

## A HAMPSHIRE PLOT

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AMONG the domestic State Papers<sup>1</sup> of the reign of Queen Elizabeth are to be found twenty-four documents dealing with what is described as a "Mutenie and Rysinge," and in another place as a "conspiracy of certaine lewd felowes for fying y<sup>e</sup> Beacons," which, it was alleged, had been planned in the Meon Valley in the year 1586.

The grievance of the people was the scarcity of corn, which they attributed to the fact that the fields were sown with woad instead of wheat or barley; and the signal for the rising was to be the firing of the local beacons.

The preamble of the charge runs as follows:—

"The pretense of the conspirators was firste to have fired the Beacons by that meanes to have assembled the people together, whereby they might have weapons put into their hands. Then to have redressed the present dearth of corne and to have put down the sowynge of Oade. Also they purposed to have robbed divers gentlemen's houses in the Shire, and to have put downe Sir Richard Norton's houses, and so to have gone to Wynchester and lett the recusants owt of prison and then to have taken the Bishoppe owt of Wolsey, whom they would have slayne, with divers other priests and gentlemen, whom they found and thynk' meete to be putt downe."

The conspiracy was first discovered by two men, Thomas Cleverley and John Dipnall of Waltham, and eighteen men were arrested. One of these, Zacharie Mannsell, a weaver, of Hartley Mauditt, gave evidence against his friends.

Owing to fading ink, many of the papers are only partially legible; but enough can be deciphered to give an interesting glimpse of life in rural Hampshire in the days of good Queen Bess, two years before the coming of the Invincible Armada.

In June, 1586, Maunsell was brought before a magistrate and examined as follows:—

"The examina<sup>con</sup> of Zachary Mannsell of Hartley Mawdytt, Wever, app'hended and examined before Thomas Dabrigecort, Esquire, one of Her Mat<sup>s</sup> Justices of Peace w<sup>th</sup> in the County of South<sup>t</sup>, the thirteenth of June 1586.

Imprimis This examinat confesseth that ther was a certaine Mutenie and Rysinge p'tended uppon the scarcity of corne and

1. S. P. Domestic ref<sup>ce</sup>. S. P. 12, Vol. 191, papers 15, i-xv, and 20, i-ix.

other victuall, for redress thereof and especially for takinge away the Sowinge of Oade w<sup>ch</sup> they imputed the principall cause of the dearth of all kinde of victualls.

Item. he further saith that ther was a night appointed (viz.) the 6<sup>th</sup> of June y<sup>t</sup> the Beacons should have bin sett on fyre, and certeine of their companie were named and appointed for y<sup>t</sup> purpose, w<sup>ch</sup> was by y<sup>e</sup> watchinge of the beacons and God's good providence prevented.

Being demanded what they would have done if they had proceeded uppon Fiering of the Beacons, annswereth that they of the porer sort being gathered together by y<sup>t</sup> meanes, entended to releve themselves by takinge of victuall where they could gett it.

Being further demanded what Captaines or Leaders they made accompt of to ayde them in this acc<sup>con</sup>, Annswereth, none.

But this Exam. saith about three weekes past traveling to Guilford with cacsies<sup>1</sup> to one Bowyer, a clothier, betwene Hollyborne and Froile mett with a mann travelinge to London, whose name this Exam. knoweth not, who asked of the p'ces of corne and victualls in this country. This Exam. answered it was very deare for pooremen. Thother said it was in Dorsetshire dearer, viz. at v<sup>s</sup>, in Cornewall at vi<sup>s</sup>, and in Bristow at viii<sup>s</sup>, and gen'rally is hard and deare, that poore men could not contynue longe in this sort.

Item. This said traveler declared further that dyvers poormen had bin uppe in Cornwall and in other shyres Westwards."

To facilitate the examination of the prisoners, the Authorities drew up a set of questions, based on the above evidence of Zachary Mannsell, which the local magistrates were to put to them. These, with the replies of some of the conspirators, are recorded. The questions put to one Richard Noyse or Noisse and his replies are the most legible and are as follows:—

"Articles to be mynstered to Rich. Noyse.

(1) Whether were yo<sup>u</sup> Servant to M<sup>r</sup> Nicholas Titchbourne and how longe, and whether did yo<sup>u</sup> use to repaire to Church and to heare Service there, whilst yo<sup>u</sup> did serve M<sup>r</sup> Titchbourne, and whether have yo<sup>u</sup> done so since you left his service.

(2) When and by whome were yo<sup>u</sup> first acquainted or 'pryvie to the conspiracy or purpose to fire the beacons. And howe and by whome: By whome was it first devised, and for what end or purpose.

(3) Howe many and whome have yo<sup>u</sup> moved to ioyn with yo<sup>u</sup> herein, and when and where.

1. Probably teasles—the modern form is Keck or Kex, meaning any hollow-stemmed wayside weed.—See O.E.D., but Harrison in his *Elizabethan England* speaks of "Ashen Kexes."

(4) Whether did you report or say to any p'son that you would go to Wynchester and fetche yo<sup>r</sup> frendes out of Durance or prison, and specially M<sup>r</sup> Nicholas Titchbourne and his frendes or any wordes of like effecte. And when, where and to whome did you use any such speche and what was yo<sup>r</sup> inten<sup>con</sup> or purpose therein. And who were these frendes of M<sup>r</sup> Titchbourne. And whether did you knowe or have heard that any other of the conspirato<sup>rs</sup> have used any suche speches or had any such inten<sup>con</sup>.

(5) Whether did you say or report that you would take the Bisshope of Wynchester, or that you would have his head, or that you would pull hym out of his house or spoile his house or any wordes of like effecte. To whome did you use any suche speche. And where and upon what occasion.

(6) Whether did you or any of the said conspirato<sup>rs</sup> report or say that you would take suche other gentlemen and priestes, as yo<sup>r</sup> frendes for all thinke yt. And who be these frendes w<sup>ch</sup> you meant. And what gentlemen and priestes did you mean to have taken and for what causes and to what end.

(7) Whether did you say or report that you would make S<sup>r</sup> Richard Norton some p'te Amende for his Curtesie shewed to yo<sup>r</sup> frende, or that you would take hym or pull or beate downe his house or any wordes of like effecte. And who be those yo<sup>r</sup> frendes w<sup>ch</sup> you meant. And what occasion of offence or displeasure hath S<sup>r</sup> Richard Norton geven to you or any of them.

(8) What speciall cause of offence or quarrell have you or any of the other conspirato<sup>rs</sup> against the Bisshoppé of Wynchester or any of the gentlemen or priestes of that Countrey and against whome.

(9) How often w<sup>thin</sup> this quarter of a yere have you had any communicac<sup>on</sup> or talke w<sup>th</sup> the said M<sup>r</sup> Titchbourne or his wife, and of what matters talked you. And what was the effecte of yo<sup>r</sup> talke.

(10) Whether did you or any other to yo<sup>r</sup> knowledge make them or other of theme pryvie w<sup>th</sup> this purpose of firing the Beacons or raising the people. And what said they to the same.

(11) Whether did you say to any P'son that you doubted not but w<sup>thin</sup> another moneth to have masse againe in Englande. And to whom did you say it. And what caused you so to say. And whether did you purpose or intende to compasse the same by this raisinge of the people.

(12) Whether did you heare any P'son report or say that the Frenchmen were upon the Coastes. And that their Shippes were seene at Portsmouth. And of whome did you heare any

suche Report or Speche. And whether did yo<sup>u</sup> heare any P'son wyshe that they were comen indeed for that wee should have some stirre and that then there would be some good done for pooremen. And whom did yo<sup>u</sup> heare to wyshe yt. And what was the meanyng and intente thereof. And what stirre was hoped or expected. And what was the good w<sup>ch</sup> was to grow thereby.

(13) Whether did yo<sup>u</sup> or any other to yo<sup>r</sup> knowledge acquaynt or make pryvie M<sup>r</sup> George Loukere of this matter and whether doe yo<sup>u</sup> knowe or have heard that he was made p<sup>'</sup>vie of the same. And when, howe, and by whome. And what did he say touchinge the same.

(14) Whether did yo<sup>u</sup> say to any P'son that yo<sup>u</sup> would not for xx<sup>li</sup> but that the matter should goe forwarde. And to whome did yo<sup>u</sup> say so, or to like effect. And what moved yo<sup>u</sup> so to say. And what benefite or proffert did yo<sup>u</sup> expect or hope for thereby. And howe and by what meanes."

The report of the "ministering of these articles" is as follows :  
 "The Examina<sup>con</sup> of the said Richard Noisse to the p<sup>'</sup>ticular articles to him mynistered.

(1) To the Firste he saithe that he was Serv<sup>'</sup>nt w<sup>th</sup> Nicholas Titchbourne and served him aboute the space of six yeres and lefte his service aboute three yeres since when Titchbourne was comitted to prison. And in the tyme that he served him and since he lefte his service he hathe repaired to the Churche Yarde and Divine Service and received the Comunion.

(2) To the Seconde he saithe that he was firste made privie to the Conspiracie of fieringe the Beacons by Zacharie Mannsell, and that thinten<sup>con</sup> thereof was for wante of Corne and to avoide the sowinge of Woade.

(3) To the thirde he saithe that he toulde his brother Valentyne Noisse and Robert Hassall, a Butcher, of their purpose and moved them therein, who were content to Joyne w<sup>th</sup> them so that they mighte have corne.

(4) To the Fourthe he saithe that he did not reporte to his knowledge that he would goe to Wynchester and fetche any frende out of prison, or the said Nicholas Titchbourne nor any wordes to suche effecte, neyther did this examynate here any other man use any speche or have any suche inten<sup>con</sup>.

(5) To the Fivethe he saithe that he did never say that he would take the Bisshopp of Wynchester, pull him out of his house or spoile his house.

(6) To the Sixthe he saithe that he did never reporte as in this article is mencioned.

(7) To the Seaventhe he made no suche reporte as in the article is mencioned neyther intended he to do the said Sr Richard Norton any Injurie or Hurte.

(8) To the viij<sup>th</sup> he saithe he had no cause or quarrall againste the said Bisshopp of Wynchester or any other gentlemen or prieste of that Contrie.

(9) To the ix<sup>th</sup> he saithe that on Wensday in Whitsonweeke he carried certein wheate to Wynchester to Mr Titchbourne's house and afterwarde wente to the prison to tell Titchbourne that he had carried the wheate to his house, and other speches he had not savinge he shewed him that this Ex<sup>at</sup> had received iiij<sup>s</sup> for him of Almes of Will<sup>m</sup>. Feilder, Robert Kocke, and one Hayes.

(10) To the x<sup>th</sup> he made not Titchbourne privie to the fieringe of the Beacons.

(11) To the xi<sup>th</sup> he did not say to any P<sup>'</sup>son that he doubted not but wi<sup>th</sup>in a monethe to have masse againe nor any other speches to that effecte.

(12) To the xii<sup>th</sup> he saithe that Michael Hayward at an alehouse in Farrington said to this Ex<sup>at</sup> and one Robert Hassall, a butcher, that a greate many of Frenche Shippes were sene nere to Porchmowthe and said if they were come, there woulde be some good doinge for poore men, but what his meaninge was therein this Examynate knowethe not.

(13) To the xiiij<sup>th</sup> he saithe that this Ex<sup>at</sup> did never acquainte Mr George Lowkenor w<sup>th</sup> this matter neyther did any other make him privie to the same to his knowledge.

(14) To the Fourtenthe he confessethe that he said he woulde not for xx<sup>li</sup> but that the matter shoulde goe forwarde and he spake this wordes to the said Michaell and Mannsell because the said Michaell and Mannsell were aboute to fire away. And this Ex<sup>at</sup> tould them that he had made one of his beste frendes acquainted w<sup>th</sup> the matter, meaninge his father-in-Lawe. And he doubted of any effecte that he should have had thereby savinge that he should have stayed the said Michaell and Mannsell so that the matter should not be blone back upon him."<sup>1</sup>

The complete list of the conspirators and what parts in the plot they were to take, together with marginal notes as to the disposal of them is as follows :—

1. The reading of the last few lines is somewhat doubtful.

Not yet apprehended	- Will <sup>m</sup> Michell of Hartlye	} who were appoynted to fire Bernett Beacons.
Sent to the Gaole	- Will <sup>m</sup> Mawditt, Taylor	
Sent to the Gaole	- Will <sup>m</sup> Musgrave of Selborne, Taylor	
Sent to the Gaole	- Will <sup>m</sup> Hollowaie of South Warnborowe, husband- man.	
Brought to London	- Rich <sup>d</sup> Noyse of Harlie Mawditt, husbandman. Who was appoynted to fire Heydowne Beacons.	
Sent to the Gaole	- Valentyne Noyse of Wickham, husbandman, ap- poynted to fire Exon Beacons.	
Brought to London	- Rob <sup>t</sup> Hassell of Farrington, butcher.	
Brought to London	- Rich <sup>d</sup> Passenger of Selborne, ffencer.	
Sent to the Gaole	- Rob <sup>t</sup> Wolfe of Farington, mason.	
Sent to the Gaole	- Will <sup>m</sup> Arthur of Alton, weaver.	
Brought to London	- Henrie Lokier, of Waybedinge in Sussex, Taylor, who was appoynted to fire St Rooke Hill, in Sussex.	
Not yet apprehended	- Will <sup>m</sup> Maye of Worleham, Tanner.	
Verie sicke	- W <sup>m</sup> Faythful, of Faringtonne, smith.	
Sent to the Gaole	- Geoffrey Garie of Alton, weaver.	
Sent to the Gaole	- Will <sup>m</sup> Newman of Alton, taylor.	
Not yet apprehended	- Rob <sup>t</sup> Deacon of Worlham, tanner, appointed to carie victualls to the cause with his cart.	
Sent to the Gaole	- Will <sup>m</sup> Stevens of Farrington, Taylor.	
Sent to the Gaole	- George Burbidge, gentleman.	
Bayled	- Jherome Passenger, the sonn of Richard Passenger, bayled.	
Sent to Mr fisher	- Rob <sup>t</sup> Elkyns, carpenter, sent to Maister Fisher to be further examied and then to be remytted to the Gaole.	
Brought to London	- Zacharie Mansell of Hartlie Mawditt, weaver, appointed to fire Crondall Beacon.	
Brought to London	- Michaell Hayward of Shete, husbandman, appointed to fire Basswaye Beacon.	
Sent to the Gaole	- Charles Robert, servant sometymes to Mr Ben. Tychborne.	

The declaration of certayn men touchinge certayne of these conspirators, vidt.

These twoe first found out the conspiracie	{	The declaration of Thomas Cleverley of Walthame, E <sup>p</sup> i Constable
		„ „ „ John Dipnall of Waltham.
	The declaration of John Bright of Haylinge towch- inge Michaell Hayward.	
		The declaration of Rob <sup>t</sup> Averie of Shete, towchinge Michaell Hayward, Rob <sup>t</sup> Hassell and others.

This is all we learn for certain of this plot, and one gets the impression that it was not a very serious affair. The conspirators are all simple folk, except Mr. George Burbidge, and he did not act as leader, for Manssell stated that they had none; and they had no firearms, except that one of them was reputed to have offered to supply some "gallivers." The Authorities appear to have suspected, as was usual in those days, a Popish Plot; but of

this there was no evidence at all, and moreover the grievance about the excessive sowing of woad was not without foundation, for in October 1585, the previous year, there had been a proclamation against it, namely, "That no maner of Person or Persons shal breake up . . . any maner of grounde . . . for the purpose to sowe or plant woade in." That this applied to Hampshire we know, because in 1586 it is reported that there was "unlawfull assembly at Romsey to intercept one Cooper attempting to sow oade in the comon feilds there contrary to Her Majtes proclamation prohibiting the same." It was evidently more profitable for the farmers to grow woad for dye than corn, and the scarcity of corn was widespread, for reports are recorded from different counties giving the actual quantity available.

What the fate of the prisoners was we do not know, but we may hope that these simple Hampshire men are referred to in a Privy Council order dated April 1587 that "certain prisoners remaining in the Marshallsea for the matter of fying of the Beacons, shall be discharged and dismissed upon their bonds for their good behaviour."