

# DEFOE DANIEL

TOUR THROUGH THE  
EASTERN COUNTIES OF  
ENGLAND, 1722

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# Daniel Defoe

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### INTRODUCTION

Defoe's "particular and diverting account of whatever is curious and worth observation" in his native country, told in a series of letters, was founded upon seventeen separate tours in the counties, and three larger tours through the whole country. He said he had "viewed the north part of England and the south part of Scotland five several times over," and he thought it worth while to note what he saw, because, "the fate of things gives a new face to things; produces changes in low life, and innumerable incidents; plants and supplants families; raises and sinks towns; removes manufactures and trade; great towns decay and small towns rise; new towns, new palaces, and new seats are built every day; great rivers and good harbours dry up, and grow useless; again, new ports are opened; brooks are made rivers; small rivers navigable pools, and harbours are made where there were none before, and the like." We are endeavouring, by little books published from time to time in this "National Library," to secure some record of the changes in our land and in our manners

as a people, and of what was worth record in his day we can wish for no better reporter than Defoe.

Here, therefore, is Defoe's first letter, which describes a Tour through the Eastern Counties as they were in 1722. It opens his first volume, published in 1724, which was entitled, "A Tour through the whole Island of Great Britain, Divided into Circuits or Journies. Giving a Particular and Diverting Account of whatever is Curious and worth Observation, viz., I. A Description of the Principal Cities and Towns, their Situation, Magnitude, Government, and Commerce. II. The Customs, Manners, Speech, as also the Exercises, Diversions, and Employment of the People. III. The Produce and Improvement of the Lands, the Trade and Manufactures. IV. The Sea Ports and Fortifications, the Course of Rivers, and the Inland Navigation. V. The Public Edifices, Seats and Palaces of the Nobility and Gentry. With Useful Observations upon the Whole. Particularly fitted for the Reading of such as Desire to Travel over the Island. By a Gentleman." The Second Volume of the Tour was published in June, 1725; and the Third Volume, giving a Tour through Scotland with a Map of Scotland by Mr. Moll, followed in August, 1726, completing the record of what Defoe called "a tedious and very expensive five years' Travel." However tedious the travel may have been, Defoe's account of it is anything but tedious reading.

The change of times is in this letter vividly illustrated in this volume by Defoe's account of life as he found it in the undrained

Essex marshes. Life in them was so unhealthy that the land was cheap, men thus were tempted to take fevers for grazing and corn-growing. They became fairly acclimatised, but when they brought their wives in fresh and healthy from the uplands the women sickened and perished so fast, that it was common to find a man with his sixth or eighth wife, and Defoe was told of an old farmer who was living with his twenty-fifth wife, and had a son about thirty-five years old, who had been married to about fourteen wives. Custom had even dulled the sense of this horrible state of things until the frequent change of wives became a local joke.

We have also a reminder in this volume of the traces and fresh memories of Civil War in the account of the Siege of Colchester, which is a bit of realisation such as no man could give better than Defoe. We may note also the fulness of detail in his account of Ipswich, a town that he first knew as a child of seven. He tells how it was once noted for strong collier vessels built there, he maintains its honour and explains its decay, while he makes various suggestions for the restoration of prosperity, even to the hint that Ipswich would be a healthy and pleasant place for persons to retire to who would live well upon slender means. He writes, indeed, of Ipswich like a loyal townsman who had lived there all his life.

At Bury St. Edmunds Defoe tells us how in a pathway between two churches a barrister of good family attempted to assassinate his brother-in-law whom he had invited with his wife

and children to supper. On excuse of visiting a neighbour he led him to the ambush of a hired assassin. They left their victim for dead, horribly mangled on the head and face and body with a hedgebill. He lived to bring them to justice, and was living still when Defoe wrote. But the assassins had been condemned to death “on the statute for defacing and dismembering, called the Coventry Act.” This Tour also recalls the days when Bury was a place of fashionable holiday resort. Defoe meditates upon the decline and fall of Dunwich, tells of the coming and going of the swallows from our east coast, and of innumerable swallows whom he saw one day waiting for a favourable wind on the roofs of the church and houses at Southwold. We read of the coming up to London of the Norfolk turkeys on foot, in droves of from three hundred to a thousand, and so many droves that by one route alone, and that not the most crowded – over Stratford Bridge – a hundred and forty thousand birds travelled to London between August and October.

In Norwich, Defoe was less interested than in Ipswich; but of Yarmouth his account is full, and the frequency of wrecks on the east coast, especially about Cromer Bay, which seamen called the Devil’s Throat, is illustrated by the fact that in all the way from Winterton towards Cromer that “the farmers and country people had scarce a barn, or a shed, or a stable, nay not the pales of their yards and gardens, not a hog sty, but what was built of old planks, beams, wales, and timbers, etc., the wrecks of ships, and ruins of mariners’ and merchants’ fortunes.”

Defoe saw the races at Newmarket, where he was “sick of the jockeying part.” He went also to Bury Fair, of which he gives a full description, and at Cambridge he paid honour to the University.

There was another Tour told in letters so near to Defoe’s in date and form that the first or second volume of one work is often sold with the second or first volume of the other. The book not by Defoe was entitled “A Journey through England in Familiar Letters from a Gentleman” here to his friend abroad, in two vols., 1722, with a third volume on Scotland in 1726. All editions published after Defoe’s death in 1731 have matter added by others. The addition of new matter began with the novelist Samuel Richardson in 1732.

Some time afterwards there were changes announced as “by a gentleman of eminence in the literary world.”

*H. M.*

I began my travels where I purpose to end them, viz., at the City of London, and therefore my account of the city itself will come last, that is to say, at the latter end of my southern progress; and as in the course of this journey I shall have many occasions to call it a circuit, if not a circle, so I chose to give it the title of circuits in the plural, because I do not pretend to have travelled it all in one journey, but in many, and some of them many times over; the better to inform myself of everything I could find worth taking notice of.

I hope it will appear that I am not the less, but the more

capable of giving a full account of things, by how much the more deliberation I have taken in the view of them, and by how much the oftener I have had opportunity to see them.

I set out the 3rd of April, 1722, going first eastward, and took what I think I may very honestly call a circuit in the very letter of it; for I went down by the coast of the Thames through the Marshes or Hundreds on the south side of the county of Essex, till I came to Malden, Colchester, and Harwich, thence continuing on the coast of Suffolk to Yarmouth; thence round by the edge of the sea, on the north and west side of Norfolk, to Lynn, Wisbech, and the Wash; thence back again, on the north side of Suffolk and Essex, to the west, ending it in Middlesex, near the place where I began it, reserving the middle or centre of the several counties to some little excursions, which I made by themselves.

Passing Bow Bridge, where the county of Essex begins, the first observation I made was, that all the villages which may be called the neighbourhood of the city of London on this, as well as on the other sides thereof, which I shall speak to in their order; I say, all those villages are increased in buildings to a strange degree, within the compass of about twenty or thirty years past at the most.

The village of Stratford, the first in this county from London, is not only increased, but, I believe, more than doubled in that time; every vacancy filled up with new houses, and two little towns or hamlets, as they may be called, on the forest side of the town entirely new, namely Maryland Point and the Gravel Pits,

one facing the road to Woodford and Epping, and the other facing the road to Ilford; and as for the hither part, it is almost joined to Bow, in spite of rivers, canals, marshy grounds, &c. Nor is this increase of building the case only in this and all the other villages round London; but the increase of the value and rent of the houses formerly standing has, in that compass of years above-mentioned, advanced to a very great degree, and I may venture to say at least the fifth part; some think a third part, above what they were before.

This is indeed most visible, speaking of Stratford in Essex; but it is the same thing in proportion in other villages adjacent, especially on the forest side; as at Low Leyton, Leytonstone, Walthamstow, Woodford, Wanstead, and the towns of West Ham, Plaistow, Upton, etc. In all which places, or near them (as the inhabitants say), above a thousand new foundations have been erected, besides old houses repaired, all since the Revolution; and this is not to be forgotten too, that this increase is, generally speaking, of handsome, large houses, from £20 a year to £60, very few under £20 a year; being chiefly for the habitations of the richest citizens, such as either are able to keep two houses, one in the country and one in the city; or for such citizens as being rich, and having left off trade, live altogether in these neighbouring villages, for the pleasure and health of the latter part of their days.

The truth of this may at least appear, in that they tell me there are no less than two hundred coaches kept by the inhabitants within the circumference of these few villages named above,

besides such as are kept by accidental lodgers.

This increase of the inhabitants, and the cause of it, I shall enlarge upon when I come to speak of the like in the counties of Middlesex, Surrey, &c, where it is the same, only in a much greater degree. But this I must take notice of here, that this increase causes those villages to be much pleasanter and more sociable than formerly, for now people go to them, not for retirement into the country, but for good company; of which, that I may speak to the ladies as well as other authors do, there are in these villages, nay, in all, three or four excepted, excellent conversation, and a great deal of it, and that without the mixture of assemblies, gaming-houses, and public foundations of vice and debauchery; and particularly I find none of those incentives kept up on this side the country.

Mr. Camden, and his learned continuator, Bishop Gibson, have ransacked this country for its antiquities, and have left little unsearched; and as it is not my present design to say much of what has been said already, I shall touch very lightly where two such excellent antiquaries have gone before me; except it be to add what may have been since discovered, which as to these parts is only this: That there seems to be lately found out in the bottom of the Marshes (generally called Hackney Marsh, and beginning near about the place now called the Wick, between Old Ford and the said Wick), the remains of a great stone causeway, which, as it is supposed, was the highway, or great road from London into Essex, and the same which goes now over the great bridge

between Bow and Stratford.

That the great road lay this way, and that the great causeway landed again just over the river, where now the Temple Mills stand, and passed by Sir Thomas Hicke's house at Ruckolls, all this is not doubted; and that it was one of those famous highways made by the Romans there is undoubted proof, by the several marks of Roman work, and by Roman coins and other antiquities found there, some of which are said to be deposited in the hands of the Rev. Mr. Strype, vicar of the parish of Low Leyton.

From hence the great road passed up to Leytonstone, a place by some known now as much by the sign of the "Green Man," formerly a lodge upon the edge of the forest; and crossing by Wanstead House, formerly the dwelling of Sir Josiah Child, now of his son the Lord Castlemain (of which hereafter), went over the same river which we now pass at Ilford; and passing that part of the great forest which we now call Hainault Forest, came into that which is now the great road, a little on this side the Whalebone, a place on the road so called because the rib-bone of a great whale, which was taken in the River Thames the same year that Oliver Cromwell died, 1658, was fixed there for a monument of that monstrous creature, it being at first about eight-and-twenty feet long.

According to my first intention of effectually viewing the sea-coast of these three counties, I went from Stratford to Barking, a large market-town, but chiefly inhabited by fishermen, whose smacks ride in the Thames, at the mouth of their river, from

whence their fish is sent up to London to the market at Billingsgate by small boats, of which I shall speak by itself in my description of London.

One thing I cannot omit in the mention of these Barking fisher-smacks, viz., that one of those fishermen, a very substantial and experienced man, convinced me that all the pretences to bringing fish alive to London market from the North Seas, and other remote places on the coast of Great Britain, by the new-built sloops called fish-pools, have not been able to do anything but what their fishing-smacks are able on the same occasion to perform. These fishing-smacks are very useful vessels to the public upon many occasions; as particularly, in time of war they are used as press-smacks, running to all the northern and western coasts to pick up seamen to man the navy, when any expedition is at hand that requires a sudden equipment; at other times, being excellent sailors, they are tenders to particular men of war; and on an expedition they have been made use of as machines for the blowing up of fortified ports and havens; as at Calais, St. Malo, and other places.

This parish of Barking is very large, and by the improvement of lands taken in out of the Thames, and out of the river which runs by the town, the tithes, as the townsmen assured me, are worth above £600 per annum, including, small tithes. *Note.* – This parish has two or three chapels of ease, viz., one at Ilford, and one on the side of Hainault Forest, called New Chapel.

Sir Thomas Fanshaw, of an ancient Roman Catholic family,

has a very good estate in this parish. A little beyond the town, on the road to Dagenham, stood a great house, ancient, and now almost fallen down, where tradition says the Gunpowder Treason Plot was at first contrived, and that all the first consultations about it were held there.

This side of the county is rather rich in land than in inhabitants, occasioned chiefly by the unhealthiness of the air; for these low marsh grounds, which, with all the south side of the county, have been saved out of the River Thames, and out of the sea, where the river is wide enough to be called so, begin here, or rather begin at West Ham, by Stratford, and continue to extend themselves, from hence eastward, growing wider and wider till we come beyond Tilbury, when the flat country lies six, seven, or eight miles broad, and is justly said to be both unhealthy and unpleasant.

However, the lands are rich, and, as is observable, it is very good farming in the marshes, because the landlords let good pennyworths, for it being a place where everybody cannot live, those that venture it will have encouragement and indeed it is but reasonable they should.

Several little observations I made in this part of the county of Essex.

1. We saw, passing from Barking to Dagenham, the famous breach, made by an inundation of the Thames, which was so great as that it laid near 5,000 acres of land under water, but which after near ten years lying under water, and being several times

blown up, has been at last effectually stopped by the application of Captain Perry, the gentleman who, for several years, had been employed in the Czar of Muscovy's works, at Veronitza, on the River Don. This breach appeared now effectually made up, and they assured us that the new work, where the breach was, is by much esteemed the strongest of all the sea walls in that level.

2. It was observable that great part of the lands in these levels, especially those on this side East Tilbury, are held by the farmers, cow-keepers, and grazing butchers who live in and near London, and that they are generally stocked (all the winter half year) with large fat sheep, viz., Lincolnshire and Leicestershire wethers, which they buy in Smithfield in September and October, when the Lincolnshire and Leicestershire graziers sell off their stock, and are kept here till Christmas, or Candlemas, or thereabouts; and though they are not made at all fatter here than they were when bought in, yet the farmer or butcher finds very good advantage in it, by the difference of the price of mutton between Michaelmas, when it is cheapest, and Candlemas, when it is dearest; this is what the butchers value themselves upon, when they tell us at the market that it is right marsh-mutton.

3. In the bottom of these Marshes, and close to the edge of the river, stands the strong fortress of Tilbury, called Tilbury Fort, which may justly be looked upon as the key of the River Thames, and consequently the key of the City of London. It is a regular fortification. The design of it was a pentagon, but the water bastion, as it would have been called, was never built.

The plan was laid out by Sir Martin Beckman, chief engineer to King Charles II., who also designed the works at Sheerness. The esplanade of the fort is very large, and the bastions the largest of any in England, the foundation is laid so deep, and piles under that, driven down two an end of one another, so far, till they were assured they were below the channel of the river, and that the piles, which were shed with iron, entered into the solid chalk rock adjoining to, or reaching from, the chalk hills on the other side. These bastions settled considerably at first, as did also part of the curtain, the great quantity of earth that was brought to fill them up, necessarily, requiring to be made solid by time; but they are now firm as the rocks of chalk which they came from, and the filling up one of these bastions, as I have been told by good hands, cost the Government £6,000, being filled with chalk rubbish fetched from the chalk pits at Northfleet, just above Gravesend.

The work to the land side is complete; the bastions are faced with brick. There is a double ditch, or moat, the innermost part of which is 180 feet broad; there is a good counterscarp, and a covered way marked out with ravelins and tenailles, but they are not raised a second time after their first settling.

On the land side there are also two small redoubts of brick, but of very little strength, for the chief strength of this fort on the land side consists in this, that they are able to lay the whole level under water, and so to make it impossible for an enemy to make any approaches to the fort that way.

On the side next the river there is a very strong curtain, with a noble gate called the Water Gate in the middle, and the ditch is palisadoed. At the place where the water bastion was designed to be built, and which by the plan should run wholly out into the river, so to flank the two curtains of each side; I say, in the place where it should have been, stands a high tower, which they tell us was built in Queen Elizabeth's time, and was called the Block House; the side next the water is vacant.

Before this curtain, above and below the said vacancy, is a platform in the place of a counterscarp, on which are planted 106 pieces of cannon, generally all of them carrying from twenty-four to forty-six pound ball; a battery so terrible as well imports the consequence of that place; besides which, there are smaller pieces planted between, and the bastions and curtain also are planted with guns; so that they must be bold fellows who will venture in the biggest ships the world has heard of to pass such a battery, if the men appointed to serve the guns do their duty like stout fellows, as becomes them.

The present government of this important place is under the prudent administration of the Right Honourable the Lord Newbrugh.

From hence there is nothing for many miles together remarkable but a continued level of unhealthy marshes, called the Three Hundreds, till we come before Leigh, and to the mouth of the River Chelmer, and Blackwater. These rivers united make a large firth, or inlet of the sea, which by Mr. Camden is called

*Idumanum Fluvium*; but by our fishermen and seamen, who use it as a port, it is called Malden Water.

In this inlet of the sea is Osey, or Osyth Island, commonly called Oosy Island, so well known by our London men of pleasure for the infinite number of wild fowl, that is to say, duck, mallard, teal, and widgeon, of which there are such vast flights, that they tell us the island, namely the creek, seems covered with them at certain times of the year, and they go from London on purpose for the pleasure of shooting; and, indeed, often come home very well laden with game. But it must be remembered too that those gentlemen who are such lovers of the sport, and go so far for it, often return with an Essex ague on their backs, which they find a heavier load than the fowls they have shot.

It is on this shore, and near this creek, that the greatest quantity of fresh fish is caught which supplies not this country only, but London markets also. On the shore, beginning a little below Candy Island, or rather below Leigh Road, there lies a great shoal or sand called the Black Tail, which runs out near three leagues into the sea due east; at the end of it stands a pole or mast, set up by the Trinity House men of London, whose business is to lay buoys and set up sea marks for the direction of the sailors; this is called Shoe Beacon, from the point of land where this sand begins, which is called Shoeburyness, and that from the town of Shoebury, which stands by it. From this sand, and on the edge of Shoebury, before it, or south west of it, all along, to the mouth of Colchester water, the shore is full of shoals and sands, with

some deep channels between; all which are so full of fish, that not only the Barking fishing-smacks come hither to fish, but the whole shore is full of small fisher-boats in very great numbers, belonging to the villages and towns on the coast, who come in every tide with what they take; and selling the smaller fish in the country, send the best and largest away upon horses, which go night and day to London market.

*N.B.*— I am the more particular in my remarks on this place, because in the course of my travels the reader will meet with the like in almost every place of note through the whole island, where it will be seen how this whole kingdom, as well the people as the land, and even the sea, in every part of it, are employed to furnish something, and I may add, the best of everything, to supply the City of London with provisions; I mean by provisions, corn, flesh, fish, butter, cheese, salt, fuel, timber, etc., and clothes also; with everything necessary for building, and furniture for their own use or for trade; of all which in their order.

On this shore also are taken the best and nicest, though not the largest, oysters in England; the spot from whence they have their common appellation is a little bank called Woelfleet, scarce to be called an island, in the mouth of the River Crouch, now called Crooksea Water; but the chief place where the said oysters are now had is from Wyvenhoe and the shores adjacent, whither they are brought by the fishermen, who take them at the mouth of that they call Colchester water and about the sand they call the Spits, and carry them up to Wyvenhoe, where they are laid

in beds or pits on the shore to feed, as they call it; and then being barrell'd up and carried to Colchester, which is but three miles off, they are sent to London by land, and are from thence called Colchester oysters.

The chief sort of other fish which they carry from this part of the shore to London are soles, which they take sometimes exceeding large, and yield a very good price at London market. Also sometimes middling turbot, with whiting, codling and large flounders; the small fish, as above, they sell in the country.

In the several creeks and openings, as above, on this shore there are also other islands, but of no particular note, except Mersey, which lies in the middle of the two openings between Malden Water and Colchester Water; being of the most difficult access, so that it is thought a thousand men well provided might keep possession of it against a great force, whether by land or sea. On this account, and because if possessed by an enemy it would shut up all the navigation and fishery on that side, the Government formerly built a fort on the south-east point of it; and generally in case of Dutch war, there is a strong body of troops kept there to defend it.

At this place may be said to end what we call the Hundreds of Essex – that is to say, the three Hundreds or divisions which include the marshy country, viz., Barnstable Hundred, Rochford Hundred, and Dengy Hundred.

I have one remark more before I leave this damp part of the world, and which I cannot omit on the women's account, namely,

that I took notice of a strange decay of the sex here; insomuch that all along this country it was very frequent to meet with men that had had from five or six to fourteen or fifteen wives; nay, and some more. And I was informed that in the marshes on the other side of the river over against Candy Island there was a farmer who was then living with the five-and-twentieth wife, and that his son, who was but about thirty-five years old, had already had about fourteen. Indeed, this part of the story I only had by report, though from good hands too; but the other is well known and easy to be inquired into about Fobbing, Curringham, Thundersly, Benfleet, Prittlewell, Wakering, Great Stambridge, Cricksea, Burnham, Dengy, and other towns of the like situation. The reason, as a merry fellow told me, who said he had had about a dozen and a half of wives (though I found afterwards he fibbed a little) was this: That they being bred in the marshes themselves and seasoned to the place, did pretty well with it; but that they always went up into the hilly country, or, to speak their own language, into the uplands for a wife. That when they took the young lasses out of the wholesome and fresh air they were healthy, fresh, and clear, and well; but when they came out of their native air into the marshes among the fogs and damps, there they presently changed their complexion, got an ague or two, and seldom held it above half a year, or a year at most; "And then," said he, "we go to the uplands again and fetch another;" so that marrying of wives was reckoned a kind of good farm to them. It is true the fellow told this in a kind of drollery and

mirth; but the fact, for all that, is certainly true; and that they have abundance of wives by that very means. Nor is it less true that the inhabitants in these places do not hold it out, as in other countries, and as first you seldom meet with very ancient people among the poor, as in other places we do, so, take it one with another, not one-half of the inhabitants are natives of the place; but such as from other countries or in other parts of this country settle here for the advantage of good farms; for which I appeal to any impartial inquiry, having myself examined into it critically in several places.

From the marshes and low grounds being not able to travel without many windings and indentures by reason of the creeks and waters, I came up to the town of Malden, a noted market town situate at the conflux or joining of two principal rivers in this county, the Chelm or Chelmer, and the Blackwater, and where they enter into the sea. The channel, as I have noted, is called by the sailors Malden Water, and is navigable up to the town, where by that means is a great trade for carrying corn by water to London; the county of Essex being (especially on all that side) a great corn county.

When I have said this I think I have done Malden justice, and said all of it that there is to be said, unless I should run into the old story of its antiquity, and tell you it was a Roman colony in the time of Vespasian, and that it was called Camolodunum. How the Britons, under Queen Boadicea, in revenge for the Romans' ill-usage of her – for indeed they used her majesty ill – they

stripped her naked and whipped her publicly through their streets for some affront she had given them. I say how for this she raised the Britons round the country, overpowered, and cut in pieces the Tenth Legion, killed above eighty thousand Romans, and destroyed the colony; but was afterwards overthrown in a great battle, and sixty thousand Britons slain. I say, unless I should enter into this story, I have nothing more to say of Malden, and, as for that story, it is so fully related by Mr. Camden in his history of the Romans in Britain at the beginning of his "Britannia," that I need only refer the reader to it, and go on with my journey.

Being obliged to come thus far into the uplands, as above, I made it my road to pass through Witham, a pleasant, well-situated market town, in which, and in its neighbourhood, there are as many gentlemen of good fortunes and families as I believe can be met with in so narrow a compass in any of the three counties of which I make this circuit.

In the town of Witham dwells the Lord Pasely, oldest son of the Earl of Abercorn of Ireland (a branch of the noble family of Hamilton, in Scotland). His lordship has a small, but a neat, well-built new house, and is finishing his gardens in such a manner as few in that part of England will exceed them.

Nearer Chelmsford, hard by Boreham, lives the Lord Viscount Barrington, who, though not born to the title, or estate, or name which he now possesses, had the honour to be twice made heir to the estates of gentlemen not at all related to him, at least, one of them, as is very much to his honour, mentioned in his patent of

creation. His name was Shute, his father a linendraper in London, and served sheriff of the said city in very troublesome times. He changed the name of Shute for that of Barrington by an Act of Parliament obtained for that purpose, and had the dignity of a baron of the kingdom conferred on him by the favour of King George. His lordship is a Dissenter, and seems to love retirement. He was a member of Parliament for the town of Berwick-upon-Tweed.

On the other side of Witham, at Fauburn, an ancient mansion house, built by the Romans, lives Mr. Bullock, whose father married the daughter of that eminent citizen, Sir Josiah Child, of Wanstead, by whom she had three sons; the eldest enjoys the estate, which is considerable.

It is observable, that in this part of the country there are several very considerable estates, purchased and now enjoyed by citizens of London, merchants, and tradesmen, as Mr. Western, an iron merchant, near Kelendon; Mr. Cresnor, a wholesale grocer, who was, a little before he died, named for sheriff at Earl's Coln; Mr. Olemus, a merchant at Braintree; Mr. Westcomb, near Malden; Sir Thomas Webster at Cophall, near Waltham; and several others.

I mention this to observe how the present increase of wealth in the City of London spreads itself into the country, and plants families and fortunes, who in another age will equal the families of the ancient gentry, who perhaps were brought out. I shall take notice of this in a general head, and when I have run through

all the counties, collect a list of the families of citizens and tradesmen thus established in the several counties, especially round London.

The product of all this part of the country is corn, as that of the marshy feeding grounds mentioned above is grass, where their chief business is breeding of calves, which I need not say are the best and fattest, and the largest veal in England, if not in the world; and, as an instance, I ate part of a veal or calf, fed by the late Sir Josiah Child at Wanstead, the loin of which weighed above thirty pounds, and the flesh exceeding white and fat.

From hence I went on to Colchester. The story of Kill-Dane, which is told of the town of Kelvedon, three miles from Witham, namely, that this is the place where the massacre of the Danes was begun by the women, and that therefore it was called Kill-Dane; I say of it, as we generally say of improbable news, it wants confirmation. The true name of the town is Kelvedon, and has been so for many hundred years. Neither does Mr. Camden, or any other writer I meet with worth naming, insist on this piece of empty tradition. The town is commonly called Keldon.

Colchester is an ancient corporation. The town is large, very populous, the streets fair and beautiful, and though it may not said to be finely built, yet there are abundance of very good and well-built houses in it. It still mourns in the ruins of a civil war; during which, or rather after the heat of the war was over, it suffered a severe siege, which, the garrison making a resolute defence, was turned into a blockade, in which the garrison and

inhabitants also suffered the utmost extremity of hunger, and were at last obliged to surrender at discretion, when their two chief officers, Sir Charles Lucas and Sir George Lisle, were shot to death under the castle wall. The inhabitants had a tradition that no grass would grow upon the spot where the blood of those two gallant gentlemen was spilt, and they showed the place bare of grass for many years; but whether for this reason I will not affirm. The story is now dropped, and the grass, I suppose, grows there, as in other places.

However, the battered walls, the breaches in the turrets, and the ruined churches, still remain, except that the church of St. Mary (where they had the royal fort) is rebuilt; but the steeple, which was two-thirds battered down, because the besieged had a large culverin upon it that did much execution, remains still in that condition.

There is another church which bears the marks of those times, namely, on the south side of the town, in the way to the Hythe, of which more hereafter.

The lines of contravallation, with the forts built by the besiegers, and which surrounded the whole town, remain very visible in many places; but the chief of them are demolished.

The River Colne, which passes through this town, compasses it on the north and east sides, and served in those times for a complete defence on those sides. They have three bridges over it, one called North Bridge, at the north gate, by which the road leads into Suffolk; one called East Bridge, at the foot of the High

Street, over which lies the road to Harwich, and one at the Hythe, as above.

The river is navigable within three miles of the town for ships of large burthen; a little lower it may receive even a royal navy; and up to that part called the Hythe, close to the houses, it is navigable for hoys and small barques. This Hythe is a long street, passing from west to east, on the south side of the town. At the west end of it, there is a small intermission of the buildings, but not much; and towards the river it is very populous (it may be called the Wapping of Colchester). There is one church in that part of the town, a large quay by the river, and a good custom-house.

The town may be said chiefly to subsist by the trade of making bays, which is known over most of the trading parts of Europe by the name of Colchester Bays, though indeed all the towns round carry on the same trade – namely, Kelvedon, Witham, Coggeshall, Braintree, Bocking, &c., and the whole county, large as it is, may be said to be employed, and in part maintained, by the spinning of wool for the bay trade of Colchester and its adjacent towns. The account of the siege, A.D. 1648, with a diary of the most remarkable passages, are as follows, which I had from so good a hand as that I have no reason to question its being a true relation.

# **A DIARY:**

## **Or, An Account of the Siege and Blockade of Colchester, A.D. 1648**

On the 4th of June, we were alarmed in the town of Colchester that the Lord Goring, the Lord Capel, and a body of two thousand of the loyal party, who had been in arms in Kent, having left a great body of an army in possession of Rochester Bridge, where they resolved to fight the Lord Fairfax and the Parliament army, had given the said General Fairfax the slip, and having passed the Thames at Greenwich, were come to Stratford, and were advancing this way; upon which news, Sir Charles Lucas, Sir George Lisle, Colonel Cook, and several gentlemen of the loyal army, and all that had commissions from the king, with a gallant appearance of gentlemen volunteers, drew together from all parts of the country to join with them.

The 8th, we were further informed that they were advanced to Chelmsford, to New Hall House, and to Witham; and the 9th some of the horse arrived in the town, taking possession of the gates, and having engineers with them, told us that General Goring had resolved to make this town his headquarters, and would cause it to be well fortified. They also caused the drums to

beat for volunteers; and a good number of the poor bay-weavers, and such-like people, wanting employment, enlisted; so that they completed Sir Charles Lucas's regiment, which was but thin, to near eight hundred men.

On the 10th we had news that the Lord Fairfax, having beaten the Royalists at Maidstone, and retaken Rochester, had passed the Thames at Gravesend, though with great difficulty, and with some loss, and was come to Horndon-on-the-Hill, in order to gain Colchester before the Royalists; but that hearing Sir Charles Lucas had prevented him, had ordered his rendezvous at Billerecay, and intended to possess the pass at Malden on the 11th, where Sir Thomas Honnywood, with the county-trained bands, was to be the same day.

The same evening the Lord Goring, with all his forces, making about five thousand six hundred men, horse and foot, came to Colchester, and encamping without the suburbs, under command of the cannon of St. Mary's fort, made disposition to fight the Parliament forces if they came up.

The 12th, the Lord Goring came into Colchester, viewed the fort in St. Mary's churchyard, ordered more cannon to be planted upon it, posted two regiments in the suburbs without the head gate, let the town know he would take them into his Majesty's protection, and that he would fight the enemy in that situation. The same evening the Lord Fairfax, with a strong party of one thousand horse, came to Lexden, at two small miles' distance, expecting the rest of his army there the same night.

The Lord Goring brought in prisoners the same day, Sir William Masham, and several other gentlemen of the county, who were secured under a strong guard; which the Parliament hearing, ordered twenty prisoners of the royal party to be singled out, declaring, that they should be used in the same manner as the Lord Goring used Sir William Masham, and the gentlemen prisoners with him.

On the 13th, early in the morning, our spies brought intelligence that the Lord Fairfax, all his forces being come up to him, was making dispositions for a march, resolving to attack the Royalists in their camp; upon which, the Lord Goring drew all his forces together, resolving to fight. The engineers had offered the night before to entrench his camp, and to draw a line round it in one night's time, but his lordship declined it, and now there was no time for it; whereupon the general, Lord Goring, drew up his army in order of battle on both sides the road, the horse in the open fields on the wings; the foot were drawn up, one regiment in the road, one regiment on each side, and two regiments for reserve in the suburb, just at the entrance of the town, with a regiment of volunteers advanced as a forlorn hope, and a regiment of horse at the head-gate, ready to support the reserve, as occasion should require.

About nine in the morning we heard the enemy's drums beat a march, and in half an hour more their first troops appeared on the higher grounds towards Lexden. Immediately the cannon from St. Mary's fired upon them, and put some troops of horse into

confusion, doing great execution, which, they not being able to shun it, made them quicken their pace, fall on, when our cannon were obliged to cease firing, lest we should hurt our own troops as well as the enemy. Soon after, their foot appeared, and our cannon saluted them in like manner, and killed them a great many men.

Their first line of foot was led up by Colonel Barkstead, and consisted of three regiments of foot, making about 1,700 men, and these charged our regiment in the lane, commanded by Sir George Lisle and Sir William Champion. They fell on with great fury, and were received with as much gallantry, and three times repulsed; nor could they break in here, though the Lord Fairfax sent fresh men to support them, till the Royalists' horse, oppressed with numbers on the left, were obliged to retire, and at last to come full gallop into the street, and so on into the town. Nay, still the foot stood firm, and the volunteers, being all gentlemen, kept their ground with the greatest resolution; but the left wing being routed, as above, Sir William Champion was obliged to make a front to the left, and lining the hedge with his musketeers, made a stand with a body of pikes against the enemy's horse, and prevented them entering the lane. Here that gallant gentleman was killed with a carabine shot; and after a very gallant resistance, the horse on the right being also overpowered, the word was given to retreat, which, however, was done in such good order, the regiments of reserve standing drawn up at the end of the street, ready to receive the enemy's horse upon the points

of their pikes, that the royal troops came on in the openings between the regiments, and entered the town with very little loss, and in very good order.

By this, however, those regiments of reserve were brought at last to sustain the efforts of the enemy's whole army, till being overpowered by numbers they were put into disorder, and forced to get into the town in the best manner they could; by which means near two hundred men were killed or made prisoners.

Encouraged by this success the enemy pushed on, supposing they should enter the town pell-mell with the rest; nor did the Royalists hinder them, but let good part of Barkstead's own regiment enter the head-gate; but then sallying from St. Mary's with a choice body of foot on their left, and the horse rallying in the High Street, and charging them again in the front, they were driven back quite into the street of the suburb, and most of those that had so rashly entered were cut in pieces.

Thus they were repulsed at the south entrance into the town; and though they attempted to storm three times after that with great resolution, yet they were as often beaten back, and that with great havoc of their men; and the cannon from the fort all the while did execution upon those who stood drawn up to support them; so that at last, seeing no good to be done, they retreated, having small joy of their pretended victory.

They lost in this action Colonel Needham, who commanded a regiment called the Tower Guards, and who fought very desperately; Captain Cox, an old experienced horse officer, and

several other officers of note, with a great many private men, though, as they had the field, they concealed their number, giving out that they lost but a hundred, when we were assured they lost near a thousand men besides the wounded.

They took some of our men prisoners, occasioned by the regiment of Colonel Farr, and two more sustaining the shock of their whole army, to secure the retreat of the main body, as above.

The 14th, the Lord Fairfax finding he was not able to carry the town by storm, without the formality of a siege, took his headquarters at Lexden, and sent to London and to Suffolk for more forces; also he ordered the trained bands to be raised and posted on the roads to prevent succours. Notwithstanding which, divers gentlemen, with some assistance of men and arms, found means to get into the town.

The very same night they began to break ground, and particularly to raise a fort between Colchester and Lexden, to cover the general's quarter from the sallies from the town; for the Royalists having a good body of horse, gave them no rest, but scoured the fields every day, and falling all that were found straggling from their posts, and by this means killed a great many.

The 17th, Sir Charles Lucas having been out with 1,200 horse, and detaching parties toward the seaside, and towards Harwich, they brought in a very great quantity of provisions, and abundance of sheep and black cattle sufficient for the supply of the town for a considerable time; and had not the Suffolk forces

advanced over Cataway Bridge to prevent it, a larger supply had been brought in that way; for now it appeared plainly that the Lord Fairfax finding the garrison strong and resolute, and that he was not in a condition to reduce them by force, at least without the loss of much blood, had resolved to turn his siege into a blockade, and reduce them by hunger; their troops being also wanted to oppose several other parties, who had, in several parts of the kingdom, taken arms for the king's cause.

This same day General Fairfax sent in a trumpet to propose exchanging prisoners, which the Lord Goring rejected, expecting a reinforcement of troops, which were actually coming to him, and were to be at Linton in Cambridgeshire as the next day.

The same day two ships brought in a quantity of corn and provisions and fifty-six men from the shore of Kent with several gentlemen, who all landed and came up to the town, and the greatest part of the corn was with the utmost application unloaded the same night into some hoys, which brought it up to the Hythe, being apprehensive of the Parliament's ships which lay at Harwich, who having intelligence of the said ships, came the next day into the mouth of the river, and took the said two ships and what corn was left in them. The besieged sent out a party to help the ships, but having no boats they could not assist them.

18th. Sir Charles Lucas sent an answer about exchange of prisoners, accepting the conditions offered, but the Parliament's general returned that he would not treat with Sir Charles, for that

he (Sir Charles) being his prisoner upon his parole of honour, and having appeared in arms contrary to the rules of war, had forfeited his honour and faith, and was not capable of command or trust in martial affairs. To this Sir Charles sent back an answer, and his excuse for his breach of his parole, but it was not accepted, nor would the Lord Fairfax enter upon any treaty with him.

Upon this second message Sir William Masham and the Parliament Committee and other gentlemen, who were prisoners in the town, sent a message in writing under their hands to the Lord Fairfax, entreating him to enter into a treaty for peace; but the Lord Fairfax returned, he could take no notice of their request, as supposing it forced from them under restraint; but that if the Lord Goring desired peace, he might write to the Parliament, and he would cause his messenger to have a safe conduct to carry his letter. There was a paper sent enclosed in this paper, signed Capel, Norwich, Charles Lucas, but to that the general would return no answer, because it was signed by Sir Charles for the reasons above.

All this while the Lord Goring, finding the enemy strengthening themselves, gave order for fortifying the town, and drawing lines in several places to secure the entrance, as particularly without the east bridge, and without the north gate and bridge, and to plant more cannon upon the works; to which end some great guns were brought in from some ships at Wivenhoe.

The same day, our men sallied out in three places, and attacked the besiegers, first at their port, called Essex, then at their new works, on the south of the town; a third party sallying at the east bridge, brought in some booty from the Suffolk troops, having killed several of their stragglers on the Harwich road. They also took a lieutenant of horse prisoner, and brought him into the town.

19th. This day we had the unwelcome news that our friends at Linton were defeated by the enemy, and Major Muschamp, a loyal gentleman, killed.

The same night, our men gave the enemy alarm at their new Essex fort, and thereby drew them out as if they would fight, till they brought them within reach of the cannon of St. Mary's, and then our men retiring, the great guns let fly among them, and made them run. Our men shouted after them. Several of them were killed on this occasion, one shot having killed three horsemen in our fight.

20th. We now found the enemy, in order to a perfect blockade, resolved to draw a line of circumvallation round the town; having received a train of forty pieces of heavy cannon from the Tower of London.

This day the Parliament sent a messenger to their prisoners to know how they fared, and how they were used; who returned word, that they fared indifferent well, and were very civilly used, but that provisions were scarce, and therefore dear.

This day a party of horse, with 300 foot, sallied out, and

marched as far as the fort on the Isle of Mersey, which they made a show of attacking, to keep in the garrison. Meanwhile the rest took a good number of cattle from the country, which they brought safe into the town, with five waggons laden with corn. This was the last they could bring in that way, the lines being soon finished on that side.

This day the Lord Fairfax sent in a trumpet to the Earl of Norwich and the Lord Goring, offering honourable conditions to them all, allowing all the gentlemen their lives and arms, exemption from plunder, and passes, if they desired to go beyond sea, and all the private men pardon, and leave to go peaceably to their own dwellings. But the Lord Goring and the rest of the gentlemen rejected it, and laughed at them, upon which the Lord Fairfax made proclamation, that his men should give the private soldiers in Colchester free leave to pass through their camp, and go where they pleased without molestation, only leaving their arms, but that the gentlemen should have no quarter. This was a great loss to the Royalists, for now the men foreseeing the great hardships they were like to suffer, began to slip away, and the Lord Goring was obliged to forbid any to desert on pain of present death, and to keep parties of horse continually patrolling to prevent them; notwithstanding which many got away.

21st. The town desired the Lord Goring to give them leave to send a message to Lord Fairfax, to desire they might have liberty to carry on their trade and sell their bays and says, which Lord Goring granted; but the enemy's general returned, that they

should have considered that before they let the Royalists into the town; that to desire a free trade from a town besieged was never heard of, or at least, was such a motion, as was never yet granted; that, however, he would give the bay-makers leave to bring their bays and says, and other goods, once a week, or oftener, if they desire it, to Lexden Heath, where they should have a free market, and might sell them or carry them back again, if not sold, as they found occasion.

22nd. The besieged sallied out in the night with a strong party, and disturbed the enemy in their works, and partly ruined one of their forts, called Ewer's Fort, where the besiegers were laying a bridge over the River Colne. Also they sallied again at east bridge, and faced the Suffolk troops, who were now declared enemies. These brought in six-and-fifty good bullocks, and some cows, and they took and killed several of the enemy.

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