 1592', *TDA*, 8 (1876), 517-25. For an overview of their administrative duties see R. L. Taverner, 'The Administrative Work of the Devon Justices in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century', *TDA*, 100 (1968), 55-84.

<sup>90</sup> SP 10/8 f.57. For a brief discussion on the growing deficiency of the commission of the peace during the second half of the sixteenth-century see Williams, *The Tudor Regime*, p. 416.

<sup>91</sup> Heal and Holmes, *The Gentry*, p. 168.

increase year on year throughout the second half of the sixteenth-century, the Crown was at pains to ensure that the lieutenancy remained a much more stable and exclusive office with deputies more often than not retaining their position until death. That said there was a definite growth in the number of deputy lieutenants appointed within each county from 1585 onwards. Indeed, in that year it had been usual for most counties, especially small inland counties that were not susceptible to foreign invasion, to have just two or even one deputy lieutenant. However, by the end of the Elizabethan era this had changed with most counties possessing more: Shropshire and Dorset had five; Kent six; Cornwall either seven or eight; and Devon was unsurpassed with nine.<sup>92</sup> However, despite the growth in membership, the lieutenancy remained an elite and prestigious office that was eagerly sought because, in the words of Henry Herbert, second Earl of Pembroke, 'all men cannot be deputy lieutenants ... some must govern, some must obey.'<sup>93</sup>

Ultimately, the final decision whether or not to appoint a deputy lieutenant was made by the monarch on the advice of the Privy Council. In some circumstances this decision-making process included specifically choosing the individuals who would be appointed, however, for peripheral regions of the realm that were less well known to the Crown the selection of individuals to serve as deputy lieutenants was often deferred to the relevant lord lieutenant. For example, having been newly commissioned as lord lieutenant of Wales at the beginning of 1587, the Earl of Pembroke was given permission, subject to the Crown's approval, to

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<sup>92</sup> Younger, 'War and the Counties', p. 268; DRO, ECA, Charters and Letters Patent, lxxi; DRO, 3799M-3/O/3/5.

<sup>93</sup> Quoted in Joel Hurstfield, 'County Government: Wiltshire c.1530-c.1660', in *Freedom, Corruption and Government in Elizabethan England*, ed. by J. Hurstfield (London: J. Cape, 1973), pp. 236-93 (p. 241).

take some course for the choice of certain principal gentlemen in every of the said counties (such as are well known to be of sound disposition towards her Majesty and the State) to have chief charge under your Lordship to serve as your Deputy Lieutenants.<sup>94</sup>

In Devon, as a result of his 'young years' and inexperience, the Earl of Bath played no part in this decision-making process when he became the county's lord lieutenant in autumn 1586. However, as he gained experience, Bath acquired greater influence in selecting his deputies, a fact that is confirmed by a copy of a letter sent from the Privy Council to the Lord Keeper, Sir Thomas Egerton (one of only two officials who could issue a new lieutenancy commission), on 31 October 1596 approving Bath's decision to appoint Edward Seymour a deputy lieutenant:

the said Earle of *Bath* beinge her Majes<sup>ties</sup> Leuetenant can well iudge who are fittest to be aydinge and assestinge vnto him in those affaires Wee doe therefore praie you<sup>r</sup> Lordsh<sup>ip</sup>: to Cause the Comission of Leiueten<sup>a</sup>uncye for the Countie of Devon to be renewed ... and in the same to nominate and appointe Edward Seymou<sup>r</sup> esquire for a Deputie Leuetenant.<sup>95</sup>

Thus, Bath went from playing no part in the appointment of his deputies in 1586, to possessing just ten years later a similar degree of influence to that of the Earl of Pembroke. Evidently, Mark Stoye's contention that Bath died a 'valued servant' of the Crown in July 1623 was well on its way to fruition by the end of the 1590s.

### **Devon's Deputy Lieutenants, 1586-1603**

As already noted, for a brief period after the death of the second Earl of Bedford in summer 1585 and before Bath's appointment to the office in autumn 1586,

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<sup>94</sup> HMC, *Foljambe*, p. 21.

<sup>95</sup> DRO, 1392M/L1596/14; BL, Sloane MS., 33 ff. 8-9.

Devon's lieutenancy was jointly commanded by Bedford's five deputies: Sir William Courtenay, Sir Arthur Bassett, Sir Robert Denys, Sir John Gilbert I and Sir John Chichester. The only change to this arrangement came in spring 1586 when Chichester and Bassett died of gaol fever following their attendance at Exeter's infamous 'Black Assizes'.<sup>96</sup> Thus, by the time that Bath assumed his position as lord lieutenant, Hugh Fortescue and George Cary had been appointed in place of their deceased predecessors.<sup>97</sup> This section seeks to place in context the five men who occupied the position of deputy lieutenant following the appointment of the Earl of Bath as lord lieutenant in autumn 1586, as well as the nine others who were appointed to this elevated and prominent local office throughout the late-Elizabethan era. The intention is to document a further tier in a political system that depended on personal relationships. It therefore underlines the importance of the personalities and social networks that operated at the apex of power and influence in late-Elizabethan Devon. In particular, the study reveals certain key attributes necessary to securing a place on late-Elizabethan Devon's lieutenancy commission: family connections; strategic marriage; wealth and status; geographical location of residence; having a patron of high status at court; timely personal lobbying; political ambition; local reputation, respect and influence. Thus, the underlying message that this analysis seeks to project is that securing political office in Elizabethan local government was as much to do with one's personal relationships and

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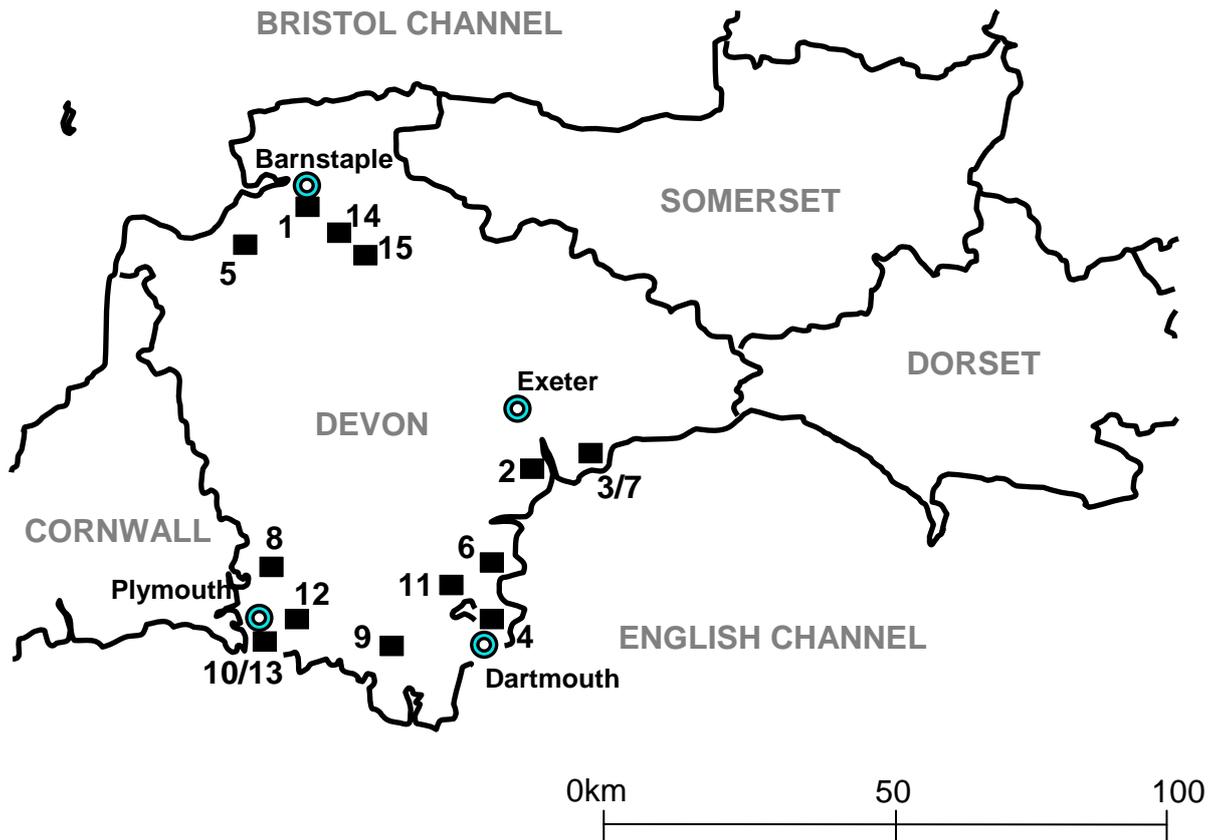
<sup>96</sup> Sir Arthur Bassett of Umberleigh died aged 58 and was buried on 2 April 1586 at Atherington (Vivian, *Visitations of Devon*, p. 47). Sir John Chichester of Raleigh died on 31 March 1586. Incidentally, he had been married to Ann, daughter of his fellow deputy lieutenant, Sir Robert Denys of Bicton and Holcombe Burnell (Vivian, *Visitations of Devon*, p. 174). Their deaths have been subsequently attributed to a fatal epidemic of Typhus that broke out amongst some Portuguese men who had been captured and brought to Exeter by Sir Bernard Drake during a raid on Newfoundland. There were a number of other notable deaths to occur as a result (Gray, *Lost Chronicle*, p. 60). For a detailed account of the 'Black Assizes' see Frederick Willcocks, 'The Black Assizes in the West', *TDA*, 16 (1884), 595-604.

<sup>97</sup> DRO, ECA, Charters and Letters Patent, Ixiva.

	1586	1593	1596	1599	1601	1603
Sir William Courtenay	1	1	1	1	1	1
Sir Robert Denys	2					
Sir John Gilbert I	3	2				
Hugh Fortescue Esq.	4	3	2	2		
Sir George Cary	5	4	3	3	2	2
Sir Thomas Denys		5	4	4	3	3
Sir Francis Drake		6				
Sir Richard Champernowne			5	5	4	4
Sir Ferdinando Gorges			6	6		
Sir Edward Seymour			7	7	5	5
Sir William Strode				8	6	6
Sir John Gilbert II					7	7
Sir Robert Bassett					8	8
Hugh Pollard Esq.					9	9
Anthony Monck Esq.*						10

Figure 2.1: The names and number of Devon deputy lieutenants, 1586-1603.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>98</sup> DRO, ECA, Charters and Letters Patent, lxiva, lxvi, lxviii, lxix, lxixa, lxxi; APC, xxvi, p. 189; DRO, 1392M/L1596/14; DRO, 3799M-3/O/3/5; HMC *Somerset*, p. 16. \* Anthony Monck of Potheridge was not commissioned a deputy lieutenant until 13 April 1603 (after the death of Elizabeth I) and is therefore not discussed below. Nevertheless, the lieutenancy commission which bears his name has been used to illustrate that Devon's lieutenancy remained unaltered between 1601 and the end of the Elizabethan era.



1. Tawstock – William Bouchier, Earl of Bath
2. Powderham – Sir William Courtenay
3. Bicton – Sir Robert Denys
4. Greenway – Sir John Gilbert I
5. Weare Giffard – Hugh Fortescue Esq.
6. Cockington – Sir George Cary
7. Bicton – Sir Thomas Dennys
8. Buckland Abbey – Sir Francis Drake
9. Modbury – Sir Richard Champernowne
10. St Nicholas Island – Sir Ferdinando Gorges
11. Berry Pomeroy – Sir Edward Seymour
12. Newnham – Sir William Strode
13. St Nicholas Island – Sir John Gilbert II
14. Umberleigh – Sir Robert Bassett
15. Kings Nympton – Hugh Pollard Esq.

Figure 2.2: Principal residences of Devon's Lord and Deputy Lieutenants, 1586-1603.

social connections as it was to do with the particular requirements of the moment and an individual's ability to do the job. A summary table (figure 2.1) presents the chronology of the appointments and/or removals of individuals serving on Devon's lieutenancy commission and highlights the increase in the number of deputy lieutenants from five in 1586 to ten in 1603. Furthermore, a map of the principal residences of Devon's Lord and Deputy Lieutenants (figure 2.2) provides a visual appreciation of the geographical concentration of the officeholders in the south of the county – a trend which owed largely to the importance that the Crown attached to defending Devon's south coast throughout the Elizabethan war with Spain.

*Sir William Courtenay of Powderham (1553-1630)*

By far the most senior of Bath's deputies, signing his name just under the Earl's in all lieutenancy correspondence, was Sir William Courtenay of Powderham.<sup>99</sup> In fact, Courtenay was the *de jure* Earl of Devon, a position that was only granted to him 201 years after his death following a curious ruling that the House of Lords made in 1831. Intriguingly, had Courtenay been granted his position among the nobility while alive he would have been a plausible alternative to Bath as Devon's lord lieutenant. While there is no concrete evidence to suggest that Courtenay ever sought to obtain his rightful title during his lifetime it was certainly the belief of the Spanish Ambassador, Bernardino

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<sup>99</sup> A short biographical note on the life and career of Sir William Courtenay and his father, Sir William Courtenay the elder, can be found in Vicary Gibbs, *Complete Peerage*, vol. iv (London, 1916), pp. 332-3. Writing one's signature 'tucked close to the closing mode of address' has been identified by James Daybell as functioning as one of the 'markers of social status' in the early modern period (Daybell, *The Material Letter*, p. 2). As a member of the nobility and the county's lord lieutenant the Earl of Bath inevitably located his signature as close as possible to the closing mode of address in all official correspondence that he and his deputies sent to the Privy Council. The fact that Courtenay always signed his name immediately below Bath's signifies his seniority in the pecking order of Devon's Deputy Lieutenants.

De Mendoza, immediately before the discovery of the Babington Plot that he would do so if given the opportunity:

Sir William Courtney, a Catholic, who expects to be able in the turmoil [of an invasion] to recover the earldom of Devonshire, which is his by right. He is a person of great weight and credit in the west, and promises to ensure the possession of the port of Plymouth.<sup>100</sup>

De Mendoza's assertion that Courtenay would assist the Spanish in their planned invasion was, in the words of John Roberts, 'almost certainly a bait to lead the Spaniards on'; in fact Sir Walter Raleigh was also involved in a similar deception at the time.<sup>101</sup> In contrast, the allegation that Courtenay was a Catholic was based on firmer ground and will be discussed further in due course.

Courtenay succeeded his father, also named William Courtenay, at the age of just four after the latter had been supposedly slain at the siege of St Quintin, France, on 18 August 1557. William Courtenay the elder had married Elizabeth, daughter of John Paulet, second Marquess of Winchester, in November 1545 and she gave birth to William Courtenay the younger in 1553. On his father's death Courtenay became the ward of his maternal great-grandfather, William Paulet, first Marquess of Winchester, who, as Lord Treasurer, ensured that William's formative years were spent at court.<sup>102</sup> By the time Courtenay married his first wife, Elizabeth, daughter of Henry Manners, second Earl of Rutland, in January 1573 he was known personally to the Queen and was a member of a circle of courtiers that included his wife's uncle, Roger

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<sup>100</sup> M. A. S. Hume, ed., *Calendar of Letters and State Papers Relating to English Affairs Preserved in, or Originally Belonging to, the Archives of Simancas*, vol. iii: Elizabeth 1580-1586 (London, 1896), no. 469, p. 604.

<sup>101</sup> John Roberts, 'A Notable Devon Knight (Sir William Courtenay, 1553-1630)', *TDA*, 88 (1956), 174-88 (p. 180).

<sup>102</sup> Hasler, *Commons*, i, p. 664.

Manners – a court favourite who protected Courtenay’s interests at the centre of affairs following the latter’s relocation to Devon.<sup>103</sup>

Courtenay’s relocation to Devon no doubt occurred after finishing his legal education at Middle Temple in 1578.<sup>104</sup> From thenceforward he was based on a more permanent basis at Powderham Castle. Overlooking the estuary of the River Exe from its western shore and just over seven miles downstream from Exeter (see figure 2.2), Powderham had been the Courtenay family’s primary residence since the fourteenth-century. However, Powderham was just a small part of much more extensive lands that still included eighteen other notable Devon manors at the time of Courtenay’s death in 1630.<sup>105</sup> Courtenay’s first commission in local government was as a Devon JP which he occupied throughout the late-Elizabethan era. He also stood as sheriff of Devon between 1579 and 1580 and was the county’s senior knight of the shire for the parliaments of 1584, 1589 and 1601.<sup>106</sup> These positions, in combination with his *de jure* noble status, landed wealth and deputy lieutenancy, provided Courtenay with the credentials to claim his place at the pinnacle of Devon’s gentry. His ability to secure and retain that position during the 1590s no doubt owed much to his seemingly unscrupulous personality and to the grudging respect that he commanded amongst his contemporaries. Certainly the Earl of Bath was weary of his deputy’s Machiavellian nature, so much so that on 2 November 1592 he

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<sup>103</sup> Roger Manners (c.1536-1607) is described by Sybil Jack as ‘the linchpin of the Manners family’s relations with the court and central government, the conduit for public and private news and advice’ (Sybil M. Jack, ‘Manners, Roger (c.1536–1607)’, *ODNB* (Oxford: OUP, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008) <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/40609>> [accessed 28 Feb 2012] (para. 3 of 6)). For evidence that this extended to Courtenay see CP 41/19: 27/5/1596; HMC, *Rutland*, p. 156.

<sup>104</sup> Hasler, *Commons*, i, p. 664.

<sup>105</sup> This included land in and around Exeter (Alphington, Chiverstone and Whitestone), land in the east (Honiton), land in the north (Milton Damerel and Holsworthy), and land dotted along the south coast near Kingsbridge (Thurlestone, Bolt Bury, Salcombe and South Huish). For a full list of the eighteen manors, see Ezra Cleaveland, *A History of the Family of Courtenay*, pt. iii (Exeter, 1735), p. 301.

<sup>106</sup> Hasler, *Commons*, i, p. 664.

wrote to Lord Burghley describing Courtenay as ‘a man who though he geue himself ouer to all vyce, as drinking, *and* hooring ... he neyther want witt to deuuse, nor might to practyse, how to strengthen him self, and weaken others’.<sup>107</sup>

However, the power and respect within Devon that Courtenay enjoyed during the reign of Elizabeth I gradually eroded following the accession of James I. This was chiefly as a result of his move towards Catholicism; a shift engendered by his third marriage to the openly Catholic Jane, daughter of Robert Hill of Yard, Somerset.<sup>108</sup> The earlier influence of the recusant Paulet family during Courtenay’s infancy may well have planted the seed from which his conversion grew and which became publicly known in 1610 when Sir William and Lady Courtenay were ‘compelled’ to take the oath of allegiance on account of their recusancy.<sup>109</sup> Worse though was to come in 1614 when Courtenay was made to surrender his deputy lieutenancy – as a recusant he could no longer occupy public office.<sup>110</sup> Nevertheless, there is certainly no evidence, save for the rather biased accusations of men like Bernardino De Mendoza, to suggest that he openly practised Catholicism during his early career and, even if he did, it did not necessarily follow that he was disloyal to the Crown. Indeed, the fact that Courtenay was entrusted with such prominent positions in the administration and defence of Devon during the Armada years strongly indicates that any uncertainty in relation to his loyalty was not felt by Elizabeth and her Privy Council during the 1580s and 1590s.

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<sup>107</sup> BL, Lansdowne MS., 71 f.194.

<sup>108</sup> Courtenay’s second wife had been Elizabeth, daughter of Sir George Sydenham of Combe Sydenham, Somerset (the widow of Sir Francis Drake). She died in 1598. The date of Courtenay’s third marriage therefore could not have been any earlier than that year (Vivian, *Visitations of Devon*, p. 247). According to John Roberts, Lady Jane Courtenay had been openly Catholic from as early as 1606 (Roberts, ‘A Notable Devon Knight’, p. 186).

<sup>109</sup> Herbert Reynolds, *The Ancient Diocese of Exeter* (Exeter, 1895), p. 233.

<sup>110</sup> Roberts, ‘A Notable Devon Knight’, p. 186.

*Sir Robert Denys of Bicton and Holcombe Burnell (c.1530-1592)*

Whereas Sir William Courtenay was at the peak of his career during the 1580s and 1590s, Sir Robert Denys' influence was drawing to a close. Denys was the eldest son and heir of Sir Thomas Denys (c.1477-1561) – the assiduous Devon lawyer and administrator whose rise to prominence had come about chiefly because of the time he had spent at court during his youth where he married wisely and cultivated important alliances with both Cardinal Wolsey and Thomas Cromwell.<sup>111</sup> This rise also included a string of important positions in local government. Denys was an MP for Devon in the parliaments of 1529, 1539 and 1553, he was twice chosen as recorder of Exeter, and was appointed a deputy lieutenant of both Devon and Cornwall in 1558.<sup>112</sup> Indeed, John Cooper has pointed out that the marriage of his eldest son to Mary, daughter of William Blount, fourth Baron Mountjoy, on 4 April 1552 'indicates how the standing of the Denys family had risen in Thomas's lifetime'.<sup>113</sup>

Sir Robert Denys, who succeeded Sir Thomas on 18 February 1561, never replicated his father's success at court, choosing instead to reside on a near permanent basis in Devon. His two primary residences within the county were at Bicton and Holcombe Burnell. Both were just a short ride from Exeter with the former approximately twelve miles south-east of the city and the latter approximately four miles west (see figure 2.2). However, even on a local level, Denys was only able partially to emulate his father's success, standing as an MP for Devon just once in 1555, acting as the recorder of Exeter from 1572 and occupying the office of deputy lieutenant of Devon but not Cornwall during the

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<sup>111</sup> John P. D. Cooper, 'Denys, Sir Thomas (c.1477–1561)', *ODNB* (Oxford: OUP, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008) <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/7504>> [accessed 28 Feb 2012] (para. 2-3 of 7).

<sup>112</sup> George Oliver, *A History of Exeter* (Exeter, 1861), pp. 235-7.

<sup>113</sup> Cooper, 'Denys, Sir Thomas (c.1477–1561)', para. 5 of 7.

1580s.<sup>114</sup> Nevertheless, he does seem to have had a good working relationship with the chief inhabitants of Exeter; regularly receiving visitors, letters and gifts from the city at his Bicton residence, the majority of which related to his positions in local government.<sup>115</sup>

By 1592 Denys' health had deteriorated to such an extent that he struggled to honour his lieutenancy commitments, a fact that is revealed by a schedule of Devon's militia that the Earl of Bath sent to the Privy Council in that year:

For *S<sup>r</sup>*: Robert Denys his Regiment in the Easte devisiō. I haue not receyued any certificate at all. the cause whereof I finde to be his longe sicknes and present extremitie as I am aduertised by his sonne *S<sup>r</sup>*: Thomas Denys: whome I haue alwayes founde to be verie dutifull & forwarde in all occasions of her Majesties seruice, and he hath promised to repaire vnto me with his fathers certificate verie shortlye.<sup>116</sup>

Evidently Denys' son was positioning himself to replace his father once he had died. He did not have long to wait for Denys' will was written on 15 July 1592 and was proved following his death just a few months later. The content of that will reveals much about Denys' personality. As a champion of the poor, Denys started building an almshouse in 1591 and he urged his son to finish it 'withe as mucche speede as convenientlye may be'. He also made monetary bequests to the poor people living in the hundreds near to where he lived as well as granting £6 13s. 4d. to the prisoners of Exeter gaol. In addition, Denys, clearly a man with a conscience, added a codicil to his will in recognition of how little he had initially bequeathed to his 'lovinge wife'.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Sir Robert Denys was also knighted in 1557, twice sheriff of Devon (1557/8 and 1567/8) and commissioned a Devon JP from c.1559 (S. T. Bindoff, ed., *The House of Commons, 1509-1558*, vol. ii (London: HMSO, 1982)).

<sup>115</sup> DRO, ECA, Exeter Receivers' Accounts, 30-34 Elizabeth I.

<sup>116</sup> BL, Cotton MS., Otho, E/XI f.226.

<sup>117</sup> PROB 11/80: 15/7/1592.

*Sir John Gilbert I of Greenway (c. 1536-1596)*

The only other survivor from the second Earl of Bedford's lieutenancy was Sir John Gilbert I. Gilbert was the eldest of three sons from the first marriage of Katherine, daughter of Sir Phillip Champernowne of Modbury, to Otho Gilbert of Greenway.<sup>118</sup> Following Otho Gilbert's death on 18 February 1547 Katherine married Walter Raleigh of Fardel. This union produced two more sons, the youngest being the widely celebrated Sir Walter Raleigh (1554-1618).<sup>119</sup> Thus, Sir John Gilbert I was the older half-brother of one of the Elizabethan era's most prominent personalities. Gilbert's own career was by comparison rather modest. Nevertheless, he served as a much-valued local agent for his courtier half-brother and occupied a prominent position in the government of Elizabethan Devon for over forty years.

Gilbert was very much a Devon man who seems to have resided within the county on a permanent basis throughout his entire life. His two key places of residence – inherited on the death of his father in 1547 – were Compton Castle and Greenway. The former is located approximately four miles north-west of Tor Bay in the south of the county, whereas the latter lies approximately five miles north of Dartmouth overlooking the River Dart estuary on its eastern bank (see figure 2.2). Gilbert's proximity to one of Elizabethan Devon's premier ports

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<sup>118</sup> The two other sons were Sir Humphrey Gilbert (1537-1583) and Adrian Gilbert (c.1541-1628) (Vivian, *Visitations of Devon*, pp. 405-6). Sir Humphrey is primarily remembered for his exploits as a maritime explorer. Described by Rory Rapple as a 'tragic hero' his final voyage to Newfoundland achieved success in establishing an English settlement but ended in tragedy when Sir Humphrey drowned in a storm on his way home on 9 September 1583 (Rory Rapple, 'Gilbert, Sir Humphrey (1537-1583)', *ODNB* (Oxford: OUP, 2004; online edn, Jan 2012) <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10690>> [accessed 28 Feb 2012] (para. 12 of 15)). Adrian Gilbert has enjoyed much less posthumous acclaim. Nevertheless, he did demonstrate an interest in exploration and served as Sir Walter Raleigh's land agent at his Sherborne estate between 1595 and 1603 (Hasler, *Commons*, ii, p. 191).

<sup>119</sup> The elder son was Carew Raleigh (c.1550-1626) (Vivian, *Visitations of Devon*, p. 639). Carew's young life was greatly influenced by his Gilbert half-brothers and he inevitably chose exploration as opposed to the more orthodox legal education (Hasler, *Commons*, iii, p. 271).

coupled with his close relationship with Raleigh made him the ideal person to organise supplies for the latter's numerous marine expeditions.<sup>120</sup> It was thus customary for Raleigh to write to Gilbert from the court prior to his fleet sailing down to Devon from its moorings at Deptford or Chatham to ensure that his half-brother had items such as bread, cider and dried Newfoundland fish ready and waiting in Dartmouth or Plymouth.<sup>121</sup> Raleigh's fleet was then able to anchor briefly at either port, pick up the victuals, and be on their way to the New World with the minimum amount of fuss. Furthermore, Gilbert levied soldiers from Devon and Cornwall to form the companies within Raleigh's fleet and purchased weapons so that they were appropriately armed to board foreign vessels, fend off other privateers and pillage unsuspecting coastline communities.<sup>122</sup> In return Raleigh acted as an important connection for Gilbert with the Elizabethan court, supplying the most up-to-date news and gossip whilst at the same time utilising his position as one of the Queen's favourites to protect and promote his half-brother's interests.<sup>123</sup>

Gilbert's ability to assist Raleigh was a result of the prominent position that he had been able to acquire for himself within the government of Devon. The catalyst for this may well have been in November 1556 when he married Elizabeth, daughter of Sir Richard Chudleigh of Ashton.<sup>124</sup> Chudleigh was an associate of the second Earl of Bedford and therefore the marriage was no doubt regarded by Gilbert as an opportunity to forge his own association with

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<sup>120</sup> Between 1583 and 1588 these expeditions were very much focused on privateering and colonisation in the New World. However, by 1595 Raleigh's focus shifted and he became preoccupied with the fabled empire of El Dorado and the need for England to establish a source of wealth in the New World that could rival that of Spain's (Mark Nicholls and Penry Williams, 'Raleigh, Sir Walter (1554-1618)', *ODNB* (Oxford: OUP, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008) <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/23039>> [accessed 28 Feb 2012] (para. 31 of 76)).

<sup>121</sup> For examples see Agnes M. C. Latham and Joyce Youings, eds., *The Letters of Sir Walter Raleigh* (Exeter: Exeter UP, 1999), pp. 35-6, 59-61 and 64-5.

<sup>122</sup> Latham and Youings, *Letters of Raleigh*, pp. 61-2 and 64-5.

<sup>123</sup> Latham and Youings, *Letters of Raleigh*, pp. 16-7, 42-3 and 59-61.

<sup>124</sup> Vivian, *Visitations of Devon*, p. 406.

Devon's principal magnate.<sup>125</sup> This association certainly seems to have been cemented by the 1570s because in June 1574 Bedford had deemed it appropriate to nominate Gilbert as one of his deputy lieutenants and, just one year later, he commended his deputy for the great 'care and diligence' that he had demonstrated in serving the Crown.<sup>126</sup>

An important element of Gilbert's service to the Crown was coordinating the handling of captured Spanish vessels and it is in this aspect of his public service that much of the evidence concerning his personality can be found.<sup>127</sup> Sir John Gilbert, described by Roberts as 'a hot-tempered man, capable of strong feelings', may well have been industrious and efficient in promoting both the Crown's and his family's interests but he also seems to have been a man who was 'eager for personal gain' and financial profit.<sup>128</sup> Indeed, his fellow deputy lieutenant, George Cary, believed him to be a man who was 'not disposed to tak payne where no gayne cometh'.<sup>129</sup> Furthermore, he was accused of prohibiting others from dealing with Spanish vessels so that he could embezzle some of the captured goods for himself and his associates and then sell the remainder without a Privy Council warrant.<sup>130</sup> Gilbert received warnings from the Privy Council in response to accusations of this nature.<sup>131</sup> Nevertheless, he 'hotly' defended his reputation against any suggestion that he acted dishonourably and no doubt believed that he was owed a portion of any captured Spanish goods in recompense for his loyal service to the Crown.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> John Roberts, 'Sir John Gilbert (c.1536-1596)', *TDA*, 91 (1959), 92-106 (p. 93).

<sup>126</sup> SP 12/179 f.117: 14/3/1558 – 4/6/1574; HMC, *Salisbury*, ii, p. 100.

<sup>127</sup> Paula Martin, *Spanish Armada Prisoners: The Story of the Nuestra Senora del Rosario and Her Crew, and of Other Prisoners in England, 1587-97* (Exeter: Exeter UP, 1988), pp. 22-62.

<sup>128</sup> Roberts, 'Sir John Gilbert', p. 92.

<sup>129</sup> SP 12/217 f.36: 14/10/1588.

<sup>130</sup> HMC, *Salisbury*, ii, p. 96; Latham and Youings, *Letters of Raleigh*, pp. 45-6.

<sup>131</sup> *APC*, xvi, pp. 293 and 378-9.

<sup>132</sup> HMC, *Salisbury*, ii, p. 96.

*Hugh Fortescue Esq. of Filleigh and Weare Giffard (1544-1600)*

Between his appointment in 1586 and his death on 1 August 1600 Hugh Fortescue was the Earl of Bath's only deputy to reside in north Devon. One of his direct antecedents, Martin Fortescue (d.1472), had originally lived at Holbeton in the south of the county.<sup>133</sup> However, on 10 September 1454 he married Elizabeth, daughter and heir of Richard Deynself of Filleigh and Weare Giffard, and relocated to north Devon.<sup>134</sup> John Fortescue (1460-1503) – Martin and Elizabeth's eldest son – took control of both manors following the death of his mother and, from then on, this particular branch of the Fortescue family chose to reside permanently at Filleigh and Weare Giffard – the former being situated about eight miles south-east of Barnstaple and the latter approximately four miles south of Bideford (see figure 2.2).<sup>135</sup> Hugh Fortescue assumed control of both manors at the age of twenty-six following the death of his father, Richard, on 30 June 1570.<sup>136</sup>

Little documentary evidence survives for Fortescue's life and career.<sup>137</sup> Nevertheless, he was one of three captains assigned to inspect the Armada levies in north Devon in 1588, was one of Devon's fifty-five JPs to be named on the commission of the peace in 1592 and appears to have had substantial commercial interests in milling and husbandry.<sup>138</sup> Furthermore, Fortescue seems to have been closely associated with the Chichesters of Raleigh – an association that was formalised by his marriage to Elizabeth, daughter of Sir

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<sup>133</sup> Lady Margaret Fortescue, 'Recollections of the Fortescue Family', *TDA*, 131 (December, 1999), 1-9 (p. 3).

<sup>134</sup> Vivian, *Visitations of Devon*, p. 353.

<sup>135</sup> Thomas Fortescue, Lord Clermont, *A History of the Family of Fortescue in all its Branches* (London, 1869), pp. 46-50.

<sup>136</sup> Vivian, *Visitations of Devon*, p. 354.

<sup>137</sup> For an extremely brief summary of Hugh Fortescue's life see Fortescue, *History of the Family of Fortescue*, pp. 49-50.

<sup>138</sup> The Earl of Fortescue, 'Some notes on the family of Fortescue', *TDA*, 88 (1956), 1-20 (p. 2); PROB 11/96: 1/6/1599.

John Chichester.<sup>139</sup> Chichester had a total of nine daughters and eight sons and he was able to secure advantageous marriages for many of them with spouses belonging to other leading Devon families.<sup>140</sup> Thus, Fortescue enjoyed an extensive network of familial contacts that spanned the entire county. Indeed, it seems highly likely that Fortescue's association with the Chichester's coupled with his widespread social connections influenced the Privy Council when they nominated him to succeed his brother-in-law, Sir John Chichester, as a deputy lieutenant following the latter's untimely death of gaol fever on 31 March 1586.

*Sir George Cary of Cockington (1541-1617)*

It has already been revealed that Sir Arthur Bassett lost his life in 1586 following his attendance at Exeter's 'Black Assizes'. Bassett's chief residence was at Umberleigh in north Devon, approximately eight miles south of Barnstaple, and he, like Fortescue, had married one of Sir John Chichester's daughters. Thus, one might be forgiven for thinking that the Queen would have chosen another gentleman from north Devon to replace Bassett. However, in George Cary she chose an individual whose chief residence was in the south of the county. Cockington Court, situated just inland from Tor Bay and about ten miles north of Dartmouth, had been the chief residence of one branch of the Cary family from as early as 1375 (see figure 2.2). In that year the Cary family had divided: Sir William Cary chose to reside in Clovelly, about eleven miles west of Bideford in north Devon, whereas his brother, Sir John Cary, Chief Baron of the Exchequer,

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<sup>139</sup> Vivian, *Visitations of Devon*, p. 354.

<sup>140</sup> Sir John Chichester (Chichester's heir and namesake) married Ann, daughter of Sir Robert Denys of Bicton and Holcombe Burnell. Elinor Chichester married Sir Arthur Bassett of Umberleigh. Dorothy Chichester married Sir Hugh Pollard of King's Nympton. Cecil Chichester married Lewis Pollard of King's Nympton. Bridget Chichester married Sir Edmund Prideaux (Vivian, *Visitations of Devon*, pp. 173-4).

moved his family south to Cockington.<sup>141</sup> George Cary was a direct descendent of the latter brother. The decision to appoint another deputy lieutenant on the south coast of the county as opposed to the north may well have been influenced by the growing threat from Spain. Nevertheless, the Crown had appointed an individual who also commanded, partly through his cousin and namesake George Cary of Clovelly, a significant degree of influence in north Devon.<sup>142</sup>

Having been legally educated at the Inner Temple from 1558, Cary assumed control of his Devon estate at the age of twenty-six following the death of his father, Thomas Cary, in 1567. Cary's early career was very much centred in Devon and by the 1570s he was fast becoming a leading member of the county's government: from 1572 he was a captain of the county militia; from c.1579 he was a JP; in 1586 he was elected an MP for Dartmouth; and three years later he stood as Devon's junior knight of the shire.<sup>143</sup> However, Cary's close association with the second Earl of Essex resulted in him joining his patron, who had been appointed lord deputy of Ireland, on his secondment to the province in 1598.<sup>144</sup> Cary was appointed as Essex's under-treasurer from 1 March 1599 as a result of the 'discrecion and fidelitye' he had shown in previous

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<sup>141</sup> Robert Dymond, 'Sir George Cary of Cockington: A Devonshire Worthy of the Elizabethan era', *TDA*, 6 (1873), 276-92 (p. 276).

<sup>142</sup> Cary's close association with his cousin was in all likelihood the reason he was elected as the junior knight of the shire for Devon in 1589. George Cary of Clovelly was sheriff of Devon at the time and no doubt played a prominent part in acquiring the seat for his cousin (Hasler, *Commons*, i, pp. 546-7).

<sup>143</sup> Ute Lotz-Heumann, 'Carew, George, earl of Totnes (1555-1629)', *ODNB* (Oxford: OUP, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008) <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4628>> [accessed 28 Feb 2012] (para. 10-1 of 12).

<sup>144</sup> Cary's association with Essex seems to have been a close one. Cary's second wife was Essex's niece, Lettice, daughter of Robert Rich, Earl of Warwick, and Penelope Rich (née Devereux) (Vivian, *Visitations of Devon*, p. 151). Cary also sent George, his eldest son from his first marriage, to serve Essex in Ireland prior to his own departure (CP 176/36). Essex knighted the young Cary in gratitude to his friend; however, Sir George Cary the younger was slain in combat and returned to Devon where he was buried on 27 August 1599 (DRO, 4652M, Reynel Diary, p. 14).

service to the Crown and was intended to be a 'pryncipall member' of the Irish Council which no doubt partly explained his knighthood in that same year.<sup>145</sup>

During his time away, Cary endeavoured to maintain his standing in Devon, particularly with the chief inhabitants of Totnes to whom he had given much legal advice during the 1590s in connection with their ongoing dispute with the town's more humble residents. This advice ensured that he displaced Richard Sparry as the town's recorder in 1596.<sup>146</sup> On 28 September 1601 Cary wrote to the Mayor of Totnes from Dublin asking that he be granted the nomination for one of the town's MPs for the forthcoming parliamentary elections.<sup>147</sup> Cary desired his agent, Thomas Watson, to have the nomination and Watson himself wrote a follow-up letter to the Mayor of Totnes on 13 October personally to request it.<sup>148</sup> However, despite Cary's best efforts, Watson failed to get the nomination. This failure may well have reflected the fact that Watson had annoyed the Mayor by asking for a speedy response because of the other possible nominations which were on offer to him. Nevertheless, one would be justified in speculating that had Cary been in Devon and not Ireland in 1601 then he would surely have secured the nomination for his agent. Evidently, his time away from Devon eroded his standing within the county and so it must have been bittersweet when in May 1603 Cary became Ireland's lord deputy, a position that he occupied until 16 July 1604 before relinquishing it to Sir Arthur Chichester in order to return to Cockington.

Nevertheless, while he was away in Ireland, Cary still retained his position as one of Devon's deputy lieutenants. Not only is this an indication of the high regard that was felt for him by the Privy Council but it also

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<sup>145</sup> SP 63/204 f.142: 22/3/1599.

<sup>146</sup> Hasler, *Commons*, i, p. 547.

<sup>147</sup> DRO, Totnes Borough Records, 1579A-0/12/2

<sup>148</sup> DRO, Totnes Borough Records, 1579A-0/12/1.

demonstrates the reluctance of the Crown to replace a deputy lieutenant for reasons other than death or gross negligence which, as noted earlier, was very different from the ever-changing commission of the peace. Thus, Cary's lieutenancy duties were temporarily devolved to Amias Bampffield of Poltimore and Thomas Reynell of West Ogwell for the duration of his absence in Ireland.<sup>149</sup> Cary returned to Devon on a permanent basis soon after he relinquished his position as lord deputy of Ireland and accordingly resumed his role as a deputy lieutenant. He died on 15 February 1617 having retired from public service some time before.<sup>150</sup>

*Sir Thomas Denys of Bicton and Holcombe Burnell (1559-1613)*

It was earlier observed that Sir Thomas Denys was operating as a *de facto* deputy lieutenant in place of his ailing father from at least the beginning of 1592. Thus, following Sir Robert Denys' death, the Privy Council wrote to the Earl of Bath declaring that they could 'thinke of no meeter person then ... Sir Thomas Dennis for all respectes to supplie his father's roome and to be a Deputie Lieutenaunte'.<sup>151</sup> The Privy Council's high opinion of Denys no doubt stemmed from the years that he had spent at court as a 'young blood'. During those years, Denys enjoyed the favour of the Queen who personally intervened on his behalf in order to obtain the Marquess of Winchester's blessing for Denys' marriage to his daughter, Lady Anne Paulet, who was the cousin of Sir William

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<sup>149</sup> SP 12/273 f.133. Amias Bampffield (c.1560-1626) was a JP for Devon from 1596, knight of the shire in 1597, sheriff of Devon in 1603/4 and was the obvious choice to succeed Cary as a deputy lieutenant of Devon in 1616 (Hasler, *Commons*, i, p. 389). Sir Thomas Reynell (1555-1618) entered Middle Temple in 1574, was a JP from 1588 and was knighted at Whitehall in July 1603. Reynell spent a significant amount of time improving his home at West Ogwell which he had begun to build in 1589 (Mary Wolffe, 'Reynell family (*per.* 1540-1735), gentry', *ODNB* (Oxford: OUP, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008) <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/74992>> [accessed 28 Feb 2012] (para. 3-5 of 16)).

<sup>150</sup> BL, Harley MS., 7002 f.158.

<sup>151</sup> *APC*, xxiii, p. 270.

Courtenay.<sup>152</sup> Denys also gained military experience and a knighthood in 1586 having joined the Earl of Leicester as one of his captains in the Netherlands.<sup>153</sup> Furthermore, as a JP in Devon from c.1583 and in Dorset by 1591, a knight of the shire for Devon in 1593 and sheriff of Devon in 1594/5, Denys had a sound knowledge of south-western politics.<sup>154</sup> It is therefore of little surprise that his name appears on Devon's lieutenancy commission on 29 April 1593 (see figure 2.1).<sup>155</sup>

Unlike Sir George Cary, Denys seems to have been reluctant to become too close to the second Earl of Essex once the latter's hostility towards Sir Robert Cecil intensified during the second half of the 1590s.<sup>156</sup> Nevertheless, he was pragmatic enough not to alienate himself from Essex either, supplying the Earl with the news and gossip that was circulating in Exeter's taverns during summer 1595 concerning the whereabouts and intention of the Spanish fleet.<sup>157</sup> Denys' decision not to align himself wholeheartedly with Essex may well have been influenced by his seemingly affable character. Just like his father, Denys made provisions for the poor in his will, bequeathing £40 to the poor of Bicton and Holcombe Burnell and ensuring that the almshouse he had erected in his father's honour was maintained.<sup>158</sup> He therefore seems to have been a man much more keen on building relationships as opposed to destroying them; an appealing trait for a deputy lieutenant to have, especially when one considers the increasing burdens that were being placed upon the inhabitants of Elizabethan Devon by central government during the 1590s.

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<sup>152</sup> Hasler, *Commons*, ii, p. 32.

<sup>153</sup> John Prince, *The Worthies of Devon* (London, 1810), p. 291.

<sup>154</sup> Hasler, *Commons*, ii, p. 32.

<sup>155</sup> DRO, ECA, Charters and Letters Patent, lxvi.

<sup>156</sup> CP 66/42: 9/12/1598.

<sup>157</sup> CP 33/57: 20/7/1595.

<sup>158</sup> PROB 11/122: 29/7/1613.

### *Sir Francis Drake of Buckland Abbey (1540-1596)*

The ever increasing burdens on Devon's lieutenancy following the commencement of hostilities with Spain in 1585 no doubt played a part in the Crown increasing the number of deputies to six at the start of the 1590s. Thus, the lieutenancy commission drafted on 29 April 1593 also named Sir Francis Drake as a deputy lieutenant (see figure 2.1). Drake's exploits as an explorer and naval commander are too well known to warrant further analysis here. In contrast, his role in Devon as a deputy lieutenant and an important mediator between local and central government has received little attention. Drake's early years are obscure owing to the fact that prior to his knighthood – an honour that was awarded by the Queen on 4 April 1581 in recognition of his famous circumnavigation of the globe – he was a man of low social status and as such enjoyed little standing at court.<sup>159</sup> Indeed, Drake's first marriage on 4 July 1569 to Mary Newman, a woman whose family were from the ranks of the yeomanry rather than gentry, indicates the extent to which Drake was very much a self-made man.<sup>160</sup> The wealth that Drake managed to amass as a result of his naval success was 'moderate'.<sup>161</sup> Nevertheless, it was sufficient to purchase Buckland Abbey from Sir Richard Grenville on 3 October 1582 for £3,400 (see figure 2.2). Furthermore, Drake acquired forty separate freehold properties in Plymouth, a leasehold interest in the Plymouth Town Mills, property at Sidbury and some other unspecified pieces of land from his kinsman, William Hawkins, on 20 October 1582 for £1,500. Thus, in a short period Drake became

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<sup>159</sup> R. N. Worth, 'Sir Francis Drake: His Origin, Arms, and Dealings with the Plymouth Corporation', *TDA*, 16 (1884), 505-52 (pp. 506-7).

<sup>160</sup> Vivian, *Visitations of Devon*, p. 299.

<sup>161</sup> Hasler, *Commons*, ii, p. 54.

Plymouth's third largest landowner behind Hawkins and the town's corporation.<sup>162</sup>

As well as providing the financial means to purchase a substantial amount of property, Drake's maritime success seems to have acted as the catalyst for his elevation in local government. Thus, in 1581 the newly knighted Drake was elected as Plymouth's mayor, from c.1583 he was commissioned a Devon JP, in 1584 he was elected an MP for the Cornish borough of Bossiney, from c.1591 he was commissioned a Cornish JP and in 1593 he was elected as one of Plymouth's MPs.<sup>163</sup> Appointing a man of Drake's renown to these positions was advantageous for both the Crown and the townsmen of Plymouth. For the Crown Drake provided a charismatic local figurehead whose popularity could be harnessed in order to obtain local cooperation in implementing potentially controversial policies.<sup>164</sup> Paradoxically, the townsmen of Plymouth enjoyed Drake's assistance in furthering their suits at the centre of affairs, using his newly acquired national eminence as a bargaining chip to protect and promote the town's interests.<sup>165</sup>

One notable example of the mutual benefit that the Crown and the townsmen of Plymouth enjoyed as a result of Drake's support and assistance concerned Plymouth's water supply. Lady Elliott-Drake has described the town's water supply prior to 1591 thus:

for the greater part of the year [there was] but a small supply, and in dry weather there was none at all, "a matter very incommodious," not only to the inhabitants, who in summer had to fetch water daily from more than a mile's distance, but also to mariners coming within the harbour to water their ships.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> All information concerning Drake's property within Plymouth has been obtained from James Barber, 'Sir Francis Drake's Investment in Plymouth Property', *TDA*, 113 (1981), 103-8.

<sup>163</sup> Hasler, *Commons*, ii, p. 54.

<sup>164</sup> For example, see *APC*, xxiii, pp. 353-4; *APC*, xxiv, pp. 303, 375, 406-7 and 479.

<sup>165</sup> For example, see *APC*, xxiii, p. 352; PWDRO, 1/359/22: 20/1/1595.

<sup>166</sup> Lady Elliott-Drake, *The Family and Heirs of Sir Francis Drake*, vol. i (London, 1911), pp. 109-10.

In order to rectify this problem Drake, at great personal expense, ordered a twenty-seven mile leat to be constructed between Dartmoor and Plymouth so that a regular water supply for the latter could be obtained from the River Meavy and its tributaries. Historians have been keen to describe Drake's efforts in bringing fresh water to Plymouth as his 'princely gift' to the town.<sup>167</sup> Furthermore, it has been customary to portray Drake's construction of the leat as an example of him selflessly furthering the town's interests.<sup>168</sup> However, this apparent act of generosity must have also been influenced by Drake's proprietary interests in the town. Put simply, if Plymouth had an inadequate water supply then the town's economy would suffer and property prices would decline. In addition, as a deputy lieutenant and naval commander, Drake was also concerned with national defence. Thus, without a regular water supply 'her Majesty's ... ships [could not] ... be supplied with water, nor her army ... with bread and beer'.<sup>169</sup> Drake's effort in bringing fresh water to Plymouth is therefore an excellent example of how his local, commercial and national interests frequently coalesced, thereby reinforcing his desire to mediate between local and central government.

#### *Sir Richard Champernowne of Modbury (1558-1622)*

Drake died of dysentery aboard the *Defiance* at Portobello Bay on 28 January 1596.<sup>170</sup> Thus, on 30 May of that year 'uppon the commendacion of our verie good Lord the Earle of Bathe' the Privy Council deemed it appropriate to appoint Richard Champernowne of Modbury as a deputy lieutenant in place of

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<sup>167</sup> Drake, *The Family of Drake*, i, p. 111.

<sup>168</sup> Hasler, *Commons*, ii, p. 54.

<sup>169</sup> HMC, *Salisbury*, xi, p. 492.

<sup>170</sup> Hasler, *Commons*, ii, p. 54.

his deceased predecessor (see figure 2.1).<sup>171</sup> The Champernowne family originally came from Normandy and settled in Devon following the Norman Conquest. The family's ownership of the manor at Modbury – located in the South Hams region of Devon approximately twelve miles east of Plymouth (see figure 2.2) – began during the reign of Edward II following the marriage of Sir Richard Champernowne's ancestor and namesake to Joan, daughter and heiress of Sir Alexander Okeston.<sup>172</sup> In 1559 Sir Richard's great-uncle, Sir Arthur Champernowne (c.1525-78), acquired Dartington Hall – a property located about two miles north of Totnes – in order to establish a secondary branch of the family.<sup>173</sup> Sir Richard Champernowne of Modbury – who succeeded his father, Henry Champernowne (c.1538-70), at the age of twelve – was born into a family which had already proven highly useful to the Crown: his father had been a valued informant during his time overseas, supplying the Earl of Leicester and Lord Burghley with political information from the continent, while his great-aunt, Katherine Astley (née Champernowne, d.1565), had been a tutor of the young Princess Elizabeth and later became a chief gentlewoman of the Privy Chamber following Elizabeth's accession in 1558.<sup>174</sup> It is therefore of little wonder that the Privy Council believed there to be 'noe person more fitt to take ... [Sir Francis Drake's] roome then Mr. Richard Champernown'.<sup>175</sup>

Unfortunately, maintaining the good reputation that his father and great-aunt had established for the family does not seem to have been a high priority for Champernowne. On the contrary, the evidence suggests that he was 'a

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<sup>171</sup> APC, xxv, p. 425; DRO, ECA, Charters and Letters Patent, lxviii.

<sup>172</sup> Vivian, *Visitations of Devon*, p. 160.

<sup>173</sup> Hasler, *Commons*, i, p. 592.

<sup>174</sup> Hasler, *Commons*, i, p. 593; Charlotte Merton, 'Astley, Katherine (d.1565)', *ODNB* (Oxford: OUP, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008) <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/68016>> [accessed 28 Feb 2012]).

<sup>175</sup> APC, xxv, p. 425.

quarrelsome young man' and possessed a rather divisive personality.<sup>176</sup> Indeed, as early as 1584 he was ruffling the feathers of Devon's most senior gentleman, Sir William Courtenay, when both men were at court.<sup>177</sup> This abrasive nature seems to have remained with Champernowne throughout his life owing to the fact that he was 'often oppressyd w<sup>th</sup> melancholy'.<sup>178</sup> Thus, it is of no surprise that on 28 January 1598 the Devon lawyer, John Hele, complained to Lord Burghley that 'M<sup>r</sup> Champemowne ... tryvmphes over me ... in assessing and taxing me and my sonne'.<sup>179</sup> Champernowne's provocative behaviour inevitably attracted enemies. Little wonder therefore that on 15 August 1595 he found himself writing to Sir Robert Cecil to deny a 'most dysgracefull' court rumour that he gelded his choir boys in order to prolong their voices.<sup>180</sup> However, perhaps the best documented controversy of Champernowne's life occurred during the second half of the 1590s when he argued with his fellow deputy lieutenant, Edward Seymour, over the command of certain sections of the county militia – an argument that will be outlined in detail in chapter three.

Nevertheless, even though controversy was always close at hand, Champernowne remained heavily involved in the government of Devon throughout his career. Indeed, as well as his deputy lieutenancy he was also a Devon JP from c.1583, an MP for West Looe in 1586, a central figure in the county militia from 1588 and the sheriff of Devon in 1592/3. Furthermore, his public service was rewarded with a knighthood in 1599.<sup>181</sup> One would be justified in questioning how it was possible for such an antagonistic man to acquire and retain these important positions in local government. Part of the

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<sup>176</sup> John Roberts, *Devon and the Armada* (Newton Abbot: Gooday, 1988), p. 166.

<sup>177</sup> Hasler, *Commons*, i, p. 664.

<sup>178</sup> CP 35/10: 10/1595.

<sup>179</sup> CP 49/3.

<sup>180</sup> CP 73/24.

<sup>181</sup> Hasler, *Commons*, i, p. 593.

answer must surely have been his familial connections. As the grandson of Sir Richard Edgcumbe, the cousin of Sir John Gilbert I and Sir Walter Raleigh, and the son-in-law of the Lord Chief Justice, Sir John Popham (c.1531-1607), Champernowne benefited from having an extensive family network which he no doubt called upon to assist him in furthering his career.<sup>182</sup> Indeed, as Julie Sampson has pointed out, Elizabethan families would have been very 'familiar with their extended networks of kinship and affinity' and would have readily utilised these networks to protect and promote their interests.<sup>183</sup> However, a more forceful reason was, in all likelihood, the cordial relationship that the Champernowne family had with the townsmen of Plymouth. The family was well known in the town and as a result both Sir Arthur Champernowne and Henry Champernowne were elected as MPs for the borough in 1558 and 1562 respectively. Sir Arthur was also a trading associate of John Hawkins – the influential head of Elizabethan Plymouth's leading merchant dynasty.<sup>184</sup> It is therefore unsurprising that during the 1590s the townsmen of Plymouth tried to obtain the command of Plymouth Fort for Sir Richard's younger brother, Arthur, because he was 'himself with his dearest Fryndes & kinsfolke ... our nerest neighbours, whose sufficiencie in marsiall affaires is well knowen'.<sup>185</sup> Appointing and retaining Champernowne in local government in spite of his antagonistic behaviour and insubordination can therefore be viewed as a pragmatic move by the Privy Council who were probably conscious that they needed a Crown agent living near to Plymouth who, like Drake, could use his popularity within the town to secure its ongoing cooperation.

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<sup>182</sup> Vivian, *Visitations of Devon*, pp. 163 and 165.

<sup>183</sup> Julie Sampson, 'Anne Edgcumbe/Dowriche and The French Historie', *TDA*, 141 (June, 2009), 93-152.

<sup>184</sup> Hasler, *Commons*, i, p. 147.

<sup>185</sup> PWDRO, 1/360/10: c.1591.

*Sir Ferdinando Gorges of Wraxall (1568-1647)*

In contrast, cultivating the cooperation of the townsmen of Plymouth was not something that came easily to Sir Ferdinando Gorges when he was appointed a deputy lieutenant in autumn 1596. Gorges' appointment increased the number of deputy lieutenants in Devon to seven (see figure 2.1). The Privy Council justified this increase because 'the shire is large and populous and by meanes that it bordereth on the sea coast hath frequent and often occasions of her Majesty's services, and therefore the other Deputie Leiutenantes hath neede of greater assistance.'<sup>186</sup> This is of course an accurate assessment of late-Elizabethan Devon's special administrative requirements; however, it seems likely that Gorges' appointment was also influenced to an extent by his continual request for additional discretionary powers in light of the hostile treatment that he had encountered from the townsmen of Plymouth following his arrival in Devon in autumn 1595.<sup>187</sup>

Gorges came to Devon from the Dutch seaport of Brille in order to take command of Plymouth's newly built fort. The commission had been obtained for him by his patron, Robert Devereux, second Earl of Essex, because of the former's desire to return to England.<sup>188</sup> It has already been revealed that the townsmen of Plymouth had wanted Arthur Champernowne to take command of the fort. Not only was this a demonstration of the townsmen's affinity towards the Champernowne family it was also their belief that having a local in charge was paramount for their safety

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<sup>186</sup> APC, xxvi, p. 189.

<sup>187</sup> Gorges had wanted to be granted the power to muster the Devon militia (J. P. Baxter, *Sir Ferdinando Gorges and his Province of Maine*, vol. i (Boston, 1890), p. 20; SP 12/257 f.28: 12/4/1596; SP 12/257 f.29: 12/4/1596; CP 40/19: 21/4/1596). However, it seems that the Privy Council were unwilling to grant him such powers, preferring instead to appoint him one of Bath's deputies who, as lord lieutenant, was the only person empowered to muster the county's forces.

<sup>188</sup> CP 172/31: 16/7/1595; CP 86/11: 27/4/1601.

because ... *Arthur Champernowne* is both vearie neigh [near] allyed vnto the best of Devon and Cornewall, and likewise is welbeloved of theym and the rest of our Countrie, which sayd Causes maie be the better meanes to drawe the gentlemen and Countrie Forces more speedelie vnto our releiffe in tyme of daunger.<sup>189</sup>

By contrast, Gorges was not a native of Plymouth, or even of Devon for that matter, rather his family were of Wraxall, Somerset. In addition, the townsmen of Plymouth believed they had earned the right to choose their own commander having spent a considerable sum of the town's money establishing the fort.<sup>190</sup> To compound matters, Gorges was authorised to pay himself and his garrison of sixty-five men with the revenue obtained from the taxation of the local pilchard trade.<sup>191</sup>

Thus, the reason for the townsmen's antipathy towards Gorges was threefold: the Privy Council had ignored their request to appoint Arthur Champernowne, they had then compounded matters by choosing an 'outsider' and had seemingly ignored the fact that the fort was to be funded by the inhabitants of Plymouth and the surrounding area.<sup>192</sup> However, in Gorges the Crown had appointed an experienced military and naval commander whose earlier career had included captaining a force of soldiers during the Earl of Leicester's expedition to the Netherlands in 1587, commanding a squadron of eight ships during the Spanish Armada in 1588, being knighted by the Earl of Essex on a military campaign to Normandy in 1591 and commanding a garrison of men at the Dutch seaport of Brille between 1594 and 1595.<sup>193</sup> In addition, the appointment of Gorges can be rationalised on the basis that the Crown no doubt considered him, as an 'outsider', to be more aware of how vital

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<sup>189</sup> PWDRO, 1/360/10.

<sup>190</sup> SP 12/254 f.39: 13/10/1595.

<sup>191</sup> SP 12/256 f.228: 3/1596; SP 12/256 f.231: 28/3/1596.

<sup>192</sup> For evidence of the fractious relationship that existed between Gorges and the townsmen of Plymouth see CP 41/49: 5/6/1596; CP 48/44: 1596; *APC*, xxv, p. 457.

<sup>193</sup> Hasler, *Commons*, ii, p. 207.

Plymouth's local defences were in the wider context of national security. Indeed, in the words of Charles Clark, he 'represented a transfer of control [of Plymouth Fort] from the town to the royal government and the subordination of local to national interests'.<sup>194</sup>

However, Gorges, who was also commissioned a Devon JP in 1595, soon became fed up with his life in Plymouth. It is therefore unsurprising that on 4 December 1598 – just three years after his arrival in Devon – he wrote to Essex, who had been appointed lord deputy of Ireland, to ask his patron whether he could join him in quelling the Irish rebellion, stating that 'I have to loath the manner of my lyvinge heere'.<sup>195</sup> The response was positive and Gorges was chosen to be a serjeant-major-general of the land forces in Ireland. However, at the eleventh hour the Queen decided that a number of officers, including Gorges, were to remain in England.<sup>196</sup> Gorges remained in command of Plymouth Fort for a further two years before becoming implicated in the Earl of Essex's infamous rebellion on 8 February 1601.<sup>197</sup> Imprisonment inevitably followed and he remained out of favour with the Queen even after he had been released. Throughout the whole affair Gorges solicited Sir Robert Cecil, his new patron, to help obtain a full royal pardon.<sup>198</sup> However, it was not until James I ascended to the throne that, with Cecil's help, he returned to his post at Plymouth – a position that he retained for a further twenty-six years before relinquishing it in order to focus on establishing the American colony of Maine.<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> Charles E. Clark, 'Gorges, Sir Ferdinando (1568-1647)', *ODNB* (Oxford: OUP, 2004) <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11098>> [accessed 28 Feb 2012] (para. 2 of 6).

<sup>195</sup> CP 199/57-8.

<sup>196</sup> Baxter, *Gorges*, p. 36.

<sup>197</sup> CP 83/92: 26/2/1601.

<sup>198</sup> CP 85/173; CP 86/11; CP 182/33; CP 182/69; CP 182/99; CP 180/137; CP 183/44; CP 89/28; CP 89/74; CP 183/108; CP 181/94.

<sup>199</sup> Clark, 'Gorges', para. 4-6 of 6.

*Sir Edward Seymour of Berry Pomeroy (c. 1563-1613)*

Autumn 1596 also saw the appointment of Edward Seymour to Devon's lieutenancy in place of Sir John Gilbert I who had died on 8 September 1596 (see figure 2.1).<sup>200</sup> Seymour was the son and heir of Lord Edward Seymour (*d.*1593) who was himself the only child to result from the first marriage of the renowned Protector Somerset (the elder brother of King Henry VIII's third wife, Jane Seymour).<sup>201</sup> However, by an Act of Parliament passed in 1540 it was the eldest son from Somerset's second marriage to Ann, daughter of Edward Stanhope, who inherited the majority of the Protector's estate following the latter's execution in 1552.<sup>202</sup> Nevertheless, Lord Edward Seymour managed to assume ownership of Berry Pomeroy Castle and from thenceforward two distinct branches of the Seymour family co-existed.<sup>203</sup> Situated approximately two miles east of Totnes and around twelve miles north of Dartmouth, Berry Pomeroy Castle was the ideal base for Edward Seymour to assume control of Gilbert's lieutenancy responsibilities (see figure 2.2). Like most deputy lieutenants, Seymour – who succeeded his father on 18 May 1593 aged thirty – had already acquired a solid grounding in other areas of county administration. He served as a Devon JP from c.1583, as the county's deputy vice-admiral in 1586, as a knight of the shire for the parliaments of 1593, 1601 and 1604, and as the county's sheriff in 1595/6.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> Roberts, 'Sir John Gilbert', p. 106.

<sup>201</sup> Vivian, *Visitations of Devon*, pp. 702-3.

<sup>202</sup> His Grace, the Duke of Somerset, 'The Lord Protector and the Seymour's of Berry Pomeroy', *TDA*, 133 (2001), 1-14 (p. 8).

<sup>203</sup> By the late-seventeenth-century the other branch of the Seymour family had chosen Maiden Bradley, Wiltshire, as their primary country residence, building Bradley House in c.1680.

<sup>204</sup> Seymour's commission as a JP was revoked in 1586 and then restored in 1590 (Hasler, *Commons*, iii, p. 369).

Throughout the course of his political career Seymour seems to have been well liked by the majority of Devon's political elite. Indeed, in August 1596 Sir Ferdinando Gorges wrote that he had been 'easelye assured' of Seymour's integrity and virtue by the 'report of diuerse ... speciall frendes'.<sup>205</sup> This high regard was clearly shared by the Earl of Bath who had by 'sondrye l<sup>et</sup>tres ... greatlie comended' Seymour to the Privy Council as the best person to replace Gilbert as a deputy lieutenant.<sup>206</sup> Seymour's appointment to the lieutenancy was no doubt also aided by the fact that the three most influential late-Elizabethan privy councillors – Lord Burghley, Sir Robert Cecil and the second Earl of Essex – all seem to have been on good terms with him during the 1590s.<sup>207</sup> However, this popularity did not extend to all quarters of Elizabethan society. Indeed, it has been highlighted already that a rivalry over the command of certain militia units broke out between Seymour and Sir Richard Champernowne during the latter half of the 1590s. The particulars of this dispute will be discussed in detail during the next chapter but it is possible, although this is pure speculation, that part of the antipathy between the two men stemmed from Champernowne's jealousy. After all Seymour fathered five sons and four daughters following his marriage on 19 September 1576 to Champernowne's cousin, Elizabeth, daughter of Sir Arthur Champernowne of Dartington.<sup>208</sup> In contrast, the melancholic Sir Richard died childless.<sup>209</sup>

Community relations between Seymour and the townsmen of Totnes also seem, on occasions, to have become strained. One notable example of this tension centred on the question of how much gunpowder the town was required to have in readiness in order to supply the county militia. The following

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<sup>205</sup> DRO, 1392M/L1596/8.

<sup>206</sup> DRO, 1392M/L1596/14.

<sup>207</sup> DRO, 3799M-3/F/1/2; DRO, 1392M/L1599/40.

<sup>208</sup> Vivian, *Visitations of Devon*, pp. 163 and 703.

<sup>209</sup> Vivian, *Visitations of Devon*, p. 165.

extract from a petition written to the Privy Council by the Mayor and Burgesses of Totnes in 1602 provides an explicit reference to this:

M<sup>r</sup> Edward Seymor, being one of the Deputie Leiftenaunts of the Shire (and for some private grudge, ill affected to the said Towne) To put the Petitioners to needlesse charge, doth nowe require them to provide and have in readynes Three Last of Powder, which is more then doble the proportion of most of the Townes there.<sup>210</sup>

This dispute clearly had a personal element; however, it is also indicative of the tension that sometimes existed between the lieutenancy (which was essentially an extension of central government in the localities) and the country's town corporations, who were always hostile to any perceived infringement of their independence.

#### *Sir William Strode of Newnham (1562-1637)*

By July 1599 Sir William Strode had become Devon's eighth deputy lieutenant (see figure 2.1).<sup>211</sup> The exact reason for the increase is unclear; however, it seems likely that the Spanish invasion scare of that year prompted the Privy Council to add him to the commission in the same way that they had been prompted to add Gorges three years earlier. The Strode family's primary residence was located approximately five-and-a-half miles east of Plymouth at Newnham (see figure 2.2). Sir William Strode assumed control of Newnham House, along with the rest of his inheritance, following his father's death on 5 August 1581.<sup>212</sup> Just one month prior to this, Strode, aged nineteen, married Mary, daughter of Thomas Southcote, landowner and tinner, of Bovey

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<sup>210</sup> DRO, Totnes Borough Records, 1579A/17/7.

<sup>211</sup> DRO, ECA, Charters and Letters Patent, lxix.

<sup>212</sup> Vivian, *Visitations of Devon*, p. 718.

Tracey.<sup>213</sup> The marriage was no doubt initially desired by Strode and his father to avoid the penalties of wardship.<sup>214</sup> However, by the early 1590s the union also provided William – who had assumed control of his family’s tin mining interests in 1593 – with a useful commercial associate.<sup>215</sup>

Throughout 1594 and 1595 Strode was keen to enlarge his industrial facilities and sought to erect a number of buildings upon some land that he owned in Lambhay, Plymouth.<sup>216</sup> This inevitably led to a conflict between himself and the chief townsmen who arranged for one of their legal practitioners, John Sparke, to lobby the Privy Council against the proposed buildings.<sup>217</sup> In January 1595 a five man commission consisting of Sir Francis Drake, Sir John Gilbert I, Edward Seymour, George Cary and Richard Champernowne was appointed by the Privy Council to investigate the dispute and by April it was ruled that Strode could go ahead with his building plans.<sup>218</sup> However, upon the advice of Drake, he decided against antagonising the townsmen, choosing instead to use the land in question as gardens.<sup>219</sup> This decision helped to ensure that relations between Strode and the inhabitants of Plymouth remained cordial throughout his life. Indeed, Strode’s affinity with the town was strong enough for him to become it’s recorder at the start of the seventeenth-century, secure his election as a Plymouth MP in 1614 and receive a number of gifts from the town for his assistance in furthering their suits.<sup>220</sup> As well as his election for Plymouth, Strode was MP for Plympton Erle (his local stannary town) in 1601, 1604, 1621 and 1625, and was one of Devon’s knights

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<sup>213</sup> Vivian, *Visitations of Devon*, p. 719.

<sup>214</sup> John Ferris, ‘Strode, Sir William (1562-1637)’, *ODNB* (Oxford: OUP, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008) <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/38023>> [accessed 28 Feb 2012] (para. 1 of 8).

<sup>215</sup> Hasler, *Commons*, iii, p. 459.

<sup>216</sup> Hasler, *Commons*, iii, p. 459.

<sup>217</sup> PWDRO, 1/359/22.

<sup>218</sup> PWDRO, 1/359/23; PWDRO, 1/359/25.

<sup>219</sup> Hasler, *Commons*, iii, p. 459.

<sup>220</sup> R. N. Worth, ed., *Calendar of the Plymouth Municipal Records* (Plymouth, 1893), pp. 151-2.

of the shire in 1597 and 1624. He was also publically active as a Devon JP from c.1592 and as the county's sheriff in 1593/4. He received a knighthood in 1598.<sup>221</sup>

However, what set Strode apart from the rest of Devon's gentry when he was chosen as a deputy lieutenant in 1599 was, in all probability, his close relationship with Devon's tin workers. Described by John Cooper as possessing 'a sophisticated cultural identity that cut across parish or even county divisions' the tin workers of Devon and Cornwall operated within eight geographical divisions (four in Devon and four in Cornwall) under the autonomous jurisdiction of stannary law.<sup>222</sup> The enforcement of stannary law during the 1590s was ultimately the responsibility of Sir Walter Raleigh who, between 1585 and 1604, operated as lord warden of the stannaries. As well as enforcing stannary law, Raleigh also fiercely protected the tin workers' autonomy from any 'foreign authority' including the lieutenancy.<sup>223</sup> Strode's association with Devon's tin workers stemmed from his family's commercial interests in tin mining. Indeed, his importance within the industry is highlighted by the fact that in 1610 he produced 64% of all the coined tin produced in Plympton, rising to 81% in 1629. Moreover, between those years he consistently produced between one-sixth and one-twelfth of Devon's entire coined tin output.<sup>224</sup> It is therefore little wonder that he was returned as an MP for Plympton Erle four times, appointed as colonel of the one hundred tin workers that were drawn from the Plympton area during the Armada years to supplement the county militia and received the

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<sup>221</sup> Hasler, *Commons*, iii, p. 459; Ferris, 'Strode', para. 2-8 of 8.

<sup>222</sup> The eight stannaries were Chagford, Ashburton, Tavistock and Plympton in Devon, and Foweymoor, Blackmoor, Tywarnhaile and Penwith-and-Kerrier in Cornwall (Cooper, *Propaganda and the Tudor State*, pp. 187-207; A. L. Rowse, *Tudor Cornwall* (London: MacMillan), pp. 54-66).

<sup>223</sup> A. H. A. Hamilton, 'The Jurisdiction of the Lord Warden of the Stannaries in the time of Sir Walter Raleigh', *TDA*, 8 (1876), 380-83; DRO, QS 1/1, p. 45.

<sup>224</sup> Tom Greeves, 'Four Devon Stannaries: A Comparative Study of Tinworking in the Sixteenth Century', in *Tudor and Stuart Devon*, ed. by T. Gray, M. Rowe and A. Erskine (Exeter: Short Run Press, 1992), pp. 39-74 (p. 55).

backing of Sir Walter Raleigh during his building dispute with the townsmen of Plymouth.<sup>225</sup> Thus, by appointing Strode as a deputy lieutenant the Crown could benefit from an individual who bridged the gap between two distinct jurisdictions, acting as a mediator for both in order to facilitate the implementation of central government policies.

*Sir John Gilbert II of Greenway (1575-1608)*

When Sir Ferdinando Gorges was imprisoned as a result of his involvement in the Essex Rebellion in January 1601 he was unsurprisingly stripped of his command of Plymouth Fort and his commission as one of Devon's deputy lieutenants. Thus, in April 1601 the Crown chose Sir John Gilbert II as the new commander of Plymouth Fort and by 3 June had commissioned him a deputy lieutenant in place of the disgraced Gorges.<sup>226</sup> Gilbert was the eldest son of Sir Humphrey Gilbert who was the younger brother of Sir John Gilbert I.<sup>227</sup> Sir John Gilbert II was therefore the nephew of Sir Walter Raleigh who used his influence at the court to acquire the command of Plymouth Fort for his young relation.<sup>228</sup> It seems that Gilbert was not himself a native of Devon and, in all likelihood, was born in London where between 1573 and 1578 his father was choosing to reside on a more frequent basis at his house in Little St Helens, Bishopsgate.<sup>229</sup> Indeed, throughout the 1580s and early 1590s Gilbert based himself predominantly at the centre of affairs, being referred to as Sir John Perrot's servant on 9 October 1591 and duelling with Sir John Burgh in March 1594 – a

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<sup>225</sup> HMC, *Somerset*, pp. 6 and 13; CP 24/76.

<sup>226</sup> APC, xxxi, pp. 284 and 400.

<sup>227</sup> Vivian, *Visitations of Devon*, p. 406.

<sup>228</sup> Latham and Youings, *Letters of Raleigh*, p. 234.

<sup>229</sup> John Roberts, 'The Younger Sir John Gilbert (c. 1575-1608)', *TDA*, 100 (1968), 205-18 (p. 205); J. M. Traherne, ed., *The Stradling Correspondence* (London, 1840), pp. 155-60.

fracas which ended in Gilbert mortally wounding his opponent and being convicted of murder only to be pardoned of any wrongdoing by the Queen.<sup>230</sup> However, in summer 1596 Gilbert's fortunes improved when he was knighted by Lord Admiral Howard following his decision to take part in the Cadiz Expedition.<sup>231</sup> Furthermore, on 8 September 1596 he became the owner of both Compton Castle and Greenway following the death of his childless uncle and namesake, Sir John Gilbert I.<sup>232</sup>

From then on it seems that Gilbert spent more and more time in Devon overseeing his newly acquired estate and operating as a privateer.<sup>233</sup> Indeed, during his absence from the court he was able to rely on the help and support of his uncle, Sir Walter Raleigh, in return for his services as Raleigh's Devon-based agent in much the same manner as his other uncle had done during his later years.<sup>234</sup> However, unlike the relationship between Raleigh and the elder Gilbert, relations between Raleigh and the younger Gilbert appear to have become strained by April 1602 as a result of the latter's perceived ingratitude for the help and assistance he had received from his uncle.<sup>235</sup> Relations between Gilbert and the townsmen of Plymouth were also tense during his brief tenure as commander of Plymouth Fort. Once again the townsmen had been denied the right to choose their own commander and, even though Gilbert had strong links with Devon, they no doubt regarded him as an 'outsider' whose priority was to protect and promote the interests of himself and the Crown as opposed to the interests of the town.<sup>236</sup> Moreover, the apparently impetuous nature of Gilbert would not have helped matters. Indeed, the fact that William Parker (Mayor of

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<sup>230</sup> *APC*, xxii, p. 14; SP 12/248 f.127; Roberts, 'The Younger Gilbert', p. 207.

<sup>231</sup> Roberts, 'The Younger Gilbert', p. 208.

<sup>232</sup> Vivian, *Visitations of Devon*, p. 406.

<sup>233</sup> *APC*, xxx, pp. 173, 424 and 660.

<sup>234</sup> Latham and Youings, *Letters of Raleigh*, pp. 192-4, 204-5, 223-7.

<sup>235</sup> Latham and Youings, *Letters of Raleigh*, pp. 232-5.

<sup>236</sup> SP 12/281 f.65; CP 89/77; CP 89/89; CP 89/95.

Plymouth in 1601/2) described Gilbert as ‘a furious and young governor, having in his fury his rapier out on the sudden’ provides a strong indication that he had learnt little from the controversy that followed his killing of Sir John Burgh ten years earlier.<sup>237</sup> It is therefore little wonder that upon his pardon in 1603, Gorges resumed command of Plymouth Fort leaving Gilbert to concentrate on his lieutenancy duties for the remainder of his short life.<sup>238</sup>

#### *Sir Robert Bassett of Umberleigh (1574-1641)*

The last amendment to Devon’s lieutenancy commission during the late-Elizabethan era was caused by the death of Hugh Fortescue on 1 August 1600. Thus, on 15 November 1600 the Earl of Bath wrote to Sir Robert Cecil in order to obtain his support for the appointment of Sir Robert Bassett and Hugh Pollard as deputy lieutenants:

I haue in my said *lettre*, by reason of the death of my Coosen Hugh Fortescue *Esquie*<sup>r</sup> byne an humble *Suito*<sup>r</sup> ... that my lovinge *Frendes* and *Kinsmen* *S<sup>r</sup>* Robert Bassett & Hughe Pollarde *Esquie*<sup>r</sup> ... mighte be admitted into the *Comission* of *Lieuetenauncie*, as my *Deputies* & *Assistentes* in that *Countie* of *Deuon*: dwellinge verie convenientlie for that purpose. And beinge *Gentlemen* of suche respecte (as I am thoroughlie perswaded) will vse all their best endevo<sup>rs</sup> to doe hir *Majestie* true and loyall Service in that behalf.<sup>239</sup>

The Queen subsequently assented to Bath’s request thereby increasing the number of Devon deputy lieutenants to nine (see figure 2.1).<sup>240</sup> This increase may well have been influenced by the fact that during the last years of Elizabeth’s reign the county officials in north Devon became increasingly

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<sup>237</sup> HMC, *Salisbury*, xi, p. 489.

<sup>238</sup> Gilbert was still included on Devon’s lieutenancy commission in July 1604 (DRO 3799M-3/O/3/4). According to John Chamberlain he died of smallpox in London on 5 July 1608 (Roberts, ‘The Younger Gilbert’, p. 216).

<sup>239</sup> CP 250/122.

<sup>240</sup> APC, xxx, pp. 786-7; DRO, ECA, Charters and Letters Patent, lxxi.

burdened by the need to coordinate the levies of men who were to be sent to serve in Ireland. Indeed, it will be shown in the next chapter that the port of Barnstaple played a central role in the transportation of soldiers to Ireland and therefore the need for an additional deputy lieutenant in the north of the county was no doubt intended to facilitate this logistical challenge.

Situated approximately eight miles south of Barnstaple and five-and-a-half miles from Tawstock Court, Sir Robert Bassett's residence at UMBERLEIGH was ideally located for him to serve as one of Bath's north Devon deputies (see figure 2.2). Bassett was the son of the deceased Sir Arthur Bassett who, as noted above, was one of the second Earl of Bedford's deputies prior to his death following his attendance at Exeter's 'Black Assizes' in 1586. At the time of his father's death Sir Robert Bassett was twelve years old and so could not replace him as a deputy lieutenant in the same way that Sir Thomas Denys had replaced his father in 1592.<sup>241</sup> Nevertheless, the fact that both Bassett's father and maternal grandfather, Sir John Chichester (c.1520-1568), were deputy lieutenants in Devon and Hugh Fortescue was his uncle through marriage undoubtedly provided him with the familial credentials to become a deputy lieutenant himself in 1600.<sup>242</sup>

Initially Bassett proved a reliable county administrator, being elected as an MP for Plymouth in 1593 at the age of just nineteen, taking on some of the lieutenancy duties of the infirm Fortescue in 1597 and becoming a Devon JP in that same year.<sup>243</sup> Further success came in 1599 when he was knighted by the Earl of Essex during a period of military service in Ireland.<sup>244</sup> However, just three years after his appointment to the lieutenancy Bassett – who was not only

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<sup>241</sup> Vivian, *Visitations of Devon*, p. 47.

<sup>242</sup> Hasler, *Commons*, i, pp. 402-3 and 602; Vivian, *Visitations of Devon*, p. 598.

<sup>243</sup> APC, xxvii, pp. 120-1; Hasler, *Commons*, i, p. 403.

<sup>244</sup> Hasler, *Commons*, i, p. 403.

rumoured to be a Catholic but also deeply in debt – fled the realm. Nevertheless, in 1611 he was granted a conditional pardon by James I and allowed to return home where he quietly lived the remainder of his days in relative obscurity having been stripped of his lieutenancy commission by November 1616.<sup>245</sup>

*Sir Hugh Pollard of King's Nympton (d. after 1604)*

In hindsight, given the swift demise of Bassett's career, it was rather a good thing that Hugh Pollard had joined him as Fortescue's replacement in north Devon in 1600. At approximately thirteen miles south-east of Tawstock Court and a further mile from Barnstaple, Pollard's residence at King's Nympton was, like Umberleigh, well situated for him to assist Bath in north Devon (see figure 2.2). Furthermore, Pollard, like Bassett, also possessed the family connections that were so important in furthering a political career during the Tudor period: he was the uncle of Sir Robert Bassett, the brother-in-law of Hugh Fortescue and the son-in-law of Sir John Chichester having married Chichester's fourth daughter, Dorothy.<sup>246</sup> Indeed, it is likely that he was chosen to provide guidance to his fatherless nephew who was only twenty-six at the time of their appointment to the lieutenancy. Pollard's ambition to become a deputy lieutenant dated from at least 1599. In that year he was reprimanded by the Privy Council for having 'entermeddled' with the work of Sir George Cary's proxies, Amias Bampfield and Thomas Reynell.<sup>247</sup> Indeed, Pollard's interference reaffirms the power and prestige that Elizabethan England's political elite attached to the lieutenancy; power and prestige that, by the 1590s, could no

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<sup>245</sup> Hasler, *Commons*, i, p. 404; DRO, 3799M-3/O/3/5.

<sup>246</sup> Vivian, *Visitations of Devon*, p. 173.

<sup>247</sup> SP 12/273 f.133.

longer be acquired by either the commission of the peace, of which Pollard was a member from at least 1592, or the shrievalty, a position that Pollard occupied during the Armada crisis of 1588.<sup>248</sup>

In surveying late-Elizabethan Devon's Lord and Deputy Lieutenants this chapter has depicted a political system dependent on personal relationships, social connections and the particular requirements of the moment. Securing a position on Devon's lieutenancy commission was thus not achieved solely on merit. Indeed, it has been argued here that family connections, strategic marriage alliances, personal wealth and status, geographical location of residence, cultivation and availability of a patron or friend of high status at court, timely personal lobbying, ambition, local reputation, respect and influence all operated in concert with the changing requirements caused by the war with Spain and rebellion in Ireland to influence the Crown when it selected the men who served as Devon's lord and deputy lieutenants during the turbulent years of 1586 to 1603. It therefore did not matter that what personal power and prestige the Earl of Bath commanded in Devon was localised in the north of the county and centred in particular on Barnstaple because he was supported by an impressive group of deputies who, with the exception of Sir Ferdinando Gorges and Sir John Gilbert II, all held substantial influence in their regional pockets of the county. Consequently, the Crown could exploit the collective influence, personal connections and commercial interests that Bath and his deputies possessed within Devon in order to communicate their orders to the county's general

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<sup>248</sup> Hamilton, 'Devon's JPs in 1592', p. 524.

population and implement their policies from the confines of Whitehall. That said, the chapter has also confirmed that Bath and the majority of his deputies held a vested interest within Devon, most notably as landowners and businessmen. This was crucial because it motivated them to convey to central government any concerns felt by the county's inhabitants about certain policies, thereby providing an important mechanism for releasing any civil tension that might otherwise have resulted. Indeed, chapter three will elaborate further on this point in the context of the county's militia, revealing precisely how Bath and his deputies modified certain Privy Council directives to accommodate Devon's general population throughout the critical years of 1588 to 1603. Nevertheless, the fact that two 'outsiders' (Sir Ferdinando Gorges and Sir John Gilbert II) were chosen by the Crown to command Plymouth Fort and serve as deputy lieutenants during the last years of Elizabeth's reign highlights that a harmonious relationship between the Crown and the county's general population was of secondary importance to national defence and the threat from Spain.

# 3

## War and the Militia:

### Musters, Levies and the Defence of the County

By illuminating the activities of late-Elizabethan Devon's militia this chapter emphasises the tactical importance that central government attached to the county, exposes the character of the Crown's relationship with the county's population and assesses the martial role of the county during the conflict with Spain and the insurrection in Ireland. The chapter thus develops the analysis already presented in chapter two of the Earl of Bath and his deputies and explores their role as commanders and co-ordinators of the county's militia during a period when Devon's geographical location and maritime significance placed it on the frontline of England's military endeavours. Of particular concern is the extent to which Devon's lieutenancy was able to secure the consent and cooperation of the wider county community for the Crown's relentless military demands. Thus, the chapter reveals that when there was an acute fear of Spanish invasion in summer 1588 and summer 1599 Bath and his deputies had a relatively easy time in meeting, even exceeding, Privy Council expectations because the inhabitants of late-Elizabethan Devon could recognise the tangible benefit of defending their homes and families from possible Spanish invasion. However, when that tangible benefit was less immediate or less obvious, as it was whenever the Privy Council ordered a general muster or chose to levy troops for service in Ireland, the lieutenancy's task became less straightforward. Indeed, the chapter argues that during periods when the interests of the Crown and the interests of the county diverged the Earl of Bath and his deputies

worked hard to implement successfully Privy Council directives whilst at the same time ensuring that the burden of those directives remained palatable for the increasingly war wearied county community – an endeavour which was greatly assisted by their collective regional influence and local knowledge. The chapter will therefore demonstrate, as Neil Younger has done elsewhere, that Privy Council ‘orders were almost a bargaining position, the extent to which they were adhered to being the product of a variety of factors.’<sup>1</sup> The chapter also provides further insight into the personal and informal nature of politics in a late-Elizabethan English county by examining the composition and command structure of Devon’s militia. However, whereas chapter two identified how personal relationships and social connections facilitated the smooth-running of the county’s affairs, this chapter reveals how they could equally undermine it. Moreover, the chapter confirms that the need to co-ordinate and make ready Devon’s land defences in response to the persistent threat that the war with Spain and the rebellion in Ireland posed throughout the 1580s and 1590s engendered a heightened degree of interaction at every tier of government – from the Privy Council and lieutenancy, down to the constables of the hundreds and petty-constables of the parishes.

The standard work on the sixteenth-century militia is Lindsay Boynton’s *The Elizabethan Militia*.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, even though it is now over forty years old it remains the most detailed and comprehensive national overview.<sup>3</sup> However, one particular area where Boynton’s research falls short is her lack of emphasis

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<sup>1</sup> Neil Younger, ‘William Lambarde on the Politics of Enforcement in Elizabethan England’, *HR*, 83:219 (February, 2010), 69-82 (p. 72).

<sup>2</sup> Lindsay Boynton, *The Elizabethan Militia, 1558-1638*, Second Edition (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1971).

<sup>3</sup> The majority of more recent work on the militia is good, but brief, owing to the fact that it has been researched only as part of much wider political-military studies. For example, see Braddick, *State Formation*, pp. 181-96, 226-31 and 281-3; Fissel, *English Warfare*, pp. 61-6 and 76-81; Paul Hammer, *Elizabeth’s Wars: War, Government and Society in Tudor England, 1544-1604* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), pp. 97-104.

on the role of the lieutenancies. This has prompted John McGurk and, more recently, Neil Younger to examine how Elizabeth and her Privy Council increasingly utilised the office of lord lieutenant to command and co-ordinate the county militias following the outbreak of war with Spain in 1585 and Irish rebellion in 1594.<sup>4</sup> In addition to these national overviews, McGurk and Michael Braddick have sought to establish the extent to which individual lieutenancies succeeded in implementing central government's military demands before, during and after the Armada crisis through the prism of two county-based case studies.<sup>5</sup> McGurk's focus was on Lord Cobham's activities in Kent which, like Devon, was a key frontline county throughout the Elizabethan war with Spain; however, its proximity to London meant that, unlike Devon, it cannot be regarded as a peripheral county. In contrast, Braddick chose to examine the work of the Earl of Huntingdon in Yorkshire, a peripheral county, yet not considered on the frontline because of its northern location. The following in-depth study of Devon's lieutenancy and its control of the county's militia therefore provides a new insight into matters of defence and security during the late-Elizabethan period because it assesses the extent to which Bath and his deputies succeeded in implementing central government's military policies in a frontline county on the periphery of the realm.<sup>6</sup> In particular, as a result of scrutinising the role of Devon's militia throughout the Armada years, the failure of Garrett Mattingly, Colin Martin and Geoffrey Parker to acknowledge the vital role played by the militia forces on the south coast during summer 1588 is

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<sup>4</sup> John McGurk, *The Elizabethan Conquest in Ireland: the 1590s Crisis* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2009); Younger, 'War and the Counties'; id., *War and Politics*.

<sup>5</sup> John McGurk, 'Armada Preparations in Kent and Arrangements Made After the Defeat', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, 85 (1970), 71-94; Michael J. Braddick, "'Upon this instant extraordinarie occasion": Military Mobilization in Yorkshire before and after the Armada', *Huntingdon Library Quarterly*, 61:3/4 (1998), 429-55.

<sup>6</sup> John Roberts has provided some useful information about late-Elizabethan Devon's militia in his book, *Devon and the Armada*. However, he is concerned solely with the year 1588 in what is a general overview of the county's military and naval activities.

exposed as inherently short-sighted.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, even when the role of the southern maritime counties has been acknowledged by historians, they have repeatedly suggested that the militias' primary role during the Armada crisis was to march in-step with the Spanish and English navies, shadowing them as they progressed eastward along the Channel.<sup>8</sup> Fortunately, Neil Younger's recent reappraisal of what might have happened 'if the Armada had landed' has greatly assisted in vanquishing this misinterpretation.<sup>9</sup> Instead he has convincingly argued that during an initial Spanish attack the militias in each of the southern maritime counties would have been responsible only for the defence of their own coastline, as well as that of their immediate neighbours, under what is referred to in this chapter as the mutual aid initiative. Thus, what follows not only reinforces Younger's revisionist work, it further enriches it by deploying hitherto unused documentary evidence from among the Seymour Manuscripts to assess specifically the unique military function of Devon before, during and after the Armada crisis of 1588.

### **The trained bands initiative**

Before looking specifically at Devon's militia during the late-Elizabethan period, it is necessary to provide some brief background information on the development of the Elizabethan militia system prior to 1588. The ancient principle that all able-bodied men between the ages of sixteen and sixty were to

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<sup>7</sup> Garrett Mattingly, *The Defeat of the Spanish Armada* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1959); Geoffrey Parker, 'If the Armada had Landed', *History*, lxi (1976), 358-68; Colin Martin and Geoffrey Parker, *The Spanish Armada* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1988).

<sup>8</sup> McGurk, 'Armada Preparations in Kent', p. 71; John S. Nolan, 'The Muster of 1588', *Albion*, 23:3 (Autumn, 1991), 387-407 (pp. 402-3); Fissel, *English Warfare*, p. 57; Hammer, *Elizabeth's Wars*, p. 146; James McDermott, *England and the Spanish Armada: the Necessary Quarrel* (King's Lynn: Yale UP, 2005), p. 371, fn. 54.

<sup>9</sup> Neil Younger, 'If the Armada had Landed: A Reappraisal of England's Defences in 1588', *History*, 93:311 (July, 2008), 328-54.

be available to serve the monarch during military crises was formalised in 1558 by the Marian Militia Acts.<sup>10</sup> However, early in Elizabeth's reign it was realised that the newly codified militia system needed reform. The development and proliferation of firearms, as well as the improvement of the pike, were obvious contributory factors. Moreover, the Crown acknowledged that by supplying fewer men with better equipment the county militias could be moulded into a much more effective fighting force.<sup>11</sup> Thus, the Crown decided to introduce the trained bands initiative which essentially involved the provision of military training for a select number of able-bodied men from within each county. In a military crisis these men would group together to form trained bands of militiamen and serve as the realm's principal land-based force whilst the county's remaining able-bodied men were expected to assemble in untrained bands as a reservist force. Central government's desire to train parts of the county militia dated from at least August 1568.<sup>12</sup> However, it was not until March 1573 that the Privy Council decided to roll out their trained bands initiative on a wholesale basis for the first time.<sup>13</sup> Neil Younger has suggested that tension between England and Spain was 'the most likely trigger'.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, Geoffrey Parker has noted that, following the Ridolfi Plot in 1571, Elizabeth 'never trusted Spain and her monarch again ... [and] she began to spend heavily to improve the defence of her realm'.<sup>15</sup> However, what is unclear from Parker's statement is that the cost of training the county militias was to be paid for by a county-wide

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<sup>10</sup> 4<sup>o</sup> & 5<sup>o</sup> Philip and Mary, ch. 2, *Statutes of the Realm*, vol. iv, part i (1819), pp. 316-22. For more detail on the Marian Militia Acts and their subsequent impact see A. H. Smith, 'Militia Rates and Militia Statutes, 1558-1663', in *The English Commonwealth, 1547-1640: Essays in Politics and Society Presented to Joel Hurstfield*, ed. by P. Clark et al (Leicester: Leicester UP, 1979), pp. 93-110.

<sup>11</sup> Hammer, *Elizabeth's Wars*, pp. 98-9.

<sup>12</sup> SP 12/47 f.75: 8/8/1568.

<sup>13</sup> CSPD, 1547-80, p. 459: 14/3/1573.

<sup>14</sup> Younger, 'War and the Counties', p. 55.

<sup>15</sup> Geoffrey Parker, *The Grand Strategy of Phillip II* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1998), p. 163.

tax.<sup>16</sup> Thus, whilst the trained bands initiative was a fundamental part of the Crown's national defence policy, the costs involved meant that it was viewed with ambivalence and trepidation by the majority of those living in the counties.

The successful implementation of the trained bands initiative therefore required central government to take a firm grip on proceedings. However, the Crown did not initially recognise this fact and as a consequence the 1573 trained bands initiative became something of a false dawn.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, it was not until March 1577 that the Council renewed its efforts, adopting a much more authoritative and realistic approach to achieve a more successful outcome.<sup>18</sup> Yet, despite moderate success in 1577, the Privy Council let its trained bands initiative fall by the way-side between 1578 and 1583 only to renew it in the maritime counties on a much grander scale in spring 1584 as a result of the rising tension with Spain.<sup>19</sup> Such an increased demand for training stemmed from the realisation that the numbers of men trained in 1573 and 1577 were woefully inadequate to withstand a sustained Spanish invasion attempt. It is therefore unsurprising that between 1584 and 1587 this beefed up trained bands initiative was extended beyond the maritime counties to encompass the

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<sup>16</sup> Hammer, *Elizabeth's Wars*, pp. 99-100.

<sup>17</sup> Younger, 'War and the Counties', p. 56-8.

<sup>18</sup> On 21 March 1577 the Privy Council provided the Lord Mayor and Aldermen of London with a set of instructions for the 'leavyeng and trayning of 2000 shotte' (SP 12/111 f.111). However, it seems that these orders are the only ones to survive in the State Papers. Nevertheless, the high volume of responses from the counties during April 1577 that relate to training the militia provides substantial evidence to support the notion that the Privy Council had dispatched instructions throughout the realm in March 1577. For examples of the responses from individual counties see: SP 12/112 f.1 (Norfolk); SP 12/112 f.5 (Hampshire); SP 12/112 f.20 (Dorset); SP 12/112 f.25 (Wiltshire); SP 12/112 f.29 (Bedfordshire); SP 12/112 f.64 (Devon). For a full list of the counties' responses see *CSPD*, 1547-80, pp. 539-43. For evidence of the Privy Council's more authoritative approach when dealing with county officials see *APC*, ix, pp. 324-6. See also Younger, 'War and the Counties', pp. 59-60.

<sup>19</sup> When the general muster was ordered in March 1580 (*CSPD*, 1547-80, p. 646) it appears that very little, if any, training took place in the counties – a notion that is supported by the sheer lack of any reference to training in the responses that the Privy Council received from county officials between 1 April and 31 July of that year (*CSPD*, 1547-80, pp. 649-68). For the Privy Council's orders to renew training in spring 1584 see *HMC, Foljambe*, p. 10.

entire realm.<sup>20</sup> However, the obvious problem with such a grand and unprecedented training programme was the increased costs that each county was liable to pay. How then did the Privy Council ensure an appropriate level of compliance? Its principal tactic was to reintroduce the office of lord lieutenant in 1585 on a much more permanent and widespread basis. Thus, whereas in 1573 and 1577 it had been the Council which dealt with the counties' ambivalence towards the trained bands initiative, from 1585 central government was able to rely increasingly on the lieutenancies to cajole the inhabitants of the counties in a more rigorous manner than had hitherto been possible.<sup>21</sup> By utilising Devon as a case study, the remainder of this chapter will examine the lieutenancies' leading role in matters of defence and security and assess some of the ways in which central government utilised the office to try and further develop the county militias during the late-Elizabethan period.

### **The social command structure of Devon's militia**

Appointing Devon's Lord and Deputy Lieutenants as commanding officers in the county's militia was the most fundamental way in which central government sought to utilise the office to maintain the county's land defences. As a result, the county's militia was an institution built around the personal relationships and social connections of Bath and his deputies: they selected their junior officers from their immediate entourage and enlisted their rank and file militiamen from amongst their nearest servants and tenant farmers. However, whereas chapter two stressed the role of personal relationships and social connections in facilitating the smooth-running of Devon's government, this section looks at how

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<sup>20</sup> Lambeth Palace MS., 247, part ii, f. i (printed in Thomson, *Lord Lieutenants*, pp. 159-60); SP 12/198 f.177: 14/2/1587.

<sup>21</sup> For a list of the lieutenancies' military duties see SP 12/179 f.96: 28/6/1585.

they could also undermine it. This perspective is achieved by examining the disagreement which broke out during the late-1590s between Edward Seymour and Richard Champernowne over the command of certain sections of the county militia. Indeed, by looking at the Seymour-Champernowne dispute in detail an important caveat to the arguments made in chapter two is highlighted – namely that, in a political-military system that did not prioritise personal talent, and in a society that placed great stock in matters of honour and reputation, factious behaviour amongst neighbouring political elite was inevitably to be expected.

First, however, it is crucial to outline the composition of Devon's militia in order to appreciate fully the effect that the personal relationships and social connections of its commanding officers had on the county's defence preparations. Unfortunately there is little, if any, reliable archival evidence that specifies the exact composition of late-Elizabethan Devon's militia. This, according to Mark Brayshay, can partly be attributed to the fact that 'men falsely secured exemption from musters, concealed lost or broken equipment, or recorded false evidence in muster certificates' in response to the rising demands of central government.<sup>22</sup> However, whilst Lindsay Boynton has stressed that muster certificates 'fail as statistical evidence' she has insisted that 'it does not follow that they are of no value at all'.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, even though figures stated in muster certificates cannot be regarded as entirely accurate they at least provide historians with a rough guide to a militia's composition, as well as the lieutenancies' high level of involvement in matters of defence and security during the late-Elizabethan period. Devon's only known surviving muster certificate for the late-Elizabethan period was drafted by the Earl of Bath

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<sup>22</sup> Mark Brayshay, 'Defending the Hampshire Coast and the Isle of Wight in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth I', *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, 84 (2006), 109-30 (p. 118).

<sup>23</sup> Boynton, *Elizabethan Militia*, pp. 40-50.

and four of his deputy lieutenants – Sir William Courtenay, Sir Robert Denys, Sir John Gilbert I and George Cary – when they convened at Exeter in December 1587.<sup>24</sup> The document was dispatched to the Privy Council on 7 December as part of Bath's response to the letters that the Council had sent to the lord lieutenants of twenty-six counties on 9 October. These letters ordered that the trained bands were to be mustered, viewed and 'put in strengthe to be in rediness to repaire to suche places' in anticipation of the Spanish Armada.<sup>25</sup> In addition, they instructed Bath, along with the lord lieutenants of eighteen other counties, to send a muster certificate itemising the number of men, horses and weapons within their particular county.

As well as stating a total of 6,200 soldiers and 200 horsemen, Devon's muster certificate also reveals how the county's militia was organised into three geographical sub-divisions – east, north and south. The East Division was composed of the ten hundreds that made up the most easterly portion of the county between Exeter, Somerset and Dorset; the North Division consisted of the ten hundreds surrounding the northern part of Barnstaple; and the South Division spanned the thirteen hundreds between Plymouth, Okehampton and Exeter (see figure 3.1).<sup>26</sup> It is uncertain exactly when these divisions were established; however, from as early as 1558 the Earl of Bedford – who had taken inspiration from how the county's JPs had divided their administrative duties – deemed it prudent to divide the county into four military sub-divisions.<sup>27</sup>

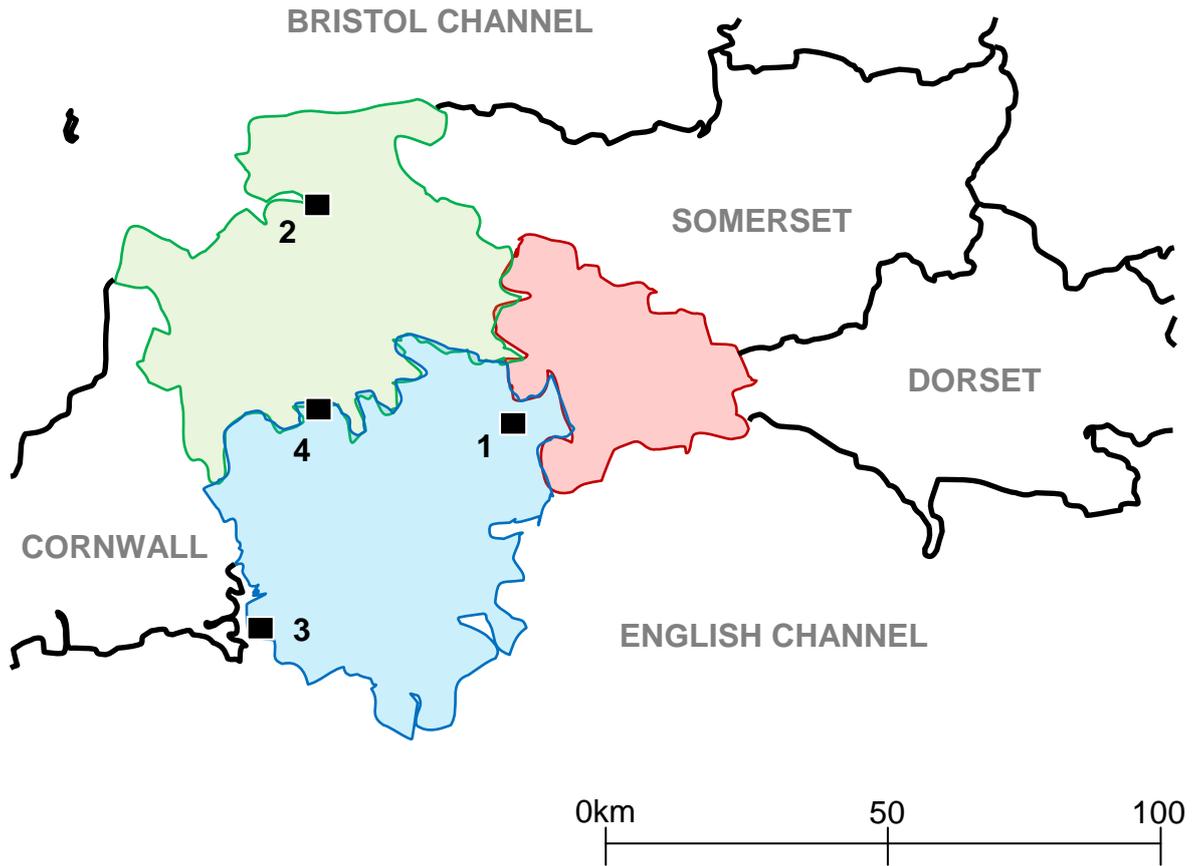
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<sup>24</sup> SP 12/206 f.25.

<sup>25</sup> *APC*, xv, pp. 252-4.

<sup>26</sup> Wolffe, *Gentry Governors of Devon*, p. 33.

<sup>27</sup> Joyce Youings, 'The Elizabethan Militia in the South West', in *Security and Defence in South-West England Before 1800*, ed. by R. Higham (Exeter: Short Run Press, 1987), pp. 58-9; SP 11/12 f.128: 18/4/1558.



1. Exeter

2. Barnstaple

3. Plymouth

4. Okehampton

 East Division

 North Division

 South Division

Figure 3.1: Approximate geographical area of Devon's three sub-divisions.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Wolfe, *Gentry Governors of Devon*, p. 30.

By 1574 this had been reduced to three and the division had become the key geographical unit from which the defence and government of the county was organised.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, similar military and administrative sub-divisions existed throughout the realm: Hampshire's governors seem to have operated within as many as seven distinct sub-divisions; Lancashire four; Yorkshire, Suffolk and Norfolk three; and Somerset two.<sup>30</sup>

Within each division Devon's muster certificate specifies the number of trained soldiers, musketeers and horsemen: the East Division had 1,667 soldiers, sixty-six musketeers and sixty horsemen; the North Division had 1,667 soldiers, sixty-seven musketeers and sixty-seven horsemen; and the South Division had 1,666 soldiers, sixty-seven musketeers and seventy-three horsemen. Thus, in total the county was apparently equipped with 5,000 trained soldiers, 200 musketeers and 200 horsemen. In addition, the certificate states that the number of untrained men within the county stood at 1,000 (332 in the East, 334 in the North and 334 in the South) and that the number of Pioneers – the militia's auxiliary forces – amounted to 1,200 (400 in each division).<sup>31</sup> As lord lieutenant of Devon, the Earl of Bath was granted the overall command of these men – an honour which was replicated in every other jurisdiction where a lord lieutenant was appointed. Within each division the soldiers and horsemen were divided into regiments and placed under the command of captains. Thus, in the East Division the militia was divided into two regiments with one being commanded by Sir William Courtenay and the other by Sir Robert Denys; the North Division was divided into three regiments with Hugh Fortescue, Hugh

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<sup>29</sup> Wolfe, *Gentry Governors of Devon*, pp. 29-46.

<sup>30</sup> SP 12/200 f.68: 23/4/1587; Clark, *English Provincial Society*, p. 430, fn. 14; SP 12/200 f.121: York, 1587; MacCulloch, *Suffolk and the Tudors*, pp. 13-27; Hassell-Smith, *County and Court*, pp. 88-9; *APC*, xvii, p. 108.

<sup>31</sup> The uniformity of these figures is a strong indication that Bath and his deputies drafted this muster certificate using approximate rather than exact numbers. It therefore must be reiterated that the certificate provides only a rough idea of Devon's military strength in December 1587.

Pollard and Anthony Monck commanding a regiment apiece; and the South Division was also divided into three regiments with Sir John Gilbert I, Richard Champernowne and Thomas Fulford taking control of one regiment each. By the beginning of the 1590s the number of regiments within the North and South Divisions had been reduced to two in like manner to the East Division and the rank of colonel was introduced to describe the commander of each of the county's six regiments which, by that time, each numbered 866 men.<sup>32</sup> In addition, Bath gained even greater control of the militia and by autumn 1596 all of the key positions within the organisation were occupied by his deputy lieutenants: Sir William Courtenay and Sir Thomas Denys were the colonels of the East Division; Sir George Cary and Edward Seymour were the colonels of the South Division; Hugh Fortescue and Hugh Pollard were the colonels of the North Division; Sir Ferdinando Gorges was the marshal; and Richard Champernowne was the colonel of the horse.<sup>33</sup>

Why then did Bath and his deputies assume such a prominent role in matters of defence and security? It was revealed above that from 1585 onwards the Privy Council looked increasingly to the office of lord lieutenant as a mechanism for achieving greater control over the county militias, but how was this achieved in practice? The identity of Devon's colonels provides part of the answer. It is no coincidence that the colonels of Devon's six regiments lived within or, in Courtenay's case, adjacent to the division where they recruited their trained bands of militiamen. This was crucial because it enabled each of them to exploit their local influence and knowledge where it was strongest and utilise their personal relationships and social connections where they were most concentrated. It therefore became customary for the colonels of each regiment

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<sup>32</sup> SP 12/243 f.31: 28/9/1592.

<sup>33</sup> DRO, 3799M-3/O/4/7.

to opt for their most loyal friends and associates as junior officers, and enlist their closest employees and leaseholders as rank and file militiamen.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, the size of the trained bands within each regiment was determined by the social status of its commanding officer rather than military aptitude: deputy lieutenants were authorised to command 250 men; knights 200; esquires 150; and gentlemen 100.<sup>35</sup> The logic behind these principles was simple: personal loyalty towards the commanding officer was promoted; social cohesion amongst rank and file militiamen was maximised; and Elizabethan views on honour and reputation were respected.<sup>36</sup> Consequently, the commanders of Devon's six regiments wielded a significant amount of power and authority over their neighbours. This was highly desirable in a society where 'social climbing was endemic', 'competitiveness came easily' and 'reputation was best advanced by activity and involvement'.<sup>37</sup> It is therefore easy to understand why each of Devon's deputy lieutenants regarded a colonelcy in the county militia as a position that could be used to buttress their political and social ascendancy within their particular region of the county. Fortunately, there were never more than two deputy lieutenants in either the East or North Division during the 1590s and thus competition for a colonelcy in those areas was not an issue. In contrast, by autumn 1596 there were four deputy lieutenants living in the South Division – Sir George Cary, Sir

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<sup>34</sup> *APC*, xxiii, p. 174; *CSPD*, 1591-1594, p. 266, n. 4 and p. 274, n. 19; DRO, 1392M/L1593/1.

<sup>35</sup> *APC*, xviii, p. 396; *APC*, xix, p. 170; HMC, *Somerset*, p. 35.

<sup>36</sup> The Earl of Leicester and the Earl of Essex recruited men for their respective expeditions to the Netherlands (1585) and Cadiz (1596) in a similar fashion. Both appointed their followers in the localities as officers and requested that they levy reliable men to serve as rank and file soldiers. For more information, see Adams, *Leicester and the Court*, chs. 9, 12 and 16; Neil Younger, 'The Practice and Politics of Troop-Raising: Robert Devereux, Second Earl of Essex, and the Elizabethan Regime', *EHR*, cxxvii, 526 (2012), 566-91.

<sup>37</sup> Anthony J. Fletcher, 'Honour, Reputation and Local Officeholding in Elizabethan and Stuart England', in *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England*, ed. by A. Fletcher and J. Stevenson (Cambridge: CUP, 1985), pp. 92-115 (p. 93). See also Heal and Holmes, *The Gentry*, ch. 5; W. J. Tighe, 'Courtiers and Politics in Elizabethan Herefordshire: Sir James Croft, His Friends and His Foes', *HJ*, 32:2 (June, 1989), 257-79.

Ferdinando Gorges, Edward Seymour and Richard Champernowne. As the South Division's senior deputy lieutenant, Sir George Cary was assured one of the South's two colonelcies while Sir Ferdinando Gorges had his hands full with the command of the garrison at Plymouth Fort. The South Division's other colonelcy had been granted to Edward Seymour in autumn 1595 on the recommendation of the incumbent colonel, Sir John Gilbert I, whose health had declined to such an extent that he was forced to cede control of his regiment.<sup>38</sup> However, this meant that Champernowne was left without either a colonelcy or an adequate substitute position within Devon's militia – a fact that formed the basis for his subsequent quarrel with Seymour.

Champernowne's chagrin was no doubt compounded by the fact that he had lost his regimental captaincy when the South Division was reduced from three to two regiments soon after the Armada crisis. Indeed, given his previous experience, he must surely have expected to be granted Gilbert's colonelcy instead of Seymour who was a man five years his junior and not yet a deputy lieutenant. In addition, Seymour's colonelcy not only gave him power and authority over Champernowne, it gave him overall control of Champernowne's trained band of militiamen who Champernowne had enlisted from his south Devon power-base of Ermington and Plympton hundreds. Thus, in order to preserve his perceived military and social standing within the South Division, Champernowne proceeded to launch a three year campaign to acquire his own regimental colonelcy calling for the South Division's militiamen to be redistributed amongst himself, Seymour and Cary so that a third regiment could be created for himself to command.<sup>39</sup> Unsurprisingly, both Seymour and Cary vehemently opposed the creation of a third regiment in the South Division

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<sup>38</sup> DRO, 3799M-3/O/1/2-4.

<sup>39</sup> DRO, 3799M-3/O/9/1/1-25.

because it directly threatened their own political and social standing within the county.<sup>40</sup> The Earl of Bath was similarly opposed to such a scheme and attempted to mollify Champernowne by granting him the colonelcy of the horse in November 1596, while the Privy Council refused point-blank to authorise the creation of a third regiment in the South Division no doubt because, as Seymour highlighted, it was too burdensome to the rank and file militiamen who had only just got accustomed to mustering and training as two regiments.<sup>41</sup> However, this opposition did little to dampen Champernowne's resolve and he proceeded to disrupt Seymour's regiment by treating his personal band of militiamen from Ermington and Plympton as an autonomous entity under his sole command.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, it was not until summer 1599 that Champernowne appears to have eased back on his insubordination. The Spanish invasion scare of that year may well have been the catalyst for this with Champernowne realising that the defence of the county, and indeed the realm, was much too important to jeopardise. However, the fact that he was also knighted in that year, thereby achieving social ascendancy over Seymour through a different channel, may well have made his decision to quit his pursuit of a colonelcy all the more easy.<sup>43</sup>

To summarise, the command structure of late-Elizabethan Devon's militia was based on the power and influence of the Earl of Bath and his deputies. The county was divided into three sub-divisions and within each sub-division there were two regiments. Each of the county's six regiments was appointed a colonel and by the mid-1590s all six of Devon's colonels were either incumbent deputy lieutenants or would soon be appointed to the office. The allocation of a specific

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<sup>40</sup> For Seymour's objections and counter arguments to Champernowne's proposals see DRO, 3799M-3/O/9/1/5; DRO, 3799M-3/O/9/1/14. For Cary's see HMC, *Salisbury*, vi, p. 552.

<sup>41</sup> DRO, 3799M-3/O/9/1/6; DRO, 3799M-3/O/9/1/8; DRO, 3799M-3/O/9/1/14.

<sup>42</sup> DRO, 3799M-3/O/9/1/16.

<sup>43</sup> Hasler, *Commons*, i, p. 593.

regiment was based purely on whether a colonel resided in the East, North or South Division and corresponded directly to the power and influence that he enjoyed within his native part of that division. Consequently, the junior officers of each regiment were chosen from a colonel's closest followers and the militiamen were drafted from amongst the occupants of his nearest landholdings. Such a structure encouraged allegiance and solidarity, as well as taking into account contemporary opinions on social status, and seems to have worked well in both the East and North Divisions where there was always a sufficient number of obtainable colonelcies to placate each deputy lieutenant. In contrast, the number of deputy lieutenants in the South Division surpassed the number of regimental colonelcies and it was this that served as the underlying issue in the Seymour-Champernowne dispute. Indeed, their jealousies highlight an inherent problem in an Elizabethan political-military system that based itself on personal relationships, social connections, honour and reputation. Namely that when there were not enough positions to satisfy a particular social group – in this case, not enough regimental colonelcies to satisfy all of Devon's deputy lieutenants – rivalry and, in extreme cases, damaging fractiousness ensued.<sup>44</sup>

### **Mustering and training Devon's militia**

In spite of the ongoing controversy between Seymour and Champernowne the primary role of the Earl of Bath and his deputies during the late-Elizabethan period was to co-ordinate general musters and oversee the training of the soldiers and horsemen under their command. Only then was it possible for a muster certificate to be drafted in like manner to the one that was produced at

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<sup>44</sup> Fletcher, 'Honour, Reputation and Local Officeholding', pp. 92-115.

Exeter in December 1587. How then did Devon's lieutenancy plan and execute a general muster of the county's forces? Lindsay Boynton has stressed that 'the decisive factor in fixing the place of the muster was, of course, distance. Primitive transport and communications were powerful reasons for taking the musters in several places during several days, or even weeks.'<sup>45</sup> This enabled each band of militiamen to muster at a location near to their homes which meant that the time they spent away from their families and livelihoods was minimised. Such a policy was crucial for maximising attendance, especially during periods when the perceived threat from Spain was low, and highlights just one of the ways in which the lieutenancies tried to accommodate the often conflicting interests of central government and the wider county community. However, the problem with such elongated musters was that it greatly encouraged weapons-sharing whereby the local authorities redistributed arms within the county to fulfil their training requirements as well as to ensure that the muster certificate mirrored, albeit falsely, Privy Council expectations.<sup>46</sup> From a central government perspective this was clearly problematic and so an effort was made to ensure that the authorities in counties such as Norfolk 'enjoyed once every quarter [year] to view the armour and furniture of the trayned bands in every devicion, and where there is any want, default or insufficiency to give order the same may speedily be amended and repayed'.<sup>47</sup> Unfortunately the Council could do little else: enforcing shorter, single location musters was desirable but impracticable for the reasons outlined above, especially for a county like Yorkshire whose northern location meant that its inhabitants did not

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<sup>45</sup> Boynton, *Elizabethan Militia*, p. 25. The Deputy Lieutenants of Essex, for example, conducted a muster of the county's forces in three different locations over the course of six days during May 1597 (HMC, *Salisbury*, vii, p. 215; CP 51/33).

<sup>46</sup> Such a practice seems to have been particularly prevalent in Lancashire and Cheshire (SP 12/208 f.142: 29/2/1588).

<sup>47</sup> *APC*, xxix, p. 665.

recognise the threat from Spain as readily as their counterparts in the southern maritime counties. Central government were therefore forced to accept the fact that county musters had to take place in multiple locations over the course of several days or even weeks. In Devon, England's fourth largest county, it was weeks rather than days.

With these issues in mind, the remainder of this section will outline how Devon's Lord and Deputy Lieutenants planned and executed a general muster of the county's forces during the 1590s. This will be achieved by deploying hitherto unused documentary evidence from the Seymour Manuscripts to reconstruct precisely the route that the Earl of Bath and Sir Ferdinando Gorges planned to travel during their eighteen day tour of the county in spring 1598 to oversee the mustering and training of Devon's militia. The aim of such an exercise is to underline the extent to which Devon's lieutenancy sought to implement Privy Council directives while at the same time minimising the impact that those directives had on the county community. Moreover, by outlining the specific locations, days and, in some instances, times that individual regiments and bands were expected to muster and train the section confirms that there must have been a significant level of communication and interconnectedness at all tiers of the county's government to even contemplate such an intricate plan.

On 12 February 1598 the Privy Council wrote to the Earl of Bath to order the mustering and training of Devon's militia. Similar orders were dispatched to seventeen other counties as part of the Council's renewed attempt to prepare England's land defences for Spanish invasion. To assist in this process the Council appointed general colonels – that is to say, 'speciall persons of knowledge in marshall seruice' – to be present at each muster. In Devon's case, the Council chose Sir Ferdinando Gorges and he was instructed to help Bath

survey Devon's forces and 'instructe them in the discipline of warre'.<sup>48</sup> Consequently, on 10 March 1598 Bath and Gorges – along with Sir William Courtenay, George Cary, Edward Seymour and Hugh Fortescue – convened at Exeter so that Bath could communicate to his deputies the Privy Council's orders.<sup>49</sup> During the meeting many matters relating to the mustering and training of Devon's militia were discussed, including the letter written to Bath by the Privy Council on 12 February. In addition, certain documents were drafted and then annexed to the minutes of the meeting which, although not explicitly stated, most probably included a single folio manuscript entitled:

The daies tymes & places appointed for the veiweing & the musteringe of all the trained forces of this Countie *of Devon* before the Lord: Leiueten<sup>a</sup>nte & S<sup>r</sup> Ferdinando Gorges knighte Generall Colonell of the same as followeth.<sup>50</sup>

This document is crucial because it outlines the exact itinerary that Bath and Gorges planned to travel in fulfilment of the Council's order to muster and train Devon's militia in spring 1598. It therefore provides a unique snapshot of how Devon's lieutenancy conducted a general muster during the late-Elizabethan period (see figure 3.2).

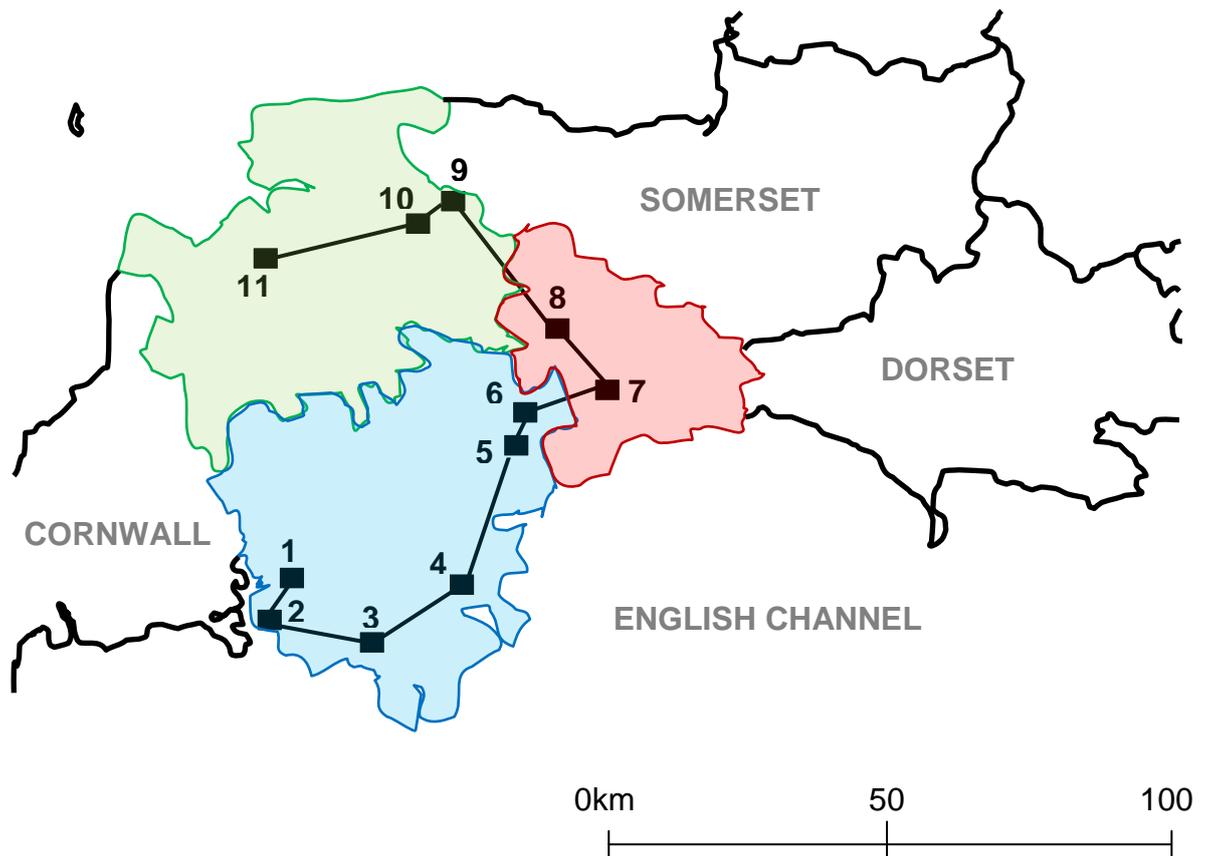
The document reveals that, with a noticeable and probably well-established understanding of the county's geography and travel times, Bath and Gorges planned to commence their tour of the county in the South Division at Roborough Down near Tavistock on Monday 27 March 1598 where they ordered Edward Seymour to appear with 200 men from the hundreds of Ermington and Plympton. The pair then intended to proceed south to Plymouth Hoe where the forces of Plymouth were expected to present themselves on

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<sup>48</sup> DRO, 1392M/L1598/2; *APC*, xxviii, pp. 304-7.

<sup>49</sup> DRO, 3799M-3/O/2/13; *HMC Somerset*, pp. 35-6.

<sup>50</sup> DRO, 3799M-3/O/2/14; *HMC Somerset*, pp. 32-3.



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|---|--|
| 1. Monday 27 March – Roborough Down                             |  East Division  |
| 2. Tuesday 28 March – Plymouth Hoe                              |  |
| 3. Wednesday 29 March – Modbury                                 |  North Division |
| 4. Thursday 30 and Friday 31 March – Totnes                     |  |
| 5. Saturday 1 April – Haldon                                    |  South Division |
| 6. Sunday 2 April – Exeter                                      |  |
| 7. Tuesday 4 and Wednesday 5 April – Ottery St Mary             |  |
| 8. Thursday 6 and Friday 7 April – Cullompton                   |  |
| 9. Saturday 8 April – Molland                                   |  |
| 10. Sunday 9 and Monday 10 April – South Molton                 |  |
| 11. Tuesday 11, Wednesday 12 and Thursday 13 April – Torrington |  |

Figure 3.2: The days and places appointed for the mustering and training of Devon's militia, Monday 27 March 1598 to Thursday 13 April 1598.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>51</sup> DRO, 3799M-3/O/2/14.

Tuesday 28 March. From Plymouth they decided that they would proceed eastward along the south coast of Devon to view Richard Champernowne's trained band at Modbury (29 March), the remainder of Edward Seymour's regiment at Totnes (30 March) and George Cary's regiment at Haldon (31 March). On Sunday 2 April the pair planned to be at Exeter to view certain horses from the South Division before moving into the East Division to view Sir Thomas Denys' regiment at Ottery St Mary on Tuesday 4 and Wednesday 5 April. From there they intended to move north to Cullompton to view Sir William Courtenay's regiment together with the horses of the East Division on Thursday 6 and Friday 7 April before proceeding to the North Division to view Hugh Pollard's regiment at South Molton (9 and 10 April) and Robert Bassett's regiment, together with the horses of the North, at Torrington (11, 12 and 13 April). Thus, the mustering and training of Devon's militia in spring 1598 was planned to take place in eleven separate locations over an eighteen day period (27 March-13 April). Moreover, the document illuminates the fact that Bath and his deputies agreed specific times for mustering and training certain sections of the militia: Edward Seymour was expected to muster part of his regiment in Totnes at 10am on Thursday 30 March; George Cary was instructed to be at Haldon with his regiment at 1pm on Saturday 1 April; and Hugh Pollard was required to have his regiment ready and waiting in South Molton at 10am on Sunday 9 April. Indeed, Bath and Gorges even had the foresight to arrange overnight accommodation during their eighteen day tour of the county, a fact that is revealed by a five word note written in the margin of the document: 'Fridaie at night M<sup>r</sup> Bluyttes'.

What then can one learn from such an intricate and well-considered itinerary? Five things instantly become apparent when looking at the document

alongside figure 3.2. First, it reinforces the arguments of Paul Glennie and Nigel Thrift that there was a prevalent Tudor ‘time consciousness’ where precise hours of the day were marked and mattered in the organisation of events and the administration of public and private proceedings.<sup>52</sup> Second, although it is impossible to say for certain whether the muster was executed precisely in accordance with the plan, the fact that Devon’s lieutenancy went to the trouble of appointing specific days, places and, in some instances, times for mustering and training different sections of the county’s militia is a strong indication that it did. Otherwise, why should Bath and his assistants have gone to so much trouble? Third, the level of planning reveals just how seriously Bath and his deputies took their position as facilitators of central government’s trained bands initiative. Fourth, the itinerary equally demonstrates the extent to which Devon’s lieutenancy tried to accommodate the county’s ordinary inhabitants. It would have been quite reasonable for Bath and his deputies to order sections of Devon’s militia to muster at three mutually accessible regional locations instead of the eleven localised locations that were chosen. For example, the forces directed to locations one to four in figure 3.2 could have all convened at Modbury; locations five to eight at Exeter; and nine to eleven at South Molton. This would have shortened the muster’s duration dramatically, minimised the possibility of weapons-sharing and sped up the production of a muster certificate. The fact that Bath and his deputy lieutenants did not do this implies that a conscious effort was made to ‘take the muster to the people’. Not only did this lessen the possibility of evasion, but also it reduced the distance that each band of militiamen had to travel and therefore minimised the time that they spent away from their families and livelihoods. And fifth, to even contemplate an

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<sup>52</sup> Paul Glennie and Nigel Thrift, *Shaping the Day: A History of Timekeeping in England and Wales, 1300-1800* (Oxford: OUP, 2009).

itinerary with such a high level of detail infers that there was an extremely high level of interconnectedness at all tiers of Devon's government. Indeed, there would have been little point in Bath and his deputies devising such a complex muster if they were not entirely confident that the relevant information could be passed on to each and every rank and file militiaman (an issue that will be discussed further in chapter five).

One final thing to consider is the extent to which the evidence of just one general muster applies to the rest of the time period covered by this thesis. It seems highly likely that each of the locations outlined above were time-honoured mustering stations specifically chosen to accommodate large scale military training.<sup>53</sup> Certainly, Torrington had been used as a muster station from at least 1583, while Roborough Down, Plymouth Hoe and Haldon offered extensive open plains for the simultaneous training of hundreds, even thousands, of men.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, recognised muster locations existed throughout the realm: St Gile's Hill in Hampshire; Bridgewater in Somerset; Buntingford and St Alban's in Hertfordshire; Braintree, Brentwood, Chelmsford and Colchester in Essex.<sup>55</sup> Thus, one can reasonably assume that the itinerary chosen for the muster of Devon's militia in spring 1598 was not designed solely for that year. Rather it was a well recognised route that was routinely travelled by Bath and his aides whenever central government requested a muster certificate of the county's militia. It is therefore possible to appreciate the intricate process that the members of Devon's lieutenancy went through to enable them to produce their muster certificate in December 1587 – a document that the Privy Council

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<sup>53</sup> For the set of drills that central government sent to the Lord Lieutenants and Muster Commissioners in spring 1598 see *CSPD*, 1598-1601, p. 38 (SP 12/266 f.139).

<sup>54</sup> SP 12/162 f.85: 24/9/1583.

<sup>55</sup> SP 12/92 f.18, SP 12/194 f.49, CP 214/28 (Buntingford); SP 12/232 f.87 (St Alban's); CP 51/33 (Braintree, Brentwood and Chelmsford); SP 12/259 f.138 (Colchester).

would have heavily relied upon to help them devise the role of Devon's militia during the Armada crisis of 1588.

### **The role of Devon's militia during the Armada crisis of 1588**

The precise role of Devon's militia during summer 1588 has, until recently, been shrouded by the recurrent tendency of historians to misinterpret the primary function of the militias in the southern maritime counties. The basic idea put forward has been that their main role during the Armada crisis was to march in-step with the Spanish and English navies, shadowing them as they progressed eastward along the Channel. Lindsay Boynton seems to have been the earliest proponent of this idea, writing in 1967 that

there were mobile forces, of indeterminate number, which remained in the maritime counties to shadow the Armada ... as the Armada made its way up the Channel, they moved with it to cover as far as possible the landing-places along the coast.<sup>56</sup>

This premise has been largely supported by subsequent scholars with James McDermott writing as recently as 2005 that

as the composite host shadowed the armada passed eastward along the English coast, "old" formations – those that had come furthest from the west – dropped out and returned home as the bands of the counties into which they advanced joined it.<sup>57</sup>

Indeed, with specific reference to Devon's militia, John Roberts has suggested that 'it seems probable that these men moved along inland more or less in step with the Armada's progress up the Channel.'<sup>58</sup> Yet in spite of this firmly

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<sup>56</sup> Boynton, *Elizabethan Militia*, p. 160. In contrast, Conyers Read made no such claim when writing in 1960. Instead he wrote: 'it seems likely that ... large forces were stationed in the maritime counties along the channel. One list puts this figure at 21,272 fighting men' (Conyers Read, *Lord Burghley and Queen Elizabeth* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1960), p. 417).

<sup>57</sup> McDermott, *England and the Spanish Armada*, p. 371, fn. 54.

<sup>58</sup> Roberts, *Devon and the Armada*, p. 257.

entrenched view, Neil Younger has recently refuted the idea, arguing that in reality

aside from the intrinsic improbability, in the context of Elizabethan military capability, of a massed force moving along the south coast with no overall commander or staff, there is no solid evidence that such a movement took place, or even that it was planned in any detail.<sup>59</sup>

However, if the militias in the southern maritime counties did not coalesce into a shadow army, what was their true function during the Spanish Armada crisis? This section answers that question by utilising Devon as a case study.

As late as March 1588 the Privy Council were gearing up to repel what they believed would be two separate Spanish attacks: an amphibious assault somewhere along the south coast of England or Wales and a primary Spanish attack spearheaded by the Duke of Parma, who had gathered his forces across the English Channel in Flanders, in either Kent or Essex.<sup>60</sup> However, Simon Adams has crucially revealed that by mid-July 1588 the Council had received new intelligence that suggested Spain's forces intended to launch just one co-ordinated attack on London.<sup>61</sup> Essex therefore became the centre of the Privy Council's defence preparations because, as Sir William Monson observed,

if an enemy land on [the] Essex side, he may march directly to London without let, impeachment, or other impediment, but by the encounter of an army ... [whereas] if an enemy land in Kent he is kept by the river of Thames.<sup>62</sup>

Consequently, the Earl of Leicester was commissioned a lieutenant-general and instructed to begin mustering an army, composed of approximately 1,500 horsemen and 11,000 militiamen from the Home Counties, at a strategically

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<sup>59</sup> Younger, 'If the Armada Had Landed', p. 334.

<sup>60</sup> SP 15/30 f.186: 3/1588; HMC, *Foljambe*, p. 32.

<sup>61</sup> Simon Adams, ed., 'The Armada Correspondence in Cotton MSS Otho E VII and E IX', in *The Naval Miscellany*, vi, ed. by M. Duffy (Naval Records Society, 146, 2003), pp. 37-92 (pp. 80-1).

<sup>62</sup> M. Oppenheim, ed., *The Naval Tracts of Sir William Monson in Six Books*, vol. ii (Naval Records Society, 1902), p. 283.

advantageous location on the north bank of the River Thames.<sup>63</sup> Leicester thought Tilbury to be the 'most apt place' to concentrate the bulk of his forces and throughout August 1588 he utilised the port as his headquarters.<sup>64</sup> However, while the Privy Council were seemingly confident that the Spanish intended just one coordinated attack on the capital they could not neglect the possibility of an attack elsewhere along the south coast. Nor could they be certain that Leicester's army would successfully repel a Spanish onslaught in Essex. With this in mind it was deemed essential that the militias of the southern maritime counties should adopt a mutual aid initiative and that a reserve army of militiamen should be instructed to muster near London to defend the Queen in the event that Leicester's army failed. Devon's militia played a crucial role in both of these contingency measures.

The mutual aid initiative in the southern maritime counties – or, the forces to 'impeach the landing ... of th'enemy upon his first descent' – has been described by Younger as 'by far the least understood' element of the Privy Council's defensive strategy owing largely to the reluctance of historians to dismiss the idea of a shadow army.<sup>65</sup> The true role of the trained bands in each southern maritime county was to act as a skirmish force, resisting any Spanish landing attempt in the first instance and, once that became futile, delaying the enemy's advance inland as much as possible in order to buy time for reinforcements to arrive from neighbouring counties. As Sir Thomas Scott put it in reference to the role of east Kent's militia:

by keeping thenemy from Landing by disordering or deminishing some parte of his forces or at the leaste by staying of him for a tyme: Wherby thenland partes of this Countie and other Counties adioyning

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<sup>63</sup> HMC, *Foljambe*, pp. 48-51.

<sup>64</sup> SP 12/213 f.38: 24/7/1588.

<sup>65</sup> HMC, *Foljambe*, p. 45; Younger, 'If the Armada Had Landed', p. 333.

may be in the more forwardnes to staye the enemy from speedy passage to London or the harte of the realme.<sup>66</sup>

Thus, the mutual aid part of the Council's defence strategy would only be initiated in the specific location that the Spanish chose to attack. For example, in the south-west, if the Spanish attacked Falmouth, Cornwall's 4,000 trained militiamen would be reinforced by 4,000 from Devon and 3,000 from Somerset. If Plymouth or Tor Bay was targeted, Devon's 4,000 trained militiamen would be supported by 2,000 from Cornwall, 3,000 from Dorset, 2,000 from Wiltshire and 4,000 from Somerset. And if Poole was assaulted, Dorset's 4,000 trained militiamen would be aided by 4,000 from Devon, 4,000 from Somerset and 2,000 from Wiltshire.<sup>67</sup> Similar arrangements were put in place further eastward thereby ensuring that all of the key ports along the south coast of England – from Falmouth in Cornwall to Yarmouth in Norfolk – were defended by a fighting force that ranged between 11,000 and 20,000 men.<sup>68</sup> Of course during the actual event the English naval forces were able to prevent the enemy from landing on the south coast, successfully harrying the Spanish fleet towards Calais so that, in the words of Lord Admiral Howard, they had 'no leisure to land'.<sup>69</sup> Consequently, this ensured that the mutual aid initiative was never actually initiated despite Henry Whitfield's unsubstantiated claim that 'amid beating drums and waving flags, seventeen thousand soldiers marched into Plymouth and encamped on the Hoe; and eleven thousand more continued the journey to Falmouth to resist the attack if it fell there.'<sup>70</sup> In reality, the navy's

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<sup>66</sup> SP 12/212 f.64: 13/7/1588.

<sup>67</sup> For a breakdown of the 4,000 militiamen that Devon would send to Dorset in the event that the Spanish attacked Poole see DRO, 3799M-3/O/2/1; HMC, *Somerset*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>68</sup> SP 12/213 f.141: 7/1588. For examples of arrangements further eastward see *APC*, xv, p. 269; SP 12/213 f.55: 25/7/1588.

<sup>69</sup> Adams, 'Armada Correspondence', p. 78.

<sup>70</sup> Henry Francis Whitfield, *Plymouth and Devonport: in Times of War and Peace* (Plymouth: E. Chapple, 1900), p. 54.

success freed Devon's militia, along with the militias in the other southern maritime counties, to begin preparing for their secondary function: joining the inland counties to form the army that would defend the Queen in the event that Leicester's army in Essex failed to thwart the anticipated Spanish attack on the capital.

The London army, which was to be placed under the command of Lord Hunsdon, was by far the largest force that the Privy Council planned to muster during the Armada crisis and, if it had been required, would have represented England's last line of defence. The Council's orders to muster the main bulk of this force – which numbered over 40,000 footmen and 4,000 horsemen – were issued between 23 and 28 July 1588.<sup>71</sup> Devon was ordered to send 2,000 footmen who were 'to be at London' on 10 August. To put this into context, 2,000 men was only the seventh highest contribution: Somerset was ordered to provide 4,000 men; Norfolk and Suffolk 3,000; Gloucestershire and Sussex 2,500; and Wiltshire 2,300. In addition, an arrival date of 10 August gave Devon's militia more time than any other contributing county to make ready. Clearly, this did not reflect Devon's inability to levy more than 2,000 men; after all it has already been revealed that the county was expected to provide Cornwall and Dorset with 4,000 men under the mutual aid initiative. However, one possible reason why Devon's contribution was relatively modest was the fact that the two western-most counties had been in a state of military readiness longer than any other region during the run up to the Armada.<sup>72</sup> It is therefore feasible that the Privy Council was reluctant to impose too great a burden on either Devon or Cornwall over and above the mutual aid initiative – a possibility

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<sup>71</sup> *APC*, xvi, pp. 171, 186 and 195-6; HMC, *Foljambe*, p. 57; SP 12/213 f.114: 30/7/1588.

<sup>72</sup> The English fleet had arrived in Plymouth at 8am on 23 May 1588. From thenceforth Lord Admiral Howard used the port as a base to launch reconnaissance missions to scout for the Spanish fleet (Adams, 'Armada Correspondence', p. 75).

that is supported by the fact that Cornwall's militia was not required to contribute at all to the London army. Another possibility was that the Council wished to maintain its hitherto impressive defensive flexibility. After all there was no way of predicting the eventual success of the English fleet once it had harried the Spanish into Calais and, as Simon Adams has pointed out, there were nagging 'fears in August that the departure of the Armada northwards [to Scotland] was a feint ... as part of a plan to double back'.<sup>73</sup> Thus, if the naval skirmishes had played out more evenly the Spanish might well have felt strong enough to retreat westward and gain a foothold in the West Country to await reinforcements. Completely draining the militia from the south-west for service in the London army would have left England's back door wide open to that threat.

Of course in reality the Armada crisis of 1588 was all but over by 3 August with the Privy Council ordering those troops who had commenced their journey to the capital to return home to their respective counties so that they did not enter into the Queen's pay.<sup>74</sup> Indeed, with the scrapping of the London army on 3 August it seems highly probable that Devon's levy of 2,000 militiamen, who still had a week to go before their allotted arrival date in London, never left the county. The Devon militia's practical role during the Armada crisis was therefore restricted to mustering within the county to repel a possible amphibious Spanish assault on the Devon coast and to make ready 4,000 militiamen to serve as reinforcements in the event of a Spanish attack in either Cornwall or Dorset. Unfortunately there are no known records that specify the intra-county movements of Devon's militia during summer 1588. It is

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<sup>73</sup> Adams, 'Armada Correspondence', p. 50.

<sup>74</sup> *APC*, xvi, pp. 215-6.

therefore impossible to be certain what the level of military preparedness was within the county 'if the Armada had landed' in the south-west.

### **Devon's defence against the 'Invisible Armada' of 1599**

In his study of Plymouth's defences in the year of the Armada Mark Brayshay acknowledged that 'evidence which indicates precisely the number of militia billeted in Plymouth during the Armada emergency has not survived.' He was therefore forced to concentrate solely on Plymouth's fortifications, ordnance supplies and battle tactics, writing of the militia that 'clearly there were soldiers in Plymouth but in what numbers and from where they came remains hard to determine'.<sup>75</sup> However, while there is insufficient evidence to measure precisely the preparedness of Devon's militia during the Armada crisis of 1588, there is a substantial amount of material present in the Seymour Manuscripts to illuminate the intra-county deployment of the county's trained bands during August 1599 when it was feared that Spain planned another invasion similar in nature to 1588. England's defence preparations in 1588 and 1599 were largely comparable and so the evidence relating to August 1599 can be deployed to gauge the likely level of preparedness within Devon during both crises. Geoffrey Parker has been hyper-critical of the county militia's potential to fend off a Spanish onslaught in 1588, describing England's land defences during the crisis as 'desperately behind-hand all over', 'ludicrously inadequate', 'untrained troops without clear orders, backed up by only a handful of inadequately fortified

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<sup>75</sup> Mark Brayshay, 'Plymouth's Coastal Defences in the Year of the Spanish Armada', *TDA*, 119 (December, 1987), 169-96 (p. 175).

towns'.<sup>76</sup> In contrast, Neil Younger has painted a rather different picture, arguing that

The privy council was called upon to deploy limited forces to defend a long coastline against an unpredictable attacker, and the evidence shows that they contrived to maximize the effectiveness of the available resources whilst balancing the calls of military practicality, financial necessity and political constraints.<sup>77</sup>

This section supports Younger's more positive assessment. Moreover, by examining the intra-county deployment of Devon's militia in August 1599, the section reveals that this was by no means unusual. Indeed, the county militias were also 'better organized, more efficient and more willing than has [hitherto] been recognized' eleven years later.<sup>78</sup>

While the defeat of the Spanish Armada represented a severe body-blow to King Philip II's military ambitions it did little to dampen his resolve in pursuing an anti-English policy for the remainder of his reign and this was carried forward with equal gusto by Philip III when he succeeded his father on 13 September 1598.<sup>79</sup> Indeed, Paul Hammer has cited the months immediately following the accession of the Protestant French King, Henri IV, on 2 August 1589 as marking the start of the 'deep war' between England and Spain 'when no end to the fighting seemed in sight and Elizabeth's regime could only seek to endure, as new threats and commitments mounted up on all sides.'<sup>80</sup> The threat of another Spanish Armada therefore persisted throughout the 1590s with an amphibious Spanish assault twice attempted in autumn 1596 and autumn 1597. The former was an ill-conceived knee-jerk reaction on the part of Phillip II who

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<sup>76</sup> Parker, 'If the Armada had Landed', pp. 364-5. See also Martin and Parker, *Spanish Armada*, pp. 265-77; Parker, *Grand Strategy*, pp. 226-7.

<sup>77</sup> Younger, 'If the Armada had Landed', p. 328.

<sup>78</sup> Younger, 'If the Armada had Landed', p. 352.

<sup>79</sup> For an appraisal of the losses sustained by Spain as a result of the Armada defeat see Parker, *Grand Strategy*, pp. 269-71.

<sup>80</sup> Hammer, *Elizabeth's Wars*, p. 175.

wanted to seize the Breton port of Brest and use it as a base to launch a counterattack in response to the English sacking of Cadiz, while the latter constituted a more ambitious plan to occupy the Cornish port of Falmouth and use it as a base to ambush the English fleet on its return from the Azores. Both armadas were forced to turn back before reaching their targets due to bad weather in the English Channel. Nevertheless, in summer 1599 they represented two recent precedents to support the growing paranoia within England that the Spanish were once again preparing for an amphibious assault on the country's southern coastline using Brest as a forward operating position.<sup>81</sup>

The first reports of this apparently imminent Spanish attack arrived in England in early-July 1599. They included a dispatch that Captain Matthew Bredgate sent to Simon Willis (one of Sir Robert Cecil's secretaries) on his arrival in Plymouth on 14 July having recently conducted a reconnaissance mission to the northern cape of Spain. Bredgate reported that there were rumoured to be 15,000 Spanish soldiers already at Brest and a further five to ten thousand expected to join them shortly. Furthermore, he stated that King Philip III himself was planning to lead this force across the Channel in an attempt to invade and occupy the Isle of Wight.<sup>82</sup> However, other reports arriving in England and Wales in mid-late July claimed that the Spanish were not yet at Brest but were nevertheless planning to use the port as a staging post to launch an attack. Milford Haven, Bristol, Falmouth and Plymouth were all

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<sup>81</sup> For a detailed analysis of the Cadiz Expedition, its aftermath, the 1596 'Armada', the 1597 'Armada' and the gales that frustrated the Spanish fleet see R. B. Wernham, *The Return of the Armadas: The Last Years of the Elizabethan War Against Spain, 1595-1603* (Oxford: OUP, 1994), pp. 82-190.

<sup>82</sup> SP 12/271 f.154.

mentioned as possible targets.<sup>83</sup> Moreover, the possibility of the Spanish launching a simultaneous attack from the Low Countries also appeared likely when the Privy Council received reports on 31 July claiming the Spanish army was gathering in Dunkirk with a view to landing somewhere in Kent.<sup>84</sup> Thus, just as in 1588, the Privy Council were required to adopt a flexible defence strategy: Lord Cobham was given command of approximately 10,000 men to prevent a Spanish landing in Kent; the Earl of Cumberland was instructed to assemble a naval blockade on the River Thames to hinder a Spanish advance on London; Lord Admiral Howard was appointed the commander of a London army to defend the Queen and capital; and the lord lieutenants of the southern maritime counties were required to renew their mutual aid initiative.<sup>85</sup>

Defence preparations also occurred concurrently within Devon as a result of the growing anxiety that had spread amongst those who inhabited the county's southern coast.<sup>86</sup> This anxiety reached a new level of intensity on the afternoon of 25 July when a fleet, initially thought to be the vanguard of a Spanish invasion force, was sighted off the coast of Plymouth. As it turned out the suspicious fleet was composed of Dutch merchant vessels returning home to the Low Countries.<sup>87</sup> Nevertheless, by 29 July this false alarm, coupled with reports arriving in Dartmouth which stated that Spain's forces were apparently far greater in number and nearer to Devon than previously thought, jolted the

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<sup>83</sup> SP 12/271 f.158: 19/7/1599; SP 12/271 f.178: 24/7/1599; DRO, 1392M/L1599/8; SP 12/271 f.209: 30/7/1599; SP 12/271 f.211: 31/7/1599.

<sup>84</sup> SP 12/271 f.215: 31/7/1599; SP 12/271 f.216: 31/7/1599. In light of this threat the Privy Council ordered one of Lord Cobham's deputies, Sir Thomas Wilforde, to arrange for trenches to be built in and around Margate in order to impeach any attempt by the enemy to land (HMC, *Foljambe*, p. 76).

<sup>85</sup> HMC, *Foljambe*, pp. 66-8, 72-7, 84-6, 91 and 104; APC, xxix, pp. 740-1.

<sup>86</sup> On 30 July the Earl of Bath described the anxiety felt by the inhabitants of Plymouth in the following terms: 'the Inhabytantes of the Towne, by reason of these contynuall intelligences are veye muche terryfied: And in a manner so farr distracted that they perswade them selues the whole Towne wilbe surprised before they shall haue anye sufficient ayde from the Countrye' (DRO, 1392M/L1599/8).

<sup>87</sup> SP 12/271 f.184. This letter has been dated 25 June 1599 in CSPD. However, when one consults the manuscript and reads it alongside SP 12/271 f.185: 25/7/1599 and SP 12/271 f.186: 25/7/1599 it becomes clear that the true date of the letter is 25 July 1599.

Earl of Bath into ordering his deputies and the rest of his militia officers 'to putt themselues and their companies in readynes to marche'.<sup>88</sup> After a short period of consultation with his deputies, Bath pin-pointed Plymouth, Dartmouth and Tor Bay as likely Spanish landing sites and proceeded to initiate Devon's military mobilisation, riding south to Roborough Down, near Tavistock (see figure 3.2), where he had ordered the colonels of the North Division (Sir Robert Bassett and Hugh Pollard) to rendezvous with 2,000 militiamen.<sup>89</sup> On 5 August this contingent marched into Plymouth where they were joined by an additional force of 1,000 footmen from the South Division. Meanwhile, Sir William Courtenay and Edward Seymour's regiments were ordered to muster at Dartmouth, Sir Thomas Denys' regiment at Totnes and Sir George Cary's regiment at Tor Bay in the light of fresh intelligence received in Plymouth from a Scottish mariner that reiterated the vulnerability of those ports.<sup>90</sup> Thus, when Bath wrote to the Privy Council on 6 August he was able to state that there was a total of 6,000 militiamen billeted at Plymouth, Dartmouth, Totnes and Tor Bay ready and waiting to repel a Spanish landing.<sup>91</sup>

Bath maintained Devon's militia at these locations for nearly two weeks.<sup>92</sup> During this period it was the inhabitants of the county who were liable to pay the mounting costs of the mobilisation because, as the Privy Council explained to Sir Ferdinando Gorges on 6 August, 'until there shall be an army assembled under a General and officers in orderly manner, her Majesty is wont never to be

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<sup>88</sup> SP 12/271 f.200.

<sup>89</sup> DRO, 1392M/L1599/8; DRO, 1392M/L1599/9. Bath was definitely at Tavistock by 4 August (DRO, 3799M-3/O/1/17).

<sup>90</sup> DRO, 4652M, *Reynell Diary*, p. 12; DRO, 3799M-3/O/1/17.

<sup>91</sup> HMC, *Salisbury*, ix, p. 274.

<sup>92</sup> With regards to Plymouth, a contemporary account states that 'the Earle of Bathon came hither with Fower thowsande men or thereabouts, and certayne Cornettes of horse who remayned here aboue three weekes, and were well lodged and entertayned' (PWDRO, 1/46, *The Black Book*, f. 9). However, the extant letters from Bath and his deputies suggest that the force consisted of just 3,000 men who stayed in Plymouth for no more than two weeks.

put to any charges.<sup>93</sup> Thus, Bath had no choice but to tax the county's inhabitants for a further ten days' conduct money on 12 August.<sup>94</sup> However, just a day later Devon's financial situation was judged to be so dire that he was forced to remind the Council that

the whole charge of the army amounts to £300 per day, besides the expenses of the colonels and other gentlemen. I find all men earnestly bent and desirous to encounter with the enemy, but truly they are very unable to continue here any longer without some direction from you to satisfy the charges.<sup>95</sup>

In addition, he cited the fact that the 1599 invasion scare was being played out in the midst of the summer harvest and, if Devon's militiamen were not dismissed by the Crown, their crops would be 'almost utterly lost'.<sup>96</sup> Such an appeal underlines the dual function of Devon's lieutenancy as facilitator of central government's defence policy and guardian of the county's interests. Moreover, it reveals a crucial aspect of the Crown's relationship with the ordinary inhabitants of late-Elizabethan Devon in that when the inhabitants of Devon perceived the threat from Spain to be high they were more than willing to meet, even exceed, central government's defensive strategy in order to protect their families and livelihoods. However, as soon as that threat was believed to have diminished, even slightly, the desire of Devon's militiamen to return home and work their land intensified and their willingness to continue cooperating with central government receded.

Yet, despite Bath's best efforts, the Council were unmoved by Devon's financial predicament; after all it had been a long-established principle that the county militias were to be funded by a county-wide tax. Nevertheless, they did

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<sup>93</sup> HMC, *Foljambe*, p. 89-90.

<sup>94</sup> DRO, 3799M-3/O/2/24.

<sup>95</sup> HMC, *Salisbury*, ix, p. 292; DRO, 1392M/L1599/23.

<sup>96</sup> HMC, *Salisbury*, ix, p. 274; SP 12/272 f.82: 17/8/1599. For Bath deciding to unilaterally send home 'a good number of honest labouring men to ... helpe ... harvest' see DRO, 1392M/L1599/20. For similar agricultural issues in Hampshire see SP 12/272 f.86: 17/8/1599.

recognise the necessity for Devon's militiamen to return home and tend to their harvest. Thus, on 12 August they instructed Bath to send a vessel to survey the Breton coast and, provided there was no sign of the Spanish fleet, on its return to order the majority of the county's militia to demobilise.<sup>97</sup> As it turned out Bath did not have to arrange his own reconnaissance mission because on 17 August John Lymberry, a mariner who had sailed to Brittany from Lyme Regis on 12 August with similar instructions from the Council, arrived in Plymouth and reported that there was no sight of the Spanish fleet in either Brest or Conquet.<sup>98</sup> Consequently, with the total cost of Devon's August 1599 mobilisation having apparently reached in excess of £10,000, Bath duly dismissed the majority of his forces; retaining just 300 militiamen in Plymouth who were to enter the Queen's pay for a further fourteen days.<sup>99</sup> However, despite their dismissal, Devon's lieutenancy reminded the county's militiamen that they were still required 'vppon paine of death to be readye at an howers warning to marche to the place of Roundeuous w<sup>th</sup> their weapons & armes'. These places were exactly the same as those that had been used earlier in the month: the forces of the North Division were to gather at Tavistock; Sir William Courtenay's regiment at Totnes; Sir George Cary and a section of Edward Seymour's regiment at Dartmouth; and the remainder of Seymour's regiment at Plymouth. Furthermore, in the event of a Spanish attack in north Devon, the militiamen of the South and East Divisions were to rendezvous at Torrington before joining forces with the North Division.<sup>100</sup> Interestingly, all of these locations have been identified as locations where Devon's militia mustered for

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<sup>97</sup> HMC, *Foljambe*, pp. 95-7.

<sup>98</sup> On 13 and 16 August officials at Portsmouth and Falmouth received similar reports that suggested the Spanish fleet was not at Brest or elsewhere in Brittany (SP 12/272 f.67 and SP 12/272 f.78).

<sup>99</sup> SP 12/272 f.82: 17/8/1599. Enclosed in this letter was the examination of John Lymberry, master of the Swan of Lyme Regis.

<sup>100</sup> DRO, 3799M-3/O/2/25.

training during the 1580s and 1590s. The fact that they were also used for military mobilisation purposes therefore reinforces the notion that they were time-honoured muster stations and as such used to similar effect during summer 1588.

A partial remobilisation of the county militias occurred in late-August as a result of fresh reports that claimed the Spanish were at Brest preparing to attack either Falmouth or Tor Bay.<sup>101</sup> However, this once again proved to be a false alarm and by 1 September all the county militias, as well as the English fleet, were able to stand down for the winter. Thus ended what R. B. Wernham has called the 'Invisible Armada' of 1599 when, in reality,

not one of [Spain's] ... ships, other than a few small scouting craft, had come nearer than Coruna to the English or Irish coasts. Yet it had called forth defence preparations by sea and even more by land on a scale comparable to those of 1588.<sup>102</sup>

Unfortunately, Wernham does not elaborate on his comparison between 1599 and 1588. Nevertheless, it has been the intention of this section to use the extensive documentary evidence of the internal mobilisation within Devon during August 1599 to reveal that the likely mobilisation of Devon's militia during the Armada crisis of 1588 was, contrary to Geoffrey Parker's belief, ahead of schedule, extensive and highly organised. Indeed, whilst it is impossible to say for sure whether the military mobilisation that took place in Devon during August 1599 was an exact replica of what happened in July 1588, it seems highly probable that it was. Certainly, the Council's national defence strategy in 1599 shared a very clear resemblance with their strategy in 1588: an army situated in Kent to hinder a Spanish attack from the Low Countries; a larger force in and

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<sup>101</sup> SP 12/272 f.114: 24/8/1599; SP 12/272 f.116: John Peryam, Mayor of Exeter to Sir Robert Cecil; DRO, 3799M-3/O/1/21; SP 12/272 f.135: 28/8/1599; Boynton, *Elizabethan Militia*, pp. 204-5.

<sup>102</sup> Wernham, *Return of the Armadas*, pp. 271-2.

around London to defend the Queen and capital; and a mutual aid initiative in the southern maritime counties. It is therefore logical to assume that the Earl of Bath and his deputies would have similarly replicated the intra-county deployment of Devon's militia that must surely have taken place during the Armada crisis of 1588 when they faced the 'Invisible Armada' of 1599.

### **Troop levies to Ireland, 1594-1602**

In retrospect the 'Invisible Armada' of 1599 was one of the watershed moments of the Armada years, marking the end of the Spanish invasion scares that had become part and parcel of life for the inhabitants of England's southern maritime counties for well over a decade. Indeed, Lindsay Boynton has noted that the 1599 crisis stretched England's military resources to such an extent that 'when the Council ordered resumed training in 1600 it was clear that there was no intention of keeping it up as frequently as before'.<sup>103</sup> However, the role of the Elizabethan militia was not restricted to the defence of mainland England and Wales. The county militias were also required to provide troop levies for military service in Brittany and in the Low Countries. Moreover, between 1594 and 1603, the county militias were similarly utilised in Ireland as part of the Elizabethan government's strategy to quell the rebellion that had broken out there, later dubbed the Nine Years' War, in response to the Tudor regime's aggressive Anglicisation policies.<sup>104</sup> The Devon ports of Barnstaple and Plymouth both served as critical centres for the embarkation and transportation of these troops across the Irish Sea. By briefly outlining the role played by the Earl of Bath and his deputies in levying and conducting Devon's quota of troops

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<sup>103</sup> Boynton, *Elizabethan Militia*, p. 205.

<sup>104</sup> For an overview of the Nine Years' War, see Ellis, *Tudor Ireland*, pp. 278-313; McGurk, *Elizabethan Conquest of Ireland*, pp. 3-28.

to these ports, this section underlines the strategic value that central government continued to attach to Devon even after the threat of a Spanish invasion of England had dissipated. Furthermore, it reveals the pragmatic steps that Devon's lieutenancy took in spreading the burden of troop levies evenly throughout Devon in a bid to appease the county's increasingly war-weary inhabitants. However, whereas the previous section outlined the relative willingness of Devon's ordinary inhabitants to meet, even exceed, central government's military demands during periods of acute Spanish threat, this section explains why such willingness was never replicated in relation to the Nine Years' War in Ireland.

Between 1594 and 1602, 6,688 footmen, 500 mariners and 132 horses were conducted to either Barnstaple or Plymouth for transportation to Ireland (see figure 3.3). The only ports to receive more during the same period were Chester (19,105 footmen and 1,046 horses) and Bristol (10,275 footmen and 602 horses). On paper this is clearly considerably more than the combined totals of Barnstaple and Plymouth: Chester handled 65% more footmen and 87% more horses; and Bristol handled 35% more footmen and 78% more horses.<sup>105</sup> However, the figures for Barnstaple and Plymouth are still substantial when one takes into account the acute burden that Devon had been under since 1585 as a frontline maritime county in England's war with Spain. Indeed, even the much smaller figures for the six other ports that were used to launch military levies across the Irish Sea can be regarded as notable when one takes into account that they too were all located within frontline maritime counties.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> McGurk, *Elizabethan Conquest of Ireland*, pp. 143 and 167.

<sup>106</sup> Southampton handled 1,010 footmen; Rochester, 1,600 footmen; Milford, 700 footmen and 100 horses; Weymouth, 400 footmen; Fowey, 300 footmen; and Padstow, 100 footmen. John McGurk's exhaustive trawl through both central and local archives to obtain these figures has been invaluable. For an annual breakdown of his figures for each port see McGurk, *Elizabethan Conquest of Ireland*, pp. 139, 143, 167, 176, and 179.

Date	Total levy	Levy origin / ratio	Port of embarkation	Destination	Note
Mar '95	1,553 f.	Brittany	Plymouth	Waterford	1
Oct '96	400 f.	Devon (300) Cornwall (100)	Barnstaple	Dublin	2
Apr '97	400 f.	Devon (300) Cornwall (100)	Barnstaple	Dublin	3
Aug '98	1,350 f. 50 h.	Low Countries	Plymouth	Lough Foyle/Carlingford	4
Nov '98	400 f.	Devon	Plymouth	Cork	5
Feb '99	16 h.	Devon	Barnstaple	Carrickfergus	6
Jan/Feb '00	200 f.	Devon (100) Dorset (50) Cornwall (50)	Barnstaple	Carrickfergus	7
Dec '00	150 f.	Devon (40) Somerset (40) Wiltshire (30) Dorset (20) Cornwall (20)	Barnstaple	Lough Foyle	8
Apr '01	170 f.	Somerset (50) Devon (40) Wiltshire (40) Cornwall (20) Dorset (20)	Barnstaple	Lough Foyle	9
Aug '01	275 f.	Devon (100) Hampshire (100) Dorset (50) Cornwall (25)	Barnstaple	Waterford/Kinsale	10
Oct '01	500 m.	Devon Cornwall	Plymouth	Kinsale	11
Oct/Nov '01	975 f.  66 h.	Devon (300) Somerset (250) Wiltshire (125) Cornwall (100) Dorset (100) Hampshire (100) Not specified	Barnstaple	Waterford/Kinsale	12
Jan/Feb '02	650 f.	Devon (350) Somerset (300)	Barnstaple	Cork	13
Aug '02	165 f.	Not specified	Barnstaple	Cork	14

Figure 3.3: Military levies to Barnstaple and Plymouth, 1595-1602.

f. = foot m. = mariner h. = horse

**Barnstaple totals: 3,385 f.; 82 h.**  
**Plymouth totals: 3,303 f.; 500 m.; 50 h.**  
**Devon totals: 6,688 f.; 500 m.; 132 h.**

**Notes:** 1. McGurk, *Elizabethan Conquest of Ireland*, p. 179. 2. *APC*, xxvi, pp. 243, 346, 406-7. 3. *APC*, xxvii, pp. 21-6; *APC*, xxviii, p. 599. 4. *Cal. Carew MSS*, iii, pp. 281-3; McGurk, *Elizabethan Conquest of Ireland*, p. 179. 5. *APC*, xxix, pp. 237-42. 6. *APC*, xxix, p. 589; McGurk, *Elizabethan Conquest of Ireland*, p. 65. 7. *APC*, xxx, pp. 41-2, 102, 262, 388; McGurk, *Elizabethan Conquest of Ireland*, p. 58. 8. *APC*, xxx, p. 790; *APC*, xxxi, p. 23. 9. *APC*, xxxi, pp. 296, 314, 318, 325-6, 363. 10. *APC*, xxxii, p. 71, gives a levy of 270 soldiers, but all other references to the levy state 275; *APC*, xxxii, pp. 82-3, 126-7. 11. HMC, *Salisbury*, xi, p. 425. 12. *APC*, xxxii, 312-3; HMC, *Salisbury*, xi, pp. 431, 454, 461, 490-1; McGurk, *Elizabethan Conquest of Ireland*, pp. 58-9. 13. HMC, *Salisbury*, xii, pp. 13, 50-1, 154. 14. HMC, *Salisbury*, xii, pp. 277, 320.

In recognition of the southern maritime counties' war weariness the Privy Council spread the burden of troop levies by drawing them from the militias of multiple counties and, wherever possible, ordering the conduction of those levies to the most convenient port of embarkation. Thus, it was logical for the counties in northern England and Wales to conduct their military levies to Chester, whereas, for those counties situated in the English midlands and south Wales, Bristol was preferable.<sup>107</sup> Similarly, figure 3.3 reveals that apart from two occasions in 1595 and 1598 when veterans from Brittany and the Low Countries were redeployed to Ireland via Plymouth, the troop levies that arrived at Barnstaple and Plymouth were made up entirely of militiamen from the six south-western counties of Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Hampshire, Wiltshire and Somerset.

The responsibility of levying and conducting these men to either port customarily rested upon the lieutenancies – a process that John McGurk has explored in detail in relation to Kent. However, McGurk has also noted that for counties such as Lancashire and Cheshire, where the office of lord lieutenant became vacant following the death of the fourth Earl of Derby in September 1594, the responsibility was shared by the shrievalty and muster commission.<sup>108</sup> Of course in Devon there was no such vacancy and so the responsibility of levying and conducting the county's military levies to Plymouth and Barnstaple rested squarely on the shoulders of the Earl of Bath and his deputies. This is reflected in the Seymour Manuscripts which include a substantial number of items relating to the levying and conducting of men to Barnstaple between October 1596 and August 1602. It is therefore possible to provide an insight into

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<sup>107</sup> *APC*, xxvi, p. 346; *APC*, xxvii, p. 24; *APC*, xxx, p. 790; *APC*, xxxi, pp. 23 and 318; *APC*, xxxii, pp. 82-3. Military levies that did not have a convenient port of embarkation – that is to say, those from the Home Counties and London – were sent to Chester because of the ports proximity to Dublin and ability to handle the additional men.

<sup>108</sup> McGurk, *Elizabethan Conquest of Ireland*, pp. 81-134.

the practical steps taken by Bath and his deputies to balance the conflicting interests, exposed by the Irish rebellion, of the Crown and the county's inhabitants.

Bath responded to the Crown's incessant military levies pragmatically, allocating the county's three divisions an equal proportion of each levy. Thus, of the forty Devon footmen that arrived in Barnstaple in May 1601, thirteen were from the East Division, fourteen from the South Division and thirteen from the North Division. Similarly, of the 100 that arrived in August 1601, thirty-three were from the East, thirty-three from the South and thirty-four from the North. And, of the 150 that arrived in October 1601, fifty were from the East, fifty from the South and fifty from the North.<sup>109</sup> In doing so, Bath's primary concern was not 'to make choice of good men' (which the Queen and Privy Council explicitly instructed him to do); rather it was to spread the burden as evenly as possible throughout Devon in recognition of the county's war weariness.<sup>110</sup> Indeed, this policy of equitable apportionment seems to have been replicated by Bath's deputies within each division: the more parishes a hundred had, the more men that hundred provided.<sup>111</sup> Moreover, it seems that Devon's governors were not alone in their efforts to spread the burden of troop levies throughout each county. County officials in Lancashire and Cheshire, for example, seem to have adopted a certain degree of levy apportionment between the hundreds in their respective counties to achieve a similar result.<sup>112</sup>

However, despite their best efforts to ameliorate the Crown's demands, Devon's lieutenancy could do nothing about the unwillingness of the men who were chosen to serve in Ireland. Such unwillingness originated not only as a

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<sup>109</sup> DRO, 3799M-3/O/2/28; DRO, 3799M-3/O/2/30; DRO, 3799M-3/O/2/32.

<sup>110</sup> DRO, 3799M-3/O/1/24; DRO, 3799M-3/O/1/29.

<sup>111</sup> DRO, 3799M-3/O/2/7.

<sup>112</sup> McGurk, *Elizabethan Conquest of Ireland*, pp. 112 and 123; Younger, 'The Practice and Politics of Troop-Raising', p. 577.

result of their desire to remain at home, work their land and protect their families, but also the complete disconnection that ordinary county folk felt towards the Irish rebellion. For them it was a conflict in a far away land and thus it was difficult to see a tangible benefit in helping the Crown to quell the uprising. Much the same feelings were felt throughout the northern counties during the Armada crisis. Indeed, Michael Braddick has explained that the reason for Yorkshire's 'difficult and grudging' military mobilisation in 1588 was caused primarily by the belief 'that the [Spanish] threat was not ... particularly immediate' in north England.<sup>113</sup> Thus, in light of these feelings it is unsurprising to find many recorded instances of desertion, not only within Devon but throughout the counties.<sup>114</sup> Clearly, some impressed men were of the firm opinion that their personal, tangible interests far outweighed the impersonal, intangible interests of the Crown and thus chose desertion over service.

The primary intention of this chapter has been to underline the high strategic value that central government attached to Devon throughout the late-Elizabethan period. This manifested itself most markedly in the vital role that the county's militia played in the Privy Council's contingency measures during the Spanish Armada crisis of 1588 and the 'Invisible Armada' of 1599. Moreover, the utilisation of Barnstaple and Plymouth as critical centres for the embarkation and transportation of English troops across the Irish Sea during the Nine Years' War in Ireland ensured that Devon's governors and inhabitants were at the

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<sup>113</sup> Braddick, 'Military Mobilization in Yorkshire', pp. 429 and 440.

<sup>114</sup> For cases of desertion in Devon see DRO, 1392M/L1600/2; DRO, 1392M/L1601/1; DRO, 3799M-3/O/1/25. For cases of desertion in other counties see SP 12/274 f.83 (Flintshire); *APC*, xxxii, pp. 359-60 (Lancashire and Lincolnshire); *APC*, xxxii, p. 392 (Dorset).

forefront of England's military endeavours even during periods when the threat from Spain was perceived to be low. To harness the realm's military resources the Privy Council increasingly looked to the office of lord lieutenant. By examining the social command structure of Devon's militia and the manner in which the county's forces were mustered and trained, this chapter has underlined the practical importance of the Elizabethan lieutenantcies in matters of defence and security. Specifically, it has shown how the local power and influence of Bath and his deputies served as the foundation from which Devon's militia was organised. However, such a system made rivalry inevitable thereby highlighting an inherent problem in a political-military organisation that was structured around personal alliances as opposed to military aptitude. Yet despite the short period of disruption that occurred in the South Division during the late-1590s, the chapter has made it plain that Devon's lieutenantcy worked hard to meet, even exceed, central government's defence policy. This was a relatively easy task during periods when the threat from Spain was perceived to be at its zenith – as it was in summer 1588 and summer 1599 – because the desire of the wider county community to protect their homes, livelihoods and families matched the Crown's need decisively to repel a Spanish attack. However, during the much longer periods when the perceived benefit of meeting the Crown's incessant military demands was low – as it was whenever the Privy Council ordered a general muster or levied troops for service in Ireland – the lieutenantcy needed to adapt the centre's defence policy to pacify Devon's overburdened inhabitants. Indeed, such occurrences reveal an important aspect of the relationship that existed between the centre and periphery during the late-Elizabethan era, namely, that the Crown had to secure the consent and cooperation of those who inhabited the counties in order to implement an

appropriate defence policy in response to the threat from Spain and the rebellion in Ireland. This was achieved primarily through the office of lord lieutenant. The Earl of Bath and his deputies served as important mediators between central government and the inhabitants of Devon, utilising their local knowledge and extensive social connections to facilitate the implementation of the centre's military demands while at the same time remaining mindful of local concerns and issues. Indeed, it is useful to envisage the existence of a dialogue taking place between central government and the inhabitants of Devon with the county's lieutenancy providing the channel through which that dialogue flowed. How this dialogue was maintained is a central concern of the following two chapters, especially when the need for the centre rapidly to communicate with the inhabitants of Devon increased as the Elizabethan war with Spain and the Nine Years' War in Ireland intensified.

# 4

## **The Tudor South-West's Royal Post-Stage Service:**

### **Structure, Speed and Efficiency**

The previous chapter concluded by stressing the increased necessity for central government rapidly to communicate with local government officials situated in Devon as England's conflict with Spain and the rebellion in Ireland progressed. The next two chapters will reveal precisely how this was achieved. This chapter provides an in-depth analysis of the Tudor south-west's royal post-stage service during the late-Elizabethan era. It focuses on the physical structure upon which the government's postal arrangements rested (that is to say, the Tudor highway), the operational mechanics employed for conveying official mail nationwide (as well as overseas) and the network of Exchequer-funded post-stages that connected London with the south-western periphery of the realm during periods of political turmoil. Moreover, it provides an important reassessment of the speed and efficiency of the south-west's royal post-stage service, demonstrating that the network was more rapid and reliable than many scholars have been willing to recognise. A fundamental aim of the whole thesis is to abolish the notion that Devon was a backward, cut-off, distant, insular and impenetrable county during the late-Elizabethan period. By highlighting the complexity, organisation and relative efficiency of the Tudor south-west's royal post-stage service this chapter makes an important and substantial contribution to this objective. Chapter three argued that the Elizabethan war with Spain and the Nine Years' War in Ireland stimulated an increased level of interaction between central government policy-makers situated at Whitehall and local

government enforcers residing in Devon. This trend was mirrored throughout the realm making an effective and reliable postal service vital. Yet despite this necessity the majority of scholars interested in sixteenth-century postal arrangements have argued that the royal post-stage network was 'insufficient', 'unreliable', 'slack', 'slow' and 'tardy'.<sup>1</sup> These judgements have been based largely upon the anecdotal evidence that survives among the State Papers which details numerous instances of when government dispatches were severely delayed or lost along the Exchequer-funded postal routes. However, relying solely on this type of evidence is inherently flawed because it presents a skewed and fundamentally inaccurate image of the royal post-stage service.

More recent studies, however, have overturned the fallacy of early modern postal inefficiencies, arguing for a much quicker, more efficient network. Indeed, the pioneering work of Mark Brayshay, Philip Harrison and Brian Chalkley has helped to alter modern understanding of the relative speed of the Elizabethan royal post-stage service. By utilising 181 unique postal endorsements written on the outside panel of an unspecified number of letters transported along the south-west's royal post-stage route between 1570 and 1620, they have calculated that it customarily took approximately fifty-and-a-half hours for government letters to be conveyed between London and Plymouth during the late-Elizabethan and early-Stuart period. This, they argue, 'provided an enhanced and sophisticated means of rapid communication between the core of government in Westminster and important places located on the principal thoroughfares of the realm' and constituted a marked improvement on

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<sup>1</sup> William Lewins, *Her Majesty's Mails* (London, 1864), p. 13; J. C. Hemmeon, *The History of the British Post Office* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1912), p. 98; E. J. B. Allen, *Post and Courier Service in the Diplomacy of Early Modern Europe* (The Hague, NL: Nijhoff, 1972), pp. 20-1; R. M. Willcocks, *England's Postal History* (Perth: The Author, 1975), p. 5; Philip Beale, *England's Mail: Two Millennia of Letter Writing* (Stroud: Tempus, 2005), pp. 172-3.

the postal arrangements that had gone before.<sup>2</sup> Such a comprehensive and systematic methodology has radically enhanced the reputation of the royal post-stage service. Indeed, by utilising an even larger sample of 335 postal endorsements from a collection of seventy-three letters dispatched along the Tudor south-west's royal post-stage route between 1595 and 1603, this chapter adopts the same approach to back up and reinforce Brayshay, Harrison and Chalkley's findings. Moreover, the chapter measures the efficiency of the royal post-stage service relative to central government expectations. The Privy Council stipulated that the relays of mounted post-boys who carried government dispatches back and forth along Exchequer-funded post-stage routes were to maintain a speed of seven miles-per-hour in summer and five miles-per-hour in winter.<sup>3</sup> This, as J. Crofts has rightly observed, was 'seldom if ever' achieved. In fact, by utilising postal endorsement data from a sample of forty-six letters, Crofts calculated an average speed of 4.6 miles-per-hour.<sup>4</sup> On the face of it one could argue that this confirms the inefficiency of the royal post-stage service. However, by converting the Privy Council's summer and winter target speeds into target times and comparing them with the times recorded in the 335 postal endorsements that have been gathered for the purposes of this chapter, a more refined interpretation of the royal post-stage service's capability has been achieved.

To summarise, in part because rather more coherent, comprehensive and systematic evidence has survived, an analysis of the royal post-stage service towards the south-west provides a valuable (perhaps the best) means to

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<sup>2</sup> Brayshay et al., 'Speed of the Royal Post', p. 282.

<sup>3</sup> SP 12/167 f.64: 'Orders set downe and allowed by the Lordes of Her Majesties Privie Council, and appoynted to be put in print for Her Majesties service; concerning the Postes of the Realme in general, presently or hereafter to be apointed'.

<sup>4</sup> J. Crofts, *Packhorse, Waggon and Post: Land Carriage and Communications under the Tudors and Stuarts* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967), pp. 87-8.

probe the character and speed of communication between London and Devon. Yet it should be noted here that a variety of other forms of carriage were certainly employed to send and deliver Devon correspondence and other documents (see chapter five). Unfortunately, however, it is much harder with any certainty or precision to establish either the full extent to which other methods of conveyance were used to deliver government mail, or the swiftness of their delivery. Consequently, this chapter focuses solely on the post-stage system with the aim of further rehabilitating the reputation of late-sixteenth-century royal postal communications and confirm that those at the apex of late-Elizabethan Devon's government enjoyed a rapid and sustained postal link with their superiors at Whitehall whenever a royal post-stage service was engaged between London and the south-west.

### **Postal infrastructure: roads and bridges**

At the centre of any examination of the speed and efficiency of the Elizabethan government's postal arrangements lies the physical infrastructure upon which the royal post-stage network rested: the Tudor highway. The condition of sixteenth-century roads and bridges – their upkeep, their maintenance and their ability to handle an ever increasing volume of traffic – is fundamental to contemporary understanding of the degree to which the 'core' and 'periphery' of the Tudor state was 'connected'. Older historiography has painted a rather dire picture of the state of the early modern road and bridge network: 'insecure foundations accounted only in part for the hazards run by travellers in the crossing of bridges'; 'neglect of the highways was by no means confined to country roads'; 'they were everywhere deplorable and getting steadily worse';

'the worst possible way between two given points was along the common road'; 'rutted tracks called roads must have been a common sight for three hundred years'.<sup>5</sup> Literary accounts by those who lived during the early modern era were similarly negative when it came to describing the roads and bridges of England. In his *Description of England* (1577), William Harrison portrayed the 'common highways' thus:

Of the daily encroaching of the covetous upon the highways, I speak not. But this I know by experience, that whereas some streets within these five-and-twenty years have been in most places 50 foot broad according to the law, whereby the traveler might either escape the thief or shift the mire or pass by the loaden cart without danger of himself and his horse, now they are brought unto 12 or 20 or 26 at the most, which is another cause also whereby the ways be the worse and many an honest man encumbered in his journey.<sup>6</sup>

Writing some forty years later the famous seventeenth-century antiquarian and topographer, Tristram Risdon, wrote an equally derisory account of the state of Devon's roads in his *Survey of Devon* (1620):

This county, as it is spacious, so it is populous, and very laborious, rough, and unpleasant to strangers travelling those ways, which are cumbersome and uneven, amongst rocks and stones, painful for man and horse; as they can best witness who have made trial thereof. For be they never so well mounted upon horses out of other countries, when they have travelled one journey in these parts, they can, in respect of ease of travel, forbear a second.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, on a superficial level the capacity for the royal post-stage service to be speedy and efficient does not appear to have been achievable, particularly in peripheral regions such as the south-west, given the apparently woeful road and bridge network that it relied on. Nevertheless, it is a central purpose of this

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<sup>5</sup> Joan Parkes, *Travel in England in the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1925), p. 31; Cyril H. Hartmann, *The Story of the Roads* (London: Routledge, 1927), p. 46; Charles H. Wilson, *England's Apprenticeship, 1603-1763* (London: Longmans, 1965), p. 43; Crofts, *Packhorse, Waggon and Post*, p. 16; Willcocks, *England's Postal History*, p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> Harrison, *Description of England*, p. 44.

<sup>7</sup> Tristram Risdon, *The Chorographical Description or Survey of the County of Devon* (London, 1811), p. 4. For modern-day appraisals of the state of Elizabethan Devon's road and bridge network see W. G. Hoskins, *Devon*, Fifth Edition (Tiverton: Devon Books, 1992), pp. 145-53; Francis Bennett, *The Roads of Devon and Cornwall* (The Author, 2007).

chapter to challenge this notion and argue that in reality the government's postal arrangements were more rapid and reliable than previously thought.

Indeed, despite the pessimistic depictions of early modern England's apparently dilapidated travel and communication network, there has been a growing trend among scholars to present a much more positive picture. Medievalists have argued that the road and bridge network inherited by the Tudors was far from being in a perennial state of decay and disrepair. On the contrary, medieval roads and bridges were 'adequate' for a Tudor economy that relied on 'quite a high level of internal trade'.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, economic historians have convincingly revealed road conditions in the seventeenth-century to be 'sufficiently good to permit the running of a complex network of scheduled public carrying services' and have thus helped to demonstrate 'the major significance of roads in inland transport'.<sup>9</sup> Roads also facilitated 'the advance of [improvised commercial] postal services' which were increasingly utilised by merchants to accelerate 'the integration of domestic [and foreign] markets'.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, the historical geographer, Mark Brayshay, has further undercut the 'tenacious old myths about the isolation of England's early modern provincial communities' – which were supposedly 'denied contact with their neighbours and regions further afield by impassable roads' – by examining the extensive inter-urban road travel undertaken by a broad spectrum of early modern society.<sup>11</sup> Evidence

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<sup>8</sup> D. F. Harrison, 'Bridges and Economic Development, 1300-1800', *EHR*, 45:2 (May, 1992), 240-61 (pp. 240 and 259).

<sup>9</sup> J. A. Chartres, 'Road Carrying in England in the Seventeenth Century: Myth and Reality', *Econ. HR*, 30:1 (February, 1977), 73-94 (pp.73 and 87).

<sup>10</sup> J. A. J. Housden, 'The Merchant Strangers' Post in the Sixteenth Century', *EHR*, 21:84 (October, 1906), 739-42; J. A. Chartres, *Internal Trade in England, 1500-1700* (London: MacMillan, 1977), p. 55.

<sup>11</sup> Mark Brayshay and Philip Harrison, 'Post-Horse Routes, Royal Progresses and Government Communications in the Reign of James I', *JTH*, 18:3 (1997), 116-33; Mark Brayshay, 'Long-Distance Royal Journeys: Anne of Denmark's Journey from Stirling to Windsor in 1603', *JTH*, 25:1 (2004), 1-21; id., 'Waits, Musicians, Bearwards and Players: the Inter-Urban Road Travel and Performances of Itinerant Entertainers in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England', *JHG*, 31 (2005), 430-58 (p. 431).

revealing the use of roads to facilitate the widespread circulation of intelligence, news and rumour has also proven useful to social historians seeking to illuminate the frequent contact and interaction that occurred between those who inhabited different regions of the country. Adam Fox, for example, has shown how professional carriers and travelling trades-people served as important 'brokers of news' in an age that preceded the daily press.<sup>12</sup> Collectively studies of this nature have had the effect of eroding the view that peripheral regions of early modern England were disconnected and cut-off from London and each other. Instead, they suggest the existence of a highly integrated nation or, to borrow a phrase from Professor Brayshay, a 'joined-up' realm.<sup>13</sup> Certainly they do not support the notion that the early modern road and bridge network was woefully inadequate. On the contrary, they provide substantial evidence to support James Daybell's contention that 'roads and the increasing numbers of travellers on them were crucial to postal and communication networks.'<sup>14</sup> Moreover, fundamental to this chapter, they suggest that a relatively speedy and efficient royal post-stage network was feasible.

### **Tudor England's royal post-stage network**

At the start of the sixteenth-century Tudor England's royal postal system via which government letters, orders, proclamations and other official state documentation was nationally and internationally conveyed differed greatly from the much more intricate network that was in place by the end of the century. In 1500 if central government wished to send official correspondence to the

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<sup>12</sup> Adam Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England, 1500-1700* (Oxford: OUP, 2000), pp. 335-405.

<sup>13</sup> Mark Brayshay, *A Joined-Up Realm: Historical Geography of Early Modern Road Communications in England and Wales* (Forthcoming: Exeter UP).

<sup>14</sup> Daybell, *The Material Letter*, p. 114.

provinces it had to do so by way of court messenger or pursuivant.<sup>15</sup> These royal messengers, who wore the King's livery, carried their dispatch directly from the court to its intended addressee via a relay of post-horses which they hired from stable-owners at towns through which the main roads that linked London with the rest of the country ran.<sup>16</sup> Thus, on the presentation of a royal warrant or placard, a royal messenger could acquire a fresh horse and guide for the next leg of his journey.<sup>17</sup> Once that leg was completed the guide returned to his master's stable with the tired horses and the process began again until the court messenger had reached his destination. This method of transportation, which was referred to by contemporaries as 'riding post', had been in place prior to the sixteenth-century but was extensively established throughout the realm in 1533 under the direction of Brian Tuke who had been appointed as England's first master of the posts in 1512.<sup>18</sup> In a letter to Thomas Cromwell dated 17 August 1533 Tuke expressed that it was

the Kings pleassurs that postes be better appointed and laide in all places most expedient w<sup>th</sup> comaundment to all townshippes in all places on payne of life to be in suche redynes and to make suche prouision of horses at all tymes as no ... losse of tyme be had.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> A pursuivant was a heraldic officer of the lowest rank.

<sup>16</sup> Mark Brayshay, 'Royal Post-Horse Routes in England and Wales: the Evolution of the Network in the Later-Sixteenth and Early-Seventeenth Century', *JHG*, 17:4 (1991), 373-89 (p. 373). The King's livery might be a metallic badge, worn on a chain or cord around the neck or affixed to the tunic. It would have been a well recognised symbol to anyone concerned that the bearer was an important court official on important state business and as such facilitated a court messenger's passage throughout the realm. I am grateful to Mark Brayshay for his guidance on this matter.

<sup>17</sup> In the majority of cases post-horses were available to hire from a local innkeeper. This provided any traveller that required a fresh horse and guide with the opportunity to rest and obtain fresh victuals before commencing their onward journey. For a contemporary description of sixteenth-century inns and the main thoroughfares along which some were situated see Harrison, *Description of England*, pp. 397-406.

<sup>18</sup> Tuke was formally appointed in 1517, serving until his death in 1545. His sixteenth-century successors were John Mason (1545-66), Thomas Randolph (1566-90) and John Stanhope (1590-1618).

<sup>19</sup> SP 1/78 f.128. 'Riding post' was not a means of transport reserved exclusively for court messengers carrying correspondence, it was also used by individuals on other business to transport them with haste to their intended destination.

The cost for the retention of fresh post-horses and guides at each town was in the majority of cases met by the local municipal authorities – a burden which was compounded by the fact that royal messengers could request a post-horse and guide at a reduced price in accordance with the royal prerogative of purveyance.<sup>20</sup>

Two routes widely recognised and regularly used by court messengers and other royal representatives by the time Tuke assumed his role as master of the posts were the roads that connected London with Dover and Berwick.<sup>21</sup> The former allowed vital communications to flow between those at the centre of English government and their counterparts in other ruling regimes throughout continental Europe, while the latter greatly assisted the Crown in coordinating the defence of the Scottish border and securing political control over England's northern counties.<sup>22</sup> However, early in the sixteenth-century it became apparent to central government that the slower ad hoc retention of court messengers personally to carry official correspondence as 'through posts' was insufficient for the rapidly growing level of communication that had begun to flow along these two strategically vital routes.<sup>23</sup> This realisation prompted the Crown to introduce

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<sup>20</sup> The prerogative of purveyance was the monarch's universal right to obtain goods and services at a reduced price to that which was paid on the open market. This principle extended to any representative of the monarch who carried a royal warrant or placard. Therefore, court messengers and royal representatives could demand this discount when they sought a post-horse and guide, paying just 1d. per mile. For examples see *APC*, i, pp. 333, 465, 469; *APC*, ii, pp. 504-5.

<sup>21</sup> For the Dover route, J. Crofts notes that as early as 1396 it is 'highly probable ... the Kentish hackneymen were handling the royal dispatches' (Crofts, *Packhorse Waggon and Post*, p. 64). They were certainly doing so by 1512, in addition to carrying a large volume of merchant correspondence (Housden, 'The Merchant Strangers' Post', pp. 739-42). For the Berwick route reference is made to the 'costs of posts between London and Berwick, June, 3rd year [1512]' in J. S. Brewer, ed., *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII* (London, 1920), No 1463, pp. 669-70.

<sup>22</sup> Once dispatches arrived at Dover there was no special shipping arrangements ordered. This contrasted to the post-barks (ships) periodically engaged to operate to and from Ireland. Instead the Dover post-master simply entrusted the royal packet to the captain of a departing vessel. However, it is highly probable that there were a number of captains regularly employed by the Dover post-master owing to their previous good service (Brayshay, 'Royal Post-Horse Routes', p. 379).

<sup>23</sup> The delivery times of court messengers carrying letters, proclamations, writs, summonses, etc., (usually, though not always, to multiple recipients), would have been slower than the post-stage service because messengers would have had to sleep; they could not travel non-stop.

Exchequer-funded post-stages running along the roads to Dover and Berwick.<sup>24</sup> By 1566 there were five Exchequer-funded post-stages situated approximately fifteen miles apart along the eighty mile Dover road, while for the 350 miles of road that connected London with Berwick there were a total of twenty-three Exchequer-funded post-stages similarly located approximately fifteen miles apart.<sup>25</sup>

The two linchpins of the royal post-stage network were the court post-master and his counterpart for the City of London.<sup>26</sup> Both men constituted the central node of the entire network. The court post-master oversaw all dispatches emanating from and arriving at the court, wherever the court may be.<sup>27</sup> He ensured that all outgoing royal letters or packets were promptly conveyed via mounted post-boys to the City of London post-master and that all incoming dispatches were delivered to the addressed court official.<sup>28</sup> It was the post-master for the City of London's duty to make certain that each royal dispatch he received from the court promptly began its journey to its assigned destination. He achieved this by retaining his own mounted post-boys to carry each royal letter or packet to the first post-stage along either the Dover or Berwick road. Conversely, he was also required to forward all incoming letters and packets to the court post-master, again utilising his mounted post-boys.

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<sup>24</sup> The exact date that Exchequer funding began is uncertain. However, the earliest Declared Accounts of the Master of the Posts (AO 1/1950/1) reveal that by 1566 both routes had become permanently funded by the state.

<sup>25</sup> For a detailed map of these routes, together with a list of the post-stages, see Brayshay, 'Royal Post-Horse Routes', pp. 376-7.

<sup>26</sup> The term 'post-master' was not used until the seventeenth-century. Instead, in the sixteenth-century individuals who oversaw the day-to-day running of a post-room were known simply as 'posts'. However, to avoid confusion the term post-master is used throughout the chapter.

<sup>27</sup> The duties of the court post-master increased considerably whenever the monarch was away from London because he was required to establish and coordinate an 'extraordinary' (that is, temporary) royal post-stage service in order for official correspondence to be conveyed between the travelling court and those government officials who had remained in the capital. For examples see James Gairdner, ed., *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII*, ix (London, 1886), pp. 7-8; *APC*, vii, p. 238; *APC*, x, p. 286; *APC*, xxiii, pp. 128, 150. For an overview of the 'extraordinary' posts laid during James I's reign see Brayshay and Harrison, 'Royal Progresses and Government Communications', pp. 116-33.

<sup>28</sup> *APC*, xxxii, p. 124.

Away from London, royal post-masters were appointed to manage the day-to-day running of each provincial post-stage. Initially the remit of the provincial royal post-master had been personally to carry royal letters and packets to his counterpart at the next post-stage. However, as with the court and City of London post-masters, by the second half of the sixteenth-century it was customary to outsource this task to a number of post-boys who also acted as local guides for any royal representative wishing to 'ride post' to the next stage. On arriving at the next royal post-stage the post-boy relinquished the royal dispatch and returned to his post-master together with the post-horses that had been used. The post-master of the neighbouring post-stage then arranged for his own mounted post-boys to carry the royal dispatch, along with any royal representative who desired a guide, to the next post-stage in exactly the same fashion. By the late-sixteenth-century the Exchequer was paying each post-master along the Berwick and Dover roads 20d. per day for these services.<sup>29</sup> This was a rather modest figure when one considers that it stayed static throughout the final years of Elizabeth's reign despite the ever increasing flow of official correspondence and government officials 'riding post' engendered by the war with Spain and Nine Years' War in Ireland. Nevertheless, any resentment for this poor wage seems to have been largely offset by an additional benefit that the Crown bestowed upon its post-masters, which was to give them a monopoly right to all commercial livery business within the vicinity of their post-stage. Royal post-masters – who were customarily innkeepers and stable-owners – therefore enjoyed first refusal on all

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<sup>29</sup> Those post-masters situated along the Dover road had initially been paid on a 'per packet' basis rather than a 'per day' basis. However, as the volume of official correspondence reached unprecedented levels in the 1580s and 1590s this payment system became increasingly costly. The government therefore took the prudent step of abolishing the privilege, thus bringing the Dover service under the same payment system as the rest of the network (Brayshay, 'Royal Post-Horse Routes', pp. 379-80).

private and commercial horse hire which had the knock on effect of attracting a higher volume of people wishing to lodge in their inn situated adjacent to their stables.<sup>30</sup>

Thus, by the mid-sixteenth-century these two crucial channels of communication linking London with the continent and Scotland became the blueprint from which the rest of the late-Elizabethan royal post-stage network was built. However, the rest of the network differed in one crucial characteristic: permanence. Whilst the necessity in having permanent Exchequer-funded post-stages along the Dover and Berwick roads had become entrenched in central government's thinking early in the sixteenth-century, similar attitudes did not exist for the royal post-stage routes that linked London with other parts of the realm. Indeed, Exchequer-funded post-stages towards Ireland and the south coast of England were introduced only during times of political instability and were promptly stood down once the threat level had receded. One occasion when this occurred was in autumn 1565 following the suppression of Shane O'Neill's Rebellion in Ulster. Royal post-stages had been engaged whilst the uprising ensued between London and Liverpool together with a post-bark (or ship) that carried correspondence back and forth across the Irish Sea.<sup>31</sup> However, having quelled O'Neill and his followers, the Lord Deputy of Ireland, Sir Henry Sidney, was convinced that the Exchequer-funded post-stages and post-bark were no longer necessary. Thus, when the Privy Council wrote to him concerning the 'dymynshinge of the Postes towards Irelande' in November 1565 Sidney's response was confidently to advise 'that the Postes layed betwene the Courte and the realme of Ireland might well be sparyd and that

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<sup>30</sup> For example, Thomas Hutchins, whose father had been the royal post-master of the post-stage at Crewkerne during the 1590s, owned an inn known as 'The George' located in Crewkerne's Fore Street. He also owned 'land in East Common Field' which might well have served as paddocks for grazing post-horses (SRO, DD\BR\boa/1, Crewkerne deed, 1619).

<sup>31</sup> Brayshay, 'Royal Post-Horse Routes', p. 382.

there is no necessarye cawse to have them contynued'.<sup>32</sup> Thereafter, as the political instability of the province ebbed and flowed so too did Exchequer funding of the post-stages towards Ireland.<sup>33</sup> Political turmoil in France following the assassination of King Henri III on 2 August 1589 also engendered the temporary expansion of the royal post-stage network to England's south coast.<sup>34</sup> During the immediate aftermath of the assassination the English government believed it vital to establish rapid and reliable communication with its agents and contacts in Europe. Thus, for 197 days between 15 September 1589 and 31 March 1590, royal post-masters were paid Exchequer wages at London, Chipstead, Flimwell and the port of Rye in Sussex.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, in February 1593 royal post-masters were engaged between London, Portsmouth and Southampton due to the Spanish presence in Brittany. However, true to form, this arrangement was short-lived and after only fifty-three days Exchequer funding of the service was discontinued.<sup>36</sup>

To summarise, an Exchequer-funded royal post-stage service was permanently engaged along the Dover and Berwick roads throughout the sixteenth-century to convey rapidly official mail back and forth from London. Periods of political turmoil engendered the temporary expansion of the network towards Ireland and England's south coast but these additional services were always disengaged once stability had been regained. It is important also to

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<sup>32</sup> *APC*, vii, pp. 292 and 302.

<sup>33</sup> For example, for fifty-nine days between 1 February 1599 and 31 March 1599 post-stages were funded between London and Holyhead, north Wales, at a cost of £102 13s. 8d. together with a 'post bark with men and furniture' (AO 1/1951/10). The London to Holyhead route remained between 1 April 1599 and 31 March 1602 during which time Robert Pepper (post-master of Holyhead) was granted £10 per month for 'enterteyninge a *post* bark with men and furniture to transporte her Majes<sup>ties</sup> packetts into Ireland'. An additional route was introduced on 1 October 1600 until 31 March 1602 linking London with Milford Haven, south Wales, via Bristol (AO 1/1951/11).

<sup>34</sup> Mark Brayshay, 'The Royal Post-Horse Routes of Hampshire in the Reign of Elizabeth I', *Proceedings of the Hampshire Field Club and Archaeological Society*, 48 (1992), 121-34 (p. 124).

<sup>35</sup> AO 1/1950/6.

<sup>36</sup> AO 1/1951/8.

stress that the royal post-stage service was above all else an official service to be utilised only for the conveyance of government mail to and from Elizabeth and her chief ministers at Whitehall and local officials at the apex of county government. Private letters, or 'bye letters' as they became known, do seem to have been unofficially carried alongside the royal packet but post-masters were never to delay the progress of official correspondence in order to post 'private' letters or deliver those that had been received.<sup>37</sup> One final thing to note is that even when Exchequer funding was withdrawn from a post-stage court messengers and other royal representatives could still 'ride post' to that location, present a royal warrant or placard and requisition fresh post-horses at a cut-price in accordance with the royal prerogative of purveyance. In other words royal post-stages to the south-west and elsewhere remained intact during periods when Exchequer funding was withdrawn, operating as private commercial horse-hiring enterprises, and so could easily be re-engaged by central government should the need arise.

### **Exchequer-funded post-stages to the south-west**

The fact that Exchequer funding was never a permanent feature along roads other than the two that connected London with Dover and Berwick has led some scholars to misinterpret the true extent that the state funded a royal post-stage service to the south-west. For example, Philip Beale has questionably suggested that a 'temporary [Exchequer-funded] arrangement was made in July 1574 when the Privy Council ordered post horses to be provided from the Court

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<sup>37</sup> As an alternative, Professor Daybell has described the 'carrier network' as 'the most accessible and affordable option for ordinary letter-writers.' An early modern carrier was 'an individual paid to carry goods, packages and letters' back and forth from London to the provinces (Daybell, *The Material Letter*, pp. 126-35).

at Windsor to Exeter for packets for the queen's service', while David Cornelius has insisted that

Posts were again laid as far as Exeter in the critical year of the Spanish Armada – 1588 – and a new stage was inserted between Crewkerne and Honiton, at Chard, and three extra stages were again laid between Exeter and Plymouth in 1588 at Chudleigh, Ashburton and Brent, and these were still in use in 1590. Soon after, they were dismissed but were brought back into use by 1597: and about this time the Plymouth Road became a Standing Post.<sup>38</sup>

Yet despite these confident assertions, Beale's suggestion of a royal post-stage service being engaged in July 1574 must be treated with extreme caution owing to the lack of any reference being made to Exchequer funding in that month and year in the Declared Accounts of the Master of the Posts.<sup>39</sup> Cornelius's claims, moreover, are definitely wrong because, as will be shown below, central government curiously chose to utilise court messengers to carry dispatches as 'through posts' between London and the south-west during the Armada crisis of 1588 rather than to re-engage the royal post-stage system. Fortunately, however, the nature, extent and duration of royal post-stages engaged between London and the south-west has been painstakingly mapped by Professor Mark Brayshay, who discounted the 'fragmentary and frequently misleading evidence yielded by the surviving State Papers'. Instead he has expertly utilised the Declared Accounts of the Master of the Posts – which record the towns that served as royal post-stages, the men who were employed as post-masters, the wages they received, the periods of Exchequer funding and, in some instances,

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<sup>38</sup> Beale, *England's Mail*, p. 219; David B. Cornelius, *Devon and Cornwall: A Postal Survey, 1500-1791* (Reigate: Postal History Society, 1973), p. 2.

<sup>39</sup> AO 1/1950/2. The Privy Council ordered that 'post horses be laid in all convenient places betwixt the Coourte and Exeter, for the spedie conveyance of all such pacquettes as shalbe sent from thearle of Bedford out of the West Countrey for the service of her Majestie (*APC*, viii, pp. 268-9) and granted 'An open placard for [Robert] Gascoigne [the court post-master] to lay postes in the West Partes for the sending of letters by thearle of Bedford to the Coourte and back again (*APC*, viii, p. 271). However, if this service was truly engaged one would expect accounts of wages to be present in the Declared Accounts of the Master of the Posts. They are not, leading one to suspect that the engagement of this route was cancelled. I am thankful to Mark Brayshay for his expert advice on this matter.

the reason for engagement – ‘to chart more accurately ... the development of the royal post-horse routes of England and Wales’.<sup>40</sup> This section utilises the same evidence. What is more, for the first time, King Henry VII’s Book of Payments is used in conjunction with the Declared Accounts of the Master of the Posts to demonstrate that an Exchequer-funded post-stage service to the south-west was first engaged much earlier than previously thought.

The earliest known record of post-stages receiving Exchequer funding along the road that connected London with the south-west is currently a 1506 entry in King Henry VII’s Book of Payments. The relevant information provides not only the locations of each post-stage (see figure 4.1), but also the names of each post-master, the duration of Exchequer funding, the post-master’s daily wage (20d.) and the total cost to the treasury (£9):

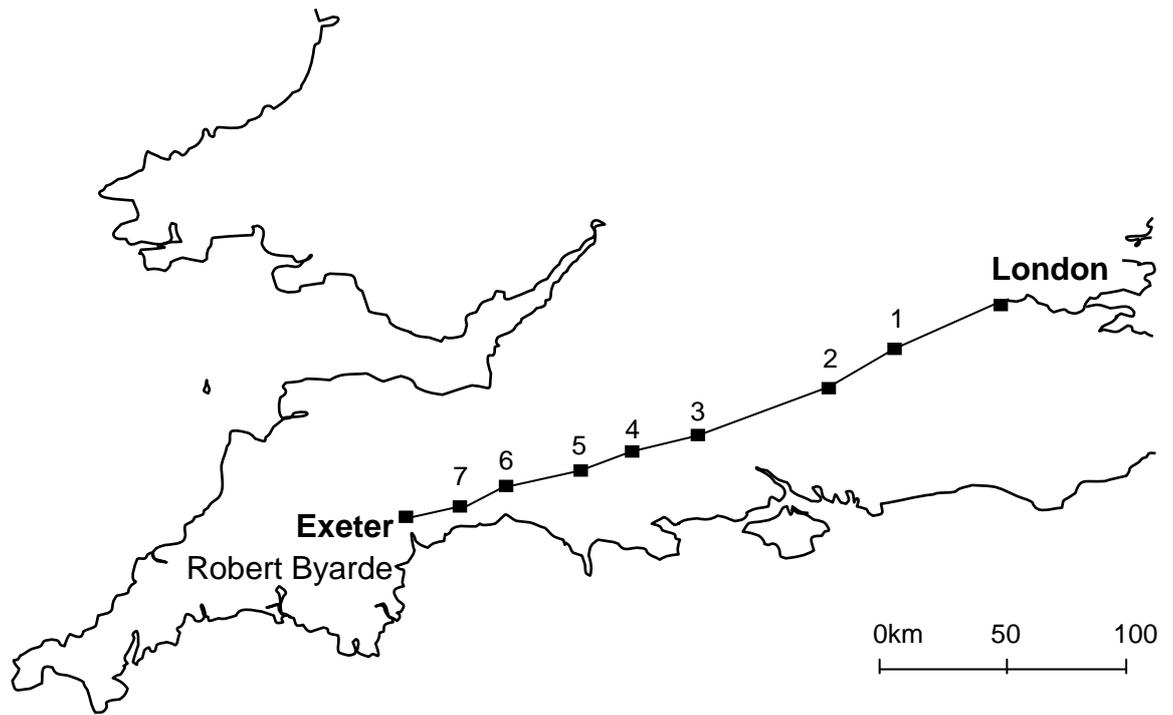
Item to Gilbert burgh one post lying at Bagshote.  
 Thomas Anesley an other post lying at Basyngstoke.  
 Iohn Hume lying at Salesbury. Ieffrey More lying  
 at Shaftsbury. Richard Dean lying at Sherborne.  
 Iohn Power lying at Charde. Robert Churcher lying  
 at Hunnyngton[Honiton]. & Robert Byarde lying at Exceter.  
 euynche of them havyng for xx<sup>tie</sup>[20] dais at xx<sup>d</sup>[20d.] the  
 pece. begynnyng upon this tewesday xvij[17] die Meij[May]  
 anno xxj[21 Henry VII – 1506].<sup>41</sup>

} ix<sup>li</sup>[£9]

The duration of this arrangement was fleeting. Nevertheless, for twenty days commencing on Tuesday 17 May 1506 a royal post-stage service was established between the court and Exeter. Frustratingly there is no mention of why this temporary service was engaged. However, the south-west did attract attention from central government in January 1506 when Archduke Philip of

<sup>40</sup> Brayshay, ‘Royal Post-Horse Routes’, p. 375; id., ‘Royal Post-Horse Routes in South West England in the Reigns of Elizabeth I and James I, *TDA*, 123 (December, 1991), 79-103.

<sup>41</sup> E 36/214 f.46: quoted in J. W. M. Stone, ed., *The Inland Posts (1392-1672): A Calendar of Historical Documents with Appendixes* (London: Christie’s Robson Lowe, 1987), p. 2.



1. Bagshot – Gilbert Burgh
2. Basingstoke – Thomas Anesley
3. Salisbury – John Hume
4. Shaftesbury – Jeffrey More
5. Sherborne – Richard Dean
6. Chard – John Power
7. Honiton – Robert Church

Figure 4.1: Exchequer-funded post-stages and post-masters engaged between London and Exeter, 17 May 1506 to 4 June 1506.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>42</sup> E 36/214 f.46: quoted in Stone, *Inland Posts*, p. 2.

Burgundy and his wife were forced to land at Weymouth, Dorset, for a period of time as a result of rough seas in the English Channel.<sup>43</sup> Whether the ensuing establishment of Exchequer-funded post-stages between the court and Exeter had anything to do with this situation is unclear. Nevertheless, the fact that the duration of Exchequer funding was set prior to the commencement of operation suggests that there was a specific reason for the establishment of rapid and reliable communications.

With such an early precedent being set it is somewhat surprising that it was not until summer 1579 that central government deemed it necessary to re-engage Exchequer-funded post-stages between London and the south-west. Nevertheless, from the available evidence it appears that this was the case. Indeed, even during the Western Rebellion of 1549 royal post-stages seem not to have been engaged.<sup>44</sup> Instead letters were conveyed between central and local government officials via personal messenger – a process that will be explained in detail in chapter five. While the reason for the brief establishment of royal post-stages between London and Exeter in 1506 is unclear, the catalyst behind the recommencement of Exchequer-funded post-stages to Devon on 1 August 1579 for 122 days was made explicitly clear in the Declared Accounts of the Master of the Posts:

Also allowed ... for wages and enterteynement of ordinarie posts laid towards Ireland betwene London and Tavestocke[Tavistock] for more speedie intercourse in conveyance of *lettres* and dispatch of other her Majes<sup>ties</sup> busines accordinge to th' importaunce thereof after the rate of xx<sup>d</sup>[20d.] per diem to euerie severall post so employed.<sup>45</sup>

The reintroduction of royal post-stages to Devon was deemed essential due to the escalating instability in Ireland caused by the landing of Papal troops in July

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<sup>43</sup> Beale, *England's Mail*, p. 219.

<sup>44</sup> Anthony Fletcher and Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Tudor Rebellions*, Revised Fifth Edition (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2008), pp. 54-66.

<sup>45</sup> AO 1/1950/2A.

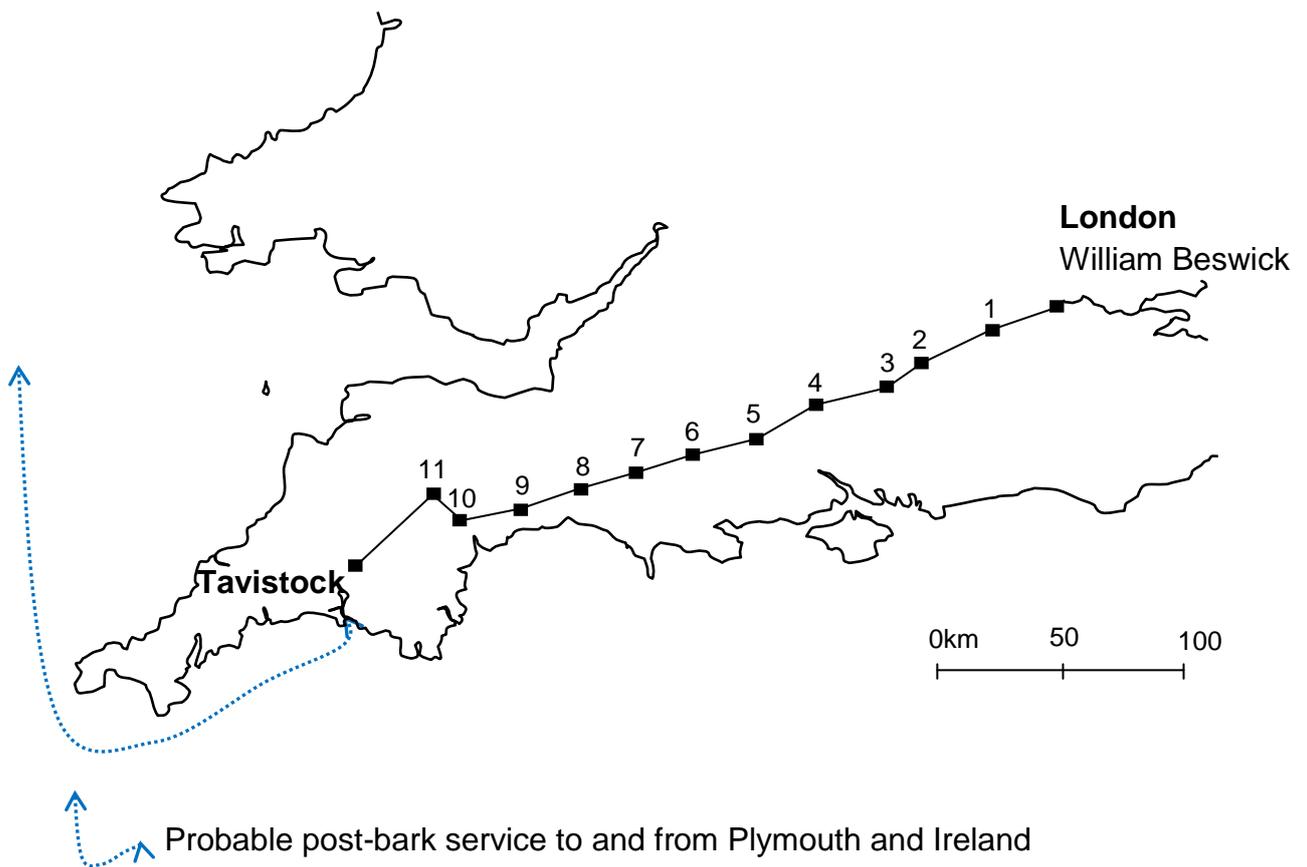
1579. This triggered the second Desmond Rebellion (1579-1583), an insurrection throughout southern Ireland spearheaded by Gerald, fourteenth Earl of Desmond.<sup>46</sup> Thus, due to the location of the rebellion within Ireland, central government believed it prudent to fund royal post-stages between London and Devon in order for vessels to carry official government dispatches concerning the Irish situation to and from the county's ports in the same manner as the post-barks periodically engaged at Liverpool, Holyhead and Milford Haven.<sup>47</sup> As one can see from figure 4.2, the route had been slightly altered from that of 1506 with new post-stages introduced at Staines, Hartfordbridge, Andover, Crewkerne, Crediton and Tavistock (the location of the second Earl of Bedford's Devon residence), as well as the removal of the post-stages at Bagshot and Chard. The financial cost to the Crown for re-establishing royal post-stages for the 122 days amounted to £125 11s. 8d.

The next political and military emergency to affect the south-western peninsula was the Armada crisis of 1588. One would have thought the escalating war with Spain would have encouraged central government officials to order the re-engagement of Exchequer-funded post-stages between London and the south-west. However, this did not occur despite the claims made to the contrary by David Cornelius. Instead the Privy Council believed it sufficient to increase the deployment of court messengers who were entrusted personally to carry official correspondence to and from Devon as 'through posts' – that is, individual letter-carriers travelling the whole journey via a relay of post-horses that they hired along the way. Evidence of this arrangement is revealed by a series of payments made to various court messengers between May and

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<sup>46</sup> Hammer, *Elizabeth's Wars*, pp. 108-9.

<sup>47</sup> Exchequer funding for post-barks is not stated in the Declared Accounts for the Master of the Posts. It therefore seems likely that an ad hoc system similar to that which was employed at Dover operated. Due to Tavistock's proximity, Plymouth seems the most likely port from where this improvised service ran.



1. Staines – Thomas Dove
2. Hartfordbridge – Christopher Abraham
3. Basingstoke – John Hopkins
4. Andover – John Smith
5. Salisbury – Mathew Andrewes
6. Shaftesbury – John Barto<sup>r</sup> [Bartholemew?]
7. Sherborne – Stephen Exall
8. Crewkerne – John Hutchins
9. Honiton – Richard Hilliard
10. Exeter – Richard Beckingham
11. Crediton – No name given

Figure 4.2: Exchequer-funded post-stages and post-masters engaged between London and Tavistock, 1 August 1579 to 30 November 1579.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>48</sup> AO 1/1950/2A.

Messenger	£	s.	d.
John Hedd	8	0	0
William Page	7	0	0
John Rydinges	8	0	0
John Deacons	3	0	0
Richard Swanson	9	0	0
Carey Reynell	5	0	0
John Deacons	4	0	0
Captain Crosse	20	0	0
William Page	7	0	0
William Saunders	9	0	0
Thomas Jobson	5	0	0
Jonas Bodenham	10	0	0
Robert Browne	13	0	0
Valentine Harrys	10	0	0
Arthure Gytins	10	0	0
Gabriell Hills	4	13	4
Arthure Gytins	10	0	0
<b>sum</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>4</b>
William Stallinge*	6	13	4
Adam Charlton*	10	0	0
<b>sum</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>total</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>

Figure 4.3: Payments made to court messengers riding as 'through posts' between the court and Plymouth, May to September 1588.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>49</sup> SP 12/216 f.100: 'The names of such Gromes, Messengers, and others as haue had anie allowances w<sup>th</sup> in thoffice of the Threr[Treasurer] of her majes<sup>tes</sup> Chamber for the carriage of *Lettres* betwene the Court and the Towne of Plimouth in the monethes of Maie, Iune, Iulie, August, and September 1588'. \* These men were paid separately for services rendered during the same period.

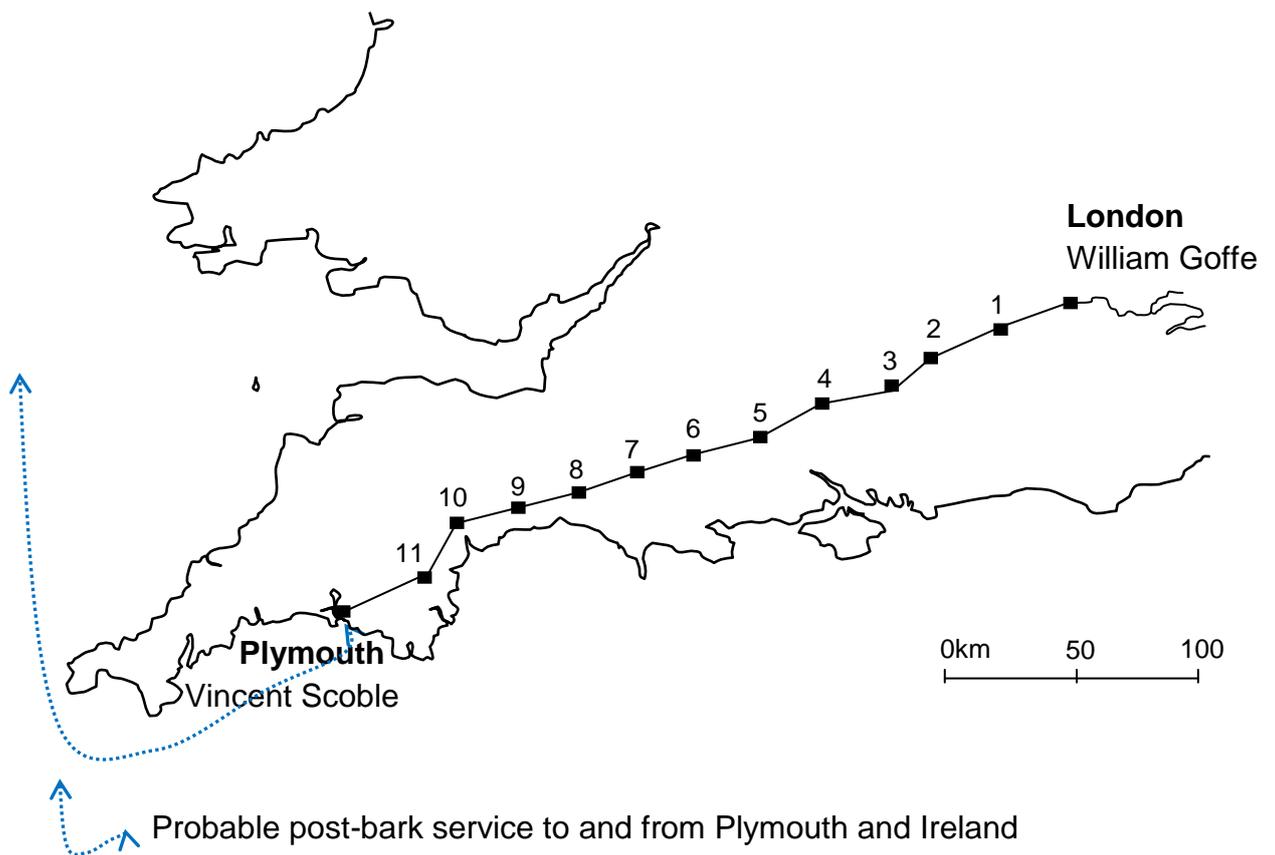
September 1588 (see figure 4.3). When one compares the total outlay of £158 6s. 8d. paid to these court messengers over the five months (153 days) that are accounted for with the total expenditure of £125 11s. 8d. laid out over the four months (122 days) that royal post-stages were engaged in autumn 1579 it is clear that the decision not to re-engage Exchequer-funded post-stages in 1588 was not a financial one. However, faced by a rapidly changing set of circumstances and an ever increasing 'to do list' it is likely that the Privy Council was reluctant to accord attention to the re-engagement of royal post-stages westward only for them to be dismissed once the Spanish threat had dissipated.

However, by autumn 1595 the Spanish threat had reasserted itself and turmoil in Ireland had recommenced. The Privy Council therefore made the decision to re-engage Exchequer-funded post-stages between London and Devon for an initial period of twenty months (1 August 1595 to 31 March 1597).<sup>50</sup> The route adopted was almost an exact replica of the 1579 route. However, instead of branching off to Tavistock via Crediton at Exeter the route proceeded to Plymouth via Ashburton (see figure 4.4).<sup>51</sup> Post-bark services to Ireland were not paid for by the Exchequer. It therefore seems probable that an ad hoc shipping system similar to the one that was seemingly employed in 1579 was again utilised. In addition, only Stephen Exall and John Hutchins remained in their position as post-master of Sherborne and Crewkerne respectively. Moreover, by 1 April 1597 Gilbert Bickton had replaced William Atkyns as post-master of Staines, while between 1 April 1597 and 31 March 1599 Gilbert

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<sup>50</sup> AO 1/1951/9.

<sup>51</sup> Francis Russell, second Earl of Bedford, died in 1585. He was replaced as lord lieutenant of Devon by William Burchier, third Earl of Bath, who resided at Tawstock, north Devon. Thus, there was no longer any need for a link to Tavistock. Instead official correspondence was carried to and from the Earl of Bath via Exeter by mounted messengers retained by the city's corporation (see chapter five).



1. Staines – William Atkyns
2. Hartfordbridge – Gilbert Lippescombe
3. Basingstoke – George Yate
4. Andover – Robert West
5. Salisbury – John Dowley
6. Shaftesbury – Roger Brice
7. Sherborne – Steven Exall
8. Crewkerne – John Hutchins
9. Honiton – Christopher Searle
10. Exeter – Thomas Newman
11. Ashburton – John Hext

Figure 4.4: Exchequer-funded post-stages and post-masters engaged between London and Plymouth on 1 August 1595.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>52</sup> AO 1/1951/9.

Lippescombe was succeeded by Henrie Davies as post-master at Hartfordbridge, Richard Hutchins took over from his father, John, at Crewkerne and Thomas Marwodd replaced Christopher Searle at Honiton.<sup>53</sup>

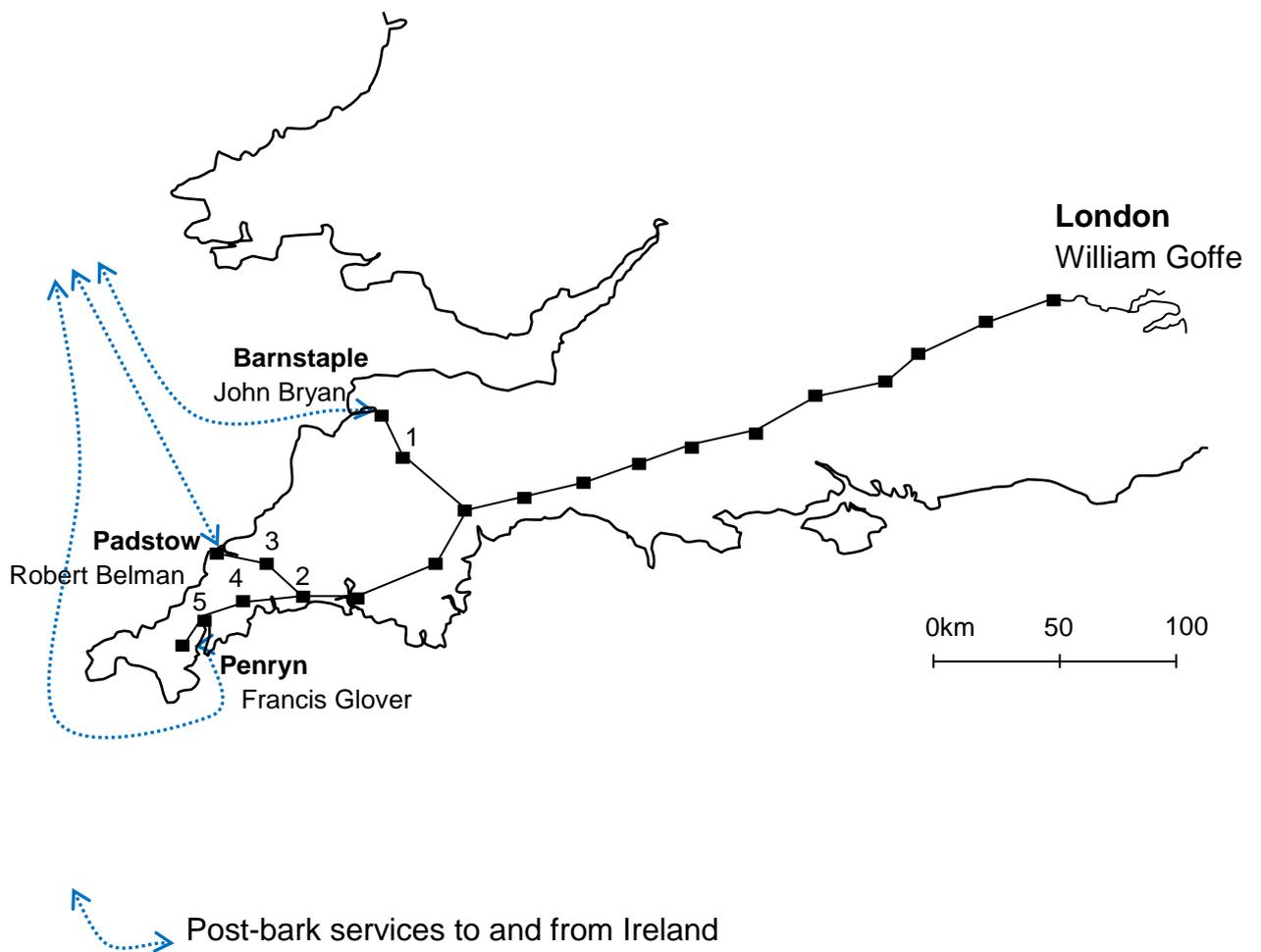
The last significant development of Exchequer-funded post-stages engaged between London and the south-west to occur during the reign of Elizabeth I took place between 1 October 1600 and 31 March 1602. By October 1600 the Nine Years' War in Ireland was in its sixth year and England's war with Spain had continued unabated since 1585. Consequently, in order to coordinate an effective response to these persistent threats from the confines of Whitehall, the Privy Council ordered the extension of Exchequer funding beyond Plymouth further westward into Cornwall. Initially, on 1 October 1600, extra royal post-stages at Looe, St Austell and Truro were engaged to carry royal packets to and from Vincent Scoble in Plymouth and Francis Glover in Penryn while a year later, on 1 October 1601, another new route was engaged between Scoble in Plymouth and Robert Belman in Padstow via Looe and Bodmin. Both were designed to speed up the conveyance of government mail to and from Ireland and the Declared Accounts of the Master of the Posts reveal that to achieve this Belman was paid an additional £10 per month 'for kepinge a *post barke* with men and furniture'.<sup>54</sup> In addition, on 1 November 1601 another branch was added between Exeter and Barnstaple via Chulmleigh 'for sendinge of *lettres* to and from Ireland for her *Majes<sup>ties</sup>* service'.<sup>55</sup> Again, although it is not explicitly itemised in the accounts, John Bryan, post-master of Barnstaple, similarly

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<sup>53</sup> AO 1/1951/10.

<sup>54</sup> AO 1/1951/11.

<sup>55</sup> AO 1/1951/11.



1. Chulmleigh – John Newman
2. Looe – George and John Cumming
3. Bodmin – Richard Triggs
4. St Austell – Richard Dallamayne
5. Truro – Ralph Bird

Figure 4.5: Additional Exchequer-funded post-stages and post-masters engaged in Devon and Cornwall.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>56</sup> AO 1/1951/11. Royal post-stages to Penryn were engaged in October 1600, to Padstow in October 1601 and to Barnstaple in November 1601.

arranged vessels to carry letters between the north Devon port and Ireland.<sup>57</sup> The fact that the London to Plymouth route was extended into Cornwall and north Devon indicates that the flow of official correspondence to and from the south-west and London reached a watershed moment during the two year period when an extended service was engaged (1 October 1600 to 31 September 1603).<sup>58</sup> This is reinforced by the fact that both Vincent Scoble and Thomas Newman received additional payments ‘over and above’ their daily wage of 20d. throughout this period. Clearly Plymouth and Exeter, the two most crucial bottle-necks of the south-west’s royal post-stage network, were seen as more burdensome than any other with Scoble and Newman being expected to channel vital correspondence to and from Cornwall and north Devon in addition to handling the correspondence of their immediate locales.<sup>59</sup> Following the death of Elizabeth the requirement of having an extended royal post-stage service diminished – Hugh O’Neill, the leader of the Irish rebels, had surrendered and war with Spain was all but over. As a consequence, James I authorised the withdrawal of Exchequer funding from the post-stages in Cornwall and north Devon but retained funding for the main service between London and Plymouth. A link to Padstow was re-engaged by the Crown in June 1608 until March 1611 by which time James I ‘thought fit to discharge certain post stages not usually maintained but in time of war, and not now necessary’ which included ‘all those to Plymouth and Padstow’.<sup>60</sup>

To review, the periods when London was connected to the south-west via a network of Exchequer-funded royal post-stages were a product of political

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<sup>57</sup> HMC, *Salisbury*, xi, p. 497.

<sup>58</sup> AO 1/1951/12.

<sup>59</sup> Vincent Scoble received an additional 4d. per day when royal post-stages were engaged westward into Cornwall, while Thomas Newman received an additional 12d. per day when royal post-stages were engaged at Chulmleigh and Barnstaple (AO 1/1951/11).

<sup>60</sup> Stone, *Inland Posts*, p. 42; Brayshay, ‘Post-Horse Routes in the South West’, pp. 94-5.

necessity and highlight the reactive nature of Tudor government. Conflict with Spain and rebellion in Ireland stimulated an increased level of interaction between politicians at the core and periphery of the Tudor state. Devon's geographical situation and strategic importance placed it at the forefront of both crises and led to a strong connection being formed between Elizabeth's chief ministers at Whitehall and the county's political elite throughout the late-Elizabethan era. A rapid and reliable postal service between the capital and the county was therefore crucial for the successful implementation of central government policy. Yet while the royal post-stage system could be quickly mobilised during times of stress, it curiously did not feature during the Spanish Armada crisis of 1588. Instead a slower ad hoc messenger service was regarded as sufficient. Nevertheless, by autumn 1595 the war with Spain persisted and rebellion in Ireland had broken out making the need for an Exchequer-funded post-stage service between London and the south-west paramount.

### **Post-stage travel times between Plymouth and London, 1595-1603**

As noted earlier, previous scholarly research has primarily presented a slow and unreliable royal post-stage service by utilising anecdotal evidence from the State Papers that reveal instances when the network broke down and misfired. The remainder of this chapter will undercut assertions of this nature and, with the help of postal endorsement data, argue that, at least by sixteenth-century standards, the south-west's royal post-stage network was relatively speedy and efficient. This section will employ data from a sample of 335 postal endorsements written by the south-west's royal post-masters on the outside

panel of seventy-three letters to measure the average (mean) travel time of official mail conveyed to and from the south-west and the capital between autumn 1595 and spring 1603. Moreover, the range of times calculated will be presented alongside the mean times in order to establish how efficient the post was at this level.

Post-master endorsement of the royal packets and individual letters that passed through their post-rooms supplemented the ledgers that they were ordered to keep by the Privy Council. Thus, when a packet or letter arrived at a post-room the time of arrival (to the nearest quarter-of-an-hour), the date (in some cases) and the name of the post-stage were all customarily scribbled on the outside panel of a dispatch in addition to being entered in a ledger. Unfortunately, however, it seems that no ledgers have survived. This is highly surprising when one considers the fact that post-masters were required to make monthly copies of what had been entered into them which they then forwarded to the Master of the Posts. Nevertheless, the only surviving ledger evidence to have been discovered is a fair copy of the ledger entries made by John Rigges, post-master of Huntingdon, during August 1585.<sup>61</sup> Even more disappointing for the modern researcher is the fact that very little of the paper used to wrap royal packets, which would have had postal endorsements written on them, appears to have survived. This is to be expected because they offered no immediate worth to the recipient.<sup>62</sup> However, postal endorsements written on the outside panel of individual letters do survive in sufficient number to provide a useable amount of serial data for measuring the travel speed and, ultimately, the efficiency of the Tudor south-west's royal post-stage network.

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<sup>61</sup> Brayshay et al., 'Speed of the Royal Post', pp. 275-8; CP 138/202.

<sup>62</sup> Daybell, *The Material Letter*, pp. 50 and 121.

For example, post-master endorsements scribbled on the outside panel of a letter written by Lieutenant Edward Doddington in Plymouth to the Privy Council in London reveal the progress it made along the south-west's royal post-stage network following its dispatch from the town's fort at 19.00 on 25 July 1599.<sup>63</sup> The letter reached John Hext's post-room in Ashburton at 02.00 on 26 July, Thomas Newman in Exeter at 06.00, Thomas Marwodd in Honiton at 08.00, Richard Hutchins in Crewkerne at 11.00, Steven Exall in Sherborne at 13.00 and Roger Brice in Shaftesbury at 16.00. Unfortunately, John Dowley failed to endorse the letter when it arrived at his post-room in Salisbury. However, it was with Robert West in Andover at 08.00 on 27 July, George Yate in Basingstoke at 13.00, Henrie Davies in Hartfordbridge at 15.30, Gilbert Bickton in Staines at 19.00 and William Goffe in London at what appears to be 23.00. Thus, the letter took approximately fifty-two hours to travel the twelve post-stages connecting Vincent Scoble's post-room in Plymouth with William Goffe's post-room in London. Similarly, a letter written by the Mayor of Plymouth, Thomas Payne, and other chief inhabitants to Lord Admiral Nottingham and Sir Robert Cecil on 30 July 1601 bears postal endorsements for much of its journey from Plymouth to London.<sup>64</sup> It left Plymouth's fort at 01.00 on 30 July and was received by John Hext in Ashburton at 05.00, Thomas Newman in Exeter at 08.00, Thomas Marwodd in Honiton at 10.00, Richard Hutchins in Crewkerne at 15.00, Steven Exall in Sherborne at 18.30 and Roger Brice in Shaftesbury at 22.00. Once again John Dowley failed to endorse the letter on its arrival in Salisbury. Nevertheless, it was with Robert West in Andover at 10.30 on 31 July, George Yate in Basingstoke at 15.00, Henrie Davies in Hartfordbridge at 17.30, Gilbert Bickton in Staines at 22.00

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<sup>63</sup> SP 12/271 f.184.

<sup>64</sup> SP 12/281 f.65.

and William Hynchley (who succeeded Goffe on 1 July 1601) in London at 04.00 on 1 August 1601. In all it had taken the letter fifty-one hours to be conveyed from Vincent Scoble in Plymouth to William Hynchley in London. Both letters therefore took nearly the same amount of time to travel the twelve post-stages that connected Plymouth with London – a distance of approximately 230 statute miles. However, how usual were these times during the last eight years of the Elizabethan era? By using the postal endorsement data from both of these letters in conjunction with data from seventy-one other letters it has been possible to calculate, with a fair degree of accuracy, mean travel speeds achieved by the mounted post-boys who carried government mail to and from Plymouth and London between autumn 1595 and spring 1603.

However, before revealing the times that have been calculated there are a number of methodological issues that must be flagged up. First, the modern concept of Greenwich Mean Time was not known in early modern England. In fact in the late-sixteenth-century each town in England functioned according to its own distinct local time.<sup>65</sup> This meant that the inhabitants of Elizabethan Plymouth conducted their daily lives at approximately sixteen minutes behind their counterparts living in London.<sup>66</sup> One might therefore think it necessary to adjust the postal endorsement data to take into account this variation. However, this would have no bearing on the results whatsoever because time-keeping was not as precise as it is today. Indeed, the endorsements written by the post-masters were calculated only to the nearest quarter-of-an-hour and were accompanied by time-markers such as 'morning', 'before noon', 'afternoon', 'evening' and 'night'. Moreover, in some instances a post-master's endorsement is not fully legible or is incomplete. This information has therefore not been

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<sup>65</sup> D. Howse, *Greenwich Time and the Discovery of the Longitude* (Oxford: OUP, 1980), pp. 80-8.

<sup>66</sup> Brayshay et al., 'Speed of the Royal Post', pp. 270-3.

used. In addition, there are some occasions where a letter has not been endorsed at all by certain post-masters along the route. This was presumably because they regarded a ledger entry as sufficient. Thus, many letters only reveal travel times for part of their journey. Having conducted a thorough analysis of the postal endorsements chosen for this study it also seems highly probable that errors were made by the hurried post-masters when scribbling down the time that a letter arrived in their custody. In particular, when using Roman instead of Arabic numerals it must have been all too easy for a post-master to mistakenly write 'before vj at night' when in actual fact he should have written 'before vij at night', while during the long nights of winter 'three quarters of an hour past iij at night' could quite easily have been early evening or morning. Thus, taking all of this into consideration, the use of postal endorsement data will only ever provide an approximate arrival time for an unequal number of royal post-stages. This is compounded by the fact that the inevitable post-master mistakes and the use of vague time-markers have engendered ambiguity with regards to the unusually fast and the pitifully slow speeds that were recorded on rare occasions. Such methodological problems have led Dorian Gerhold to remark that: 'evidence of this kind does not readily lend itself to statistical analysis'.<sup>67</sup>

Nevertheless, postal endorsement data can still be used to calculate the speed of journeys undertaken to transact matters of state providing that a method is applied to ameliorate any potential inaccuracy. Whilst not providing a complete solution to the problem, nineteen instances that were more than two

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<sup>67</sup> D. Gerhold, 'Packhorses and Wheeled Vehicles in England, 1550-1800', *JTH*, 14 (1993), 1-26.

Post-stage	Cases	Minimum time (hours)	Maximum time (hours)	Mean	Standard deviation	Extreme times	Adjusted mean	% of cases under adjusted mean
Plymouth to Ashburton	31	3.00	15.00	6.70	3.53	4	5.56	52
Ashburton to Exeter	43	3.00	9.25	4.49	1.37	2	4.29	65
Exeter to Honiton	52	2.00	15.00	3.33	1.90	1	3.11	67
Honiton to Crewkerne	43	2.00	15.00	4.58	2.12	1	4.33	53
Crewkerne to Sherborne	30	2.00	8.00	3.54	1.41	3	3.19	70
Sherborne to Shaftesbury	25	1.25	13.00	3.63	2.55	2	2.99	76
Shaftesbury to Salisbury	21	2.00	11.00	4.20	2.05	1	3.86	52
Salisbury to Andover	21	2.25	16.00	4.90	3.02	1	4.35	71
Andover to Basingstoke	29	2.00	8.50	4.51	1.76	2	4.21	69
Basingstoke to Hartfordbridge	24	1.50	8.00	2.67	1.40	1	2.43	67
Hartfordbridge to Staines	10	3.00	7.00	4.25	1.16	1	3.94	40
Staines to London	6	3.00	6.00	3.83	1.17	0	3.83	50
<b>Totals</b>	<b>335</b>	<b>27.00</b>	<b>131.75</b>	<b>50.63</b>		<b>19</b>	<b>46.09</b>	<b>61</b>

Figure 4.6: Travel times between the south-west's Exchequer-funded post-stages, 1595-1603.

BL, Lansdowne MS., 81/182; SP 12/253 f.115; SP 12/257 f.81; SP 12/264 f.91; SP 12/264 f.95; SP 12/271 f.184; SP 12/272 f.116; SP 12/279 f.133; SP 12/281 f.65; SP 12/281 f.104; SP 12/281 f.153; SP 12/281 f.166; SP 12/281 f.169; SP 12/281 f.174; SP 12/285 f.17; SP 12/285 f.26; SP 12/285 f.147; SP 12/254 f.147; SP 12/255 f.20; SP 12/256 f.189; SP 12/260 f.130; SP 12/262 f.124; SP 12/270 f.9; SP 12/271 f.205; SP 12/279 f.2; SP 12/283a f.97; SP 12/283a f.87; CP 35/26; CP 43/63; CP 43/73; CP 50/37; CP 51/10; CP 51/22; CP 54/10; CP 54/38; CP 60/98; CP 69/100; CP 70/57; CP 71/62; CP 78/11; CP 81/1; CP 49/84; CP 86/128; CP 182/135; CP 182/137; CP 182/138; CP 92/92; CP 92/127; CP 94/128; CP 94/147; CP 95/35; CP 88/52; CP 95/120; CP 101/4; CP 101/9; CP 35/71; CP 35/91; CP 36/44; CP 36/64; CP 56/50; CP 175/121; CP 68/21; CP 68/71; CP 68/105; CP 88/114; CP 88/127; CP 88/134; CP 89/85; CP 89/102; CP 90/21; CP 85/13; CP 90/119; CP 181/101; CP 85/98. Note: an 'extreme' time has been calculated as more than two standard deviations above or below the 'mean'. These cases, which clearly distort the 'mean', have been eliminated in the calculation of the 'adjusted mean'. The effect of this is to reduce the 'mean' travel time from Plymouth to London by approximately 4.5 hours (8.9%). 'Extreme times' have been discounted when calculating the percentage of cases under the 'adjusted mean'.

standard deviations above or below the 'mean' time have been omitted when calculating the 'adjusted mean' (see figure 4.6).<sup>68</sup> By applying this safeguard any unreliable endorsements which indicate either an extremely fast or slow travel speed do not affect the final calculation of the 'mean' travel time that was achieved by the post-boys who carried government mail to and from Plymouth and London during the eight years of analysis. Therefore, despite the inherent problems, postal endorsements offer an invaluable source of information and provide a vital indication to the rapidity of the south-west's Exchequer-funded royal post-stage service.

The information presented in figure 4.6 confirms that by the end of the sixteenth-century it was customary for government mail to travel between Plymouth and London in just over forty-six hours. However, the fact that 61% of all cases were under this mean time indicates that travel times were usually even speedier. In addition, the minimum and maximum stage-to-stage travel speeds reveal that potentially a dispatch could be conveyed between Plymouth and London in a rapid twenty-seven hours or a woefully slow 131.75 hours. Of course both figures are constructed from the data of multiple letters and therefore represent the royal post-stage system's limits, which would have very rarely, if at all, been achieved by a single letter. Nevertheless, the purpose of this chapter is to present a relatively speedy service. Reasons for delays therefore need briefly to be explained. The 'slow' travel times revealed by the data often involved quite challenging terrain – it would have been tough to ride the way from Plymouth up to Ashburton, for example. Some of the other post-

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<sup>68</sup> Standard deviation is a measurement of statistical variability. It shows how much variation exists from the average (mean) value. Small standard deviation indicates data points that are very close to the mean. High standard deviation indicates data points that are spread out over a large range of values.

stages would have been, by contrast, rather less taxing. Congestion on the roads, especially on market days, would also have hindered a post-boy's progress.<sup>69</sup> Indeed, Alan Everitt has observed that in Shaftesbury grain merchants often complained that the 'narrowness' of the main street where the market was held meant that the road could not handle the 'continual thoroughfare ... of travellers', leading to excessive congestion.<sup>70</sup> Delays may also have been caused because the post-boys were sometimes all already out riding, and there was a need to wait for one of them to come back before a royal packet could be on its way. Maybe, sometimes, all the horses were out on hire, or had just returned and were in need of food, rest and a drink before they could be sent out again. In other words, there might be perfectly legitimate reasons why a packet was held up for a few hours at a particular post-room. When delays dragged on for most of a day, however, something worse must have happened.<sup>71</sup>

Nevertheless, in spite of these unavoidable and, on rare occasions, seemingly negligent delays, the data reveals that by the late-Elizabethan period local government officials based in Devon were customarily no more than two days distant from their superiors in London. When one compares this to the rare data that exists for the fifteenth-century, it would appear that this was a distinct advance in 'core-periphery' connectivity. For example, in 1450 news of the Duke of Suffolk's execution took two days to travel seventy miles from Dover to London; in 1453 news of Prince Edward's birth took over twenty-four hours to

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<sup>69</sup> Overuse of the road connecting London with Plymouth was certainly a cause of concern for the inhabitants of Staines. Indeed, a copy of a petition that the town's inhabitants wrote in 1589 (located in Exeter's City Archives) underlines the overuse of the Plymouth road during the late-Elizabethan period: 'her Highnes hauinge occasion to sende diuers into the west partes aboute speciall busines in haste as often as to anie other places w<sup>th</sup>in this Realme & the passage that waye lieth as Frequente as to anie quarters or Coastes w<sup>th</sup>in her Highnes Dominions' (DRO, ECA, Book 55, f. 180).

<sup>70</sup> A. Everitt, 'The Market Towns', in *The Early Modern Town*, ed. by P. Clark (London: Longman, 1976), p. 180.

<sup>71</sup> I am indebted to Professor Brayshay for discussion on these matters.

travel the fifty-five miles between Westminster and Canterbury; in 1461 and 1484 it took at least six days for news to be conveyed 210 miles between York and London; while the conveyance of messages between Exeter and London during the fifteenth-century appears to have customarily taken about four days.<sup>72</sup> Thus, whereas in the fifteenth-century travelling between London and Plymouth in less than two days was inconceivable, by the end of the sixteenth-century the south-west's royal post-stage network had made it the norm for official correspondence.

### **Privy Council target travel times**

The previous section has revealed that at the end of the sixteenth-century it was the norm for government mail to be conveyed between Plymouth and London in just over forty-six hours. However, to what extent did a travel time of forty-six hours meet central government expectations? The aim of this section is to answer this question by comparing the actual travel times achieved by the royal post-horses operating along the Plymouth road with the expected target times that were predetermined by the Privy Council. In a bid to regulate the royal post-stage network orders were issued by central government periodically throughout the second half of the sixteenth-century.<sup>73</sup> When one reads the orders it is clear that there were two things the Privy Council were keen to see enforced: speed and efficiency. For example, it was repeatedly stipulated that

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<sup>72</sup> J. Gairdner, ed., *Paston Letters*, vol. ii (London, 1904), pp. 146-8; W. G. Searle, ed., 'J. Stone, Chronicle of Christ Church Canterbury, 1415-71', *Cambridge Antiquarian Society*, Eighth Series, 39 (1902), 87-94; A. Raine, ed., 'York Civic Records', *Yorkshire Archaeological Society*, 98:1 (1938), pp. 1 and 88; Gairdner., *Paston Letters*, p. 49; S. A. Moore, ed., *Letters of John Shillingford* (London: Camden Society, 1871), pp. 5-6, 61 and 454; C. L. Kingsford, ed., *Chronicles of London* (London, 1905), p. 217.

<sup>73</sup> BL, Lansdowne MS., 78/92: 'Ordynaunces deuised by the Kynge *Philip* and Quenes *Mary* Maiestie for the order of the Postes and Hackeneymen betwene London and the bordere of Scotland'; SP 12/96 f.193:5/1574; SP 12/167 f.64: 14/1/1583; CP 141/368: 1/1/1591.

post-masters 'shall keepe a booke of v. or vj quires of paper' to register the time that they received each royal letter or packet; post-boys were to have a leather bag 'lyned w<sup>t</sup>h good cotton or bayes' to safely carry royal dispatches between post-stages; they were also provided with a horn and were expected to blow it 'at the leaste foure tymes euery mile'; on hearing the horn post-masters were to make ready their own post-boy so that he could 'depart w<sup>t</sup>h the pacquette w<sup>t</sup>h<sup>n</sup> in one quarter of an houre'.<sup>74</sup> All of which was to be performed twenty-four hours a day seven days a week. Central government orders also stipulated the speed (in miles-per-hour) at which government dispatches were to be carried along each royal post-stage route during summer and winter months. The following extract from a set of orders issued in May 1574 provides a typical example:

the boy or man that carrieth *the royal packet* ..., do ride in Sommer tyme, counting from the Annuntiacon of ou<sup>r</sup> Ladye [25 March], to the feaste of S<sup>t</sup> Michael The archangell [29 September], at the leaste vij [7] myles everie houre, and in the winter, w<sup>h</sup><sup>n</sup> muste be counted for the reste of the yeare, v: [5] myles everie houre or more, as the waie is good or badd.<sup>75</sup>

When one examines other sets of orders published throughout the Elizabethan era the required speed of seven miles-per-hour in summer and five miles-per-hour in winter are consistently stated.<sup>76</sup> Moreover, post-masters and post-boys were reminded of the need to provide a speedy and efficient service by more informal measures. This most commonly manifested itself with a written advertisement on the outside panel of an individual letter or packet stressing that its contents concerned matters 'For her Majes<sup>ties</sup> especiall affayres' and therefore required 'hast post hast for lyffe' or similar words to that effect. More

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<sup>74</sup> SP 12/96 f.193.

<sup>75</sup> SP 12/96 f.193.

<sup>76</sup> The notable exception to this is the set of orders drawn up by Lord Burghley and John Stanhope in January 1591 (CP 141/368). Instead of seven miles-per-hour in summer the orders stipulate that post-boys must ride at 'sixe miles the houre'. The speed of five miles-per-hour during winter was retained.

forceful still were the crude sketches of a gallows that often adorned the outside panel of a letter thereby making it clear, even to an illiterate post-boy, that the speedy conveyance of royal mail was paramount.<sup>77</sup>

Previous research on whether the royal post-stage network customarily achieved the Privy Council's summer and winter target speeds have rightly observed that they 'seldom if ever did'.<sup>78</sup> However, this has been adjudged by calculating the speed post-boys achieved along the royal post-stage network in miles-per-hour using postal endorsement data. Such an approach is problematic because it provides a 'yes or no' answer to a question that is far from straightforward. To clarify, it infers that the relays of post-boys progressed from one post-stage to the next continuously without stopping – an inference which is of course incorrect. In reality, delays inevitably occurred along a royal post-stage route, most of which were beyond the control of either post-boy or post-master. For example, as argued above, the tough undulating terrains between certain post-stages, congestion on the roads and the overuse of the network during times of political turmoil were all perfectly legitimate reasons why a royal packet did not meet the Privy Council's summer and winter target speeds. Moreover, because the royal post-stage service was a twenty-four hour service it must have been nigh on impossible to maintain such arbitrary speeds in pitch darkness particularly during the long nights of winter. Small delays therefore do not equate to an inefficient network, on the contrary, they were to be expected given the increased interaction between the 'core' and 'periphery' that occurred as a result of the Elizabethan war with Spain and Nine Years' War in Ireland. Consequently, this section converts the Privy Council's target travel speeds for the south-west's royal post-stage network into target travel times in

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<sup>77</sup> Daybell, *The Material Letter*, pp. 6, 8, 28 and 142.

<sup>78</sup> Hemmeon, *The British Post Office*, p. 99; Crofts, *Packhorse, Waggon and Post*, p. 87.

order to measure the number of hours under or over Privy Council expectations that government mail arrived in London from the south-west. Given the inevitable and unavoidable delays outlined above one would expect all of the post-stage to post-stage travel times to be over the Privy Council's target times by one or two hours and therefore such results should not lead one to conclude that the service was poor. Anything more than this, however, would indicate that the royal post-stage network was relatively unreliable and inefficient.

Devising an appropriate methodology to achieve this goal began by analysing the concept of mileage in the sixteenth-century. While the modern statute mile was introduced in 1593 it was not adopted on a wholesale basis until 1824.<sup>79</sup> Instead, during the early modern era there was a marked variation in terms of what constituted a mile. This was noted by Fynes Moryson in 1617 when he wrote: 'Of the divers measures of miles, through divers parts of the world ... five Italian miles, or three French, or two and a halfe English, make one Dutch mile'.<sup>80</sup> Even within countries there were disparities. For example, in England a mile was shorter in London and longer 'through the desert places of the North'.<sup>81</sup> Thus, an 'old English' mile could equate to anything from 1.20 to 1.30 modern statute miles.<sup>82</sup>

Having established that an 'old English' mile varied in length, the next course of action was to find a way of calculating the 'old English' mile used by the Privy Council when they stipulated summer and winter target speeds of

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<sup>79</sup> I. M. Evans, 'A Cartographic Evaluation of the Old English Mile', *GJ*, 141:2 (July, 1975), 259-64 (pp. 259-60).

<sup>80</sup> Quoted in Evans, 'The Old English Mile', p. 259.

<sup>81</sup> Evans, 'The Old English Mile', p. 259.

<sup>82</sup> For detailed analyses of the 'old English' mile see J. B. Pearson, 'On the Table of Distances Between Different Towns Given by Holinshed in his Description of England', *Cambridge Antiquarian Communications: being papers presented at the meetings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society*, iv (1881), pp. 261-70; W. F. Petrie, 'The Old English Mile', *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Edinburgh*, 12 (1883-84), 254-66; C. Close, 'The Old English Mile', *GJ*, 76:4 (1930), 338-42; J. B. P. Karlslake, 'Further Notes on the Old English Mile', *GJ*, 77:4 (1931), 358-60; E. H. Smith, 'Lancashire 'long measure'', *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, (1959), 1-14.

seven and five miles-per-hour. The starting point for this was the information contained in the May 1574 and January 1584 Privy Council orders. Both stipulated that if a speed of seven miles-per-hour in summer and five miles-per-hour in winter was achieved by the post-horses operating up and down the Great North Road then 'the *royal* packet may be caried in sommer betweene London and Barwicke[Berwick] in fortie two houres, and in winter in threescore[60].'<sup>83</sup> From these figures one can approximate how far the Privy Council believed London was from Berwick in 'old English' miles (oem).<sup>84</sup> Thus, in both sets of orders the Privy Council regarded Berwick as being approximately 297 'old English' miles from London. However, this figure on its own is not sufficient to calculate the approximate length of the 'old English' mile used by the Privy Council. It was therefore necessary to find a way of calculating the approximate distance between London and Berwick in modern statute miles which would ultimately enable a reasonably accurate conversion from statute mile to the Privy Council's 'old English' mile and vice versa. This was achieved by measuring the distances that separated each of the royal post-stages between London and Berwick in modern statute miles using electronic route planning software. Whilst an exact route was clearly not possible, a reasonably accurate one was plotted at a distance totalling 366.10 statute miles. With both the 'old English' and statute mileage calculated it was possible to determine that one statute mile equated to 1.23 'old English' miles and that one 'old English' mile equated to 0.8 statute mile.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> SP 12/167 f.64.

<sup>84</sup> Summer target time (42 hours) x Summer target speed (7 mph) = 294 oem. Winter target time (60 hours) x Winter target speed (5 mph) = 300 oem. Summer mileage (294 oem) + Winter mileage (300 oem) = 594 oem. Total mileage (594 oem) / 2 = 297 oem.

<sup>85</sup> London to Berwick in statute miles (366.10) / London to Berwick in 'old English' miles (297) = 1.23. London to Berwick in 'old English' miles (297) / London to Berwick in statute miles (366.10) = 0.8.

Post-stage	Distance (statute miles)	Distance 'old English' (miles)	Summer target time (hours)	Winter target time (hours)
Plymouth to Ashburton	25.00	20.00	3.00	4.25
Ashburton to Exeter	20.00	16.00	2.50	3.50
Exeter to Honiton	18.50	14.80	2.50	3.25
Honiton to Crewkerne	22.00	17.60	2.75	3.75
Crewkerne to Sherborne	15.00	12.00	2.00	2.75
Sherborne to Shaftesbury	16.00	12.80	2.00	2.75
Shaftesbury to Salisbury	21.00	16.80	2.75	3.50
Salisbury to Andover	20.00	16.00	2.50	3.50
Andover to Basingstoke	20.50	16.40	2.50	3.50
Basingstoke to Hartfordbridge	10.00	8.00	1.50	1.75
Hartfordbridge to Staines	20.00	16.00	2.75	3.75
Staines to London	21.00	16.80	2.75	3.50
<b>Totals</b>	<b>229.00</b>	<b>183.20</b>	<b>29.50</b>	<b>39.75</b>

Figure 4.7: Distances and Privy Council target travel times between the south-west's royal post-stages, 1595-1603.

Post-stage	Cases	Minimum under/over	Maximum under/over	Mean	Standard deviation	Extreme times	Adjusted mean	% of cases under adjusted mean
Plymouth to Ashburton	31	-1.25	12.00	3.19	3.74	3	2.32	61
Ashburton to Exeter	43	-0.50	5.75	1.52	1.33	2	1.35	38
Exeter to Honiton	52	-1.25	12.50	0.47	1.93	1	0.23	53
Honiton to Crewkerne	43	-1.25	11.25	1.46	2.11	1	1.23	48
Crewkerne to Sherborne	30	-0.25	5.25	1.27	1.46	1	1.13	62
Sherborne to Shaftesbury	25	-0.75	10.25	1.39	2.44	2	0.76	48
Shaftesbury to Salisbury	21	-1.50	7.50	1.20	2.09	1	0.89	55
Salisbury to Andover	21	-0.50	12.50	1.88	2.95	1	1.35	65
Andover to Basingstoke	29	-0.50	6.00	1.63	1.82	3	1.16	46
Basingstoke to Hartfordbridge	24	0.00	6.50	1.07	1.41	1	0.84	65
Hartfordbridge to Staines	10	0.25	3.25	1.30	0.86	1	1.08	33
Staines to London	6	0.25	3.25	1.08	1.17	0	1.08	50
<b>Totals</b>	<b>335</b>	<b>-7.25</b>	<b>96.00</b>	<b>17.46</b>		<b>17</b>	<b>13.42</b>	<b>51</b>

Figure 4.8: Hours under/over the Privy Council's target travel times between the south-west's royal post-stages, 1595-1603.

Armed with this information it was then possible to calculate the 'old English' mileage between London and Plymouth. By adopting the same approach as the one used to calculate the approximate statute mileage between London and Berwick the figure of 229 statute miles was calculated for the London to Plymouth royal post-stage route. This figure was then multiplied by 0.8 as per the mileage conversion to give an 'old English' mileage between London and Plymouth of 183.20. In addition, individual stage-to-stage statute mileage was noted and then converted into 'old English' miles (see figure 4.7). With the 'old English' mileage calculated it was then possible to approximate the Privy Council's summer and winter target times for each stage. All times were then rounded to the nearest quarter-of-an-hour due to the nature of royal post-master time-keeping.<sup>86</sup> Thus, at twenty 'old English' miles, Plymouth to Ashburton was the longest section of the south-west's royal post-stage route and accordingly had the lengthiest summer and winter target times of 3.00 and 4.25 hours respectively. In contrast, at just eight 'old English' miles, Basingstoke to Hartfordbridge was the shortest section and so had summer and winter target travel times of just 1.50 and 1.75 hours respectively. Overall, the south-west's royal post-stage route was adjudged to have had a Privy Council target time of approximately 29.50 hours in summer and 39.75 hours in winter.

Having calculated the approximate Privy Council summer and winter target times for each post-stage along the Plymouth road it was then possible to employ the same postal endorsement data used in the previous section to measure how close the actual royal post-stage travel times were in comparison

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<sup>86</sup> Post-stage distance in 'old English' miles / Summer target speed (7 oemph) + Post-master make ready time (0.25 hour) = Privy Council summer target time. Post-stage distance in 'old English' miles / Winter target speed (5 oemph) + Post-master make ready time (0.25 hour) = Privy Council winter target time.

with the Privy Council's summer and winter target times (see figure 4.8).<sup>87</sup> The data reveals that all post-stage to post-stage sections of the network were capable of exceeding the Privy Council's expectations. Indeed, the potential was there for official mail to be conveyed seven-and-a-quarter hours under central government's predetermined summer and winter target times. Conversely, the potential also existed for official mail to be conveyed ninety-six hours over central government's summer and winter target times. Both times, however, were rarely if ever achieved by a single letter or packet and, just like the overall travel times outlined in the previous section, represent the limits of the network's capability. The crucial figures to consider for present purposes are the post-stage to post-stage 'adjusted means' and the percentage of cases that fell under these times. Out of the south-west royal post-stage network's twelve stage-to-stage sections four (Exeter to Honiton, Sherborne to Shaftesbury, Shaftesbury to Salisbury and Basingstoke to Hartfordbridge) achieved 'adjusted mean' travel times within one hour of the Privy Council's target travel times, while a further seven (Ashburton to Exeter, Honiton to Crewkerne, Crewkerne to Sherborne, Salisbury to Andover, Andover to Basingstoke, Hartfordbridge to Staines and Staines to London) were within one-and-a-half hours. Such small amounts of time can be attributed to the inevitable and unavoidable delays outlined above and are small enough not to undercut the proposition that the south-west's royal post-stage service was a relatively rapid and efficient one. Indeed, even Plymouth to Ashburton's comparatively slow 'adjusted mean' travel time of 2.32 hours over central government targets is not too bad when one considers that it was the lengthiest section of the network. Moreover,

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<sup>87</sup> Summer was adjudged to be from 25 March to 29 September, and winter from 30 September to 24 March as per the May 1574 and the January 1584 orders.

because the road followed the contours of Dartmoor, it probably included the most undulating terrain.

The data also reveals that royal dispatches customarily arrived at William Goffe's post-room in London from Vincent Scoble's post-room in Plymouth approximately thirteen-and-a-half hours over the Privy Council's target travel times with 51% of all government mail arriving inside this 'adjusted mean' time. To modern eyes this figure may seem substantial. However, it must be reiterated that royal post-masters only wrote the time of arrival of a packet or letter at their post-stage to the nearest quarter-of-an-hour. Thus, while Paul Glennie and Nigel Thrift are right in arguing that the prevalence of 'time consciousness' was 'both assumed and promoted' very much earlier than the Industrial Revolution, the fact that a quarter-hour remained the minimum time unit for England's royal postal network throughout the late-Elizabethan period meant that dispatches arriving half a day late would not have overly concerned Elizabeth's chief ministers.<sup>88</sup> If, however, delays dragged on for days on end then questions were most certainly raised. The fact that the south-west's royal post-stage network customarily conveyed official mail in less than half a day over the Privy Council's target travel times would therefore not have raised eyebrows at Whitehall and the network would have probably been regarded by those in charge as relatively speedy and efficient.

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<sup>88</sup> Harrison, *Description of England*, p. 379; E. P. Thompson, 'Time, Work-Discipline and Industrial Capitalism', *P&P*, 38:1 (1967), 56-97; Brayshay et al., 'Speed of the Royal Post', p. 272; Glennie and Thrift, *Shaping the Day*; Mark Brayshay, 'Review: Shaping the Day: A History of Timekeeping in England and Wales, 1300-1800', *JHG*, 30 (2010), 1-2.

The central purpose of this chapter has been to examine the Tudor south-west's royal post-stage service – the principal method by which Elizabeth and her chief ministers maintained a dialogue with those local officials at the apex of Devon's government between August 1595 and March 1603. In doing so, the chapter has endeavoured to repair the reputation of this mode of communication. From the outset it was argued that the postal infrastructure upon which the royal post-stage network rested was not in a dilapidated state of disrepair. On the contrary, the Tudor road and bridge network provided an adequate infrastructure upon which a relatively reliable postal service could operate. Initially, Exchequer-funded post-stages were engaged on the highway from London towards Dover and Berwick, providing successive Tudor monarchs with a permanent postal connection to the continent and northern border. However, as a consequence of the Elizabethan war with Spain and periodic turmoil in Ireland, additional routes were temporarily engaged from the capital along the main arterial roads towards the south-west and Ireland. Curiously, however, during the Armada crisis of 1588 Devon was not connected to the centre via an Exchequer-funded post-stage service. Instead, the slower method of dispatching court messengers was utilised. Yet by 1595 the war with Spain persisted and rebellion in Ireland had begun making a rapid and reliable royal post-stage link between London and the south-west vital. How rapid and reliable this service was has been a key concern of this chapter. Indeed, by utilising postal endorsement data, it has been feasible systematically to reveal that the south-west's royal post-stage network constituted a significant improvement on postal times. Thus, when one considers all this collectively, it is clear that inter-urban connectivity between London and late-Elizabethan Devon's two major urban centres (Exeter and Plymouth) was relatively rapid and sustained. The notion that late-Elizabethan

Devon was strongly connected-up to the centre, and not cut-off or isolated, therefore seems well-justified. Indeed, the postal endorsement evidence indicates that this 'superior service' between London and Devon was impressively fast (though the authorised users were strictly limited to the political elite). Nevertheless, as chapter five will reveal, it was not the only means by which official mail was conveyed and virtually all the other means available were slower and, in some though not all cases, less reliable.

# 5

## **Intra-County Postal Networks:**

### **Connectivity, Communication and Scribal Culture**

The central purpose of this chapter is to elucidate late-Elizabethan Devon's internal government postal arrangements and to explore the process of letter production employed by the Earl of Bath, his deputies and other local government officials during the critical years of 1588 to 1603. Thus, whereas chapter four provided an in-depth analysis of the Tudor south-west's royal post-stage network during the late-Elizabethan era, highlighting the manner in which central government achieved relatively rapid and reliable connectivity with those local officials situated within or near to Devon's principal urban centres, this chapter investigates how official government mail was delivered to those living more distant from a royal post-stage in the regional hinterland. Equally, it unravels the different modes of local letter delivery available to Devon's political elite for circulating official orders, directives, news, intelligence and other information amongst each other and their subordinates working at a division, hundred and parish level. Moreover, the issue of letter production and dissemination is explored through an examination of the role of secretaries and the practice of chain copying of letters which was customarily deployed by networks of politicians, family members, factions, co-religionists and other identifiable social groups during the late-Elizabethan era.

Existing research on provincial letter delivery has articulated the function of foot-posts, bearers and servants in delivering letters and parcels personally

to an addressee.<sup>1</sup> Alan Stewart and Heather Wolfe, for example, have shown that rather than being carried by the ‘employees of impersonal, organized postal systems’ many of the official and unofficial letters written during the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century were delivered on behalf of the nobility and gentry by ‘identifiable and often personally known individuals’ ranging from chance travellers to the friends and family members who occupied the inner-most circle of an individual’s entourage.<sup>2</sup> More specifically, by utilising the household accounts of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, James Daybell has been able to disentangle ‘the complexities of informal letter-carrying’. Leicester’s accounts reveal that he authorised the payment of a wide range of individuals personally to carry his correspondence including servants, footmen, royal pursuivants and state messengers. Indeed, as Professor Daybell notes, such ‘detailed accounts highlight the huge variety and ad hoc nature of postal methods available to early modern social elites.’<sup>3</sup> Such studies confirm the improvised character of intra-county and inter-regional postal arrangements during the early modern period and will be utilised in tandem with other relevant secondary literature, as well as primary material located in the Seymour Manuscripts and local receivers’ accounts, to outline in detail the makeshift postal services that Devon’s political elite and town corporations utilised during the late-Elizabethan period to deliver and receive official government mail.

However, whereas improvised postal arrangements have received a reasonable degree of scholarly interest in recent years, much less is currently understood about more formal mechanisms of intra-county letter-delivery

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<sup>1</sup> Brayshay, ‘Post-Horse Routes in the South West’, pp. 81-5; Brayshay et al., ‘Speed of the Royal Post’, pp. 279-81; Crofts, *Packhorse, Waggon and Post*, ch. 8; Daybell, *The Material Letter*, pp. 135-40; Alan Stewart and Heather Wolfe, *Letterwriting in Renaissance England* (Washington D.C.: Folger Shakespeare Library, 2004); Alan Stewart, *Shakespeare’s Letters* (Oxford: OUP, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> Stewart and Wolfe, *Letterwriting*, p.121; Stewart, *Shakespeare’s Letters*, p. 196.

<sup>3</sup> Daybell, *The Material Letter*, pp. 138-40.

available at different levels of local government periodically during the late-sixteenth-century. In Devon particularly there existed a standardised postal service which supplemented the ad hoc employment of foot-posts, letter-bearers and servants during periods of political crisis. Namely, an intra-county post-stage network similar in nature to the national network outlined in chapter four was periodically engaged by the Earl of Bath for the rapid conveyance of official correspondence to and from his deputies while a parish-to-parish postal network was employed by Devon's local elite to distribute information and knowledge speedily down the hierarchical chain of command to the constables of the hundreds and the petty-constables of the parishes. Of the latter, Lindsey Boynton has provided the briefest of appraisals during her analysis of the Elizabethan militia:

The lord-lieutenants were given directions for the post-system, which was based on the parishes. Each supplied horse and foot posts, preferably men living near the parish church and so readily available. The posts were used at all times, not merely in emergencies; and, subject to extraordinarily bad weather, they were remarkably efficient.<sup>4</sup>

This chapter will utilise Devon as a case study to significantly build upon the cursory mention that Boynton affords the parish-to-parish postal system and demonstrate in detail how it functioned alongside Devon's hitherto unacknowledged provincial post-stage network. In particular, it will be revealed that the persistent threat posed by Spain throughout the late-Elizabethan period necessitated the establishment in Devon of a comprehensive, systematic and multi-faceted postal network that not only connected local politicians at the apex of government but also provided a speedy and sustained link between the

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<sup>4</sup> Boynton, *Elizabethan Militia*, pp. 137-8.

county's political elite and their minor associates who operated at a division, hundred and parish level.

Having outlined the variety of informal and formal letter delivery methods available to late-Elizabethan Devon's political elite for the conveyance of official mail, the second half of the chapter will shift focus to matters pertaining to letter production. Specifically, it will investigate the role of the personal secretary in the authorship and handling of official documentation and briefly discuss the scribal culture of chain-copying which facilitated the rapid dissemination of political ideas amongst networks of local government officials not only at the apex of county government but also at a parish level. Research conducted on the role of secretaries is substantial. Henry Woudhuysen, for example, has written an informative evaluation of their role and remit during the early modern period while A. G. R. Smith and Paul Hammer have examined specifically the secretariats of the Cecils and Robert Devereux, second Earl of Essex, respectively to provide detailed insight into the day-to-day function of those secretaries who were on the payroll of Elizabeth's chief ministers.<sup>5</sup> Provincially-based members of the nobility and gentry have also been identified as employing personal secretaries to handle their affairs and produce correspondence on their behalf.<sup>6</sup> It is thus one of the key objectives of this chapter to examine the roles of Thomas Hinson and Roger Papworth who jointly performed the function of secretary for the Earl of Bath during the 1590s in order to more fully appreciate the activities of the provincial secretary and establish precisely where they fitted into intra-county communication networks.

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<sup>5</sup> H. R. Woudhuysen, *Sir Philip Sidney and the Circulation of Manuscripts, 1558-1640* (Oxford: OUP, 2003), pp. 66-87; A. G. R. Smith, 'The Secretariats of the Cecils, circa 1580-1612', *EHR*, 83:328 (July, 1968), 481-504; Paul E. J. Hammer, 'The Uses of Scholarship: The Secretariat of Robert Devereux, Second Earl of Essex, c.1585-1601', *EHR*, 109:430 (February, 1994), 26-51.

<sup>6</sup> Daybell, *The Material Letter*, pp. 75-6.

'Scribal publication', to borrow a phrase from Harold Love, has similarly received detailed scholarly attention over the past twenty years.<sup>7</sup> For example, Arthur Marotti has shown that 'scribal communities' formed amongst groups of young men whilst they attended university or a legal inn, providing them with a mechanism for exchanging contemporary poetical literature; Nancy Pollard-Brown has exposed the benefits of manuscript transmission for networks of Catholic recusants who needed a platform from which to share clandestine religious ideas; and Peter Beal has conducted seminal work on Philip Sidney's *Letter to Queen Elizabeth*, articulating in detail how it circulated indiscriminately in copied form amongst national scribal networks.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, Professor Daybell has mapped the mechanisms by which hundreds of scribally copied letters written by or relating to the most famous, and indeed infamous, people or events of the period achieved the 'widest currency' (that is, circulation) in manuscript form.<sup>9</sup> In short, the Loveian concept of 'scribal publication' encompasses a broad range of early modern letter production practices. The final section of this chapter will concentrate on just one of these, the circular missive, whereby 'networks of friends or associates would regularly exchange texts with each other either by a process of chain copying or by a member making copies for the entire group.'<sup>10</sup> To clarify, it will scrutinise not only how circular letters were disseminated amongst the Earl of Bath and his deputy

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<sup>7</sup> Harold Love, *Scribal Publication in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

<sup>8</sup> Nancy Pollard-Brown, 'Paperchase: The Dissemination of Catholic Texts in Elizabethan England', in *English Manuscript Studies 1100-1700*, vol. i, ed. by P. Beal and J. Griffiths (Blackwell, 1989), pp. 120-43; Arthur F. Marotti, *Manuscript, Print and the English Renaissance Lyric* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1995), pp. 31-7; Peter Beal, "'Hoping they shall only come to your merciful eyes": Sidney's *Letter to Queen Elizabeth* and Its Transmission', in *In Praise of Scribes: Manuscripts and their Makers in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), pp. 109-46 and 274-80. See also Paul E. J. Hammer, 'Myth-Making: Politics, Propaganda and the Capture of Cadiz in 1596', *HJ*, 40:3 (1997), 621-42; James Daybell, 'Women, Politics and Domesticity: the Scribal Publication of Lady Rich's Letter to Elizabeth I', in *Women and Writing c.1340-c.1650: The Domestication of Print Culture*, ed. by A. Lawrence-Mathers and P. Hardman (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2010), pp. 111-30.

<sup>9</sup> Daybell, *The Material Letter*, p. 191.

<sup>10</sup> Love, *Scribal Publication*, p. 80.

lieutenants at the zenith of county government, but also how circular precepts were similarly distributed between the constables of the hundreds and petty-constables of the parishes in order for them to be read aloud in Devon's parish churches. Such an analysis is crucial to appreciating fully how this form of letter production facilitated the transaction of state business not only within Devon but also throughout the realm and confirms that 'scribal publication' pervaded all sections of society and was not merely a culture exclusive to the political elite.

Collectively this chapter thus provides the first comprehensive survey of a county's official intra-county postal arrangements during the late-Elizabethan period. It will be argued throughout that Devon's frontline location, vulnerability to invasion and high strategic value necessitated the establishment of a highly organised, complex and efficient internal postal network to complement the south-west's Exchequer-funded royal post-stage service outlined in the previous chapter. The detailed primary evidence relating to Devon's formal communication network extant in the Seymour Manuscripts coupled with the numerous items relating to the ad hoc payment of foot-posts, letter-bearers and servants in the receivers' accounts of the county's town corporations provide the documentary platform for this analysis. Indeed, it should be noted that but for this material an accurate reconstruction of Devon's internal postal infrastructure and practices would not have been possible. The use of Devon as a case study therefore provides a rare opportunity to witness how local officials (at all tiers of government) in other frontline maritime counties are likely to have rapidly communicated with central government officials at Whitehall and each other during the critical years that followed the Armada crisis of 1588.

## **Letter delivery: foot-posts, letter-bearers and servants**

By utilising the Declared Accounts of the Master of the Posts, postal endorsement data and Privy Council directives, among other documents, chapter four was able to present clearly the royal postal network that functioned along the main highways to and from London and the south-west periodically during the late-Elizabethan era. However, what was not explained is what happened to official mail once it had reached Honiton, Exeter, Ashburton or Plymouth and required onward delivery to addressees living distant from these royal post-stages. It is therefore the objective of this section to answer this question and outline the informal postal arrangements used by Devon's political elite and town corporations to post a response to their nearest royal post-master who then dispatched it along the royal post-stage network to central government at Whitehall. Moreover, it will be explained that these informal mechanisms of letter delivery were similarly deployed by local government officials to send official orders, instructions, progress reports, news and the like among each other.

The task of carrying official mail from the royal post-stages at Honiton, Exeter, Ashburton and Plymouth to an addressee's residence was ordinarily undertaken by foot-posts retained by the local civic authorities.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, according to Brayshay, Harrison and Chalkley,

correspondence arriving at a post-stage from London, or any other origin, which was directed to a person of importance in the local area would, under the regulations governing the royal posting system, be delivered within a five- or 10-mile radius by a 'foot post'.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Brayshay, 'Post-Horse Routes in the South West', p. 85.

<sup>12</sup> Brayshay et al., 'Speed of the Royal Post', p. 280.

Similar onward delivery services existed elsewhere. For example, on 10 December 1618 John Stanhope, Master of the Posts, issued an order to certain justices of the peace to aid John King, post-master of Southwark, 'in delivery of letters six miles round', while the royal post-master at Marshfield, Gloucestershire, customarily sent a foot-post to Bath with official mail addressed to the city's chief inhabitants – a trip of approximately eight miles which ordinarily took three hours.<sup>13</sup>

The receivers' accounts of Exeter and Plymouth provide crucial evidence of the onward delivery services that operated out of Devon's two principal royal post-stages. Indeed, the accounts reveal that as well as foot-posts, mounted messengers and shipmasters were customarily employed by Exeter's and Plymouth's civic authorities to carry official mail received from Whitehall off the main highway to the residences of addressees located in the nearby hinterland. Thus, in Exeter the receivers' accounts reveal that foot-posts were employed to deliver central government letters addressed to the Devon deputy lieutenants Sir Robert Denys, Sir William Courtenay and Sir John Gilbert I who lived at nearby Bicton, Powderham and Greenway respectively.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, apart from the brief period when an Exchequer-funded post-stage service was engaged from Exeter to Barnstaple via Chulmleigh, Exeter's chief inhabitants arranged the onward delivery of central government mail directed to Devon's Lord Lieutenant, the Earl of Bath, who lived at Tawstock Court in north Devon. Thus, the Exeter accounts disclose that Richard Tolliscoote was paid 2s. in the 1588/9 year of account for 'caryinge lettres to my Lord of Bathe'; Thomas Bayley was paid 2s. 8d. in 1589/90 'for goinge to my Lord of Bathe' (presumably with royal letters); John Smith was paid 6s. 8d. in 1594/5 'to Ride to the Lord of Bathe w<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> SP 14/104 f.37; John Wroughton, *Tudor Bath: Life and Strife in the Little City, 1485-1603* (Bath: Lansdown Press, 2006), p. 150.

<sup>14</sup> Brayshay, 'Post-Horse Routes in the South West', p. 85.

*lettres*’; an unnamed messenger was paid 2s. 6d. in 1595/6 ‘for carriage of the Lord Treasurers *Lettre* vnto the Lord of Bathe’; and 3s. 3d. was paid out by Exeter’s receiver in 1595/6 ‘for a footman sent to my *lord* of Bathes’ (again, no doubt with government mail from Whitehall).<sup>15</sup> Similarly, Plymouth’s accounts during the late-Elizabethan era reveal that the town corporation paid for letters from central government to be forwarded locally, for example, to naval commanders moored in Plymouth Sound, Sir John Gilbert I at Greenway and Sir George Carew at Antony, as well as further afield, for example, to Captain Fenner at Falmouth, Sir Francis Godolphin at west Cornwall and the deputy lieutenants of Cornwall.<sup>16</sup> Collectively, such evidence reveals that the onward delivery service organised by the civic authorities of late-Elizabethan Exeter and Plymouth far exceeded the prescribed five to ten mile radius expected of them. In reality, government mail was regularly forwarded approximately forty miles from Exeter to the Earl of Bath at Tawstock and over sixty miles from Plymouth to individuals located at the western-most tip of Cornwall. Thus, these services exemplify how ‘private enterprise extended the reach of the royal post network, well beyond main arterial roads into relatively remote parts of the realm’.<sup>17</sup>

However, what then happened once a government dispatch had been forwarded to its designated addressee in these ‘remote’ locations? How did an addressee set about posting a response back to Whitehall and what postal mechanisms did they have at their disposal for disseminating the information that they had received to other local government officials within Devon? The remainder of this section will outline the common informal methods of letter delivery available to all members of the early modern nobility, gentry and town

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<sup>15</sup> DRO, ECA, Receivers’ Rolls, 31-2 and 37-8, Elizabeth I.

<sup>16</sup> PWDRO, 1/132, Widey Court Book, ff. 85, 109, 115, 118 and 126.

<sup>17</sup> Daybell, *The Material Letter*, p. 123; Brayshay, ‘Royal Post-Horse Routes in the South West’, p. 79.

corporations, while the following two sections will detail the 'extraordinary' (that is, temporary) formal postal arrangements engaged specifically by Devon's Lord Lieutenant during the crisis years of 1588 to 1603.

The most frequent and sustained mode of letter delivery available to the English nobility, gentry and town corporations during the early modern era was via private messenger. Indeed, Alan Stewart and Heather Wolfe have noted that

before the royal post began officially accommodating private letters in 1635, mailing a letter involved paying a carrier, bearer, servant, or messenger, or enjoining a friend or a stranger headed in the desired direction, to carry the letter for you.<sup>18</sup>

It is therefore of no surprise that Devon's political elite commonly utilised their most trusted household servants and town corporations employed their most dependable footmen personally to carry correspondence addressed to central government officials to their nearest royal post-stage where it would be forwarded, along with other royal mail, to Whitehall via the relay of mounted post-boys discussed in chapter four. Alternatively, when Exchequer funding of the south-west's royal post-stage network was absent or when mail did not relate to her Majesty's 'especial affairs', these private and personal letter-bearers carried such items personally to the relevant central government official or London-based contact either by 'riding post' in similar fashion to court messengers and pursuivants or travelling the whole way on a single horse or on foot.<sup>19</sup> The former 'through post' method was speedier but significantly more expensive owing to the fact that only officials possessing a royal warrant or placard could benefit from the discounted post-horse hire charges that were

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<sup>18</sup> Stewart and Wolfe, *Letterwriting*, p. 121.

<sup>19</sup> In a letter from the Earl of Bath to Sir Robert Cecil dated 20 September 1596 Bath explained that he had sent 'his servant, the bearer, to present the general certificate of the forces of the shire' to the Privy Council (HMC, *Salisbury*, vi, p. 393). See also E 407/38.

afforded them by the royal prerogative of purveyance, whereas the latter modes were inevitably a great deal slower but altogether cheaper and more secure.

Nevertheless, using one's own horse or hiring one from a local horse-owner was still costly. This is confirmed by a list of expenses present in the Barnstaple Borough Records which itemise the money disbursed by an anonymous messenger who rode to London from Barnstaple and back again via the South Hams and Plymouth at some point between November 1564 and November 1565 'in Chichesters Cause' which presumably related to Sir John Chichester's purchase of the manor and borough of Barnstaple in 1566.<sup>20</sup> His expenses included: 1s. 4d. 'at London for the chamberlaine hoslers [hostlers] and other servantes ther and a haulfe a pecke of otes for my ho<sup>r</sup>se'; 4s. 'at Harteley [probably Hartley Wintney, Hampshire] come the same night for my horse and my sealf'; 4s. 6d. 'pa<sup>d</sup> at Salisbury the second night homewardest'; 10d. 'pa<sup>d</sup> at Evelye [probably Eveleigh, near Cullompton] for horse shewing'; 2s. 'pa<sup>d</sup> more at Evelighe for horse meat'; 1s. 6d. 'pa<sup>d</sup> for my horse meate' at Honiton; 2s. 'pa<sup>d</sup> at Exon [Exeter] for my supper and horse meat'; 1s. 2d. 'pa<sup>d</sup> for my dinner at Kenton [near Exmouth] wher I stayer to speake with M<sup>r</sup> Holcombe and my horse meat ther'; 1s. 'pa<sup>d</sup> at winckley [Winkleigh] for my horse meat and dinner riding to the southe hames'; 2s. 2d. 'pa<sup>d</sup> at Chagford for my supper and horse meat'; 2s. 6d. 'for a guyde to goe over the more to s<sup>t</sup> Buttockes [St Budeaux] beyond plimouth [Plymouth] to one of the attales[sic] men Stephen lustice'; 4d. 'pa<sup>d</sup> for shewing my horse nire plimouth with one Somers'; 4s. 6d. 'pa<sup>d</sup> at plimouthe for my supper and guides and horse meat and my dinner at chilton with the fare of the passage botes on the waye'; 12s. 'pa<sup>d</sup> at Dodbroke [Dodbrook, near Torpoint, Cornwall] at the bayliffes howse

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<sup>20</sup> NDRO, B1/3118: 'old note of charges in Chichesters Cause', 7 Elizabeth I (1564-5); Hasler, *Commons*, i, p. 143.

with horse meat and the charge of an other guide'; 3s. 'paid for my supper horse meat and guides supper at kinges bridge [Kingsbridge]'; 1s. 1d. 'paid at Brent [South Brent] for my dinner and horse meat'; 3s. 6d. 'paid at Shagford [Chagford] returning for my guide and horse meat'; £1 7s. 'I owe to Iohn Homes for hire of his horse for London and the Southehames'. Thus, as well as spending money on his own accommodation, food and drink, the mounted messenger also had to pay for oats, meat and two re-shoeings for his hired horse, two guides, their accommodation, food and drink, ferries and John Homes' horse hire charge. Such expenditure therefore underlines the financial costs involved in travelling on horseback during the sixteenth-century as well as illuminating some of the other payments that were inevitably necessary during the course of a long inter-regional trip. Indeed, with horse travel costing so much, delivery of correspondence by this method was very expensive and it is therefore unsurprising that on many occasions town corporations chose footmen to carry their letters instead.

In fact as well as being cheaper, J. Crofts has suggested that a footman was quicker over long distances because a horse's speed, when not used in relays, was thought to fall off 'much more steeply than that of a man as the distance increased.'<sup>21</sup> It was therefore customary for the receivers of Exeter and Plymouth to pay footmen rather than mounted messengers for the conveyance of letters to and from the capital – a fact revealed by numerous payments in the receivers' accounts of both corporations. For example, in Exeter John Chappell disbursed 18s. 'to a footeman for goinge to London w<sup>th</sup> letters' during the 1589/90 year of account; Henrye Hull paid 20s. 'To a Footeman wh<sup>ch</sup> caryed lettres to London' in 1593/4; and Thomas Edwardes similarly 'paide Wyatt the

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<sup>21</sup> Crofts, *Packhorse, Waggon and Post*, pp. 51-2.

footman' 20s. 'to Carrye Lettres to London Concerninge Bidwell being in prison' in 1599/1600.<sup>22</sup> Likewise, in Plymouth John Martyn issued 20s. to 'a footeman to Carrye lettres ... to London to Mr Recorder' during the 1592/3 year of account; John Golson paid a miserly 6d. to 'Iorye the Footman for bringinge a lettre from London' in 1594/5; and Roberte Trelawnie authorised the payment of 35s. for 'a footeman to Carrie lettres to Mr Sparke and Mr Bacon at London soundrie tymes' in 1597/8.<sup>23</sup>

Similarly, letter-bearers personally known to and on the payroll of Devon's political elite and town corporations frequently conveyed important official dispatches via horse, foot and boat on an intra-county and inter-regional basis to other local government officials and organisations located within and beyond the county.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, there are a number of letters in the Seymour Manuscripts which refer specifically to letter-bearers entrusted with transporting correspondence from sender to recipient. The Earl of Bath in particular regularly made reference to letter-bearers in his correspondence. For example, in a series of letters that Bath wrote to Edward Seymour between summer 1596 and autumn 1601 the following comments were made: 'I haue receyued youre lettre by this Messenger'; 'I haue receyued youre lettre by the Messenger'; 'this bringer youre seruante'; 'the bearer hereof my servaunte Iohn Allyn'; 'the particulars whereof I then sent as I doe nowe againe by my servaunte Papwarthe'; 'I hope youe shall receyve *my letter* by this messenger you<sup>r</sup> servaunte'; 'I haue sent vnto youe by this bringer so manie particulers'; 'I haue

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<sup>22</sup> DRO, ECA, Receivers' Rolls, 32, 36 and 42 Elizabeth I.

<sup>23</sup> PWDRO, 1/132, Widey Court Book, ff. 96, 104 and 123.

<sup>24</sup> Items pertaining to riders and footmen bearing letters are numerous in Plymouth's receivers' accounts during the late-Elizabethan period. By contrast, payments pertaining to the use of boats for transporting letters are less common and include: 1588/9, 'Item paied to Edward hill for rowing vp to *the howe* to aduertise the lord: Chamberlen of the Spaniard that Came in to Bigberie Baie', 2s.; 1596/7, 'Item pa<sup>d</sup> for Carriage a lettre to Crymmell [Cremmell] passage [ferry] sent from the llordes of the Councell to S<sup>r</sup> Fraunces Goddolphin', 2d.; 1598/9, 'Item pa<sup>d</sup> for a Pinnis [Pinnacle – small nimble vessel] to carrie y<sup>e</sup> Counselles lettres to her Majes<sup>ties</sup> shippes', 2s. (PWDRO, 1/132, Widey Court Book, ff. 80, 118 and 126).

receiued *you<sup>r</sup>* last *lett<sup>r</sup>e* by the bearer hereof *you<sup>r</sup>* *Servaunte*'; 'I haue once more sent ... my servante Skippon ... to bringe vnto youe these instructions'.<sup>25</sup> Evidence of using personally known letter-bearers can also be found in the receivers' accounts of late-Elizabethan Devon's town corporations. In Dartmouth, for example, during the August 1599 Spanish invasion scare, Jon Lomer, Henry Osborne and Henry Collins, along with two individuals referred to as 'Speed' and 'Beers man', were paid to convey letters, messages and news to local government officials living in nearby Blackawton, Blackpool, Berry Pomeroy, Modbury, Plymouth and Totnes.<sup>26</sup> Throughout the late-Elizabethan period, moreover, Plymouth's civic elite made payments to a wide range of personally known individuals, including Edward Hill, Edward James, Francis Blewett, George Sterling, Henrie Ellis, Henrie Stoute, John Veizie, John Gibbons, Nicholas Doe, Nicholas Lane, Richard Berryman, Richard Isacke, Thomas Edmondess, Thomas Payne, as well as men known colloquially as 'Ballemaine' or 'Ballamy', 'Collins', 'Dodge', 'Fletcher', 'Peter the post', 'Peters boy' and 'Russell the post', for delivering letters and messages to local elite living throughout Devon and Cornwall.<sup>27</sup> In terms of remuneration, it would appear that these personally known letter-bearers were paid twice for their services by both sender and recipient.<sup>28</sup> Thus, as well as paying letter-bearers for carrying outgoing mail, Devon's town corporations also disbursed money to those letter-bearers and servants who brought incoming mail from their correspondents. For instance, Exeter's receivers made a number of payments to the Earl of Bath's junior secretary, Roger Papworth, during the 1590s for the

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<sup>25</sup> DRO, 1392M/L1596/6; DRO, 1392M/L1596/9; DRO, 1392M/L1596/22; DRO, 1392M/L1600/1; DRO, 1392M/L1601/13; DRO, 3799M-3/O/1/4; DRO, 3799M-3/O/1/21; DRO, 3799M-3/O/9/1/24.

<sup>26</sup> DRO, DD.61619.

<sup>27</sup> PWDRO, 1/132, Widey Court Book, ff. 72-146.

<sup>28</sup> Daybell, *The Material Letter*, p. 139.

delivery of letters to Exeter from Tawstock Court, while in Plymouth William Downeman noted in his 1593/4 year of account the 5s. 'geiven Sf Willia<sup>m</sup> Courtenye his man for bringinge a *lettre* from the Earle of Essex for the Pilchardes cause'.<sup>29</sup>

The two main advantages of utilising personally known letter-bearers and servants to carry official government mail direct from sender to recipient instead of the impersonal royal post-stage, carrier or mercantile service was security and trust. In terms of security, the risk of a dispatch misfiring or falling into the wrong hands was minimised because private messengers ensured 'that a letter would be handed directly to the hands of the addressee or at least left at their residence'.<sup>30</sup> While, with regards to trust, a sender could furnish his most dependable personal messengers with additional information not contained in a dispatch in order for it to be conveyed orally to a recipient. This saved vital time, allowing the sender to write a brief *précis* of the main points he wanted to communicate, leaving the messenger to 'fill in the gaps', answer any questions and relay any sensitive information verbally. Thus, it was common for late-Elizabethan Devon's political elite to refer to oral messages in their *communiqués*. Once again the Seymour Manuscripts provide a crucial snapshot of this phenomenon with a number of letters written from the Earl of Bath to Edward Seymour containing references to oral messages: 'Since the writinge hereof I haue thoughte good to write vnto my Coosen Champernowne in such sorte as this bringer youre seruante can informe youe'; 'I aunsweread m<sup>r</sup> Richard: Champemownes servaunt by worde that I had signified my mynde vnto my Llordes of the counsell'; 'my servaunte Papwarthe ... shall be readye to attende you'; 'I haue thought it good to forbearre to delyver anye other aunswere

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<sup>29</sup> DRO, ECA, Receivers' Rolls, 31, 38, 39 and 43 Elizabeth I; PWDRO 1/132, Wided Court Book, f. 99.

<sup>30</sup> Daybell, *The Material Letter*, p. 140.

therevnto then by worde of mouthe to his Messenger *wh<sup>ch</sup>* I haue also willed Papworthe to declare vnto yo<sup>u</sup>.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, it was customary for personal messengers to wait with a recipient for a response (either oral or written) before returning to his master thereby speeding up the execution of government business and providing an explanation as to why personal letter-bearers received payment from both sender and recipient. Thus, when the Earl of Bath desired a response ‘*wi<sup>th</sup>*out anye delaye’ on 22 May 1600, he endorsed a letter to Edward Seymour, Thomas Reynell and Amice Bampfield thus: ‘I praye geue this messenger for his paynes Twoe shillinges And retourne me yo<sup>u</sup>r aunsio<sup>r</sup> by him.’<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, despite efforts to maximise the rapidity of these informal postal arrangements they were, understandably, inherently slow. Thus, during the critical years of 1588 to 1603 Devon’s political elite needed a speedier and more sustained link with the county’s royal post-stages, each other and their subordinates to facilitate the heightened degree of interconnectedness at all tiers of government engendered by the war with Spain and rebellion in Ireland. It is the intention of the following two sections to outline in detail how this was achieved.

### **Devon’s intra-county post-stage service**

A number of documents in the Seymour Manuscripts reveal that the Earl of Bath established an intra-county post-stage service similar in nature to the national facility outlined in chapter four in order for government mail to rapidly be conveyed to and from himself, his deputies, civic elites located in Devon’s principal port towns and certain other high status county officials. The specific

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<sup>31</sup> DRO, 1392M/L1596/22; DRO, 1392M/L1598/6; DRO, 1392M/L1601/13; DRO, 3799M-3/O/9/1/19.

<sup>32</sup> DRO, 3799M-3/O/1/22.

date when this intra-county post-stage network was established is presently unknown. However, it was definitely engaged by autumn 1596 and operated in conjunction with the south-west's Exchequer-funded post-stage network (itself engaged on 1 August 1595) in order to replicate the rapid inter-urban transmission of government mail on an intra-county basis. This section provides an in-depth analysis of this intra-county postal network outlining wherever possible the locations of Devon's intra-county post-stages and, where there is insufficient evidence, providing logical suggestions as to where the remaining intra-county post-stages are likely to have been situated. In addition, by combining relevant primary material from the Seymour Manuscripts with the postal endorsement data utilised in chapter four, evidence in the borough records of Okehampton, the receivers' accounts of Exeter and Plymouth and the wills of certain members of late-Elizabethan Devon's political elite, the section outlines to whom the service was available, how it functioned and the probable delivery speeds achieved.

However, before discussing Devon's intra-county post-stage network it is important to note that a less formalised and more primitive forerunner existed. To clarify, there is substantial evidence in the borough records of Plymouth and Exeter which confirms that prior to 1596 Devon's town corporations regularly received letters from the Earl of Bath, his deputies and other political elite addressed to individuals residing in the nearby hinterland which required onward delivery. For example, in 1588/9 Plymouth's incumbent receiver, John Geare, disbursed 18d. 'to Georg Sterling for riding to m<sup>r</sup> Champemons of Modberie w<sup>th</sup> Sir Frauncis Drake his *lettre* for staieng of the moneies wh<sup>ch</sup> hath bin gathered' and another 18d. 'to Collins for riding to m<sup>r</sup> St<sup>r</sup>oudes & to the Constables and to m<sup>r</sup> Champemons at Modberie w<sup>th</sup> a *precept* from m<sup>r</sup> George

Carie of Cokenton [Cockington]'.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, Exeter's Act Book for the years 1587 to 1601 contains an acknowledgement that 'Lettres receiued this daye [20 January 1590] from the Earle of Bathe were sente theone directed to S<sup>r</sup> William Courteney ... theother directed to S<sup>r</sup> Roberte Dennys'.<sup>34</sup> Then, in 1593/4 Exeter's incumbent receiver, Henrye Hull, paid 9s. 4d. 'for sixe post horses vppon reporte of the landinge of the Spanyardes at Sidmoth bye S<sup>r</sup> Thomas Denys Sheriffe'.<sup>35</sup> Presumably Denys had sent a messenger to Exeter from his home at Bicton with orders to relay this news via six post-horses to the Earl of Bath and his five fellow deputy lieutenants. However, by 1596 these informal post-horse relay arrangements were evidently regarded as insufficient to operate alongside the south-west's Exchequer-funded post-stage service and so more formal arrangements were enacted.

On 19 November 1596 the Earl of Bath convened at Okehampton with four of his deputy lieutenants (Sir Ferdinando Gorges, George Cary, Edward Seymour and Richard Champernowne) to discuss certain matters pertaining to the government of Devon. Item twelve on their agenda related to the provision of post-horses which they ordered to operate along an intra-county post-stage network:

Item yt is ordered that there be poast horsses laid in readynes through all the princypall trade waies leadinge from the places of descent in this County of Devon to the Lord Leiueten<sup>a</sup>nte & his Deputies accordinge to a former *order* therof sett downe by the Lord Leiueten<sup>a</sup>nte in that behalf.<sup>36</sup>

The 'places of descent' refer to the likely landing sites that the Spanish were expected to choose in the event of an amphibious assault on Devon which, as outlined in chapter three, were thought to be Plymouth, Dartmouth and Tor Bay,

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<sup>33</sup> PWDRO, 1/132, Widey Court Book, ff. 80-1.

<sup>34</sup> DRO, ECA, Act Book V (1587-1601), pp. 150-1.

<sup>35</sup> DRO, ECA, Receivers' Rolls, 36 Elizabeth I.

<sup>36</sup> DRO, 3799M-3/O/2/8.

while the principal residences of the Earl of Bath and his deputy lieutenants are illustrated by figure 2.2 in chapter two. A subsequent order made by Bath and three of his deputies (Sir William Courtenay, Hugh Fortescue and Edward Seymour) when they met at Exeter on 19 April 1599 confirms the engagement of late-Elizabethan Devon's intra-county post-stage network:

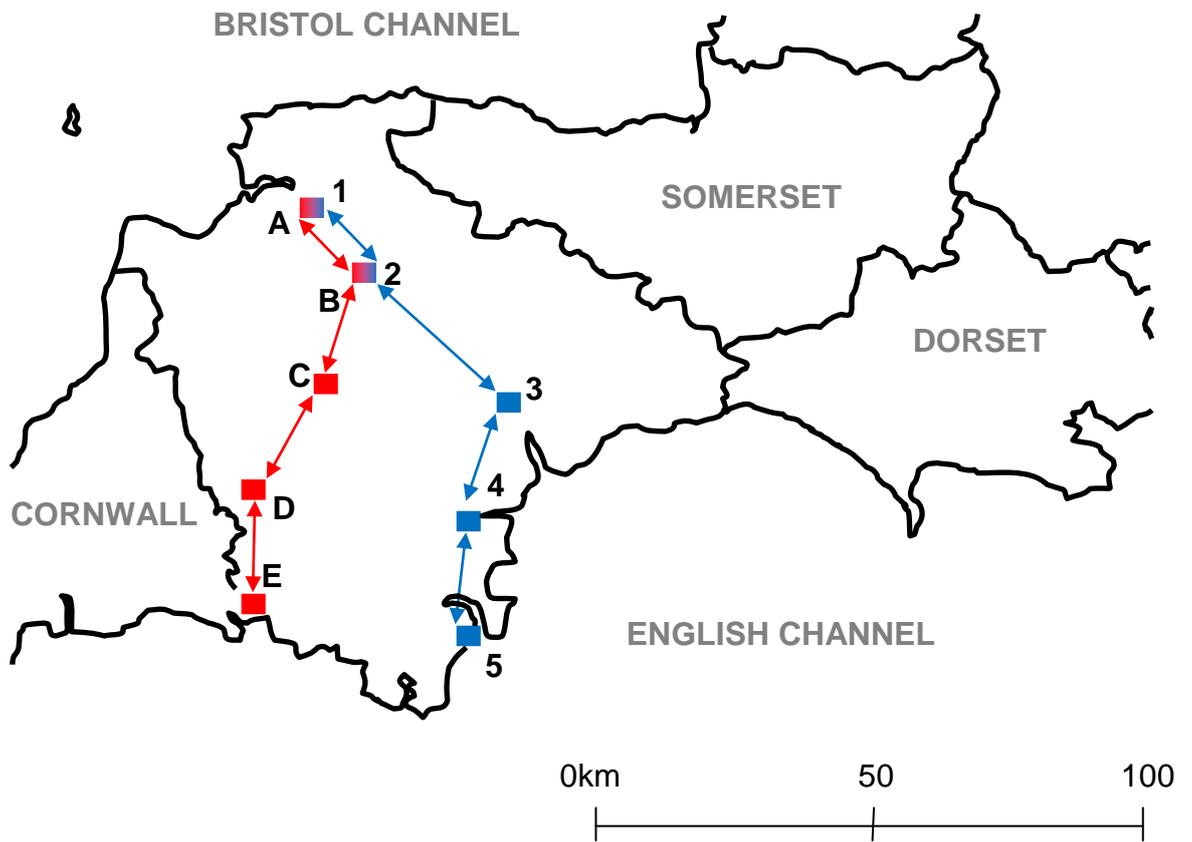
Item yt is ordered for the ease & benefytt of the Country that from hencefourthe at all places where post horsse haue byn vsuallie Comaunded to be layd for the more expedicon & Convayaunce of *lettres* & messuages from the Lord: Leiueten<sup>a</sup>nte to Exeter Plymouthe & other places for the seruice of her majes<sup>tie</sup> That the said post horsse shalbe dismissed & tourned into foote post.<sup>37</sup>

The fact that both Exeter and Plymouth are explicitly mentioned verifies the location of two of Devon's intra-county post-stages. Moreover, the notion that this network was a permanent feature in late-Elizabethan Devon from at least autumn 1596 is indicated by the fact that the order stipulates the downgrading of the service from a post-horse to a foot-post facility. This therefore implies that during periods of heightened Spanish threat the more expensive engagement of post-horses was ordered to establish optimum intra-county communication speeds amongst Devon's political elite, whereas during periods of diminished threat the network was turned into a less expensive and comparatively slower foot-post service rather than being dismissed altogether.

As well as Plymouth and Exeter, it is logical to assume that Dartmouth was engaged as an intra-county post-stage because, as noted above and in chapter three, it was considered one of the 'places of descent' likely to be chosen by the Spanish in the event of an invasion attempt. Thus, the town's civic elite needed to be in ready contact with Bath and his deputies to relay incoming news and intelligence from the continent and receive orders and

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<sup>37</sup> DRO, 3799M-3/O/2/18.



**Tawstock Court to Plymouth**

- A. Tawstock Court
- B. Chulmleigh
- C. Okehampton
- D. Tavistock
- E. Plymouth



**Tawstock Court to Dartmouth**

- 1. Tawstock Court
- 2. Chulmleigh
- 3. Exeter
- 4. Newton Abbot
- 5. Dartmouth

Figure 5.1: Late-Elizabethan Devon's intra-county post-stage network.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>38</sup> DRO, 3799M-3/O/2/8; DRO, 3799M-3/O/2/18; DRO, 1392M/L1599/12; DRO, 3248A/9/3; PWDRO, 1/132, Widey Court Book, f. 139.

directives concerning matters of defence and security. The remaining intra-county post-stages linking Dartmouth with Tawstock Court may well have been Ashburton, Exeter and Chulmleigh. All three served as royal post-stages during the late-Elizabethan era and as such possessed the logistical capability to function in this secondary capacity. That said, a letter from Sir William Courtenay to Edward Seymour dated 3 August 1599 when the former was at Cullompton in east Devon and the latter was at Dartmouth suggests that Ashburton may not have been an intra-county post-stage. Postal endorsements on the outside panel of the letter reveal that the dispatch was at Exeter ‘the 3 of Aug at one a cloke after nowne’ before being forwarded to the ‘Counstable of Newton ... w<sup>th</sup> speed’.<sup>39</sup> Had Ashburton been engaged as an intra-county post-stage the letter would surely have been conveyed there. The fact that it was not therefore suggests that Newton Bushel (present-day Newton Abbot) functioned as the intra-county post-stage linking Exeter with Dartmouth. At approximately fifteen-and-a-half statute miles from Exeter and eighteen statute miles from Dartmouth it was ideally placed. What is more, unlike Ashburton, Newton Abbot is located adjacent to Tor Bay (one of the ‘places of descent’ thought likely to be chosen by the Spanish). Thus, for the purposes of this chapter, Newton Abbot is considered an intra-county post-stage instead of Ashburton (see figure 5.1).

Additional evidence of late-Elizabethan Devon’s intra-county post-stage network is located in the borough records of Okehampton. On 1 August 1599 Sir Ferdinando Gorges, Sir William Strode, Thomas Hele, John Copleston, Tristram Gorges, William Crymes and Christopher Harris wrote from Plymouth to the Mayor of Okehampton ordering

in her Majes<sup>ties</sup> name streightlie to charge and Comaunde you that vpon receipte hereof you provide twoe able and sufficiente post

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<sup>39</sup> DRO, 1392M/L1599/12.

horses to be alwayes in ... readines w<sup>th</sup>in your Towne for the speedie transportinge and sendinge of ... all such lettres as shall from tyme to tyme be directed from hence or from any other the partes here adioyninge by any of vs to ... the Lord: Lyuete<sup>a</sup>nte for her Majes<sup>ties</sup> service, or from him vnto vs or any of vs.<sup>40</sup>

This letter is of crucial importance because it confirms that a second intra-county post-stage connection, largely independent from the Exchequer-funded royal post-stage network, was established between Tawstock Court and Plymouth via Okehampton during the late-1590s. In addition to Okehampton, it seems likely that Tavistock and Chulmleigh functioned as the route's other post-stages. The supposition of the former's engagement is based largely on a single entry made by William Can in the Plymouth's receivers' accounts during 1601/2: 'Item pa<sup>d</sup> Thomas Pavie for Carriage a letter to ... Tavistocke beinge directed to the Earle of Bathe'.<sup>41</sup> While this is rather tenuous evidence it nevertheless implies that letters directed to the Earl of Bath were sent from Plymouth to Tavistock before being directed to Okehampton and then on to Chulmleigh which, as noted, was a logical location for the final link to and from Tawstock Court and Plymouth owing to its periodic engagement as a royal post-stage. Moreover, the distance between Plymouth and Okehampton is approximately thirty statute miles. Thus, when one remembers the comparatively slow speeds (outlined in chapter four) achieved by the post-boys who carried royal mail between Plymouth and Ashburton – a distance of twenty-five statute miles – a midway point between Plymouth and Okehampton would have been desirable. At approximately fourteen statute miles from Plymouth and sixteen from Okehampton, Tavistock was ideally placed.

Who then in Devon could utilise this intra-county post-stage network?

The Earl of Bath, his deputies and the civic authorities in Plymouth, Dartmouth

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<sup>40</sup> DRO, 3248A/9/3.

<sup>41</sup> PWDRO, 1/132, Widey Court Book, f. 139.

and Exeter were of course the primary users, but whom else, if anyone was permitted to utilise the system? The letter written by Sir Ferdinando Gorges and others to the Mayor of Okehampton on 1 August 1599 ordering the provision of two post-horses helps to answer this question because not only was it signed by two of Bath's deputies (Gorges and Sir William Strode) it was also signed by Thomas Hele, John Copleston, Tristram Gorges, William Crymes and Christopher Harris – none of whom were either a deputy lieutenant of Devon or a leading member of Plymouth's civic elite. All however were from influential south-west families. Thomas Hele, for example, was the third son of Sir John Hele of Wembury (c.1542-1608) – the powerful lawyer whose legal prowess ensured that he occupied the position of recorder for both Exeter (1592-1605) and Plymouth (by c.1604) during his career – while Christopher Harris of Radford (c.1553-1625) was a very prominent local official in both Devon and Cornwall, most notably as a JP (from 1591) and vice-admiral (1596 and 1600).<sup>42</sup> It thus appears that as well as the primary users, a secondary set of local government officials operating immediately subordinate to Bath and his deputies were able to utilise Devon's intra-county post-stage network if necessary. Nevertheless, it is quite clear that the network was designed first and foremost to enable Devon's Lord and Deputy Lieutenants – a small elite group of politicians at the apex of the county's government – to communicate rapidly with each other and with the civic authorities in Devon's most vulnerable port towns and seems only to have been available to lower level government personnel on the explicit say-so of either Bath or one of his deputies.

Having outlined the probable structure of Devon's intra-county post-stage network and the individuals to whom the network was available it is now

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<sup>42</sup> Vivian, *Visitations of Devon*, p. 464; Hasler, *Commons*, ii, pp. 259 and 287-8.

necessary to demonstrate how this formal method of speedy letter delivery is likely to have functioned. Each intra-county post-stage illustrated in figure 5.1 seems to have been overseen and funded by the local civic authorities. For example, as noted above, the Mayor of Okehampton was instructed to ‘provide twoe able and sufficiente post horses to be alwayes in ... readines’, while Plymouth’s receivers disbursed £3 in 1596/7 to Thomas Pavie ‘for keepinge of a post horse to Carie letters to the Earle of Bathe’ and 40s. in 1597/8 ‘for half a yere for a post horse to Carrye lettres to the Earle of Bathe’.<sup>43</sup> Thus, from these few examples it is likely that local civic elites were able to retain a sufficient number of post-horses to serve along Devon’s intra-county post-stage network and thereby ensure the smooth and speedy running of their section of the service. Indeed, when in 1588 Sir Walter Raleigh’s entourage arrived at Exeter and demanded the hire of thirty-two post-horses to transport them to Sir John Gilbert I’s house at Greenway Exeter’s authorities duly accommodated them, charging ‘for 22 myle at j<sup>d</sup>[one pence] ob[of] per mylle for euery horse’ in accordance with the royal prerogative of purveyance.<sup>44</sup> Of course such an outlay had nothing to do with Devon’s intra-county post-stage arrangements; nevertheless, it indicates that even during the most critical year of the late-Elizabethan period the civic authorities in Exeter were able to supply a substantial number of post-horses if the need arose.

However, the availability and provision of post-horses at each of Devon’s intra-county post-stages would have been irrelevant had post-horses not been readily available at the residences of the Earl of Bath and his deputies. Indeed, to utilise the service at its optimum speed an appropriate number of horses, along with sufficient stabling facilities, was needed at each of their homes to

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<sup>43</sup> DRO, 3248A/9/3; PWDRO, 1/132, Widey Court Book, ff. 115 and 122.

<sup>44</sup> DRO, ECA, Receivers’ Rolls, 31 Elizabeth I.

enable the rapid conveyance of important government mail to their nearest intra-county post-stage. How then does one determine whether Bath and his deputies owned a sufficient number of horses to make the most of Devon's intra-county post-stage network? The answer lies in the extant wills of Devon's Lord and Deputy Lieutenants which include numerous references to horse ownership. For example, the Earl of Bath bequeathed to his son, Edward Bouchier, fourth Earl of Bath, 'six of the best winter geldings and fower of the best somer naggess' and to Francis, Lord Russell, 'the best stone horse, and best gelding'. Sir Robert Denys left certain members of his household 'One guelding with Sadle and other necessaryes meete for her owne Rydinge, one other for a gentlewoman with furniture to the same, And fower other geldings with their Sadles and furnitures fit for Servingmen'. Hugh Fortescue granted to his wife and executors 'one haulf of all my other horsesses geldinges mares and Coultess'. Sir John Gilbert II gave his servant, Edward Crompton, his 'olde blacke nagge'. And Sir Amyas Bampfild, who assumed Sir George Cary's lieutenancy duty during the latter's time in Ireland, bequeathed his wife his 'best Ambling gelding or nagge'.<sup>45</sup> While not revealing the true extent of horse ownership among Bath and his deputies, these bequests nevertheless indicate that it was substantial. After all, several legacies refer to the grant of 'best' horses implying that the deceased owned many more horses besides. Indeed, in his analysis of horses and social status, Peter Edwards has described the quantity and type of horses owned by the nobility and upper-gentry thus:

Good horsemanship was deemed to be one of the essential attributes of a gentleman ... For this reason, the stables belonging to the upper classes contained the largest and most varied stock. Local

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<sup>45</sup> PROB 11/142: 31/10/1622; PROB 11/80: 15/7/1592; PROB 11/96: 5/6/1599; PROB 11/112; PROB 11/148: 4/6/1625. A 'gelding' is a castrated male horse of any age. A nag or 'nagge' is a 'small riding horse'. A 'stone' horse is a male horse of four years or older – in other words, a stallion. A 'mare' is a female horse of four years or older. A colt is a male horse under the age of four years.

gentry might keep ten to twelve head but the nobility would have dozens of horses in their stables.<sup>46</sup>

The extant wills of Bath and his deputies therefore collectively confirm that each maintained ample equine services at their homes to facilitate the intra-county post-stage network's best possible postal speeds.

What then were the likely postal speeds achieved between late-Elizabethan Devon's intra-county post-stages assuming that the network outlined above is an accurate reconstruction? Unfortunately, unlike the Exchequer-funded royal post-stage network, there seem to have been no stringent guidelines in place for recording the time of arrival at each post-stage in a ledger or indeed on the outside panel of a dispatch. However, despite this, there are a number of letters present among the Seymour Manuscripts which were endorsed with a time of dispatch. The letter written by Sir William Courtenay to Edward Seymour on 3 August 1599 (used above to argue the case for Newton Abbot being an intra-county post-stage) is a notable example, as is the letter written by Sir John Gilbert II at Plymouth to the Earl of Bath at Tawstock Court on 28 July 1601, which is endorsed 'the fort the 28<sup>th</sup> Iuly 1601 at 7 of the clock at night', and the letter from Amyas Bampfield and Thomas Reynell to Edward Seymour and others dated 16 October 1601, which is certified as being 'At the Castell of Exon [Exeter] friday half an hower past 10 of the clock in the forenoon'.<sup>47</sup> Unfortunately, postal endorsements like these are too rare and fragmented to enable one to apply the same methodology as the one used in chapter four to approximate the mean travel times between Plymouth and London. Nevertheless, they do point to an intra-county post-stage

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<sup>46</sup> Peter Edwards, *Horse and Man in Early Modern England* (Cornwall: Continuum, 2007), p. 3. See also Peter Edwards, *The Horse Trade of Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge: CUP, 1988); Joan Thirsk, 'Horses in Early Modern England: for Service, for Pleasure, for Power', *The Stenton Lectures: University of Reading* (1977).

<sup>47</sup> DRO, 1392M/L1599/29; DRO, 1392M/L1601/4; DRO, 1392M/L1601/15.

network that was similarly geared to speed and efficiency. Indeed, this is supported by the fact that a number of letters present in the Seymour Manuscripts which were dispatched on an intra-county basis possess the phrases 'For her majesties spetiall seruice' and 'haste hast post hast for life', or similar words to that affect, and some even include a sketch of a gallows – the usual caution for a prompt delivery repeatedly found on the letters that were conveyed along the south-west's Exchequer-funded post-stage network by relays of semi-literate post-boys.<sup>48</sup> It is therefore reasonable to assume that mean travel times between Devon's intra-county post-stages were equally as rapid as the mean travel times achieved along the south-west's Exchequer-funded post-stage network. Consequently, by utilising the postal endorsement data from chapter four, it has been possible to calculate estimated mean travel times that are likely to have been achieved by the post-boys who carried government mail via late-Elizabethan Devon's intra-county post-stage network.<sup>49</sup> The results are presented in figure 5.2 and suggest that Devon's intra-county post-stage service enabled the Earl of Bath customarily to send and receive mail to and from his subordinates in Dartmouth in just over fourteen hours and, in Plymouth, a little under twelve-and-a-half hours.

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<sup>48</sup> DRO, 1392M/L1595/7; DRO, 1392M/L1596/20 and 24; DRO, 1392M/L1599/3, 8, 11-14, 25, 29, 31 and 37; DRO, 1392M/L1601/2, 4, 10, 12, 15 and 17; DRO, 1392M/L1602/3; DRO, 3799M-3/O/1/13, 17-19, 21 and 29; DRO, 3799M-3/O/9/1/20.

<sup>49</sup> The first step taken when calculating estimated mean travel times between Devon's intra-county post-stages was to measure the distance in statute miles between each post-stage using route planning computer software. This revealed that the Tawstock Court to Dartmouth route totalled approximately seventy-one statute miles while the Tawstock Court to Plymouth route was approximately sixty-one-and-a-half statute miles (see figure 5.2). Having established these distances it was then necessary to calculate the mean time it took for a letter to be conveyed one statute mile via the south-west's Exchequer-funded post-stage route: adjusted mean travel time between Plymouth and London (46.09 hours) / approximate distance between Plymouth and London (229 statute miles) = 0.20 hours-per-mile. Armed with this information it is possible to estimate the mean travel times achieved between late-Elizabethan Devon's intra-county stages by multiplying the distance between each post-stage in statute miles by the 0.20 hours-per-mile customarily achieved by the post-boys operating along the south-west's royal post-stage network.

<b>Intra-county post-stage</b>	<b>Distance (statute miles)</b>	<b>Estimated mean travel time (hours)</b>
Tawstock Court to Chulmleigh	15.00	3.00
Chulmleigh to Exeter	22.00	4.40
Exeter to Newton Abbot	16.00	3.20
Newton Abbot to Dartmouth	18.00	3.60
<b>Totals</b>	<b>71.00</b>	<b>14.20</b>

<b>Intra-county post-stage</b>	<b>Distance (statute miles)</b>	<b>Estimated mean travel time (hours)</b>
Tawstock Court to Chulmleigh	15.00	3.00
Chulmleigh to Okehampton	16.00	3.20
Okehampton to Tavistock	16.00	3.20
Tavistock to Plymouth	14.50	2.90
<b>Totals</b>	<b>61.50</b>	<b>12.30</b>

Figure 5.2: Distances and estimated mean travel times between Late-Elizabethan Devon's two intra-county post-stage routes. N.B. Estimated mean travel times have been calculated using the postal endorsement data from chapter four.

However, what concrete evidence is there to confirm that these estimated travel times were achievable? Fortunately, this question can be answered by certain letters among the Seymour Manuscripts and State Papers written during the summer 1599 Spanish invasion scare. One of these was sent from the Earl of Bath at Tawstock Court to Edward Seymour at Berry Pomeroy Castle on 26 July 1599. The opening few lines of the letter read as follows:

Good Coosen Seymou<sup>r</sup>: since I wrote to youe laste, wh<sup>i</sup><sup>ch</sup> was aboute nyne of the Clocke in the forenowne this p<sup>r</sup>esente daye (and then in some haste as aunswere to you<sup>r</sup> lett<sup>r</sup>e wh<sup>i</sup><sup>ch</sup> I receyved by the poste) Captayne Dodington hath gyven me aduertisemen<sup>t</sup> that the Fleete wh<sup>i</sup><sup>ch</sup> was discovered yesterdaye before Plymouthe are all Fleminges bounde for Salte [La Rochelle].<sup>50</sup>

To place this letter into context, ‘Captayne Dodington’ was in fact Lieutenant Edward Dodington – Sir Ferdinando Gorges’ second-in-command at Plymouth Fort. At seven o’clock on the evening of 25 July 1599 he mistook an approaching Flemish fleet for Spanish warships and hurriedly dispatched two letters warning his superiors of the perceived threat. One was conveyed via the Exchequer-funded post-stage service to the Privy Council in London and the other was directed to the Earl of Bath at Tawstock presumably via Devon’s intra-county post-stage network.<sup>51</sup> The earliest that Dodington could have dispatched his letter to Bath from Plymouth was seven o’clock in the evening of 25 July and the latest that it could have arrived at Tawstock Court was nine o’clock in the morning of 26 July because by that time, as Bath states in the above extract, the Earl had forwarded the information to Edward Seymour.<sup>52</sup> In

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<sup>50</sup> DRO, 1392M/L1599/2.

<sup>51</sup> SP 12/271 f.184. Reference to Dodington’s letter to Bath can be found in DRO, 1392M/L1599/3.

<sup>52</sup> Dodington also wrote a follow-up letter to the Privy Council explaining to them, no doubt with much embarrassment, that the suspected fleet were: ‘Fleminges bounde for Rochell [La Rochelle]’ but that ‘the manner of there woorkinge caused vs ... to misdoubte them, whereof I thought it my dutie to geue you<sup>r</sup> honours: the speediest notise ... pardon my hastie writinge’ (SP 12/271 f.185).

fact it is feasible to assume that Bath received Dodington's letter much earlier than nine o'clock on the morning of 26 July because by that time he had read it, considered it, written a letter to Seymour informing him of the perceived threat and dispatched that letter forthwith. The time it took for Dodington's letter to travel from Plymouth to Tawstock Court therefore could not have taken any longer than fourteen hours and, in all likelihood, was in the Earl of Bath's possession no later than the estimated mean travel time of twelve-and-a-half hours outlined in figure 5.2. Consequently, when on 26 July Bath instructed Seymour to 'comaunde the post horses betwene yo<sup>u</sup> and me to be in present readynes to convaye lettres to eache of vs w<sup>th</sup> speede, and lett me heare from yo<sup>u</sup> daylie in anye wise so longe as this daunger lasteth' he did so safe in the knowledge that daily contact between himself in north Devon and his subordinates in south Devon was easily achievable thanks to the intra-county post-stage network that he and his deputies had established.<sup>53</sup>

### **Devon's parish-to-parish postal network**

So far this chapter has outlined the various modes of letter delivery available to the Earl of Bath, his deputies and the county's civic elite for sending and receiving government mail and messages among each other. However, during the critical years of 1588 to 1603 Devon's political elite needed also to be readily connected with those local government officials operating at a division, hundred and parish level so that they could promptly order the mustering of the county's militia within 'an hour's warning', initiate the widespread levying of

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<sup>53</sup> DRO, 1392M/L1599/3. Similarly, when Sir William Courtenay wrote (most probably from Exeter) to Edward Seymour at Dartmouth on 4 August 1599 he endorsed the letter thus: 'I expect aunswer of this this night' (DRO, 1392M/L1599/14). Had there not been an appropriately rapid means of conveyance engaged such a request would have likely been considered futile.

troops for service in Ireland and circulate important pieces of news and intelligence throughout the county.<sup>54</sup> Consequently, a parish-to-parish postal network was established whereby a combination of post-horses and foot-posts were kept on standby in each of Devon's parishes to carry orders, directives and precepts to all corners of the county. By utilising relevant material from the Seymour Manuscripts in conjunction with the receivers' accounts of Plymouth, the Institute of Heraldic and Genealogical Studies' map of Devon parishes and the Plymouth Market Toll Book this section clarifies how Devon's parish-to-parish postal network functioned, to whom it was available and how it undoubtedly facilitated the widespread dissemination of political information and ideas among not only late-Elizabethan Devon's political elite but also the county's wider population.

Evidence of late-Elizabethan Devon's parish-to-parish postal network can be found in certain orders among the Seymour Manuscripts. Thus, item nine of a set of orders devised by Devon's Deputy Lieutenants on 12 August 1595 stipulates: 'That therebe postes Appoynted Aswell one horse as one foote in eache parishe for the more expedicon to be vused for all intellygences as occasyon shall Requyer'; while a draft precept from Edward Seymour to the petty-constables of the parishes near to his house at Berry Pomeroy dated 2 August 1599 instructs them to: 'haue in each parish one suffycient post horsse for the more spedier execucon of all directions that shall Come vnto yo<sup>u</sup>'.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, the longevity of these postal arrangements is confirmed by an order made by the Earl of Bath and his deputies on 2 August 1620 wherein they agreed: 'That two or three fit men be appointed in every parish by the

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<sup>54</sup> HMC, *Somerset*, p. 48.

<sup>55</sup> DRO, 3799M-3/O/2/3; DRO, 3799M-3/O/2/20.

constables to be foot posts for conveyance of letters upon all occasions.’<sup>56</sup> According to the eighteenth-century writer, John Bruce, such parish-to-parish postal arrangements were not peculiar to Devon, rather it was a widespread communication expedient utilised throughout the realm during the Armada crisis of 1588 rapidly to convey official government mail.<sup>57</sup> Thus, while the evidence is somewhat tenuous, it would appear that a parish-based communication network operated throughout the realm on an intermittent basis from at least the time of the Spanish Armada to well beyond the accession of James I.

Further evidence of late-Elizabethan Devon’s parish-to-parish postal service can be gleaned from the postal endorsements on certain letters written to Edward Seymour from his fellow deputy lieutenants, Sir Ferdinando Gorges and Sir William Strode. Gorges wrote from ‘Plymoth att xij[12] a Clocke the xx[20]<sup>th</sup> of August 1599’ to Seymour ‘att Berie Castle’ in order to query why a detachment of fifty militiamen from Sir George Cary’s regiment was unable to reinforce his troops. Crucially the words ‘from tything to tything’ (a tithing being an administrative unit that consisted of ten households) can faintly be discerned on the outside panel of the letter beneath the customary declaration that the missive was ‘For her Majes<sup>ties</sup> especiall affaires’, Seymour’s name and address and the location, time and date the letter was sent.<sup>58</sup> Similarly, Strode wrote a letter at Meavy, near Tavistock, on 18 October 1601 to Seymour at Berry Pomeroy Castle in order to acknowledge the receipt of certain letters and arrange a meeting ‘at the Parlement very shortly’. The letter was endorsed thus: ‘For her Majes<sup>ties</sup> speciall service’; ‘To the right *Worshipfu<sup>ll</sup>*: my verie lovinge

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<sup>56</sup> HMC, *Somerset*, p. 63.

<sup>57</sup> John Bruce, *Report On The Arrangements Which Were Made, For The Internal Defence of These Kingdoms, When Spain, By Its Armada, Projected The Invasion and Conquest of England* (London, 1798), p. cxxx. The relevant passage reads: ‘that there be a foote poste appoynted in every parish within the shire, whose dwellinge should be chosen, neere unto the churche’.

<sup>58</sup> DRO, 1392M/L1599/29.

Cosen Edward Seymou<sup>r</sup> esqu<sup>i</sup>e at Berry Castle geue theise'; 'hast hast post hast'; 'At Meuoy [Meavy] the 18<sup>th</sup> of October by 11: in the forenoone.'; 'from parish to parish by the Cunstables to be conveyed'; 'William Strode'.<sup>59</sup> Indeed, Strode seems to have been a regular user of Devon's parish-to-parish postal network for 'at night' on 7 March 1602 he wrote again from Meavy to Seymour at Berry Pomeroy Castle this time enclosing a letter from the Earl of Bath which related to the first payment of the second subsidy together with 'bookes wh<sup>ch</sup> his lordship: sent touching the same'. At eight o'clock the next morning Strode dispatched this bundle of documents to Seymour 'from parish to parish by the Cunstables or other officers w<sup>th</sup> speed'.<sup>60</sup>

Town corporations also seem to have had ready access to the county's parish- and tithing-based postal infrastructure. For example, Plymouth's receiver for 1596/7, Thomas Reynolson, paid 4d. 'for Carriage a *lettre* to the next tythinge sent to the Earle of Bathe', 6d. 'for Carienge a *lettre* at next tithinge sent to the Earle of Bathe', 15d. 'for Carriage three hues & Cries to the next Tithinges' and 3d. 'for carriage a hue & Crie at next tithinge'; while his successor, Robert Trelawnie, disbursed 15s. 2d. 'for passinge of *lettres* this yere from tythinge to tythinge'.<sup>61</sup> Much can be learnt from these examples in terms of the nature of Devon's parish-to-parish postal service. In particular, its *raison d'être* was speed; it was utilised by Devon's Deputy Lieutenants to communicate rapidly not only with their subordinates but also each other; it was used by Plymouth's civic elite as an alternative method of letter delivery to the Earl of Bath; and its maintenance depended not on Devon's political elite but on the constables, petty-constables and tithingmen. The last mentioned of these is particularly important given the fact that orders stipulated that there was to be

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<sup>59</sup> DRO, 1392M/L1601/14.

<sup>60</sup> DRO, 1392M/L1602/2.

<sup>61</sup> PWDRO, 1/132, Widey Court Book, ff. 115-6, 118 and 123.

'in each parish one sufficient post horse' thereby raising the crucial question of whether constables, petty-constables and tithingmen had easy access to at least one adequately nimble horse in their immediate vicinity.

To place this into context, mainland Devon was made up of 483 ecclesiastical parishes.<sup>62</sup> Thus, if one takes the letters, orders and precepts extant in the Seymour Manuscripts at face value, the county's parish-to-parish postal network required the same number of post-horses. Consequently, when Sir Ferdinando Gorges directed his letter to Edward Seymour 'from tything to tything' on 20 August 1599 it was potentially (although this is complete speculation) carried through the seven parishes separating Plymouth and Berry Pomeroy via a relay of eight mounted post-boys. Likewise, when Sir William Strode dispatched his letters to Seymour on 18 October 1601 and 7 March 1602 'from parish to parish' they too may well have travelled through the seven parishes separating Meavy and Berry Pomeroy via a relay of eight mounted post-boys, while the letters dispatched from Plymouth to the Earl of Bath at Tawstock Court in 1596/7 could quite possibly have travelled through nineteen parishes via a relay of twenty mounted post-boys.<sup>63</sup> Constables having access to at least one appropriately agile horse in each of Devon's 483 parishes was therefore essential to the smooth-running of the county's parish-to-parish postal network. Crucially, horse ownership in England transcended the social elite to encompass all ranks of the gentry, yeomanry and mercantile community. Indeed, it seems that even the English 'peasantry' had access to horses, something which the Venetian Ambassador observed in June 1558:

there is no male or female peasant ... who does not ride on horseback, and miserable must that man be who follows his cart on

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<sup>62</sup> However, according to a document from among the Harley Manuscripts at the British Library there were only 394 parish churches (BL, Harley MS., 7022 ff.75-7).

<sup>63</sup> The number of Devon parishes has been obtained from the Institute of Heraldic and Genealogical Studies' Map of Devon Parishes.

foot. Thus the rustic on horseback drives the oxen or horses of his team, and hence comes it that England is also called the land of comforts.<sup>64</sup>

According to Peter Edwards one must interpret the Ambassador's use of the word 'peasant' with caution and regard it 'as a farmer of some means rather than a smallholder and therefore a person of standing in his community'.<sup>65</sup> Nevertheless, it is clear that both the ownership of and access to horses was more socially democratic throughout early modern England than has previously been assumed. It is therefore unsurprising to note that amongst those who purchased and sold horses at Plymouth Market between 1590 and 1600 was a blacksmith, a butcher, a chandler, a cutler, a goldsmith, a joiner, a labourer, a mariner and a sadler, as well as five yeomen and five husbandmen.<sup>66</sup> Thus, orders to place one sufficient post-horse on standby in each of mainland Devon's 483 parishes should not be regarded as a fanciful pipedream. In reality these orders were issued on the premise that they were readily achievable.

The significance of late-Elizabethan Devon's parish-to-parish postal network and similar networks which, according to Bruce, were established elsewhere should not be underestimated. Indeed, as well as providing the political elite with an additional means of communicating with each other, the parish-to-parish network also constituted an important mechanism for disseminating orders and precepts throughout all tiers of local government. Such a system is crucial for further developing a modern-day understanding of precisely how policies devised at Whitehall were articulated and implemented at a parish level. However, it was not merely letters, orders and precepts that circulated from parish to parish. Indeed, in relation to the Exchequer-funded

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<sup>64</sup> CSPV, vol. vi (1555-8), n. 171, p. 1672.

<sup>65</sup> Edwards, *Horse and Man*, pp. 74-5.

<sup>66</sup> PWDRO, W89, Plymouth Market Toll Book.

post-stage network, Brayshay, Harrison and Chalkley have persuasively argued that a post-boy also functioned as ‘an important purveyor of news and gossip, passed by word of mouth in the post-rooms from one rider to the next’. The riders who carried mail between Devon’s intra-county post-stages and parishes would also undoubtedly have circulated oral information off the main highway and throughout the surrounding hinterland thereby providing Devon’s ordinary folk with ‘an appreciation of a wider geography and a larger community’ as well as ‘a spatial context’ within which they could sense their own particular place.<sup>67</sup> Thus, an ordinary inhabitant of late-Elizabethan Devon was not as cut-off or distant from regional, national and international affairs as previously thought. On the contrary, they were intrinsically linked to events that were unfolding well beyond the horizon of their home parish.

### **Letter production: the role of a secretary**

Having provided a comprehensive overview of the informal and formal modes of letter delivery available to late-Elizabethan Devon’s political elite for sending and receiving official government mail on an inter-regional and intra-county basis this chapter will now shift focus to examine the production of letters. The aim of this section is to outline the role of a secretary in the collaborative letter-writing process and to assess the extent to which the secretaries of Devon’s Lord and Deputy Lieutenants were embedded into the county’s post and communication network. Thus, as well as functioning as a scribe, this section will examine the supplementary responsibilities of a secretary. These included being their master’s confidant, chief advisor, point of contact and representative,

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<sup>67</sup> Brayshay et al., ‘Speed of the Royal Post’, p. 284. See also Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture*.

as well as acting as a trusted messenger and *de facto* post-master. To achieve these objectives the section will focus primarily on the activities of Thomas Hinson of Fordenham, Cambridgeshire (*d.* 1614), and Roger Papworth of Hoxton, Middlesex (*d.* c.1620), who jointly performed the role of personal secretary to the Earl of Bath during the late-Elizabethan period. Most notably this will involve conducting a palaeographical analysis of the Earl of Bath's extant letters to Edward Seymour in order to gauge the level of involvement that both men had in the production of the Earl's official correspondence and the level of access that they had to his public and private affairs. Christopher Burlinson and Andrew Zurcher have undertaken similar research on the scribal duties of Edmund Spenser who served as Arthur, Lord Grey of Burlington's chief secretary during the latter's two-year tenure as lord deputy of Ireland (1580-2). In doing so they have convincingly argued that the relationship between Spenser and Grey was 'that of a servant, and not ... an intimate' and in some ways have challenged the prevailing understanding of secretaries in the context of Irish politics.<sup>68</sup> The extent to which Hinson and Papworth were intimates as well as servants of the Earl of Bath is therefore a key concern of this section. It is also worth noting that the focus on Bath's secretaries has been dictated by the available primary material. Thus, whereas there is extensive documentary evidence surviving for Hinson and Papworth in the Seymour Manuscripts, State Papers, borough records and various other collections, there is unfortunately no known primary evidence exposing the identity and activities of the individuals who were undoubtedly employed by each of Devon's Deputy Lieutenants to serve them in a similar capacity. Nevertheless, a central argument of this section is that each of Bath's deputies probably had at least

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<sup>68</sup> Christopher Burlinson and Andrew Zurcher, 'Secretary to the Lord Grey Lord Deputie here': Edmund Spenser's Irish Papers', *The Library*, Seventh Series, 6:1 (2005), 30-75 (pp. 49 and 68); *id.*, eds., *Edmund Spenser: Selected Letters and Other Papers* (Oxford: OUP, 2009).

one personal secretary who performed the same array of duties that Hinson and Papworth did for Bath. Therefore by examining the activities of Bath's secretaries as a case study it is possible to intuitively infer what role the secretary had in the household of each of Devon's Deputy Lieutenants.

Professor Daybell has described the process of letter production during the early modern period as an 'often collaborative' affair in which 'various parties might be involved' in addition to the person whose name was signed at the bottom of a missive.<sup>69</sup> Consequently, in the words of Alan Stewart, 'an examination of collaborative writing forces us to re-think our notion of authorship' – in other words, scholars must now 'accept that the author may not be the person who writes (either mentally composes or physically pens) a text.'<sup>70</sup> In reality, early modern husbands and wives, children and parents, extended family and friends, neighbours and associates regularly pooled resources to pen a letter.<sup>71</sup> Indeed, Alison Wiggins has recently identified no less than twenty-one different scribal hands among the seventy-six known letters sent from Elizabeth Talbot, Countess of Shrewsbury ('Bess of Hardwick'), during her lifetime.<sup>72</sup> Such informal activities were ordinarily performed free of charge or in return for a favour. However, if a family member or close associate was not at hand to offer their letter-writing assistance, an individual could employ a semi-professional letter-writer or scrivener.<sup>73</sup> Scriveners' costs were 'roughly a penny or two a page' which meant that for

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<sup>69</sup> Daybell, *The Material Letter*, p. 74.

<sup>70</sup> Alan Stewart, 'The Making of Writing in Renaissance England: Re-Thinking Authorship Through Collaboration', in *Renaissance Transformations: The Making of English Writing, 1500-1650*, ed. by M. Healy and T. Healy (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2009), pp. 81-96 (p. 82). See also James Daybell, 'Women's Letters and Letter-Writing in England, 1540-1603: An Introduction to the Issues of Authorship and Construction', *Shakespeare Studies*, 27 (1999), 161-86.

<sup>71</sup> Daybell, *Women Letter-Writers*, ch. 3.

<sup>72</sup> Alison Wiggins, *Bess of Hardwick's Letters* (Forthcoming, Aldershot: Ashgate).

<sup>73</sup> A. E. B. Owen, 'A Scrivener's Notebook From Bury St. Edmunds', *Archives*, 14:61 (1979), 16-22 (p. 17).

those below the social and political elite their employment was ‘an occasional extraordinary’ expense.<sup>74</sup> By contrast, there was a frequent commonplace need for early modern England’s civic elite to employ semi-professional penmen. This can clearly be seen in the receivers’ accounts of late-Elizabethan Devon’s town corporations. For example, between 1588 and 1602 Barnstaple’s receivers made the following disbursements: 8d. ‘for wretynge the Indentures concemyng the burgeses of the *parliamen*<sup>b</sup>’; 10s. ‘to m<sup>r</sup> Iohn Dodderidge for his paynes taken in *provsynge* [providing] the Towne wretynge’; 2s. 6d. ‘to Iames Sparowe for wretynge of an obligacon [obligation] and *dyuers lettres* concemyng Captayne Grenes’; 12d. to James Sparowe ‘for wretynge *diuers other lettres* to my lord of Bath’; 12d. ‘for wretynge the book of the *Subsedye*’; 12d. ‘for wretynge a paire of Indentures betwixt the *Corperacon* of this Towne and the Sheriff concemyng the Elecon of the Burgeses of *parliament*’; 3s. 2d. ‘for the booke of the last Statutes made’; 11s. 8d. ‘to Iohn Combe for *dyuers wretynge*s he made there this yere Concemyng the Townes busynes’; 12d. ‘for wretynge the Indentures of all the Burgeses names of this Towne the one *parte* whereof was sent to the *vndershiriff*’; 4s. ‘paid Harry Myller for the booke of *Estatutes* [statutes] made the last *parliament*e’; 17s. ‘for the *Drawynge* of a *Supplicacon* to the *Iustices*’; and 12d. ‘for wretynge the first *Subsedy booke*’.<sup>75</sup> It is unclear whether all of these payments were made to scribes employed on an ad hoc basis. More likely, some were made to clerks employed by Barnstaple Corporation – individuals who received piecemeal rates for occasional pieces of writing.

However, while the ad hoc employment of semi-professional letter writers sufficed the needs of Devon’s town corporations, individuals from the ranks of

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<sup>74</sup> Peter Beal, *In Praise of Scribes*, pp. 69-72; Woudhuysen, *Circulation of Manuscripts*, p. 176; Daybell, *The Material Letter*, p. 75.

<sup>75</sup> NDRO, B1/3972, Barnstaple Receivers’ Accounts, ff. 130, 133, 141-2, 149, 158 and 162.

the county's social and political elite would have customarily employed personal secretaries on a permanent basis to handle their public affairs. These individuals received a regular salary for their letter writing duties as well as being granted allowances for paper, ink and parchment, reimbursements for rewards to messengers and gratuities from suitors attempting to acquire their master's patronage.<sup>76</sup> In addition, they would have been frequently rewarded for their loyal service via non-monetary grants such as the allocation of important positions in local government. Thus, the Earl of Bath nominated Thomas Hinson as one of Barnstaple's two MPs in 1586, 1589, 1597 and 1604, as well as securing a position for him on Devon's commission of the peace.<sup>77</sup> Similarly, Roger Papworth's enduring trustworthiness towards Bath was no doubt the driving force behind his election as one of Dartmouth's two MPs in 1589.<sup>78</sup> Of course the employment of secretaries was by no means peculiar to Devon. On the contrary, secretaries supported the machinery of government throughout late-Elizabethan England: the monarch used them to draft formal correspondence; chief ministers outsourced specific responsibilities to them; and the nobility and upper echelons of the gentry relied on them to oversee matters pertaining to local government. Thus, William Cecil, Lord Burghley, employed no less than three secretaries concurrently between 1580 and 1598 while his son, Robert Cecil, Earl of Salisbury, retained as many as eight secretaries concurrently between 1594 and 1612.<sup>79</sup> However, whereas the demands on Elizabeth's chief ministers necessitated the establishment of a

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<sup>76</sup> Paul E. J. Hammer, 'The Earl of Essex, Fulke Greville and the Employment of Scholars', *Studies in Philology*, 91 (1994), 167-80 (p. 175, fn. 40); Hammer, 'The Use of Scholarship', p. 31, fn. 2; Daybell, *The Material Letter*, p. 75.

<sup>77</sup> Hasler, *Commons*, ii, p. 318; Tawstock Parish Church, Epitaph of Thomas Hinson.

<sup>78</sup> Hasler, *Commons*, iii, pp. 170-1.

<sup>79</sup> Smith, 'The Secretariats of the Cecils', p.482.

multi-member secretariat, the comparably modest duties of the Earl of Bath required the employment of just two secretaries.

Thomas Hinson's position as one of Bath's secretaries is confirmed by a document located amongst the Seymour Manuscripts entitled: 'An aunswere vnto the severall articles presented vnto the most honorable my lordes of the Counsell by the Earle of Bathe ou<sup>r</sup> lord leuten<sup>a</sup>unte w<sup>th</sup> some of the Deputies for the Countie of Devon againste Richard Champernowne.'<sup>80</sup> The document presents Richard Champernowne's answers to a series of accusations levelled at him by Bath and some of his deputies in relation to Champernowne's dispute with Edward Seymour over the command of certain sections of south Devon's militia (see chapter three). Crucially, it is Champernowne's answer to article eight that confirms Hinson as one of Bath's secretaries: 'Some differences heerevppon growinge betwixt M<sup>r</sup> Seymo<sup>r</sup>, M<sup>r</sup> Cary and myself ... were referred to my Lord: Leiuten<sup>a</sup>n<sup>te</sup>, S<sup>i</sup> Ferdinando Gorges, and Hynson my Lord: of Bathes Secretary.' Although undated this document must have been written during the Seymour-Champernowne dispute which lasted from autumn 1596 to summer 1599. However, the evidence presented below indicates that Hinson was the Earl of Bath's personal secretary from at least 1578. As for Roger Papworth, his employment as Bath's other secretary is confirmed by an entry made by Phillipp Yearde in Exeter's receivers' accounts during his tenure as the city's receiver in 1588/9: 40s. 'for Mr Pappworthe my lorde of bathes secretarye some Conclideracon'.<sup>81</sup> The increased workload that followed Bath's appointment as lord lieutenant of Devon in 1586 must surely have been the primary reason for Papworth's employment in addition to Hinson. Thus, throughout the late-Elizabethan period the Earl of Bath utilised two secretaries

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<sup>80</sup> DRO, 3799M-3/O/9/1/16.

<sup>81</sup> DRO, ECA, Receivers' Rolls, 31 Elizabeth I.

to manage his public affairs, with Thomas Hinson seemingly the senior secretary and Roger Papworth working subordinate to him as the Earl's junior secretary.

Bath and Hinson's close personal relationship was cemented during the 1570s at Cambridge University where Hinson served as the young Earl's personal tutor.<sup>82</sup> He then accompanied Bath to north Devon following the latter's relocation to Tawstock Court in 1578 and from then until his death in 1614 served as the figurehead of the Earl's household staff.<sup>83</sup> Bath and Hinson were also related to each other as a result of Hinson's marriage to one of Bath's first cousins, Anne Spring.<sup>84</sup> Indeed, the intimate connection that the Bouchiers and the Hinsons enjoyed is made plain in the will of Bath's mother Francis, Lady Fitzwarren:

Item I giue and bequeathe to Thomas Hinson of Towstock gent And to my neece Anne his wiffe all my howsehold stuff and stock of cattell remaying at Coveney in the Isle of Elye most hartely praying my sonne to be gard vnto them, for that next vnto my selfe they haue bene his most faithfull and best frendes.<sup>85</sup>

In addition, Lady Fitzwarren made the following bequests to Hinson's children: 'vnto Margaret Hinson one hundreth poundes'; 'vnto every other of the children ... twenty poundes a peece'; and to all of them 'the rest of my goodes and chattels vnbequeathed that shall remaine after my debtes legacies and Funeralles Discharged'. Unfortunately, the relationship between Bath and Roger Papworth is much harder to gauge. Nevertheless, because Papworth was a native of Hoxton, Middlesex, it seems likely that the pair forged a strong friendship during the Earl's early life in south-east England.

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<sup>82</sup> Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, pt. i, vol. i, p. 187 and pt. i, vol. ii, p. 378.

<sup>83</sup> As well as being Bath's senior secretary Hinson was also his land surveyor and receiver-general (Hinson Epitaph).

<sup>84</sup> John W. Clay, ed., *The Visitations of Cambridge* (London, 1897), p. 125; Metcalfe, *Visitations of Suffolk*, pp. 48-9 and 167.

<sup>85</sup> PROB 11/69: 1/3/1586.

The close personal relationship that Bath enjoyed with both Hinson and Papworth was crucial when one considers the role of an early modern secretary. Manuals written during the late-Elizabethan period clearly set out the prerequisites of the office. In the second edition of Angel Day's *English Secretorie* (1595), for example, Day summarises 'the partes, place and Office' of a secretary'.<sup>86</sup> Chief among a secretary's duties according to Day was: 'the vse and exercise of the Pen, the Wit and Inuention'; the relinquishment of 'any affectation to his own doings, or leaning herein to any priuat iudgment or fantasie'; and the acceptance that his pen 'is not his owne, but anothers, and for this cause the matters to him committed, are to depend vpon the humor of his commanded, and vpon none others'. In the words of Sir Francis Walsingham's private secretary, Nicholas Faunt, a secretary was to be his employer's 'owne penne, his mouth, his eye, his eare, and keeper of his most secrett cabinet'.<sup>87</sup> Consequently, Alan Stewart has persuasively argued that the early modern closet (or study) was 'not designed to function as a place of individual withdrawal, but as a secret nonpublic transactive space between two men [master and secretary] behind a locked door'.<sup>88</sup> It is therefore unsurprising that the intimacy, influence and access that Hinson and Papworth enjoyed with the Earl of Bath attracted resentment from some individuals who believed both men abused their privileged status. Most notably, in November 1591 Hugh Fortescue and Robert Dyllon described Hinson to Lord Burghley as a 'basse' man who pretended 'to rewle a great parte' of Devon through the Earl of Bath and believed Papworth to be 'a man y<sup>t</sup> dareth doe nothinge w<sup>th</sup>oute Hinson', while George Cary similarly suggested 'that m<sup>r</sup> Hinson is one that my Lord of Bathe is

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<sup>86</sup> Angel Day, *English Secretorie ...*, Book 2 (London, 1595), pp. 131-2.

<sup>87</sup> Charles Hughes, ed., 'Nicholas Faunt's Discourse Touching the Office of Principal Secretary of Estate, &c. 1592', *EHR*, 20:79 (July, 1905), 499-508 (p. 501).

<sup>88</sup> Alan Stewart, 'The Early Modern Closet Discovered', *Representations*, 50 (Spring, 1995), 76-100 (p. 83).

cheefly & princepally directed by'.<sup>89</sup> In early-1593 criticisms of this nature seem to have been at least partly responsible for Hinson being temporarily incarcerated and interrogated by the Privy Council, thereby demonstrating the common concern among the Elizabethan political elite that the office of secretary was open to abuse.<sup>90</sup> Indeed, it is important to note that secretaries (and this level of servant in general) were by no means menials, but often highly educated, well-connected and ambitious individuals. The position of secretary was therefore sought after because it allowed individuals to rise. Thus, Henry Percy, ninth Earl of Northumberland, took the precaution of warning his son that men who sought employment as a secretary were: 'very witty ... want noe ambition ... [and] by yow they may clime.'<sup>91</sup> Nevertheless, by maintaining Hinson and Papworth as his secretaries throughout the late-Elizabethan period, Bath clearly trusted both men implicitly, was content with their performance and utilised their proficiency with the pen to produce much of his official correspondence – a fact which is confirmed by a palaeographical analysis of the thirty-one original letters and seven copied letters written from Bath to Edward Seymour between 1593 and 1601 which survive among the Seymour Manuscripts.<sup>92</sup>

Out of the thirty-eight letters examined, Thomas Hinson appears to have written twenty-one (55%), Roger Papworth nine (24%) and a third individual,

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<sup>89</sup> BL, Lansdowne MS., 68 f. 226.

<sup>90</sup> BL, Harley MS., 6995 ff. 171-2.

<sup>91</sup> James Heywood Markland, ed., 'Instructions by Henry Percy, ninth Earl of Northumberland, to his son Algernon Percy, touching the management of his Estate, Officers, &c. written during his confinement in the Tower', *Archaeologia*, 27 (1838), 306-58 (p. 348).

<sup>92</sup> A palaeographical analysis is possible because two letters exist among the Seymour Manuscripts which were personally written to Edward Seymour in secretary hand (a pro-forma handwriting used throughout the sixteenth-century in official government correspondence) and signed by Thomas Hinson and Roger Papworth (DRO, 3799M-3/O/9/1/11 and 12). Thus, by comparing the distinct nuances of their secretary handwriting with each of the original letters written to Seymour in Bath's name it has been possible to identify Hinson and Papworth as producers of a certain number of Bath's letters with a reasonable degree of confidence.

who was most likely the Earl of Bath himself, eight (21%).<sup>93</sup> These figures support the notion that Hinson was Bath's senior secretary while Papworth was his junior secretary. Moreover, the fact that Hinson wrote all seven of the copied letters written to Bath from the Queen (one letter) and Privy Council (six letters) indicates that his senior position granted him access to more sensitive information than his junior associate.<sup>94</sup> As for the twenty-two original letters written to Edward Seymour in Bath's name by Hinson (thirteen letters) and Papworth (nine letters) both secretaries appear to have been privy to a similar variety of matters pertaining to the office of lord lieutenant including trained bands apportionment, the Seymour-Champernowne dispute, mustering and training Devon's militia, levying and conducting troops to Barnstaple for service in Ireland, the garrison at Plymouth Fort, the supposed death of Sir Walter Raleigh, the commission of lieutenancy, news and intelligence gathering, intra-county troop deployment and the engagement of Devon's intra-county post-stage network. However, despite his employment of Hinson and Papworth, Bath retained a high level of control over the production and dissemination of his letters, a fact which is confirmed by his personally written post scripts, marginal notes and closing modes of address on a certain number of the letters written by his secretaries on his behalf.<sup>95</sup> Moreover, as noted above, the eight letters written in Bath's name to Seymour by a third individual were most probably penned by the Earl himself. Certainly the sensitive nature of these communiqués supports this notion. For example, one letter which relates to the

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<sup>93</sup> Hinson: DRO, 1392M/L1595/2, 3, 4, 7 and 8; DRO, 1392M/L1596/22 and 26; DRO, 1392M/L1598/9; DRO, 1392M/L1599/30; DRO, 1392M/L1601/5; DRO, 1392M/L1602/6 and 7; DRO, 3799M-3/O/1/3, 4, 21, 29 and 31; DRO, 3799M-3/O/9/1/2, 3, 19 and 21. Papworth: DRO, 1392M/L1593/1; DRO, 1392M/L1596/6, 9 and 27; DRO, 1392M/L1599/1 and 3; DRO, 1392M/L1601/2 and 17; DRO, 3799M-3/O/1/17. Bath?: DRO, 1392M/L1599/2, 8 and 11; DRO, 1392M/L1600/1; DRO, 1392M/L1601/13; DRO, 3799M-3/O/1/22 and 25; DRO, 3799M-3/O/9/1/20.

<sup>94</sup> Queen: DRO, 1392M/L1602/7. Privy Council: DRO, 1392M/L1595/2; DRO, 1392M/L1598/9; DRO, 1392M/L1601/5 and 6; DRO, 3799M-3/O/1/1; DRO, 3799M-3/O/9/1/3.

<sup>95</sup> DRO, 1392M/L1593/1; DRO, 1392M/L1596/6, 22 and 27; DRO, 1392M/L1599/1.

Seymour-Champernowne dispute contains the line: 'I praye yo<sup>u</sup> to assure yo<sup>u</sup> selues that myne hono<sup>r</sup> is so farre engaged to maineteyne ou<sup>r</sup> informacons against them to be true'.<sup>96</sup> This implies that Bath, Seymour and their supporters were manipulating the truth in order to further their cause against Champernowne. Thus, if one accepts the logic that Bath wrote this letter himself it is likely that he did so in order to prevent Hinson and Papworth from becoming aware of such deceit. Indeed, the nature of the other seven letters that were apparently personally written by Bath indicates that he believed there were certain matters either too sensitive or too important for anyone but himself to write about. Namely, news and intelligence during the 1599 Spanish invasion scare (DRO, 1392M/L1599/2, 8 and 11), levying thirty-four men for service in Ireland in February 1600 (DRO, 1392M/L1600/1), mustering the militia in order to assess weaponry losses in May 1600 (DRO, 3799M-3/O/1/22), desertion of troops levied for service in Ireland in June 1601 (DRO, 3799M-3/O/1/25) and support for Sir Thomas Denys' cause against Humphry Walronde in October 1601 (DRO, 1392M/L1601/13). Collectively these eight letters therefore suggest that even Thomas Hinson was not privy to all of the Earl's public dealings in spite of being his senior secretary, married to his cousin and enjoying a close personal relationship.

As well as their scribal duties, Thomas Hinson and Roger Papworth undoubtedly performed an array of subsidiary functions. As Bath's senior secretary Hinson would have been regarded as the administrative linchpin at Tawstock Court advising his master when required, providing a confidential ear if necessary and undertaking managerial duties when needed. Moreover, he was probably Tawstock's initial point of contact for visiting letter-bearers and

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<sup>96</sup> DRO, 3799M-3/O/9/1/20.

messengers, would have possibly been required to record the receipt of mail in a memorial book and, depending on the nature of a dispatch, open, peruse and advise the Earl of Bath on its content.<sup>97</sup> The majority of outgoing mail, too, may well have passed through Hinson's hands, been recorded in a memorial book prior to its dispatch and assigned to a trusted subordinate for delivery. Indeed, one could speculate that Hinson oversaw the arrival and departure of letter-bearers carrying mail via horse and foot on an intra-county and inter-regional basis in much the same manner as a royal post-master. Thus, the contemporary view noted above that Hinson exerted undue influence on the Earl of Bath may simply have been caused by Hinson's critics misconstruing the extent to which Bath entrusted him with his public affairs. This certainly seems to have been Bath's view in July 1602 when he described the Barnstaple merchant, John Delbridge's accusation that Hinson was his enemy as a 'causeless fear'.<sup>98</sup> As for Roger Papworth, his seemingly lesser scribal duties as Bath's junior secretary enabled him to undertake errands for his master distant from Tawstock. This included collecting £9 4s. on the Earl's behalf from Barnstaple's chief inhabitants 'for the charge of the soldiers impressed ... for Ireland' in 1586/7 and receiving 10s. from them 'for his favorable Allowance' in viewing the town's store of gunpowder in 1588/9.<sup>99</sup> Papworth's business trips to Exeter were similarly fruitful. For example, Exeter's receivers rewarded him with 20s. 'for a deputacon of the Letennasye' in 1588/9, 20s. 'about the Comysion of muster' in 1595/6 and £3 for an unspecified service in 1598/9.<sup>100</sup> Clearly then, the subsidiary functions that Papworth performed for Bath as a 'go for', letter-bearer and spokesperson constituted a significant supplementary revenue

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<sup>97</sup> Hughes, 'Faunt's Discourse', p. 501.

<sup>98</sup> SP 12/284 f. 57: 15/6/1602; CP 94/1: 4/7/1602.

<sup>99</sup> J. R. Chanter and T. Wainwright, eds., *Reprint of the Barnstaple Records*, vol. ii (Barnstaple: A. E. Barnes, 1900), p. 107; NDRO, B1/3972, Barnstaple Receivers' Accounts, f. 130.

<sup>100</sup> DRO, ECA, Receivers' Rolls, 31, 38 and 41 Elizabeth I.

stream over and above the salary he received from the Earl for his secretarial work.

To summarise, one should not view early modern letter-writing as a solitary affair. On the contrary, it was a frequently collaborative process with many individuals in elite social and political circles outsourcing a significant amount of their scribal activities to a third party. Friends, family and associates wrote letters as a favour, scribes and semi-professional scribes charged a fee per page for their penmanship and secretaries were frequently employed by members of the nobility and gentry permanently to be on hand should the need arise for a letter to be written. On securing his appointment as lord lieutenant of Devon in 1586 the Earl of Bath deemed it necessary to employ two secretaries, Thomas Hinson and Roger Papworth, to assist with his increased administrative responsibilities. The pivotal role that both men played in the functioning of late-Elizabethan Devon's intra-county postal networks makes it inconceivable to imagine that some, if not all, of the county's Deputy Lieutenants had at least one personal secretary performing similar duties on their behalf. Thus, when Sir Thomas Denys bequeathed one hundred marks to his 'trustie and faithfull servaunt Charles Hoppinge' for his 'long and honest service' in the belief that no man 'had a more honest Carefull servant' it is plausible to suppose that he did so as reward for Hoppinge's career-long service as his personal secretary.<sup>101</sup>

### **Circular letters and parish publication**

A central aim of the previous section was to articulate the pivotal role that personal secretaries had in the production of early modern letters. In doing so

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<sup>101</sup> PROB 11/122: 29/7/1613.

the section focused primarily on the original letters penned by the Earl of Bath and his secretaries to Edward Seymour between 1593 and 1601. However, the section did identify seven letters that were not originals. Rather they were fair copies of letters sent to Bath by the Queen and Privy Council which were enclosed within original letters sent from Bath to Seymour in order to provide the deputy lieutenant with a verbatim transcript of central government's instructions on certain matters relating to national defence and security. Bath also authorised his deputies to copy and circulate some of his own letters. Thus, there exist certain original and copied letters among the Seymour Manuscripts written in the Earl of Bath's name to his deputies as a group. Each letter contains a postscript instructing the first receiver of the original letter to make a copy of it, retain either the original or copy for future reference and forward the other to one of the remaining addressees. The process was then repeated until all the specified addressees had received either a copy or the original letter from Bath. Similarly, precepts written by Bath's deputies and directed to the constables of the hundreds were reproduced in multiple-copied form and circulated to the petty-constables of the parishes to be read aloud by them during church services. The present section will analyse this chain copying culture in order to explain how this form of 'scribal publication' facilitated a heightened degree of connectivity among all tiers of late-Elizabethan Devon's government. Moreover, it will help confirm precisely how policies and orders devised at Whitehall filtered down to the 'ground floor' of government whereupon they were digested and debated by the ordinary men, women and children of Elizabethan England.

By scrutinising the selection of circular letters extant among the Seymour Manuscripts it becomes apparent that the Earl of Bath chose to correspond with

his subordinates in this manner primarily to speed up the time lag between the formation and implementation of certain central government initiatives. Most notably this included the levying of troops for service in Ireland. Thus, when Bath received letters by royal messenger from the Queen and Privy Council ordering him to levy forty militiamen on 6 May 1601 he chose to notify the deputy lieutenants and justices of the South Division as a group in order to achieve the 'good and speedy performauce of these affaires'.<sup>102</sup> Consequently, on 8 May 1601 the Earl instructed Roger Papworth to pen him a letter outlining the protocol for levying the forty men and addressed it:

To my verie lovinge Cosens & Freindes S<sup>r</sup> William Strode S<sup>r</sup> Richard Champernowne Knightes and Edwarde Seymou<sup>r</sup> Esqu<sup>r</sup><sup>ie</sup>: And also vnto my lovinge Freindes M<sup>r</sup> Amyas Bampfild M<sup>r</sup> Thomas Reynell Esquires & othe<sup>r</sup> the Iustices of Peace in the Southe Devision of Devon to whome it maie apperteyne.

In addition, Bath instructed his junior secretary to write the following postscript: 'I praye and require yo<sup>u</sup> to whome these ~~my~~ *lettres* shalbe first deliuered to sende the same or the true Copie thereof vnto the rest of the *Gentlemen* to whom yt doth apperteine w<sup>it</sup><sup>h</sup>all possible expedition.' Similar circular letters were dispatched on 14 October 1601 and 2 August 1602 instructing Bath's subordinates in Devon's South Division speedily to levy additional troops for service in Ireland.<sup>103</sup> Indeed, as well as speeding up the dissemination and implementation of councillor orders, circular missives seem also to have been produced by Bath and his deputies rapidly to convey news and intelligence of the Spanish fleet as well as place the county's militia on a war footing. Thus, when Bath received intelligence in March 1602 from the Mayor of Plymouth that 'a great fleete of Shippes' was being prepared by the Spanish to carry an invasion force of 30,000 soldiers he chose to write a circular letter to Sir John

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<sup>102</sup> DRO, 1392M/L1601/2.

<sup>103</sup> DRO, 1392M/L1601/16; DRO, 3799M-3/O/1/29.

Gilbert II, Sir William Strode, Sir Richard Champernowne, Edward Seymour and Hugh Pollard advertising them of this threat as well as instructing them to make ready their trained bands of militiamen, ensure the manning of the beacons and check the stores of powder, match and bullets in their local vicinity.<sup>104</sup>

To action directives of this nature Bath's deputies distributed precepts amongst the constables of the hundreds informing them specifically what was required of them. Thus, when Edward Seymour received the Earl of Bath's circular letter dated 8 May 1601 informing him that the Queen and her Privy Council required forty men from Devon to be levied for service in Ireland he directed precepts dated 10 May to the constables of the hundreds ordering them to 'bringe or cause to be brought before me at Totnes on Fridaye next beinge the xv[15]<sup>th</sup> daie of this instant Maye by eight of the Clocke in the morninge fower good & seruiceable men w<sup>th</sup>in your hundred'.<sup>105</sup> Likewise, Bath's circular letter dated 2 August 1602 prompted Seymour on 4 August to instruct the constables of the hundreds to 'bring or cause to be brought before me at Totnes on Monday next being the nynthe daye of this instant August by vij[7] of the Clocke in the morning nyne very sufficient & seruiceable men'.<sup>106</sup> Both precepts were therefore issued by Seymour within two days of Bath writing his circular letters. Moreover, the strict deadline given to the constables for their proportion of the levy to be at Totnes was on both occasions just five days after Seymour had issued his precepts. Indeed, similarly strict deadlines were imposed on the constables of the hundreds and petty-constables of the parishes for implementing a whole range of military initiatives. For instance, on 4 September 1595 precepts were issued to the constables of the South Division instructing them to

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<sup>104</sup> DRO, 1392M/L1602/3.

<sup>105</sup> DRO, 3799M-3/O/2/29.

<sup>106</sup> DRO, 3799M-3/O/2/36.

geve warning to all pettie Counstable w<sup>th</sup>in you<sup>r</sup> Devisions that they and yo<sup>u</sup> bring before vs at Tottnes on Frydaie being the xij[12]<sup>th</sup> of this moneth by eight of the Clocke in the morning all the trayned and vntrayned souldiers.<sup>107</sup>

Similarly, on 24 August 1599, in anticipation of a supposedly imminent Spanish attack, Seymour distributed precepts to the constables ordering them ‘ymediatly after receipte herof to giue notyce vnto all the trayned souldiers w<sup>th</sup>in you<sup>r</sup> hundred that they vpon pain of death make their repaire to Dartmouth w<sup>th</sup>all possible speede’.<sup>108</sup>

It was therefore imperative that the constables of the hundreds were readily connected to their petty-constables so that military initiatives such as these could be articulated to the ordinary inhabitants of the parishes and implemented within their strict designated time frames. Clearly, the parish-to-parish postal network outlined in section three of this chapter facilitated this necessity. However, chain copying also played a critical part – a fact confirmed by a draft precept from among the Seymour Manuscripts dated 20 February 1598 wherein the constables of the hundreds were instructed

w<sup>th</sup>all possible expedicion after the receipt therof to cause Copies of the same to be dispersed into the seuerall parishes of you<sup>r</sup> hundred & ther to be openlie & publiquelie read in the Churches & all the inhabitauntes of what Condicion or Degree soeuer menctioned in the said orders to be Comaunded in Her Majes<sup>ties</sup> name to accomplish their partyculer duties therin vpon paine of their alleageance.<sup>109</sup>

Thus, the scribal culture of chain copying was not only used by the Earl of Bath as a mechanism for rapidly disseminating Privy Council orders amongst his deputies at the apex of Devon’s government, it was also utilised by the constables of the hundreds to communicate speedily with each and every parish constable. Moreover, the fact that these copied precepts were read

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<sup>107</sup> DRO, 3799M-3/O/2/5.

<sup>108</sup> DRO, 3799M-3/O/2/26.

<sup>109</sup> DRO, 3799M-3/O/2/11.

'openlie & publiquelie' to the ordinary men, women and children who congregated in each of Devon's parish churches explains precisely how the population of Devon (in its widest sense) was co-opted into furthering the Crown's interests at home and abroad and helps elucidate more broadly how, in Eamon Duffy's words, 'the Tudor state increasingly harnessed the parish to its own purposes'.<sup>110</sup> That said it is not difficult to imagine the parish churches of Elizabethan England quickly turning into arenas of hot political debate as soon as a contentious precept was read out: being levied for service in Ireland would have been regarded by many as tantamount to a death sentence; orders initiating the mobilisation of the militia during the harvest would have been viewed as economically disastrous; and even commands to watch the beacons day and night would have been shunned for fear of boredom. Thus, while Steve Hindle is right in saying that 'the most distinctive cultural characteristic of the English polity was arguably the extent to which the interests of such ruling groups intersected with the centralized policies of church and state' it did not necessarily follow that individuals outside the government always shared the same interests – a fact that was demonstrated throughout chapter three.<sup>111</sup>

To conclude, the postal delivery services available to Devon's political elite during the late-Elizabethan era for sending and receiving official government mail and messages on an intra-county and inter-regional basis were wide ranging. During periods when an Exchequer-funded post-stage service was engaged between London and the south-west, royal mail was forwarded to and

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<sup>110</sup> Duffy, *Voices of Morebath*, p. 50.

<sup>111</sup> Hindle, 'Hierarchy and Community', p. 848.

from the post-masters at Honiton, Exeter, Ashburton and Plymouth via a combination of foot-posts, horsemen and shipmasters thereby dramatically extending the reach of the Crown's national postal system off the main highway and into the surrounding hinterland. Alternatively, for non-royal business or when an Exchequer-funded service was not engaged, the county's gentry and town corporations employed servants and personally known letter-bearers to carry official correspondence to London via foot or horse as and when the need arose. Indeed, this informal and ad hoc postal arrangement was also utilised by Devon's political elite to carry government mail on an intra-county basis throughout the period. However, in response to the persistent threat posed by Spain and the outbreak of rebellion in Ireland more rapid, reliable and sustained connectivity between the Earl of Bath, his deputies and the civic authorities of the port towns thought most vulnerable to invasion became increasingly critical. Thus, by autumn 1596 an intra-county post-stage network similar in nature to the national Exchequer-funded service was established thereby enabling Bath to maintain daily contact with his subordinates in the south of the county from the confines of Tawstock Court. In addition, a parish-to-parish postal network seemingly operated throughout the late-Elizabethan period (not just in Devon but in other counties too) providing Bath's subordinates with a means of maintaining daily contact with each other as well as providing them with a mechanism for speedily conveying orders and directives down the hierarchical chain of command. Horse ownership and/or access to horses were therefore crucial for both services to achieve optimum postal speeds and, from the available evidence, seems not to have been an issue. As well as an appropriate assortment of postal delivery methods, the smooth-running of late-Elizabethan Devon's intra-county communication network depended a great deal on the

personal secretaries of the county's political elite. One should therefore regard secretaries as pivotal to the success of early modern provincial post and communication networks not only in Devon but throughout the realm. Indeed, a secretary's scribal duty was not limited solely to the composition of his master's original letters but also involved making copies of circular missives received from other individuals and organisations. These circular letters constituted an important method for speeding the delay between policy formation and implementation. It is therefore unsurprising that the constables of Devon's hundreds also customarily produced multiple copies of the precepts that they received from their superiors and distributed them to the petty-constables of the parishes. These precepts were then read aloud during church services and thus provided central government with a tangible connection to the ordinary men and women of Elizabethan England.

# 6

## **Intelligence from the Frontline:**

### **Local Government Newsletters and the Commodity of Information**

The previous two chapters have articulated in detail the various modes of letter delivery available to late-Elizabethan Devon's political elite for communicating with each other, their superiors at Whitehall and their subordinates within the county. Consequently, such postal services were necessarily vital to the speedy dissemination of news and intelligence within and beyond the county. This chapter's primary aim is to map and interpret the dissemination of the oral and manuscript exchange of news and intelligence that flowed into the ports of late-Elizabethan Devon. In doing so it broadens the current London-centric model of early modern news, which has tended to focus predominantly on the transmission of information from the centre to the provinces. This is achieved by recognising the important role played by local government officials in servicing the localities, as well as the centre, with intelligence. Existing research on early modern news has outlined a network prominently focused on the single 'hub' of London. As a result, little attention has been paid to the more complex sets of news networks that operated in the first instance at a local level, but which also had connections with the centre. In particular, while the regional ports of early modern England have been acknowledged as vital hubs for receiving continental news and intelligence in their own right, detailed elaboration on this matter has not been forthcoming. This chapter engages directly with this proposition, providing a detailed examination of how the ports of south Devon

operated as important provincial news centres during the Elizabethan war with Spain.

The chapter therefore supports the notion that Devon was a strategically crucial county during England's war with Spain. Throughout this study it has been demonstrated that the county's governors, and the postal links between them, and with the Privy Council, were particularly active during the acute political uncertainty and sustained foreign threat that marked the 1590s. Devon's geographical vulnerability coupled with the daily advertisements that arrived in the county's ports aboard merchant shipping concerning the whereabouts and intention of the Spanish fleet served as the underlying reason for this. It therefore must be reiterated that Elizabethan Devon between 1588 and 1603 provides an ideal case study for excavating the richness and complexity of provincial networks – in this case, provincial news and intelligence networks.

### **'What news at London?'**

Existing historical and literary research on early modern news has outlined a network prominently focused on the single 'hub' of London. Richard Cust has stressed that the sheer volume of visitors flowing in and out of the capital turned London into 'a melting-pot for information'; Adam Fox has described London 'as a magnet, drawing in visitors and their news stories from around the country and then radiating them out once again'; while Harold Love has labelled St Paul's Cathedral as a news 'emporium' in which visitors to London could learn

the latest parliamentary proceedings.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the importance of St Paul's as an entrepôt of news was no less well documented by contemporaries of the period. For instance, the seventeenth-century writer Francis Osborne described the cathedral in the following manner:

It was the fashion of those times, and did so continue till these ... for the principal Gentry, Lords, Courtiers, and men of all Professions ... to meet in St. *Pauls* Church by eleven, and walk in the middle Isle till twelve; and after dinner, from three to six; during which time some discoursed of Business, others of News.<sup>2</sup>

The Royal Exchange operated in a similar fashion for those wishing to learn the latest foreign news from the mercantile community; while the inns and taverns that lined Fleet Street, the Strand and Westminster hummed with the latest affairs of state and court gossip.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, 'what news at London?' became the customary greeting to those that travelled home from the capital along England's roads. The country's thoroughfares thus acted as the arteries through which London news was pumped into the country's provincial towns of trade and commerce. Once there the oral exchange of information continued. In particular, on market days these provincial centres attracted an influx of traders from smaller towns, villages and outlying areas who – as well as selling their wares and purchasing sought after items – were able to learn the latest London news should they venture into any tavern or alehouse. Having conducted their business these traders then returned to their town or village where they retold the information that they had heard amongst their friends and families. As a result, 'the towns and villages of England were', as Adam Fox has argued,

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Cust, 'News and Politics in Early Seventeenth-Century England', *P&P*, 112 (1986), 60-90 (p. 70); Adam Fox, 'Rumour, News and Popular Political Opinion in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England', *HJ*, 40:3 (September, 1997), 597-620 (p. 605); Love, *Scribal Publication*, p. 193.

<sup>2</sup> Francis Osborne, *The Works of Francis Osborne*, Ninth Edition (London, 1689), p. 449.

<sup>3</sup> Mears, *Queenship and Political Discourse*, pp. 168-9; Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture*, p. 346.

'linked with London, and to some extent with each other, through a verbal web woven by travellers.'<sup>4</sup>

As well as the oral exchange of London news, scholars have also shown that from the 1590s onwards it became increasingly common for newsletter writers to collate and transcribe the information that circulated in the capital.<sup>5</sup> Originally these newsletters had been informal, that is to say, writers were amateurs who inserted news amongst the personal correspondence that they wrote to their absent friends or relations. Both men and women participated in this process, a fact that has been illuminated by James Daybell in his detailed investigation of the news and intelligence network of Elizabeth Talbot, Countess of Shrewsbury.<sup>6</sup> However, as the demand for information concerning the war with Spain grew ever more insatiable during the last years of the Elizabethan era there developed a second type of newsletter: the 'pure' newsletter. Cust defines the 'pure' newsletter as being 'given over wholly to news, both domestic and foreign' and describes them as 'the forerunners of the internal news-sheets of the 1640s'. Indeed, whilst the informal newsletter constituted an intimate exchange of information between friends and family, the proliferation of the 'pure' newsletter represented the emergence of semi-professional journalism.<sup>7</sup> 'Pure' newsletter writers such as John Chamberlain, Rowland Whyte, John Pory and Edmund Rossingham gleaned juicy tit-bits of information at St Paul's, the Royal Exchange and Westminster; information that was sifted through and summarised in the weekly manuscript bulletins that they dispatched to their

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<sup>4</sup> Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture*, p. 354.

<sup>5</sup> F. J. Levy, 'How Information Spread Among the Gentry, 1550-1640', *JBS*, xxi, 2 (Spring, 1982), 11-34 (p. 23).

<sup>6</sup> James Daybell, "'Suche newes as on the Quenes hye wayes we have mett': the News and Intelligence Networks of Elizabeth Talbot, countess of Shrewsbury (c.1527-1608)", in *Women and Politics in Early Modern England, 1450-1700*, ed. by J. Daybell (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 114-30. See also James Daybell, 'Gender, Politics and Diplomacy: Women, News and Intelligence Networks in Elizabethan England', in *Diplomacy and Early Modern Culture*, ed. by R. J. Adams and R. Cox (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), pp. 101-19.

<sup>7</sup> Cust, 'News and Politics', pp. 62-3.

discerning subscribers throughout the provinces, as well as overseas.<sup>8</sup> This provided the county and expatriate aristocracy with a vital 'lifeline to the wider world' and as a result writers were able to charge yearly subscription fees in the region of £20.<sup>9</sup> Manuscript newsletters (informal and 'pure') thus played a vital role in the dissemination of political ideas and information from London to the provinces – a phenomena that has been explored in detail by both Cust and Fritz Levy in their quest to appreciate the development of political attitudes in the run up to the English Civil War.<sup>10</sup>

The political attitudes of early-seventeenth-century English society also developed as a result of the burgeoning printed periodical news market. This has been identified as beginning in 1620 when the first coranto (a single printed sheet containing various foreign news items) was published in English by the Dutch printer, Pieter van den Keere, and exported to England to be sold on the streets of London. Throughout the remainder of the decade London-based printers began to produce their own corantos and an English foreign news market, stimulated largely by the onset of the Thirty Years War (1618-48), steadily grew.<sup>11</sup> However, as the political situation within England deteriorated into civil war during the 1640s the desire for foreign news ebbed and the demand for domestic news intensified to such an extent that both parliamentarian and royalist printers (who saw an opportunity to make a monetary and political profit) began to produce the first English newsbooks.

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<sup>8</sup> F. J. Levy, 'Staging the News', in *Print and Manuscript Performance*, ed. by A. F. Marotti and M. D. Bristol (Ohio: The Ohio State University, 2000), pp. 252-78 (p. 264); Jonathan Gibson, 'Letters', in *A Companion to English Renaissance Literature and Culture*, ed. by M. Hattaway (Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), pp. 615-22 (p. 618, fn. 7); Chris R. Kyle, *Theater of State: Parliament and Political Culture in Early Stuart England* (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2012), p. 90.

<sup>9</sup> Jason Scott-Warren, 'News, Sociability, and Bookbuying in Early Modern England: The Letters of Sir Thomas Cornwallis', *The Library*, 1:4 (December, 2000), 381-402 (p. 389); Levy, 'Staging the News', p. 264.

<sup>10</sup> Cust, 'News and Politics', pp. 60-90; Levy, 'How Information Spread', pp. 11-34.

<sup>11</sup> John Thompson, *Ideology and Modern Culture* (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1990), p. 175.

These newsbooks took the form of multi-paged weekly diurnals and kept the nation up to date with the latest domestic developments in a particularly partisan manner.<sup>12</sup> With regards to the production and dissemination of English newsbooks, London once again served as the preeminent hub. Indeed, as Levy puts it, 'printing was concentrated in London, so that England in the period we are considering had no provincial presses except those at the two universities.'<sup>13</sup> Once printed, editors organised the initial distribution of their newsbooks by employing street vendors – known to contemporaries as hawkers and mercuries – to sell their relatively cheap publications throughout the capital to a broad spectrum of society.<sup>14</sup> This exchange constituted the initial distribution; however, it was customary for a secondary distribution to take place whereby individuals purchased one or more newsbook in order to enclose them within their letters of correspondence to friends and relatives living throughout the realm. Furthermore, Joad Raymond has explained that colonists also received English newsbooks, albeit weeks and months after publication. He describes this 'network of information stretching from northern Massachusetts to the western frontier, and from Plymouth Colony to southern Connecticut, with outliers in Newfoundland, Virginia, Bermuda and the Caribbean.'<sup>15</sup>

Existing scholarly research on early modern news has thus adopted a predominantly London-centric focus. Consequently, little attention has been paid to the existence of more complex sets of news networks that operated in the first instance at a local level, but which also had connections with London. In

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<sup>12</sup> For a detailed account of the history of the English newsbook see Joad Raymond, *The Invention of the Newspaper: English Newsbooks, 1641-1649* (Oxford: OUP, 1996). For an analysis of how newsbooks were used as a propaganda tool during the Interregnum and how Oliver Cromwell sought to censor the newsbook market for his own ends in 1655 see Ian Cooper, 'Propaganda and Censorship: English Newsbooks and Foreign Affairs During 1655' (unpublished master's thesis, Plymouth University, 2008).

<sup>13</sup> Levy, 'How Information Spread', p. 13.

<sup>14</sup> Cyprian Blagden, 'The Stationers' Company in the Civil War Period', *Library*, 13 (1958), 1-17 (p. 16).

<sup>15</sup> Raymond, *The Invention of the Newspaper*, p. 252.

particular, whilst the regional ports of early modern England have been acknowledged as important centres for receiving news and intelligence (especially those involved in continental trade) forensic scrutiny of this fact has not been forthcoming.<sup>16</sup> This is not to say that the circulation of information throughout the provinces of early modern England has not been studied. However, the overriding tendency has been to map the dissemination of information that emanated outwards from the capital rather than vice versa.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, even recent research conducted in relation to Elizabethan intelligence and espionage – which, by its very nature, demands an analysis of the ways and means that information flowed into London – has predominantly bypassed provincial intelligence networks and the important role played by local government officials as gatherers and purveyors of vital information.<sup>18</sup> Robert Hutchinson, for example, acknowledges that ‘international intelligence was ... flowing into London ... domestically from the Lord Lieutenants of the counties’ and that customs searchers at the major English ports were responsible for ‘stopping and questioning travellers from abroad’.<sup>19</sup> However, he does not elaborate any further, preferring instead to provide a detailed account of Sir Francis Walsingham’s role as the Queen’s London-based spymaster at the centre of an international web of professional intelligencers.

The focus of the remainder of this chapter is thus to chart and understand the verbal and written exchange of news and intelligence that flowed into the ports of late-Elizabethan Devon with the primary aim being to

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<sup>16</sup> Cooper, *Propaganda and the Tudor State*, p. 29; MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, pp. 171 and 241; Mears, *Queenship and Political Discourse*, p. 171.

<sup>17</sup> For example see Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture*, pp. 350-1, 354 and 369-70.

<sup>18</sup> John Michael Archer, *Sovereignty and Intelligence: Spying and Court Culture in the English Renaissance* (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1993); Paul Hammer, ‘An Elizabethan Spy Who Came in from the Cold: the Return of Anthony Standen to England in 1593’, *Bulletin of Historical Research*, 65 (1992), 277-95; id., *Polarisation of Elizabethan Politics*, pp. 152-98; Alan Haynes, *The Elizabethan Secret Services* (Stroud: Sutton, 2000); Robert Hutchinson, *Elizabeth’s Spy Master: Francis Walsingham and the Secret War that Saved England* (London: Phoenix, 2007).

<sup>19</sup> Hutchinson, *Elizabeth’s Spy Master*, p. 84.

broaden contemporary understanding of provincial news networks and the crucial role played by local government officials in servicing the localities, as well as the centre, with information. Specifically, it will survey how news and intelligence of the Spanish fleet arrived in Devon, highlighting the important role played by merchants, prisoners and eye-witnesses as purveyors of noteworthy information. It will scrutinise how the county gentry diligently transcribed the extensive amount of oral information available to them in order for it to be circulated locally and nationally via the postal networks discussed in chapters four and five. It will examine the motivational factors which incentivised them to do this in order to appreciate how the county's news and intelligence network was glued together and upheld. Finally, it will discuss the extent to which the county's general population had access to this information as well as the tactics deployed by the Crown for limiting this.

### **Devon's continental trade links**

On 14 March 1602 Sir Francis Godolphin wrote an appraisal to the Privy Council of the importance of fortifying the Isles of Scilly, which 'lieth xxx[30] miles from the lands end of Cornewall west, south, west'.<sup>20</sup> Part of Godolphin's assessment stressed the role that the islands played with regards to continental trade: 'being the nicest part of her Maiesties Dominions towards Spaine, It is as an Inne, by *wh<sup>ch</sup>* Ships trading westerly or Sutherly, are to passe and retorne, whearby it both succoreth and secureth oure trafiques'. The south Devon ports of Plymouth, Dartmouth, Totnes and Exeter were equally well placed geographically to provide both foreign and domestic merchant shipping with a

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<sup>20</sup> SP 12/283a f.103.

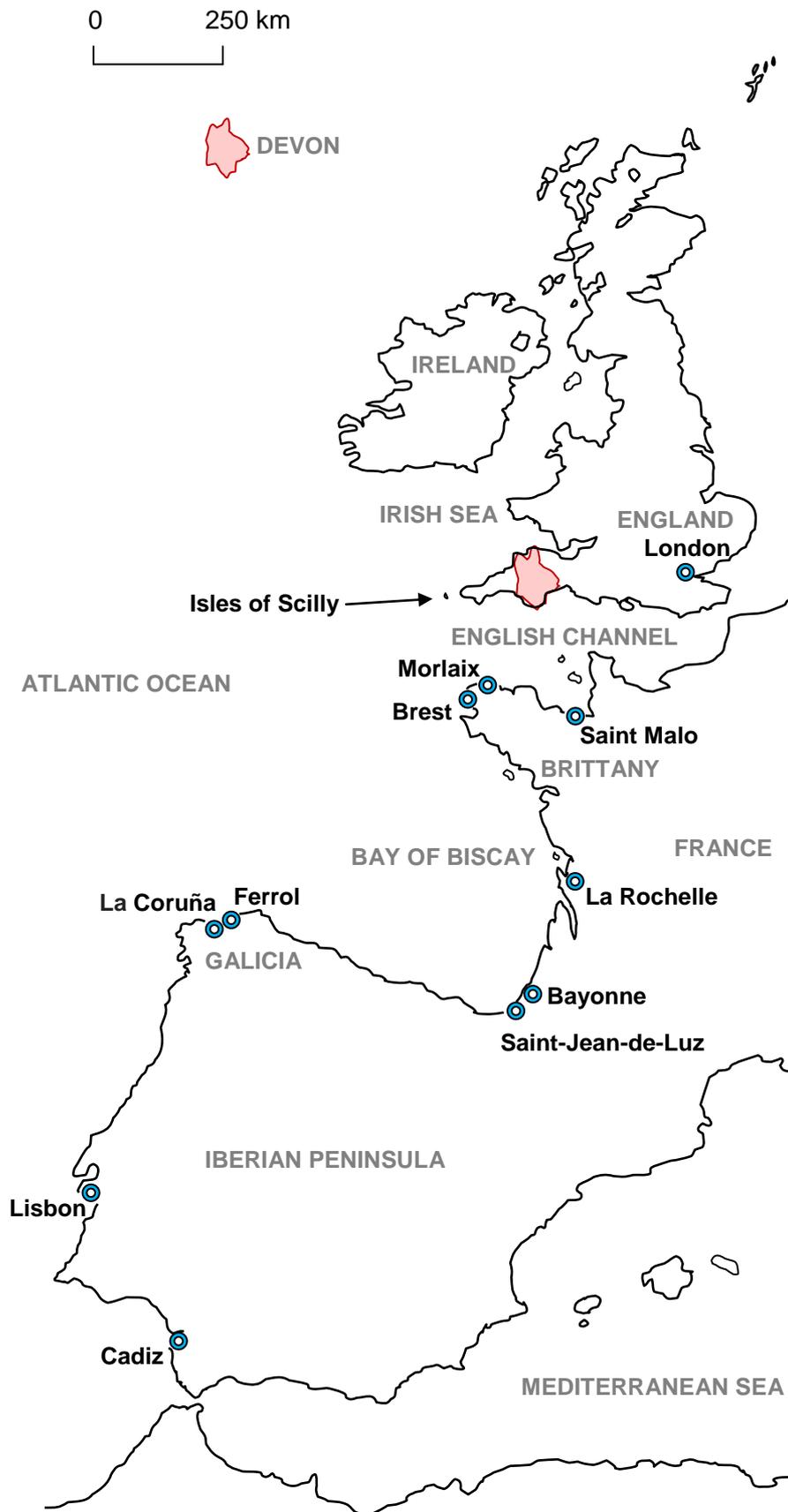


Figure 6.1: A selection of noteworthy western European ports of trade.

haven in which they could stop off to take on food and water, seek shelter during rough weather, or obtain refuge from Spanish privateers. In addition, as Crofts notes, 'it was the regular custom for ships ... to touch at Plymouth in order to land supercargoes and agents, who thereupon posted up to London with their bills of lading and letters of advice'.<sup>21</sup>

However, merchants did not only utilise the ports of south Devon as a halfway house en route to their final destinations; some chose to operate directly in and out of the county and, by the late-Elizabethan era, a thriving trade existed between the merchants of Devon and their counterparts situated elsewhere in England as well as on the continent. The merchants of Elizabethan Exeter, for example, not only traded with other domestic ports in the south-west, Wales and London; they also had trade links with all of the Norman-Breton ports (including the Channel Islands), the 'salt ports' of Western France, Portugal, as well as further afield in Newfoundland.<sup>22</sup> In Plymouth, similarly, by the 1580s the port books indicate that on average one hundred merchant vessels utilised the haven each year for foreign trade and a further sixty-four did so for domestic 'coasting' trade.<sup>23</sup> Late-Elizabethan Devon's exports were restricted primarily to just two commodities: woollen cloth and tin. However, the fact that the county's ports also 'functioned both as feeders to and redistributors of England's trade with her European neighbours' meant that there was a much more varied import and re-export business.<sup>24</sup> Consequently, there was a daily influx of merchants arriving in the ports of Devon from across

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<sup>21</sup> Crofts, *Packhorse Waggon and Post*, p. 97.

<sup>22</sup> ECA, Customs Rolls, 34-40 Elizabeth I; W. G. Hoskins, *Old Devon* (London: Pan Books, 1966), pp. 75-6; MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, pp. 160-73.

<sup>23</sup> Mark Brayshay, 'Plymouth's Past: So Worthy and Peerless a Western Port', in *Plymouth: Maritime City in Transition*, ed. by B. Chalkley et al (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1991), pp. 38-61 (p. 41); Thomas Stuart Willan, *The Inland Trade* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1976), pp. 26-49.

<sup>24</sup> Joyce Youngs and Peter Cornford, 'Seafaring and Maritime Trade in Sixteenth-Century Devon', in *The New Maritime History of Devon: From Early Times to the Late Eighteenth Century*, vol. i, ed. by M. Duffy (Exeter: Conway Maritime Press, 1992), pp. 98-107 (p. 101).

England and throughout Europe and, in addition to the dried fruit, fish, salt, sugar, tin, wine, woollen cloth and the various other goods that appeared on their bills of lading, all of them carried another valuable commodity: news.

### **News of Spanish invasion threats after 1588**

Following the Armada crisis the one topic of news that was of particular importance to all spheres of Elizabethan society was the whereabouts and intention of the Spanish fleet. As a result of Devon's geographical location and continental trade links, the county's ports all served as vital hubs for receiving relevant news of this nature, 'w<sup>th</sup> diuers intelligences *being* dayly broughte ... from sundry ports' throughout the last fifteen years of Elizabeth I's reign.<sup>25</sup> Thus, in October 1597, Martyn Orgarsabal, a mariner from the port of St Jean de Luz in south western France (see figure 6.1), arrived at Plymouth and reported that 'eleven dayes sence beinge in Bayonnde [Bayonne] in Galesey [Galicia] there came a spanish souldier from Farould [Ferrol], whose newes was, that their fleete consistinge of 120 sayle greate and smale, weare gon from thens to the Groyne [La Coruña]'.<sup>26</sup> Devon merchants such as Nicholas Bugans of Totnes arrived home similarly bearing oral information that they had heard on their travels to the continent. For instance, on his return from southern Spain in June 1599, Bugans was able to recall that 'At S<sup>t</sup> Lucas *there were* 50 shippes, at Cales [Cadiz] 40 shippes, and 50 Gallies out of the straightes then daylie expected, and 6000 souldiers lyeing in S<sup>t</sup> Lucas & at Cales [Cadiz], readye to be shipped'.<sup>27</sup> Reports of this nature (abundant in the State and Cecil Papers) convey clearly the message that Elizabethan merchants served as 'key purveyors' of news

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<sup>25</sup> CP 42/65: 21/7/1596.

<sup>26</sup> CP 56/10: 11/10/1597.

<sup>27</sup> CP 70/96: 14/6/1599.

which would be circulated both within the locality as well as being carried beyond.<sup>28</sup>

However, merchants were not the only group of people who operated as purveyors of news and intelligence for the inhabitants of late-Elizabethan Devon. Men who had been held prisoner by the Spanish were also common suppliers of information on their arrival in the county. Having been captured by Spanish privateers at sea, many of these men were taken to Spanish-controlled ports where they were incarcerated. During their imprisonment they often saw the Spanish making military and naval preparations and were able to gain knowledge, even if only rumours, concerning the reasons for such preparations. Once they secured their release, these men often obtained passage back to England in merchant shipping destined for Devon and so arrived in the county with an account, fresh in their minds, of what they had seen and heard.<sup>29</sup> One such occasion occurred in February 1597 when a man who had been held captive in Lisbon was able to declare on his arrival in Devon that '(as he hearde) there be at Lisbone the Groyne [La Coruña] Cales [Cadiz] and Farroll [Ferrol] 240 sayle preparinge for the sea *and* That they [the Spanish] had a purpose to send 10000 men into Irelande.', while on 19 March 1602, John Lattlye, who had endured two years imprisonment in Spain, arrived in Dartmouth claiming that 'there were at S<sup>t</sup> Lucas ... twelue sayle of the kings shippes neere readye, and eighteene other shippes *whi<sup>ch</sup>* came thither out of the Straites, all *whi<sup>ch</sup>* were reported to be bound for Ireland'.<sup>30</sup> Foreign mariners

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<sup>28</sup> Mears, *Queenship and Political Discourse*, p. 180. For other examples of merchants arriving in Devon with news see SP 12/212 f.100: 17/7/1588; SP 12/255 f.20: 23/12/1595; SP 12/256 f.26: 17/1/1596; SP 12/256 f.197: 16/3/1596; SP 12/256 f.224: 25/3/1596; SP 12/261 f.41: 23/12/1596; SP 12/262 f.183: 11/4/1597; SP 12/271 f.158: 19/7/1599; SP 12/271 f.159: 19/7/1599; SP 12/271 f.164a: 20/7/1599; SP 12/271 f.191: 26/7/1599; SP 12/271 f.193: 27/7/1599; SP 12/271 f.201: 29/7/1599; SP 12/275 f.203: 25/11/1600.

<sup>29</sup> For a personal account of William Pitts' incarceration at La Coruña see SP 12/268 f.111: 9/1598.

<sup>30</sup> SP 12/262 f.99; CP 85/98: 20/3/1602.

captured by English privateers were also transported to Devon where they were pressed to divulge what they knew of the Spanish fleet. Most notably, during the initial skirmishes between the English and Spanish navies in summer 1588 a Spanish vessel called *The Rosario* was captured by the English and towed into Tor Bay by Captain Jacob Whiddon in *The Roebuck*. From Tor Bay *The Rosario* was taken to Dartmouth where her Spanish crew were interrogated and billeted under the directions of Sir John Gilbert I and George Cary.<sup>31</sup> Less high profile instances were, however, much more common, such as when Pedro Tamayo of Palermo, Sicily, arrived in Plymouth in July 1599 as the prisoner of John Stone (a Devon shipmaster) claiming that ‘the Lantado: w<sup>th</sup> his wyfe his children and 13000 men were bounde for Lyshbone [Lisbon]’.<sup>32</sup>

Yet the inhabitants of Devon were not always obliged to await the arrival of merchants or prisoners from Europe with news of the Spanish fleet, because enemy ships were often sighted from land. Famously, on 21 July 1588 the initial skirmishes between the English fleet and the Spanish Armada were in ‘playne viewe’ of those watching on Plymouth Hoe.<sup>33</sup> John Gibbons and Henry Wood were also watching the approaching Armada from their vantage point at Rame Head, before returning to Plymouth to report what they had seen.<sup>34</sup> Thereafter, whilst there was nothing comparable to 1588, there were numerous eye-witness sightings of opportunistic Spanish raids at vulnerable inlets and creeks along the Devon coastline. Notably, on 15 March 1596 one eye-witness saw a Spanish pinnace arrive in Cawsand Bay in Plymouth Sound, and there land

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<sup>31</sup> On 18 September 1588 Sir John Gilbert I wrote to Sir Francis Walsingham on behalf of one Gilbert Peppett requesting that two Spanish prisoners be released to Peppett so that he could attempt to trade them for his son and another man who had been captured by the Spanish in the Canary Isles (BL, Harley MS., 286 f. 151). For further information on the subsequent handling of *The Rosario* and her crew see Martin, *Spanish Armada Prisoners*.

<sup>32</sup> DRO 1392M/L1599/6. For other instances of prisoners arriving in Devon with news see SP 12/252 f.149: 19/6/1595; SP 12/256 f.125: 20/2/1596; SP 12/264 f.1: 1/7/1597; SP 12/266 f.1: 2/1/1598; SP 12/279 f.103: 16/4/1601; SP 12/281 f.45: 24/7/1601; SP 12/283 f.38: 13/12/1601.

<sup>33</sup> SP 12/212 f.134.

<sup>34</sup> PWDRO, 1/132, Widey Court Book, f. 79.

about twenty-five men, all of whom were carrying 'muskettes vppon their shoulders'. The Spanish then proceeded to place 'five barrells of powder and brimstone to the doores of five ... howses, and two others, to two ... boattes and sett it on fier.'<sup>35</sup> Those that manned the county's beacons also reported sightings and the 'speedye aduertisements of the fleete discovered by suche as watche at Bewestocke Beacon' were gratefully noted by the Earl of Bath on 26 July 1599.<sup>36</sup> There were also regular instances of brazen piracy taking place in view of Devon's ports which provoked an exasperated John Howell to complain in April 1600 that 'the Spaniardes & Dunkurkers are such heaueie oppressors of the merchantes inhabitinge in all the westerne Coastes That they are in A manner enforced to neglect their trades ... beinge Chased att the verye entrances of our Portes'.<sup>37</sup>

Overt acts of Spanish aggression were not the only way that the war with Spain was brought to Devon's doorstep. The county also served as a military holding area in which the commanders of Elizabeth's navy and army, along with the men under their command, converged periodically between 1588 and 1603. They did so because Plymouth was the ideal rendezvous point for the English fleet to await the Spanish Armada in 1588 and to launch a pre-emptive strike on Cadiz in 1596.<sup>38</sup> In addition, between 1591 and 1594, various ports along England's south coast were used to victual and deploy troops to help Sir John Norris eject the Spanish from Brittany, whilst, as chapter three has revealed, between 1594 and 1602 the north Devon port of Barnstaple was similarly engaged as a military staging post for the embarkation and transportation of

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<sup>35</sup> SP 12/256 f.189.

<sup>36</sup> DRO, 1392M/L1599/3.

<sup>37</sup> CP 78/86: 21/4/1600.

<sup>38</sup> William H. Bartlett, *The Pilgrim Fathers* (London, 1853), p. 117: CP 41/29: 30/5/1596.

English forces into Ireland.<sup>39</sup> During these periods of increased military activity those who commanded England's forces urgently needed news of the Spanish fleet in order to formulate and modify their tactics. Therefore, Charles, Lord Admiral Howard, and Robert Devereux, second Earl of Essex, are known to have ordered that pinnaces and other nimble vessels be dispatched from the county 'to lye on and off betwixte Englande and that coaste of *Spain* to watche the comminge of the Spanishe forces'.<sup>40</sup> Cruising between the Bay of Biscay, Brittany and Devon, the masters of these spy boats were ordered 'to speake w<sup>th</sup> all Fleminges or Easterlinges that shall Come from the Southwardes'.<sup>41</sup> Letters were also commonly dispatched to the Governor of Brest 'to knowe what spanishe shippinge ... was alongest that Coast'.<sup>42</sup> Once these reconnaissance expeditions had completed their missions they would return to Devon where the shipmasters would convey the information that they had acquired to their commanders.<sup>43</sup>

In the absence of military commanders, reconnaissance expeditions were conducted by Devon's gentry living in and around the ports of south Devon in a bid to obtain news of the Spanish fleet 'on demand'.<sup>44</sup> Robert Scarlett and Edward Hill were hired on a number of occasions by the mayors of Plymouth between 1588 and 1593 'to goe to discouer certaine shippes suspected to be Spaynyards'.<sup>45</sup> In many cases these expeditions were ordered

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<sup>39</sup> For an analysis of England's involvement in Brittany see Wallace T. MacCaffrey, *Elizabeth I: War and Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1992), pp. 152-95.

<sup>40</sup> SP 12/210 f.51: 23/5/1588.

<sup>41</sup> CP 40/61: 4/5/1596.

<sup>42</sup> CP 40/61. Governor Sourdeac was more than willing to provide the English with information concerning the Spanish fleet because he hoped that Elizabeth would seek to secure England's coastline by ejecting the Spanish from Brittany. For other instances of newsgathering involving Governor Sourdeac see SP 12/271 f.205: 30/7/1599; SP 12/271 f.206: 30/7/1599; SP 12/271 f.217: 31/7/1599; SP 12/272 f.116: 24/8/1599; SP 12/272 f.122: 25/8/1599.

<sup>43</sup> For other instances of military commanders coordinating reconnaissance missions in Devon, see SP 12/212 f.70: 13/7/1588; SP 12/212 f.94: 17/7/1588.

<sup>44</sup> Brayshay, 'Plymouth's Coastal Defences', pp. 189-91.

<sup>45</sup> PWDRO, 1/132, Widey Court Book, ff.77, 81, 88, 96.

by central government, such as in October 1596 when the Privy Council asked Lord Burghley to send a 'letter vnto the Mayor of Plymouth and certaine others, for the present dispatche of three Pynnaces or Caravelles to be sent to the Coast of Spayne for discoverye'.<sup>46</sup> Likewise, at the end of July 1601 Thomas Payne was able to confirm to Lord Admiral Howard (who by that time had been created Earl of Nottingham) and Sir Robert Cecil that he had 'already mande and sent out a pynnice of Captayne Parkers' to discover the Spanish fleet and that 'ther shalbe one more with all speed sent forth' in accordance with their orders.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, during periods of acute uncertainty there was a concerted effort on the part of the Privy Council to utilise the services of the officials located in a number of different port towns along England's south-western coast – from Penryn in Cornwall to Portsmouth in Hampshire – to deploy spy boats in a bid to seek out noteworthy information concerning the Spanish fleet.<sup>48</sup>

Thus, throughout the final fifteen years of Elizabeth I's reign, both local and central government officials rigorously exploited Devon's frontline position proactively to seek out news about the Spanish fleet that might verify miscellaneous and fragmentary items of information that were daily brought to England from the continent aboard merchant vessels. However, the veracity of much of the information that was gathered was often questionable. Indeed, it is important to stress that the news arriving in Devon's ports did not constitute 'top secret' intelligence in the modern sense, but was rather a combination of

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<sup>46</sup> SP 12/260 f.112: 28/10/1596. For other instances of Devon's gentry coordinating reconnaissance missions see SP 12/272 f.34: 9/8/1599; SP 12/272 f.43: 10/8/1599; SP 12/272 f.69: 13/8/1599; SP 12/272 f.160: 4/9/1599; SP 12/272 f.181: 19/9/1599. There is also evidence of the Spanish conducting similar reconnaissance expeditions of their own, for example, see SP 12/270 f.165: 26/4/1599; SP 12/281 f.65: 30/7/1601; SP 12/281 f.80: 3/8/1601; SP 12/281 f.169: 21/9/1601; SP 12/283 f.149: Report of Vincent Skinner, 1601.

<sup>47</sup> SP 12/281 f.65: 30/7/1601.

<sup>48</sup> BL, Harley MS., 168 ff. 149-50; *APC*, xxvi, pp. 279-80; *APC*, xxviii, pp. 50-1; *APC*, xxxii, pp. 132, 228 and 260.

hearsay and rumour.<sup>49</sup> As Fox notes, the obvious issue with this sort of unprivileged and widespread information was that it was 'highly prone to distortions and inaccuracies'.<sup>50</sup> This problem was similarly recognised by John Dakyns who complained in November 1596 that the reason that 'euery sodaine Rumoure procureth A suspicion of an Inuasion [invasion] to bee attempted by Spaine againste this country (the prevention wherof enforceth her Majes<sup>tie</sup> to greate charge) ys the wante of perfect Intelligens'.<sup>51</sup> Indeed, those who occupied positions in local and central government had to contend with the fact that many of the individuals who were either the original source or the secondary purveyors of the information that arrived in the ports of southern England were foreign strangers whose loyalty to the Crown was at best unknown. This was definitely a concern for Sir Ferdinando Gorges who complained to Sir Robert Cecil on 28 April 1597 that there was a 'wante of intellygens from men of Iudgmente and reputacon'.<sup>52</sup>

Obviously then the credibility of individual accounts supplied by merchants and prisoners, especially those who were not English, was questioned by the authorities on their arrival in Devon. This led the Earl of Bath to write despairingly on 26 August 1599 that 'The vncerteinties of reportes do mucche trouble me and I knowe not what to thinke of them'.<sup>53</sup> Feelings of uncertainty were ameliorated to an extent by deploying English shipmasters proactively to gather news; however, the reports that they made on their return to Devon also relied heavily on the rumours and hearsay of foreign mariners. Yet, despite these inadequacies, it has been revealed in chapter three that in July 1588 and August 1599 central government did refer to the news and

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<sup>49</sup> Hammer, *Polarisation of Elizabethan Politics*, p. 185.

<sup>50</sup> Fox, 'Rumour, News and Popular Political Opinion', p. 598.

<sup>51</sup> SP 12/260 f.182.

<sup>52</sup> SP 12/262 f.233.

<sup>53</sup> DRO, 3799M-3/O/1/21.

intelligence that was available to them when deciding on where to concentrate their defensive forces. Nevertheless, the Privy Council were prudent to retain a high degree of flexibility during both invasion scares. After all, as Gorges observed, it was 'better not to say what they will doe, but what they may doe, and to prevente what is possible rather than to leaue yt'.<sup>54</sup> By adopting this stance it did not matter whether individual reports were accurate or not, England's governors would plan for the worst and hope for the best using the multitude of news and intelligence that they received as a rough gauge for measuring the perceived levels of threat.<sup>55</sup>

### **Local government newsletters: production and transmission**

In order for the oral news and intelligence that arrived in the ports of southern England to serve as a barometer for measuring the perceived threat level of a Spanish invasion it first had to be transcribed and conveyed to the key decision makers at the court. Consequently, the Privy Council instructed local government officials (that is to say, deputy lieutenants, JPs, vice-admirals and the mayors of port towns) to examine all merchants, prisoners and other 'passengers' that arrived in the ports of southern England – from Falmouth in the west to Dover in the east.<sup>56</sup> In Devon, the Earl of Bath and his deputies formulated a clearly defined strategy to achieve this which is revealed by a set

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<sup>54</sup> CP 56/10: 11/10/1597.

<sup>55</sup> APC, xxxii, pp. 121-2.

<sup>56</sup> SP 12/244 f.291: 4/1593; SP 12/247 f.98: 17/2/1594; APC, xvi, p. 199; APC, xxx, pp. 367-8; APC, xxxii, p. 435; CP 85/117: 29/3/1602; HMC, Rye, p. 47. For examples of examinations conducted by local government officials in Cornwall, Dorset, Hampshire, Kent and the Channel Islands see SP 12/271 f.128: 4/7/1599; SP 12/284 f.147: 23/7/1602; CP 182/141: 8/8/1601; SP 12/260 f.114: 29/10/1596; SP 12/266 f.86: 16/2/1598; SP 12/275 f.192: 12/11/1600. For similar arrangements in Ireland see Mears, *Queenship and Political Discourse*, p. 171.

of orders that were agreed upon during a meeting at Exeter on 20 March 1598.

The four relevant orders make the following provisions:

[1.] That straight orders be taken in all portes Creekes & other places that all passengers not knowne either outwarde bound or inward bound be straightly examined by the next Iustices of the peace according to former directions & Comaundemen<sup>t</sup> from the Llordes of the Counsell.

[2.] That all Constables & other officers doe bring before the next Iustices of the Peace all suspected or vnknowne persons latelie come in this land to be examined.

[3.] That Comaundemen<sup>t</sup> be gyven vppon great paine that all owners or maisters of Fisher boates bring before the next Iustices of the Peace all such persons as they shall happen to receaue or take in into their said boates at the sea to be examined.

[4.] That the owners & maisters of any bryttayne [Breton] or French boates or other stranger vessells be examined what passengers they haue brought on shoare or sett on land in any place.<sup>57</sup>

Accordingly, on their arrival at one of the county's ports, individuals who claimed to have, or were suspected of having, noteworthy information were greeted by local government officials and were either asked, or forced, to impart the information they had obtained in the course of their voyage.<sup>58</sup> Throughout these official examinations a written record was made of what was said and a copy was then enclosed within covering letters sent to central government officials.

It is clear from the prevalence of these examinations in the State Papers that central government was inundated with information concerning the Spanish fleet.<sup>59</sup> It therefore must have been helpful that covering letters were typically short and succinct. This no doubt enabled under-secretaries and clerks at Whitehall to sift and separate the multiplicity of reports that arrived on their

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<sup>57</sup> DRO, 3799-3/O/2/13; HMC, *Somerset*, pp. 36-8.

<sup>58</sup> MacCaffrey, *Exeter*, pp. 240-1.

<sup>59</sup> For example see SP 12/215 f.61: 19/8/1588; SP 12/240 f.153: 13/12/1591; SP 12/256 f.117: 7/2/1596; SP 12/259 f.167: 7/1596; SP 12/260 f.131: 11/1596; SP 12/262 f.67: 3/2/1597; SP 12/262 f.131: 22/3/1597; SP 12/266 f.32: 18/1/1598; SP 12/270 f.154: 20/4/1599; SP 12/272 f.82: 17/8/1599; SP 12/272 f.105: 23/8/1599; SP 12/279 f.134: 5/1601; SP 12/281: 9/1601; SP 12/285 f.3: 13/9/1602.

master's desks.<sup>60</sup> Examinations could then be grouped together (possibly by origin or date) and prioritised so as to limit the time that privy councillors spent reading them and ultimately quicken the process by which patterns and trends were discovered. Thus, the Mayor of Dartmouth, Gilbert Staplehill, wrote a brief covering letter to the Privy Council on 3 November 1596 notifying them of the fact that he had examined seven Flemish mariners. The examination had been recorded and attached to the covering letter so that the Council members could refer to the lengthier document should they so wish:

*Ou<sup>r</sup> duties Right Honorable most humblie remembred. Maie it please you<sup>r</sup> Lordsh:<sup>ps</sup> to be aduertised, that this daie here aryued from Morles [Morlaix] in a small barke of Lyme [Regis], Seven Fleminges of Hambroughe [Hamburg], whose Shippe and goodes were confiscated by the Kinge of Spaine, who being examined of the newes and busines there, haue declared as appeareth by this scedule hereinlosed, whereof we thought it ou<sup>r</sup> duties to aduertise you<sup>r</sup> Hono<sup>rs</sup> with all convenient speede. And so most humblye Craving pardon for ou<sup>r</sup> boldnes herein with farther remembrance of ou<sup>r</sup> duties, do most humbly take ou<sup>r</sup> leaue and committ you<sup>r</sup> Lordshi:<sup>ps</sup> to the protection of the almightie. Dartmouth the third of Nouembe<sup>r</sup>. 1596.<sup>61</sup>*

Likewise, on 3 May 1601 the Mayor of Plymouth, Thomas Payne, wrote a brief précis to Sir Robert Cecil of his examination of Thomas Halle – a Plymouth mariner who had been newly released from Spanish imprisonment. In addition, Payne ensured that the more detailed transcription of the examination was enclosed within his covering letter in the customary way:

*Right honorable my humble Duetie remembred, It maie please you<sup>r</sup> honor to receave herewith the Examinacon of one Thomas Halle of our Towne Marrinor who hath byn p<sup>r</sup>isoner in Spaine and is lately arryved as by thesame his examinacon may appeare. And so leaveinge the farther consideracon of the same to you<sup>r</sup> honorable wisdom And praieing thalmightie for you<sup>r</sup> honou<sup>rs</sup> increase of all happines I humblie take my leave Plymouth this third of Maie 1601.<sup>62</sup>*

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<sup>60</sup> Haynes, *Elizabethan Secret Services*, p. 15.

<sup>61</sup> SP 12/260 f.130.

<sup>62</sup> SP 12/279 f.133. For other examples of covering letters written by Devon's gentry to accompany their examinations see SP 12/262 f.124: 15/3/1597; SP 12/262 f.147: 27/3/1597; SP 12/263 f.128: 2/6/1597; SP 12/265 f.21: 18/11/1597; SP 12/268 f.17: 30/7/1598; SP 12/278

Copies and extracts of these examinations were often circulated simultaneously to powerful men within the county in order to place them in a state of readiness prior to any official orders being sent by the Privy Council. For example, Sir John Gilbert I wrote to Sir Francis Walsingham from his home at Greenway on 7 November 1588 to inform him that a merchant named Richard Blackaler of Totnes had reported that 'the Kinge of *Spain* prepares for another Fleete' and that this fleet was to be supplied with 'plentye of newfoundelande Fishe, & Pilcherds ... out of theis weste partes'. In addition to notifying Walsingham, Gilbert had also simultaneously circulated the news to local government officials located elsewhere in Devon and Cornwall in order for them 'to make staye of the Pilcherds' until further orders were received from the court.<sup>63</sup> A similar episode occurred on 15 March 1596 when the Deputy Mayor of Plymouth, George Baron, wrote to the Privy Council to inform them of the Spanish raid at Cawsand Bay the previous day. As well as informing the Council of the raid, Baron also noted that he and his brethren had 'given notice hereof eastwarde alongest the Coaste' and 'there is advertises hereof given by Mr Edgecomb westward'.<sup>64</sup> Likewise, on 29 July 1599 the Mayor of Plymouth, John Blithman, wrote three letters containing information of the Spanish fleet extracted during the examination of Pedro Tamayo. One was directed to the Privy Council for their Lord's 'goode Consideracons'; a second was dispatched to Sir Richard Champernowne of Modbury together with a postscript from Blithman beseeching Champernowne to 'advertise M<sup>r</sup> Seymour ... and the Maior

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f.209: 23/2/1601; SP 12/281 f.62: 29/7/1601; SP 12/281 f.153: 11/9/1601; SP 12/281 f.159: 17/9/1601; SP 12/281 f.166: 20/9/1601; SP 12/285 f.17: 17/9/1602.

<sup>63</sup> SP 12/218 f.11. Gilbert seems to have regularly supplied Walsingham with important trade information that arrived in the ports of south Devon. For example, on 14 December 1586 he wrote from Exeter to inform the Secretary of State that: 'so ys heare seuerall reportes theare ys greate abundanse of corne and wyne thys yeare yn spayne, thys ys allso affyrmyd by afrenche man thatt came from Lisborne *whi<sup>ch</sup>* ys nowe In Dartmouthe.' (BL, Harley MS., 295 f.178).

<sup>64</sup> SP 12/256 f.189.

of Dartmouthe'; and a third was conveyed to Tawstock Court for the Earl of Bath's perusal.<sup>65</sup> All three examples demonstrate the existence of an interlocking local news network which was used to broadcast important pieces of information from the initial point of contact to the key decision makers scattered across the county.

Indeed, sending the same news to more than one local recipient not only ensured that the appropriate political actors within the county were alerted to a potential threat, but also it acted as an insurance policy against the possibility of letters addressed to central government being lost in transit. It seems that it was therefore customary for central government to receive the same information from multiple sources within Devon. This notably occurred in July 1599 when a merchant of Dartmouth named John Ashley arrived home from Brittany having heard whilst moored at Roscoff that there were '200 shypps and Gallyes in the Groyns [La Coruña] bownde for England ... *carrying* 22000 men'.<sup>66</sup> Ominously, as well as reporting the 200 ships and 22,000 men that were apparently bound for England, Ashley had learnt 'that the Spaniardes would be ready w<sup>th</sup>in Fifteene dayes'.<sup>67</sup> Having interviewed Ashley following his return to Dartmouth on 27 July, the Mayor of Dartmouth, Robert Martin, hurriedly dispatched a written copy of his examination to the nearest available deputy lieutenant, Edward Seymour, who lived just over ten miles away at Berry Pomeroy.<sup>68</sup> On receiving Ashley's examination at Berry Pomeroy Castle, Seymour forwarded the information to Sir Robert Cecil at the court, the Earl of Bath at Tawstock Court and Sir Ferdinando Gorges at Plymouth Fort. Ashley's examination was then copied again by Bath on 29 July and enclosed in a covering letter

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<sup>65</sup> SP 12/271 f.201; DRO, 1392M/L1599/6; DRO, 1392M/L1599/8.

<sup>66</sup> DRO, 1392M/L1599/4.

<sup>67</sup> SP 12/271 f.198.

<sup>68</sup> CP 71/95: 28/7/1599.

addressed to the Privy Council, providing them with 'a trewe transcripte' of what the merchant had reported.<sup>69</sup>

To summarise, the way in which Devon's political elite circulated and transmitted news and intelligence amongst each other, as well as across to central government officials at the court, did not have a permanently rigid or proscribed format. This meant that those who conducted the examinations of the merchants, prisoners and other 'passengers' that arrived in Devon (that is to say, the mayors and chief inhabitants of port towns, JPs and deputy lieutenants) had a discretionary choice to make as to which nodes of the political network they would notify and in what order. This choice was especially pertinent when the threat of a Spanish invasion appeared imminent, making the speedy advertisement of the threat a necessity. In that instance information tended to be transmitted laterally and vertically amongst both local and central government officials simultaneously. In doing so, the time delay between newsgathering and notification was minimised. Consequently, Devon's governors did not have to wait to learn news of the Spanish fleet from the Privy Council; instead they could place the county's defences in a state of readiness prior to orders being received from central government. Thus, whereas Richard Cust has identified two types of early modern newsletter – the informal and the 'pure' – this section has highlighted a third: the local government newsletter. Official in nature, local government newsletters were similar to 'pure' newsletters in the sense that they were entirely made up of news and intelligence, yet, they also differed in that they were non-profit making (at least in the monetary sense) and were intended for a small, elite and exclusively male readership. However, their most important characteristic was the fact that

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<sup>69</sup> SP 12/271 f.200. For other instances of central government receiving the same information from more than one source see SP 12/253 f.48: 23/7/1595; SP 12/253 f.49: 2/8/1595; SP 12/272 f.114: 24/8/1599; SP 12/279 f.148: 7/5/1601.

they were produced provincially. They therefore provide historians with a solid documentary foundation from which to expose and explore the more complex sets of early modern news networks that operated in the first instance at a local level, but which also had connections with London.

### **Trading news for patronage**

The evidence discussed in the previous section has shown that the entire framework of Devon's news and intelligence network was readily connected to central government. However, what has not been made plain is why this connection was so strong. In contrast to the intricate networks of overseas intelligencers who received monetary recompense for supplying Elizabeth's chief ministers with vital information from behind enemy lines, local government officials received no financial remuneration for supplying their superiors at Whitehall with news and intelligence from the frontline.<sup>70</sup> Therefore, what motivational drivers did they possess for doing so? On a purely human level the acute fear of invasion that persisted throughout the late-Elizabethan era combined with an impassioned anti-Spanish sentiment to ensure that the supply of news and intelligence from Devon – as well as from other maritime counties – remained plentiful.<sup>71</sup> Thus, on 17 July 1588 Captain Thomas Fenner saw the

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<sup>70</sup> For the costs involved in Sir Francis Walsingham's espionage operations see Hutchinson, *Elizabeth's Spy Master*, pp. 90 and 100-1.

<sup>71</sup> Such anti-Spanish sentiment has been subsequently identified by the early-nineteenth-century Spanish journalist, Julian Juderías, as being stimulated by 'Black Legend' propaganda. To quote Helen Rawlings, 'the term 'Black Legend' is, surprisingly, of recent origin ... It refers to an attitude that was prevalent in northern European thinking in the second half of the sixteenth century when international criticism of the Inquisition began to emerge in those countries politically and ideologically opposed to Spain ... The legend, some of it generated by Spanish Protestant exiles, was designed to promulgate the blackest facts about Spain and its rulers to serve as a warning of the consequences of Spanish hegemony in Europe' (Helen Rawlings, *The Spanish Inquisition* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), p. 4). For a detailed analysis of the Black Legend in relation to Spanish foreign policy and colonialism see Benjamin Keen, 'The

opportunity to provide Sir Francis Walsingham with information as a way of doing 'some effectuall service for my ... Country' and 'to breake downe the Spanish pride'; on 30 July 1599 Sir Ferdinando Gorges wrote to Sir Walter Raleigh to relay 'the particulars of the spaniards p<sup>r</sup>operation', post scribing the words 'God and S<sup>t</sup> George: let them come an' they dare'; while just a day later, Captain Matthew Bredgate wrote to Lord Cobham from Plymouth having 'newlie com from Brest' to inform the privy councillor that there were reportedly 'som 30000 *Spanish* soulderes' at the Breton port. Bredgate accompanied this information with a defiant warning to the King of Spain that the 'sucses his father had in :88: he shall now haue in :99:'.<sup>72</sup> The strength of the sense of duty felt by local government officials is also plain in the letters of news and intelligence that they sent to central government. Thus, on 11 May 1589, Humphrey Fownes, William Hawkins and William Moys wrote that it was their 'bounden dewties' to send news to the Privy Council; on 6 November 1590 William Blande's 'humble dutie vnto' Lord Burghley prompted him to send letters of intelligence from Plymouth; on 25 July 1596 George Cary of Cockington stated that he thought it was his 'duty to signyfy vnto' Sir Robert Cecil the examination of a Scotsman; on 17 August 1599 the Earl of Bath, Sir William Courtenay, Sir William Strode and Edward Seymour reassured the Privy Council that they 'alwaies remembred' their 'humble dueties' unto their Lords when sending 'creadible intelligence'; and on 23 February 1601 Sir Richard Champernowne believed it to be both his 'duty & vowyd servyce' to inform Cecil of the news which had been conveyed to him by a merchant of Kingswear.<sup>73</sup>

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Black Legend Revisited: Assumptions and Realities', *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, 49:4 (November, 1969), 703-19. See also Cooper, 'Propaganda and Censorship', ch. 2.

<sup>72</sup> SP 12/212 f.105; SP 12/271 f.206; SP 12/271 f.217.

<sup>73</sup> SP 12/224 f.48; SP 12/234 f.7; SP 12/259 f.172; SP 12/272 f.82; SP 12/278 f.209.

However, local government officials were not simply driven by fear, anti-Spanish sentiment and public duty. Indeed, whilst they did not profit financially from the information that they supplied, they did seek profit in a non-monetary sense. The fact that local government officials in Devon were situated so far away from the centre of government meant that it was much harder for them to acquire the patronage that they needed to further their political careers because they did not have regular face-to-face access to the principal patrons of the Elizabethan court. In contrast, their courtier counterparts enjoyed regular personal contact with these powerful men. Therefore, transmitting news and intelligence served as a tangible way of overcoming the disadvantages of distance and enabled men residing in peripheral counties such as Devon to trade information as a commodity that might earn them favour.<sup>74</sup> Supplying a prominent courtier with news and intelligence of the Spanish fleet thus acted as a form of gift giving, a process that Linda Levy-Peck has identified as being 'among the glues which bound together superior and subordinate'.<sup>75</sup>

Consequently, it was a common occurrence for local government officials in Devon to solicit for favours from powerful men such as Lord Burghley and Sir Robert Cecil when they sent local government newsletters and other noteworthy information concerning the Spanish fleet. Such an arrangement was equally appealing to these powerful politicians who relied on an extensive network of

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<sup>74</sup> Ian Atherton, "'The Itch Grown a Disease'": Manuscript Transmission of News in the Seventeenth Century', in *News, Newspapers, and Society in Early Modern Britain*, ed. by J Raymond (London: F. Cass, 1999), 39-65 (p. 50); Daybell, 'The News and Intelligence Networks of Elizabeth Talbot', p. 120; Kristen Brooke-Neuschel, *Word of Honor: Interpreting Noble Culture in Sixteenth-Century France* (Cornell, NY: Cornell UP, 1989), pp. 72-3; Gary Schneider, *The Culture of Epistolarity: Vernacular Letters and Letter Writing in Early Modern England, 1500-1700* (Cranbury, NJ: Rosemont Publishing, 2005), pp. 152-60; Barbara Stephenson, *The Power and Patronage of Marguerite de Navarre* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), p. 38.

<sup>75</sup> Linda Levy-Peck, *Court Patronage and Corruption in Early Stuart England*, (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 4

informants to buttress their own standing with the Queen.<sup>76</sup> This symbiotic arrangement of reciprocal benefit is clearly referred to in a letter that Cecil wrote to Edward Seymour in summer 1599:

*Sf I haue receaued a lettre from yo<sup>u</sup> dated y<sup>e</sup> xiiij[14]<sup>th</sup> of lune wherby I fynd yo<sup>u</sup> haue a desire to contynue the same affeccion towardes me that it seemes yo<sup>u</sup> haue borne heretofore to my Lord: my Father [Lord Burghley], wh<sup>ch</sup> I doe very thanckfully accept, w<sup>th</sup> the desire that as occasion serves, yo<sup>u</sup> would make me partaker of such materyall Spanysh advyses as come to you<sup>r</sup> handes, wherof I haue receaued some already, in you<sup>r</sup> lettre, wherin was contayned y<sup>e</sup> examynacon of one Buggens [Nicholas Buggans of Totnes], assuring yo<sup>u</sup>, that you<sup>r</sup> lettres shalbe very wellcome to me, and for requyttall of you<sup>r</sup> kyndnesse, yo<sup>u</sup> shall ever fynd me you<sup>r</sup> very assured frend.<sup>77</sup>*

Sir Richard Champernowne appears to have had his own similar bilateral relationship with Cecil which he revealed in a letter to the Secretary of State dated 23 February 1601 notifying him of ‘reports herd in saynt malloes [St Malo]’ by a merchant of Kingswear. Champernowne did so in order ‘to manyfest the same earnest affectyon’ to Cecil as he had hitherto shown Lord Burghley ‘being thervnto bovdn through hys contynuall favors’.<sup>78</sup> However, it was not just individual members of Devon’s gentry who sought to trade information in return for patronage, the county’s town corporations also regarded news and intelligence as a currency that could be used to purchase political backing. Such a transaction is revealed in a letter that Charles, Lord Admiral Howard, wrote to the Mayor of Plymouth on 2 October 1594:

*After my hartie comendacons: I haue by this bearer receaved you<sup>r</sup> lettre of intelligence and the packeth you sent therew<sup>th</sup>all and haue caused such lettres as were directed to the merchantes to be delyvered to them. For you<sup>r</sup> frendship in sendinge them to me I hartely thanke you and wilbe ready to requite it in any thinge I can*

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<sup>76</sup> For a detailed survey of the Earl of Essex’s intelligence network – which was established to rival the networks of Burghley and Cecil – see Hammer, *Polarisation of Elizabethan Politics*, pp. 152-98.

<sup>77</sup> DRO, 1392M/L1599/40.

<sup>78</sup> SP 12/278 f.209.

and soe I bid you farewell. From the court on the waye to Nonsuche the 2 of October 1594.<sup>79</sup>

The competition to be the first to send a vital piece of information was no doubt fierce amongst Devon's political elite; after all to lose out to a competitor in the race to notify a patron was a sure fire way of diminishing one's credit-balance of court patronage. This may well have been playing on the Earl of Bath's mind when he wrote to the Privy Council from Tawstock on 29 July 1599.<sup>80</sup> Bath dedicated a section of his letter to explaining why he had failed to notify their Lords of 'a late Fleete discovered neere vnto the shoare of *Plymouth* ... supposed to be Enemyes'. His excuse hinged on the fact that the suspicious fleet turned out to be Flemish merchants which he apparently 'alwaies tooke them to be: And therefore thoughte yt not good to trouble' their Lords. Quite how Bath could have been so certain of this from his home in north Devon is not made clear. It therefore seems highly likely that Bath's excuse was made to deflect any negligence that their Lords may have levelled at him and thereby preserve his political standing at the centre of affairs. Competing to be the first to send news and intelligence was certainly at the forefront of Sir John Gilbert II's mind when he dispatched a local government newsletter to Cecil from the fort at Plymouth on 7 May 1601.<sup>81</sup> Gilbert conceded in his covering letter that the enclosed examination was sent 'rather for a Confirmation of what the Mayor of *Plymouth* hath allreadie enformed then anye hoope I haue to be the first'. He then proceeded to request Cecil to order the Mayor to make him 'acquainted with suche intelligence as toucheth anye preparation of an Enemye ... so that

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<sup>79</sup> PWDRO, 1/359/21. Whilst Howard's letter does not explicitly state that the Mayor of Plymouth had sent him information one can suppose that he did because of an endorsement written on the outside panel of the letter: 'A *lettre* from my Lord Admyrall givinge thanks for Intellygence that was sent hym.'

<sup>80</sup> SP 12/271 f.200.

<sup>81</sup> SP 12/279 f.148.

your honor may be the more assured, and the lesse troubled with frivolous intelligences'. Reading between the lines, it seems highly probable that Gilbert was attempting to monopolise the flow of news and intelligence that emanated from Plymouth in order to stockpile the resulting patronage for his own ends.

The quest for patronage therefore encouraged Devon's gentry proactively to gather and transmit information that daily arrived in the county's ports. In return, central government enjoyed a web of informants situated on the frontline of England's war with Spain who readily purveyed the multitude of predominantly oral reports concerning the Spanish fleet which would not otherwise have been accessible from the confines of the court. Thus, the news and intelligence network of late-Elizabethan Devon was a reciprocal relationship of mutual advantage to both spheres (local and central) of Elizabethan government. In addition, it provides an important case study to help exemplify how provincial regions, particularly ports, served the political nation as 'important nexi of news' during the early modern period.<sup>82</sup>

### **News circulating among Devon's wider population**

From the above analysis of local government newsletters it might be supposed that the news and intelligence which arrived in Devon circulated only among local and central government elites. However, archival evidence reveals that this was not the case. A number of references survive for the last fifteen years of Elizabeth I's reign which indicate a more widespread circulation of information concerning the Spanish fleet throughout the lower echelons of Devon society. Thus, when the Mayor of Plymouth, John Sparke, wrote to the

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<sup>82</sup> Mears, *Queenship and Political Discourse*, p. 171.

Privy Council in February 1593, he articulated his concerns that 'sondrie of thinhabitautes were putt into suche feare' as a result of the reports made 'by divers Englishmen and manye other straungers that are come latelie out of Spaigne'. On 12 April 1596 Sir Ferdinando Gorges similarly complained in a letter to Lord Burghley that the 'daylye rumores of thEnimies intent, to put for these partes to burne and spoyle theym' was causing most men to be 'full of feare & in doubt what to doe'. And, on 29 July 1599 the Earl of Bath likewise informed the Privy Council that there was 'some feare and terro' putt into the myndes of those of Plymouthe and the rest of the southe Coaste by reason of a late Fleete discouered neere vnto the shoare there aboute supposed to be Enemyes'.<sup>83</sup>

The Privy Council responded to letters of this nature by ordering the Earl of Bath 'to apprehend & Comytt to prison the aucthors & spreaders of such fals idle & mutynous reportes', suggesting that he should 'appoynte a Provoste martiall who may haue authoritie to apprehend such ... vagrant persons that goe vpp & downe the Country, lyeing losslye w<sup>th</sup>out labouring & to see them Comitted to pryson'.<sup>84</sup> Such an order reflects the Elizabethan government's concern that the passage of rumour and news among the general population of England was politically destabilising. Thus, just as it was an offence to speculate on the health of the Queen, it was also an offence to speculate on the perceived threat of Spanish invasion.<sup>85</sup> For that reason it seems highly unlikely – in contrast to what Lindsay Boynton has argued for earlier periods in relation

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<sup>83</sup> SP 12/244 f.119; SP 12/257 f.28; SP 12/271 f.200.

<sup>84</sup> DRO, 1392M/L1599/17. See also Boynton, *Elizabethan Militia*, p. 149. A provost-marshal was a royal officer charged with enforcing public order – a precursor to the modern military policeman. For more on their role and remit see Lindsay Boynton, 'The Tudor Provost-Marshall', *EHR*, 77:304 (July, 1962), 437-55.

<sup>85</sup> Robert P. Adams, 'Despotism, Censorship, and Mirrors of Power Politics in Late Elizabethan Times', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 10:3 (Autumn, 1979), 5-16; Braddick, *State Formation*, p. 151, fn. 52.

to Hampshire – that during the late-Elizabethan period Devon’s beacon network was ever ‘fired’ to convey messages within and beyond the county’s borders.<sup>86</sup>

To elucidate this viewpoint it is helpful to provide a case study. On 25 July 1599 the threat of Spanish invasion appeared to have become a reality for the inhabitants of Plymouth when an unidentified fleet was spotted offshore. At seven o’clock that evening Lieutenant Edward Dodington chose not to fire Plymouth’s beacon.<sup>87</sup> Instead he wrote a hurried note to the Privy Council in which he informed them that there ‘is a Fleete atthis instant cominge in vpon vs the wind at north west, by all liklyhoode it should be the enymy’. Having scribbled his signature and sealed the letter Dodington dispatched it post haste to the Council utilising the royal post-stage service outlined in chapter four.<sup>88</sup> However, Dodington had been too hasty in his dispatch and, shortly afterwards, with some embarrassment, he wrote again to the Council to explain that the fleet he had feared as hostile was in fact merely ‘Fleminges bounde for Rochell [La Rochelle]’.<sup>89</sup> Had Plymouth’s beacon been lit on this occasion Devon and the rest of the south-western counties would have no doubt been mistakenly placed on alert, and panic would have ensued. As has been shown, the Privy Council were at pains to ensure that this sort of widespread chaos was

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<sup>86</sup> Boynton, *Elizabethan Militia*, pp. 132-9. One would suppose that if the beacons were customarily ‘fired’ between 1588 and 1603 reference would be made to this in the Privy Council Register. However, a detailed inspection of the entries reveals just one mention of a beacon being ‘fired’ and in that case those responsible were imprisoned for a time in the Marshalsea (*APC*, xv, p. 14). Much more common are the entries that relate to watching and guarding the beacons (*APC*, xv, p. 273; *APC*, xvi, p. 194; *APC*, xvii, p. 222 and 397; *APC*, xxi, p. 131, 133 and 166; *APC*, xxiv, p. 39; *APC*, xxv, p. 304 and 440; *APC*, xxvi, p. 289; *APC*, xxx, p. 367), dismissing beacon sentries during the winter months (*APC*, xvi, p. 297 and 302; *APC*, xix, p. 79 and 480; *APC*, xxi, p. 470; *APC*, xxii, p. 160; *APC*, xxiii, pp. 264-5; *APC*, xxv, pp. 51-3; *APC*, xxix, pp. 191 and 288), and arbitration of disputes pertaining to the funding of the beacon network (*APC*, xviii, p. 167; *APC*, xxiv, p. 39; *APC*, xxvi, p. 289; *APC*, xxvii, p. 77, 226 and 316).

<sup>87</sup> Plymouth’s beacon was situated on the Hoe and was one of a network of approximately eighty-nine beacons that were strategically positioned throughout Elizabethan Devon during the Armada years. This, according to Percy Russell, would appear to be a ‘considerable total, [and] probably the highest for any English county’ – Kent had just forty-three, Hampshire and south Sussex twenty-four apiece (Percy Russell, ‘Fire Beacons in Devon’, *TDA*, 87 (1955), 250-302 (pp. 270-1)).

<sup>88</sup> SP 12/271 f.184.

<sup>89</sup> SP 12/271 f.185; DRO, 1392M/L1599/2.

minimised. It was therefore ordered by the Earl of Bath that Devon's beacons were only to be fired 'upon show of 10 sail of ships that shall offer any attempt of landing'.<sup>90</sup> As it transpired such a large force never actually attempted a landing in Devon and therefore the county's beacons evidently remained unlit throughout the late-Elizabethan period.<sup>91</sup> Thus, the romantic notion that the intricate network of beacons strategically positioned in each of England's counties was used to relay the news that the Armada had arrived off the coast of Devon in July 1588 would appear unfortunately to be nothing more than a myth.<sup>92</sup> In reality, firing the beacons was a measure of last resort to be used in the event of an actual landing, not an offshore sighting, in order to alert the local authorities and initiate the immediate mustering of the county militias.<sup>93</sup>

Consequently, because the Spanish never landed an invasion force in Devon (or, for that matter, anywhere else in England) the news and intelligence that arrived in the county's ports was conveyed to local and central government officials 'confidentially' via the various postal infrastructures outlined in chapters four and five. Nevertheless, such attempts to restrict the circulation of information likely to engender panic among the ordinary people of Devon was often futile given the fact that the sources of much of the alarming talk shared by the county's inhabitants were the land-based sightings of the supposed Spanish fleet. Indeed, the evidence used throughout this chapter has demonstrated that much of the information circulating in the county was largely

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<sup>90</sup> HMC, *Somerset*, p. 4. See also *APC*, xvii, p. 397 and 402.

<sup>91</sup> However, even if there had been a Spanish landing of ten sail or more John Roberts has convincingly argued against the idea that all of England's beacons would have been fired. Instead, he describes a less grand system whereby a small number of beacons could be used to pinpoint the location of a landing (Roberts, *Devon and the Armada*, p. 156).

<sup>92</sup> Brayshay, 'Plymouth's Defences', p. 191; David H. Montgomery, ed., *Heroic Ballads with Poems of War and Patriotism* (Boston, MA, 1890), pp. 50-8.

<sup>93</sup> Paula Martin has agreed with this contention when discussing the approach of the Spanish Armada in July 1588. However, she does argue that 'some fires were definitely lit, and were assumed by the Spaniards to be a system of beacons, spreading news of their arrival' (Martin, *Spanish Armada Prisoners*, p. 21). This may well have been the less grandiose system outlined by Roberts.

unprivileged and so by implication it can be inferred that it was readily accessible to a broad spectrum of Devon's society in one form or another, especially those living in and around the county's ports where land-based sightings of the Spanish were most common.

Thus, by identifying a number of references that were made by the political elite in their correspondence concerning the widespread fear and anxiety that was endemic among the county's ordinary folk, this section has been able to offer more than just an inference of widespread circulation. Indeed it has provided an important, albeit indirect, glimpse at a much broader network of news and intelligence to the one which is predominantly depicted in the extant documents. This is crucial as it sheds light directly on the issue of whether or not the general population was folded within local news networks; providing some rare concrete evidence to confirm that which would intuitively have been expected. Moreover, by briefly outlining central government's attempt to 'censor' or restrict the dissemination of this information among the general populace, this section has supported Natalie Mears' argument that 'we cannot just push back the chronological boundaries of the public sphere to 1558'.<sup>94</sup> A central plank of Jürgen Habermas's 'public sphere' theory (which he dated as beginning in the coffee houses of late-seventeenth-century England) was the concept that those who engaged in political debate did so without fear of reprisals from the state.<sup>95</sup> Appointing provost marshals to apprehend and commit to prison those who spread reports of the Spanish fleet therefore

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<sup>94</sup> Mears, *Queenship and Political Discourse*, p. 26.

<sup>95</sup> For more on Habermas's 'public sphere' theory and the tendency of modern scholars to push back its chronological boundaries to the Elizabethan era see Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry Into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989); Craig Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992); Natalie Mears, 'Counsel, Public Debate, and Queenship: John Stubb's 'The discoverie of a gaping gulf', 1579', *HJ*, 44:3 (2001), 629-50; Peter Lake and Steven Pincus, eds., *The Politics of the Public Sphere in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2007).

undermines a fundamental aspect of his theory. Thus, while it is possible to date the development of certain elements of a Habermasian 'public sphere' to the Elizabethan era, essential aspects of the model will always be absent.

By focusing on late-Elizabethan Devon's news and intelligence network this chapter has examined one of the key ways in which the county was exploited by local and central government officials during the Elizabethan war with Spain. Because of their geographical location and extensive continental trade links the ports of south Devon all served as vital hubs for receiving information concerning the whereabouts and intention of the Spanish fleet. While the veracity of this information was often questionable it was nevertheless diligently pooled, recorded and circulated by Devon's political elite in the form of local government newsletters in order to measure the likelihood of the worst case scenario: a Spanish land invasion. The presence of many local government newsletters in the State Papers and other centrally held archives provides historians with a substantial documentary platform from which to expose how other provincial news networks served the localities, as well as the centre, with information. Indeed, this chapter has revealed that part of the reason why local government newsletters exist in such large quantity is because they provided the political elite living in Devon and other counties distant from the court with a mechanism for acquiring patronage from Elizabeth's chief ministers. The chapter has also briefly discussed the social depth of late-Elizabethan Devon's news networks. Central and local government attempted to restrict the general population's access to information likely to instil panic by ordering the

appointment of provost marshals, choosing not to fire the beacons during times of emergency and utilising the various postal delivery services identified in chapters four and five to convey news 'confidentially' to each other. Nevertheless, this was largely futile in light of Devon's frontline location and the unprivileged nature of early modern intelligence gathering. Thus, by exposing the complex, multi-faceted and socially inclusive intelligence network that operated in the first instance within late-Elizabethan Devon, but which also had connections with the capital, the vital role played by merchants, prisoners, eye-witnesses, spy-boats and local government officials in servicing the localities, as well as the centre, with information has been recognised and the current London-centric model of early modern news has been shown to be somewhat one dimensional.

# 7

## Conclusion

Focusing on Devon between 1588 and 1603, this thesis has investigated political-military networks, postal infrastructures, scribal culture and the flow of information within and beyond the county. It has been highlighted that over the last thirty years or so 'new' Tudor political historians, such as David Starkey, Eric Ives, Simon Adams, Barbara Harris and Stephen Alford, among others, have sought to reconstruct the multiplicity of personal relationships that formed the basis of power at the epicentre of the Tudor state in order to confirm the importance of informal linkages in a political system where the line between the public and the private was so conflated. However, much still remains unclear about how political networks operated at regional and local levels, and how these networks were connected to other local groups and institutions, as well as with central government and the court. Thus, by concentrating on late-Elizabethan Devon this thesis has provided answers to many hitherto unanswered questions on issues relating to governance and connectivity in an English county and in doing so has explained the ways in which a county community (in its widest sense) communicated at an inter-regional and intra-county level.

The final fifteen years of the Elizabethan era have been portrayed throughout this study as being a crucial period in the development of the English nation state. The deployment of lord lieutenants on a more widespread and permanent basis, the professionalisation of the county militias, the extensive engagement of a state-funded postal service, a heightened degree of

contact between all tiers of government and an apparent rise in the flow of news from the localities into London are the most notable advances that have been identified. The two main catalysts for these developments were the Elizabethan war with Spain and the Nine Years' War in Ireland and it has been demonstrated consistently that Devon provides an ideal case study for analysing the impact that each had on central government's ability to govern the realm whilst being spatially anchored at Whitehall.

By conducting a detailed reconstruction of the personal connections of Devon's lieutenancy it has been revealed that an informal 'social network' underpinned and facilitated the functioning of the county's government. Acquiring a place on Devon's lieutenancy commission did not hinge on the talent or military aptitude of the appointee. Instead, familial contacts, wealth, status, geographical location of residence, court connections, personal ambition and local prestige all functioned in concordance with specific strategic issues resulting from the conflict with Spain and the insurrection in Ireland to assist central government when they made their appointments. Thus, the loyalty to the Crown that each member of Devon's lieutenancy felt as a result of their selection was counterbalanced by the loyalty they felt to their regional power base within the county. This dual allegiance was of vital importance to the success of the Elizabethan regime because on the one hand it provided the Queen and her chief ministers with a group of loyal local agents, while on the other hand it gave the inhabitants of Devon an institutional mechanism for communicating any grievances to central government.

As well as explaining how and why Devon's lieutenancy functioned as an important 'point of contact' between the centre and the locality, this study has gauged the success the Earl of Bath and his deputies had as commanders and

co-ordinators of the county's militia. In doing so, the high strategic value that central government attached to Devon throughout the late-Elizabethan period has been underlined. From 1585 onwards the Privy Council increasingly turned to the lieutenancies to secure the realm's military resources. In Devon, as in other counties, the local power and influence of the lieutenancy served as the basis from which the militia was organised. This encouraged allegiance and unity, as well as acknowledging early modern thoughts on honour and reputation. However, when the number of suitable positions within the militia did not match the number of aspirants (a problem experienced in Devon's South Division) such a system made discord inevitable and highlights a fundamental weakness in a system that did not prioritise personal aptitude. Nevertheless, for the majority of the time Devon's lieutenancy worked hard to implement the Crown's defence policy. This was a comparatively straightforward task during times when the threat from Spain was acutely felt. However, during periods when the perceived threat was low it was necessary for Devon's lieutenancy to adapt the centre's demands in an effort to secure the cooperation of the county's overburdened population.

A central argument in the thesis has been that, as England's conflict with Spain and the rebellion in Ireland persisted, there was an increased necessity for central government to communicate rapidly with local government officials situated in Devon as England's conflict with Spain and the rebellion in Ireland persisted. Consequently, the study has revealed exactly how this was accomplished. Between August 1595 and March 1603 the Tudor south-west's royal post-stage service constituted the principal method by which Queen Elizabeth I and her chief ministers maintained rapid and reliable communications with those local officials at the apex of Devon's government.

The speed and reliability of this mode of communication has so often been portrayed as woefully unable to meet the ever increasing demands of the Tudor state. However, by utilising a large sample of postal endorsement data this thesis has been able to rehabilitate the reputation of the service. Specifically, it has confirmed that this relay system facilitated significantly better inter-urban travel times in comparison to those that were achieved during the late-fifteenth- and early-sixteenth-century when such an arrangement was not engaged. Thus, by the end of the sixteenth-century political elites at the pinnacle of Devon's government could regularly communicate with their superiors in London in less than forty-eight hours – a speed rarely, if ever, achieved in earlier periods.

As well as looking at inter-regional postal arrangements, this thesis has also elucidated late-Elizabethan Devon's internal postal infrastructure. When the south-west's royal post-stage service was engaged official mail was dispatched to and from Devon's royal post-masters via a combination of foot-posts, horsemen and shipmasters. Conversely, for private business or when an Exchequer-funded service was not in operation, Devon's gentry and town corporations paid personally known letter-bearers to transport their letters to the capital via horse or on foot. This informal system was also used to carry government mail on an intra-county basis. However, as a direct result of the war with Spain, a speedier link between the Earl of Bath and his associates living in south Devon became critical. Consequently, an intra-county post-stage service was established enabling Bath to communicate on a daily basis with his contacts in Exeter, Dartmouth and Plymouth. In addition, a parish-to-parish postal network provided Devon's governors with an additional means of maintaining regular contact with each other and allowed them to dispatch instructions rapidly down the chain of command. The smooth-running of this

communication network depended greatly on the secretaries of Devon's political elite. One should therefore view secretaries as being the linchpins of early modern provincial post and communication networks not only in Devon but throughout the realm. Indeed, an important scribal duty for any secretary was making copies of circular missives. This constituted an important way of minimising the delay between policy formation and implementation and was practised by the constables of the hundreds who produced multiple copies of the precepts that they received. These copied precepts were then read aloud during church services thus ensuring that even the most humble members of late-Elizabethan Devon's society were engaged in a national political culture.

Having laid out the various modes of letter delivery available to late-Elizabethan Devon's political elite for communicating with each other, their superiors at Whitehall and their subordinates within the county, it has been possible to investigate the county's news and intelligence network with a clear understanding of how information travelled on an intra-county and inter-regional basis. Indeed, by focusing on the flow of news, one of the primary ways in which local and central government officials exploited Devon's frontline location and continental trade links during the Elizabethan war with Spain has been identified. The ports of south Devon all served as news 'hotspots' throughout the conflict and while the accuracy of much of the news was uncertain the information was nevertheless recorded and circulated by Devon's political elite in the form of local government newsletters. Part of the reason why they did this was to secure political backing from the leading politicians of the Elizabethan court. However, it must be emphasised that the intelligence contained in these newsletters did not constitute classified information in the modern sense. As a result, the extent to which late-Elizabethan Devon's general population was

aware of Spanish naval activities was significant. Central and local government attempted to restrict access to reports likely to engender alarm but this was unsurprisingly ineffectual. Devon during the late-Elizabethan period therefore functioned as the arena for a socially democratic provincial news network. Indeed, by examining the extensive flow of information within and beyond the county this study has added another dimension to existing research on early modern news which has hitherto adopted a predominantly London-centric focus.

The thesis has thus fundamentally contributed to a reassessment of the nature of Tudor politics at a local and national level. In particular, it has demonstrated that between 1588 and 1603 the inhabitants of Devon were not distant and cut-off from events that were unfolding on a national and international level. On the contrary, in spite of their geographical remoteness from the centre of affairs, those who lived in the county were well aware of and participated in a national political culture. This was encouraged by Devon's strategic importance, vulnerability to invasion and continental trade links which collectively necessitated the establishment of a complex postal network designed to maintain relatively speedy and sustained connectivity between all tiers of government. This conclusion has been made by focusing on events within Devon rather than from a central government perspective. In other words, in order to understand more fully the nature of governance in Devon at the end of the sixteenth-century, this thesis has used the same 'centre-periphery' methodology that Steven Ellis deployed to such great effect in relation to Tudor Ireland and the English borderlands.

The Devon analysis articulated in the thesis could not have been achieved without the newly discovered Seymour Manuscripts – the

documentary platform from which this study has developed. These papers have been utilised extensively throughout this study in tandem with an array of primary material from other locally and centrally held archives. The receivers' accounts of Barnstaple, Dartmouth, Exeter and Plymouth have been particularly useful in pursuing a 'centre-periphery' methodology. Indeed, it has been a central purpose of this thesis to exemplify how a sufficiently detailed set of receivers' accounts can be utilised to help to expand present-day understanding of the 'sinews of power' in an early modern English county.

Of course it is inevitable that there are certain questions and issues not covered by the primary sources used in this thesis. For instance, there is a much greater amount of evidence in the Seymour Manuscripts for the late-1590s and early-1600s. This has been counterbalanced by accessing earlier evidence from other locally and centrally held collections although these too tend to have more material dated post-1595 which presumably is a consequence of the availability of better postal services from thenceforth. Another limitation with the available evidence is its predominantly official character. Consequently, this thesis has largely focused on the ways and means that central and local government (at all levels) sustained a dialogue with each other in a governmental context. That said socio-cultural issues have been considered wherever they were especially germane. Most notably, the study has emphasised the importance of personal relationships to the Elizabethan political-military system, explained how Devon's general population was co-opted into a national political culture, identified the importance of newsgathering as a mechanism for securing patronage and highlighted the socially democratic nature of late-Elizabethan Devon's intelligence network. Nevertheless, further avenues of enquiry will inevitably need to be pursued in

future work in order to achieve a fuller understanding of the political and societal culture of Devon during the Armada years.

For example, one important topic that has not been discussed in very great detail in this study is religion. In particular, it would be very useful to establish precisely the religious perspectives of the Earl of Bath and thereby better understand his personality. At the start of the seventeenth-century Bath sought assistance from the Bishop of Exeter in quelling the Puritanical tendencies of certain townfolk in Barnstaple. It might therefore be supposed that he was a strong supporter of the Elizabethan Settlement and that the religious conservatism displayed by his father-in-law, the second Earl of Bedford, and other members of the Russell family had not had much influence on him. However, it is equally feasible that in tackling the issue of religious conservatism Bath was merely adopting a pragmatic approach and would have conformed to Puritanism or indeed Catholicism should circumstances have demanded such outward expressions of adherence. Certainly if his uncle, Sir Thomas Kitson, is to be believed Bath had no qualms in marrying into the Catholic Cornwallis family in 1577. Successfully ascertaining Bath's religious beliefs would therefore help to verify an important issue surrounding the Earl's character and career. Was he a loyal servant of Queen Elizabeth I and an ardent supporter of the Elizabethan Settlement? Or, was he a shrewd political tactician content to alter his religious beliefs in concordance with the prevailing political winds at the centre of affairs in order to preserve the power and prestige he enjoyed as lord lieutenant of Devon?

Whereas the issue of religion has received some attention in this thesis, the matter of literacy has, unavoidably, not featured at all. This omission is a result of a lack of available evidence coupled with the fact that an examination

of literacy rates in late-Elizabethan Devon was beyond the purview of this study. Nevertheless, looking at levels of literacy in the county during the 1590s would enrich some of the findings that have been presented in this thesis. For instance, the fact that the constables of the hundreds were required to make copies of the precepts that they received from Devon's lieutenancy and then circulate those copies to the petty-constables of the parishes implies that they were able to read and write at a fairly advanced level. However, what is less certain is what level of literacy existed among Devon's petty-constables. Did they personally read out loud the copied precepts that they received from the constable of their hundred to their parish church congregation? Or, more likely, was their level of literacy such that they were forced to ask a member of the clergy to read the document from atop the pulpit on their behalf? Whatever the answer one thing is certain, the availability of reading material pervaded all social strata in late-Elizabethan England. It is therefore highly likely that literacy rates among the lower echelons of society improved significantly as a result.

In addition to the lack of evidence pertaining to religion and literacy, other limitations with the source material have been acknowledged where applicable. For example, the inherent difficulties of using postal endorsements have been discussed, the patchy content of receivers' accounts recognised and the Seymour Manuscripts' lack of clarity in relation to the locations of Devon's intra-county post-stages highlighted. Nevertheless, despite these shortcomings the documentary evidence utilised throughout this thesis has collectively enabled the first comprehensive survey of a county's official communication arrangements during the late-Elizabethan period. Indeed, it should be noted that but for the extant material in the Seymour Manuscripts, receivers' accounts, borough records, State Papers, Cecil Papers, Declared Accounts of the Master

of the Posts and other locally and centrally held manuscript collections an accurate reconstruction of Devon's communication infrastructure and practices would not have been possible. It therefore must be reiterated that by using Devon as a case study this thesis has exploited a rare opportunity to observe how the inhabitants of a frontline 'maritime' county rapidly communicated with central government officials at Whitehall and each other during the critical years that followed the Armada crisis of 1588.

Finally, looking to the future, it is appropriate to identify how the research undertaken in this thesis can be taken forward and developed. Because there exists such a large quantity of relevant primary material, Devon constitutes an ideal case study for excavating the operational mechanics of governance at the periphery of the Tudor state during the late-sixteenth-century. However, to develop further modern understandings of how local political networks functioned and expose the postal services that connected these networks to each other and the centre additional studies of other counties and regions need to be conducted. The approaches adopted in this thesis should therefore be regarded as a blueprint for analysis in other areas of the country. A particularly fruitful avenue of inquiry would be to compare and contrast the communication arrangements that were available to the inhabitants of Devon with those that were available in other frontline 'maritime' counties as well as less strategically vital 'inland' counties. The benefit of this would be twofold. First, it would address how typical the situation in Devon was in comparison to other tactically important locations. And second, it would confirm whether or not the circumstances of the late-Elizabethan period brought the inhabitants of strategically vital, yet peripheral, regions of the realm effectively closer to the centre than those who lived in less important, yet more geographically

proximate, areas. Investigating local political networks and postal connectivity during other time periods would also further enrich contemporary understanding of the nature of early modern political networks. While the war with Spain and the Nine Years' War in Ireland necessitated an increased level of interaction between central government and the inhabitants of Devon, during peacetime there was much less need for centrally based political actors to communicate with the county's population – a fact that is reflected by the temporary nature of the Tudor south-west's royal post-stage service. Thus, by looking at multiple regions during a period that encompassed both war and peace it would be possible to assess the extent to which different peripheral areas of early modern England were periodically brought 'closer' to the centre via more elaborate modes of postal services before becoming more 'distant' again once the political situation had been resolved. Thus, as well as making an important contribution to 'new' Tudor political history in its own right, the findings of this thesis are offered as a springboard for future academic research.

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