

# Dartmouth



# Armada 88

Compiled and Published by Dartmouth Town Council

With grateful thanks to Mrs. Ray Freeman for her research.

## DARTMOUTH IN 1588

In 1588 The Spanish Armada sailed up the Channel and England faced her biggest threat for over 500 years. Ships from all the Devon Ports sailed out to do battle, Dartmouth playing its part in what was to be a great victory for the English Navy.

It is perhaps interesting to retrace the events leading up to this momentous occasion. Philip II of Spain, the most powerful ruler in Europe was fed up with the impudent sea dogs, many from Devon, who challenged his right to the sole trade with the Spanish Colonies in Central America. His ships were constantly plundered of the riches being transported to Spain, with Queen Elizabeth's tacit consent. England had also sent an army to the Netherlands to help the rebels fight against the Spanish rule. Dartmouth Corporation provided £150 to equip a ship to carry 300 soldiers there in 1585.

As early as December 1585 word reached the Privy Council from Dartmouth that a merchant Walter Squior, who had just returned from Lisbon, reported preparations there for a Great Enterprise against England. Eighty large hulks, over twenty galleons of between 500 and 800 tons, and forty other ships were assembled together with over sixty thousand soldiers. Orders were given to make the Navy ready for action in an attempt to defend the coast.



Philip had tried to bring England under control by other means. He organised several attempts to assassinate Queen Elizabeth to enable Mary Queen of Scots to inherit the throne. When the Babington Plot was uncovered Mary's fate was sealed. Very reluctantly, Elizabeth agreed to her execution and she was beheaded in February 1587. With the failure of his plots, and Mary's Will, bequeathing him her claim to the throne, Philip finally decided to order the Armada to sail in the summer of 1587

Sir Francis Drake however had other ideas and in his famous attack on Cadiz in April 1587 "singeing the King of Spain's beard" he destroyed over thirty ships about to sail to Lisbon to join the main force. Less well known is

the fact that near Lagos he later destroyed many small cargo boats laden with hoops and pipe staves, essential material for the building of casks used for the storage of ships food and water. When the Armada finally sailed the food stores soon became foul because the casks were of green wood.

Drake returned from Cadiz laden with spoils and on the way back captured the huge 'San Felipe' a Portugese carrack homeward bound from Goa and full of spices, silks and other treasures, worth more than a hundred thousand pounds. Drake took a share of £17,000 and the Queen £40,000 so it was clear that when a galleon as large as Drake's flagship could be built for £2,600 these expeditions were encouraged.

More important at the time was that the departure of the Armada was delayed for a year while Philip ordered the lost ships and stores to be replaced. Philip suffered a further blow in February 1588 by the death of his Admiral, the Marquis of Santa Cruz, a victor over the Turks at Lepanto and many other sea battles.

Philip immediately appointed as successor the Duke of Medina Sidonia, the highest ranking nobleman in Spain, but without any naval knowledge whatsoever. In fact the Duke wrote to Philip begging to be relieved in the following terms

"I know by experience of the little I have been at sea that I am always seasick....Since I have had no experience either of the sea or of war, I cannot feel that I ought to command so important an enterprise".

However as Philip knew that a high rank was needed to settle disputes, and naval advice could be obtained from experienced officers within the command, Sidonia reluctantly did his duty. By early May 1588 the Armada sailed only to be driven back by storms to Corunna where several weeks passed in repair work. It was not until July that it was again ready, and had a favourable wind for England.

#### DARTMOUTH'S CONTRIBUTION

In Torbay and the South Hams the task of organising the defence against this formidable threat was given to Sir John Gilbert of Greenway on the Dart, George Cary of Cockington and Sir Edward Seymour of Torre Abbey. They raised a local force of eight hundred men, all armed. Able bodied men in every town and village were mustered and the following extract from the Devon Muster Roll shows the contribution made by Dartmouth and surrounding parishes. It is interesting to note that some of the names listed still exist in the area. The accounts show that some of these Devonshire men were marched up to London to guard the Queen, as the main attack was expected in Kent.

#### DARTMOUTHE TOWNE

Presenters sworn: John Plumley, John Cutte, Robert Shappley, Robert Holland

Who do present as aforesaid

John Plumlighe G7 + 3 harqu

Andrew Wakeham L 10 + 1 harqu

William Sayer L 10

Peter Philpott 1 almen rivet, 1 s.cap, 1 bill

John Reynolds 1 almen rivet, 1 s.cap, 1 bill

Gilbert Roope L 10

John Keymer 1 almen rivet, 1 s.cap

Osmond Herdon 1 almen rivet, 1 bow, 1 sh.arr, 1 bill

Thomas Gorney 1 almen rivet, 2 pikes, 1 murr, 1 bill

Edward Lydston 1 almen rivet, 1 murr

Richard Carwythan 2 almen rivets, 2 murr, 2 bills

John Cutte 1 almen rivet, 1 bow, 1 shar.arr, 1 murr, 1 bill

Robert Shapley 2 bows, 2 sh.arr, 1 harqu, 1 bill

Thomas Paidge 1 almen rivet, 1 s.cap, 1 bill

Christopher Blackaller 1 almen rivet, 1 harqu, 1 murr

Robert Smythe 1 bow, 1 sh.arr, 1 jack, 1 bill, 1 murr

James Pillyton 1 almen rivet, 2 harqu, 1 bill

The inhabitants not particulie chardged by the said statute of Armor are accessed to fynde 4 corselets, tenne calivers, 20 pikes

The names of all the habell menne within the saide Tounne of Dartmouthe mustered

Archers

Morris Jeffrye  
John Hille  
Richard Whitelocke

John Bedford (or Redford)  
Robert Giles  
John Gorney

Walter Geffrye  
Edward Liston

Harquebusiers

William Plumleghe  
Richard Wakham  
Bartholomew Mason  
Robert Weiks  
John Treherne  
James Rowe  
Robert Byckley  
William Baker

John Wekes  
John Smythe  
Nicholas Jeffrye  
Robert Holland  
Willaim Holland  
John Newman  
John Bewes  
George Keymer

Robert Rowe  
John Gellard  
Peter Barter  
Thomas Seaman  
William Sparke  
Nicholas Seymer  
Nicholas Holland  
Thomas Seymer sen

Pikemen

Nicholas Babbe  
William Wakeham

Nicholas Pascowe  
Nicholas Wekes

Robert Coliford  
George Newlond

Billmen

William Sheront  
Alexandra Frye  
Richard Edwards  
Richard Wakham  
John Basterd  
William Giles  
Henry Phisick  
Mathew Mason  
Thomas Wakeham  
John Ryvers  
John Heyrs  
William Evans  
Richard Hayes

Richard Kneebone  
Peter Dickeman  
Christopher Torre  
John Reynoldes  
Vincent Shorte  
Humphry Wyne  
John Fox  
Thomas Page  
Thomas Pascowe  
Nicholas Abbey  
Edmond Fox  
Avery Byckott Richard Barrey  
John Blackaller

William Hunte  
William Courtis  
John Cornewe  
Nicholas Jackeman  
Richard Collyford  
Martin Pascowe  
Robert Tylley  
George Maryner  
Robert Notte  
Richard Riche  
John Phillipps

**TOWNSTALL PARRISHE (DARTMOUTH ST CLEMENT)**

Presenters sworn : John Roope, Nicholas Balle

Who do present as aforesaid

John Roope 1 cors, 1 almen rivet, 2 bows, 1 sh.arr, 1 s.cap, 2 bills, 1 murrion  
Nicholas Hille 1 bow, 1 sh.arr, 1 s.cap  
Nicholas Balle 1 almen rivet, 1 bow, 1 sh.arr, 1 harqu  
Robert Dyer 1 al.riv, 1 bill

The names of all thabell menne within the saide parishe of Townstall mustered

Harquebusier

Nicholas Hille



Pikemen

John Roope  
William Michelmor  
Morris Geffrey

John Ellycot  
Thomas Morrys  
John Galford

John Martyn  
John Hele

Billmen

William Cole

Henry Dedsten

Walter Toker

**KINGSWERE PARRISHE (KINGSWEAR)**

Presenters sworn: John Chadder, Lewes Stere, John Croste, John Bawes

Who do present as afforsaide

John Prouse 1 almen rivet, 1 bow, 1 sh.arr, 2 calivers  
Thomas Welshe G 7  
Stephen Hamond 1 bow, 1 sh.arr, 1 s.cap, 1 pike  
Robert Walter 1 bow, 1 sh.arr, 1 bill, 1 calver  
Richard Cuttiforde 1 bow, 1 sh.arr, 1 jacke

The names of all the habell menne within the saide parishe of Kingeswere mustered

Archers

Robert Walter  
William Androwe  
Stephen Hamont  
Robert Symon

William Midrigan  
Thomas Archer  
Richard Edwards

William Edwards  
George Servaunte  
John Harryes

Pikemen

Thomas Wilks  
John Hore  
John Chadder

John Cuttiforde  
Vincent Androwe  
David Stafforde

John Steven  
John Croste

Billmen

John Prouse  
Richard Cuttiford  
Lawrence Meathe  
John Gelderne

John Veale  
Henry Inglishe  
John Bownde  
John Teke

Ellice Crefell  
William Gaye  
William Harrys

**STOKE FLEMINGE PARRISHE**

Presenters sworn: Thomas Hayman, Philip Neale, John Halswill, William Luscombe

Who do present as afforsaide

William Mayne G 7  
John Smythe & Thomas Hayman 1 bow, 1 sh.arr each  
Henry Neale 1 bow, 1 sh.arr, 1 pair splints, 1 s.cap  
Roger Gonne 1 jack, 1 s.cap, 1 bill, 1 harqu  
Richard Whitlocke 1 almen rivet, 1 s.cap  
Vincent Paige & John Halswill G 7 each

The inhabitants not particularlie charged by the statute are accessed to fynde etc  
3 calivers, 20 pikes

The names of all thabell menne within the saide parishe of Stoke Flemynge  
mustered

Archers

William Mayne  
Philip Neale  
Henry Ledstone

Nicholas Hilley  
William Mortowe  
John Luscombe jun

Richard Halswill  
Vincent Sture

Harquebusiers

Henry Neale  
Henry Paidge  
John Farre

John Gonne  
Roger Smythe

John Rowe  
William Combe

Pikemen

Richard Sperke  
Philip Meade  
Peter Ledstone

William Elliott  
Thomas Hayman  
John Drewe

Henry Shapley  
Nicholas Davye

Billmen

Roger Gonne  
John Wekes  
Peter Hilley

Thomas Rowe  
John Halswill  
Thomas Wakeham

Nicholas Elliott  
Vincent Luscomb  
Richard Awstyn

**BLACK AWTON PARRISHE**

Presenters sworn: Nicholas Forde, Richard Forde, Benet Shere, Nicholas  
Yeabesley

Who do presente as afforsaide

Nicholas Forde L 10 + splints, Richard Forde G 7, Benet Shere L 10 less bill,  
Nicholas Yabesley 1 buff cote & splints, 1 Bow, 1 sh-arr, 1 s.cap

The inhabitants not particularlie charged by the statute are accessed to fynde  
and maynteyn at their Comune chardge 2 corslets, 6 calivers

The names of all the habell menne within the saide parishe of Black Awton  
mustered

Archers

Nicholas Forde

John Pynhey jun

William Milton

Harquebusiers

Anthony Beare

Edward Burges

Pikemen

William Dowinge  
Richard Heathe  
Robert Tokerman  
Robert Sperke

Richard Forde  
William Forde  
Robert Wille

William Wooton  
Vincent Sparke  
Alexander Swete

### Billmen

John Ridlake  
Chrispyn Babbe  
William Cawse  
John Collynge  
Henry Holdiche

John Wille  
William Frye  
William Sparke  
Hugh Cole  
Robert Pyers

Robert Wotton  
Nicholas Burges  
Richard Hyne  
William Elliot

### **DITTISHAM PARRISHE**

Presenters sworn: Thomas Rouse, John Yolden, Brian Browne

Who do present as afforsaide

Thomas Rouse L 10,

John Yolden 1 almen rivet & gorgett, 1 bow, 1 sh.arr, 1 s.cap

Brian Browne 1 almen rivet & splints, 1 pike, 1 murrion

John Fourde 1 almen rivet & splints, 1 bow, 1 sh.arr, 1 s.cap

John Toser G 7+ 1 jack,

John Corncall 1 bow, 1 sh.arr, 1 s.cap, 1 pair splints

William leache 1 bow, 1 sh.arr, 1 murr, 1 pair splints

Thomas Sherpham 1 bow, 1 sh.arr, 1 murr

Henry Awstyn 1 bow, 1 sh.arr, 1 s.cap

John Scorse 1 bow, 1 sh.arr, 1 S.Cap

William Radforde 1 bow, 1 sh.arr

The inhabitants not particuarie chardged by the statute are accessed to fynde etc  
one corselet, 4 calivers

The names of all the habell menne within the sayde parishe of Dittisham mustered

### Archers

John Yolden jun  
William Yolden  
Nicholas Rouse  
William Leache

William Pyne jun  
John Awstyn  
John Scorse  
William Churcheward

Richard Perott  
John Sperik  
Richard Walcam

### Harquebusiers

Henry Pyne

Andrew Damerell

### Pikemen

John Forde  
John Radforde  
Thomas Tokerman  
Gregory Sherpham

Leonard Leache  
William Leache  
John Woodley  
William Radforde

Richard Leache  
Morris Scorse  
William Shoote  
John Mighell

### Billmen

Richard Rouse  
John Collyford sen.  
John Everye  
Nicholas Lyne  
Richard Radforde

John Bawthen  
Richard Repe  
Richard Townsend  
Thomas Norracott

Roger Townsend  
Christopher Phillippe  
Thomas Parnyll  
Mathew Trewman



However Dartmouth's main contribution to the war effort was at sea. The town had long been known for its ability to provide ships and seamen of high quality. The Normans after 1066 had developed its natural harbour into a port with facilities for servicing ships. As early as 1099 William Rufus sailed from here for Normandy, and in 1190 it was of sufficient importance to be chosen by Richard III as the rendezvous for a fleet setting out for the Third Crusade to the Holy land. During the wars of Edward III, Dartmouth supplied 31 ships and 757 mariners for the siege of Calais - more than any other town in the kingdom except for Yarmouth and Fowey. Ever since the thiteenth century the town was required to provide two ships, armed and victualled for a month, whenever the Sovereign demanded it in time of war. The royal connection with Dartmouth is shown by the original seal of the borough charter, granted in 1349, depicting a ship with a king seated in it



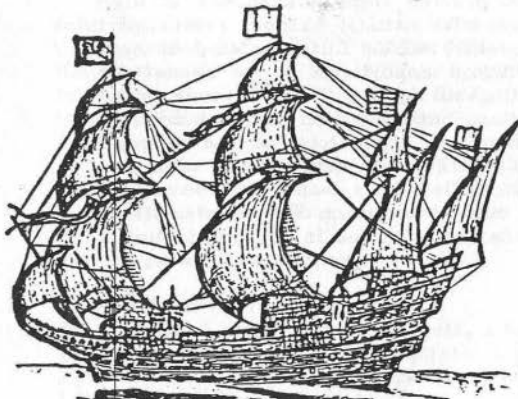
Chaucer in the Canterbury Tales describes a "Shipman" of Dartmouth - thought to be based on John Hawley a renowned merchant, privateer and leader of the English fleet against the French in the Hundred Years War. He was only one of many such privateers who gave the town's seamen a reputation for ruthlessness and skill at sea.

In 1588 two vessels were prepared, the "Cressant", of 80 tons burden and carrying 70 men, Captain John Wilson and Master Christopher Waymouth, and the "Harte", carrying 30 men, Captain James Houghton and Master Thomas Anthonye. These served for four months with the fleet led by Lord Admiral Howard and Vice Admiral Drake based in Plymouth. They must have seen the whole action of that dramatic summer as the Spanish Armada sailed up the channel from off the Lizard to Calais.

All the supplies weapons, powder, shot, biscuits, beer, salt beef, pork, peas, dried fish and water, were supplied by the local merchants, many of them prominent in the ruling Corporation of the Town. The whole was organised by the Mayor Richard Drew and his receiver Walter Dottyn.

To pay for all the expenses, a subsidy was raised in Totnes, Dartmouth and the country villages around in the three "Hundreds" of Heytor, Stanborough and Coleridge, the modern Torbay and South Hams. These parts of Devon raised a total of £7,500 for their own defence in this time of crisis.

Many of the local gentry fitted out at their own expense privateers, which sailed from the Dart. Sir Walter Raleigh's "Rowe Bucke" of 300 tons and 120 men was one. Others were the "Diamond of Dartmouth", which served all the summer and the "Thomas Bonaventure" of Dartmouth, owned by a group of Taunton merchants which served for 6 weeks. Five other ships left the Dart in the thick of the fighting in July. Sir John Gilbert sent three ships: the "Gabriel", 150 tons with 80 men; the "Samaritan", 300 tons and 150 men and the "Commande", 120 tons and 80 men. The "Elizabeth of Leistoff" with 30 men left at this time also.



In May of 1588 Dartmouth was agog with excitement as the town watched their ships, the "Crescent" and the "Harte", sail with the tide to join the fleet under command of Lord Admiral Howard and his Vice Admiral Drake at Plymouth. Their task was to guard the entrance to the English Channel and give immediate warning of the appearance of the Armada. They had a long wait as the Armada was held up at Corunna undergoing repairs from a storm.

On every high point along the coast and inland firebeacons had been prepared to speed the news of the first sighting to London. In Dartmouth ever since the middle ages, the site of the firebeacon was at the top of Jawbones, which still bears the name of Beacon Park. Firebeacons had been manned since 1586 by three men at night and one by day.

Off Plymouth, Howard and Drake were waiting with growing impatience for the arrival of the enemy fleet. Three weeks had been spent sailing fruitlessly up and down the Channel approaches, food was being consumed and stores depleted and more and more sailors were falling sick due to the cramped conditions. The Fleet finally returned to Plymouth: for a week they overhauled their ships, put sick seamen ashore, and took on fresh provisions.

Then on Friday the 19th July, Captain Fleming of the "Golden Hind" arrived to report that he had seen Spanish ships near the Isles of Scilly, apparently waiting for the rest of the fleet to catch up with them. The story is that Drake was playing bowls at the time and saw no need to hurry saying "We have time enough to finish the game and beat the Spaniards too". Though undocumented the story is quite believable as the tide was flooding into Plymouth Sound that afternoon and there was no way the English Fleet could leave until it turned. That night, with no wind and an ebbing tide the largest and best armed of the English galleons were warped out of the harbour and by early next morning were anchored in the lee of Rame Head. The rest of the fleet followed and soon Howards force of about 100 ships, using all their superior ability to sail close to the wind, were to the rear of the Armada with the wind in their favour.

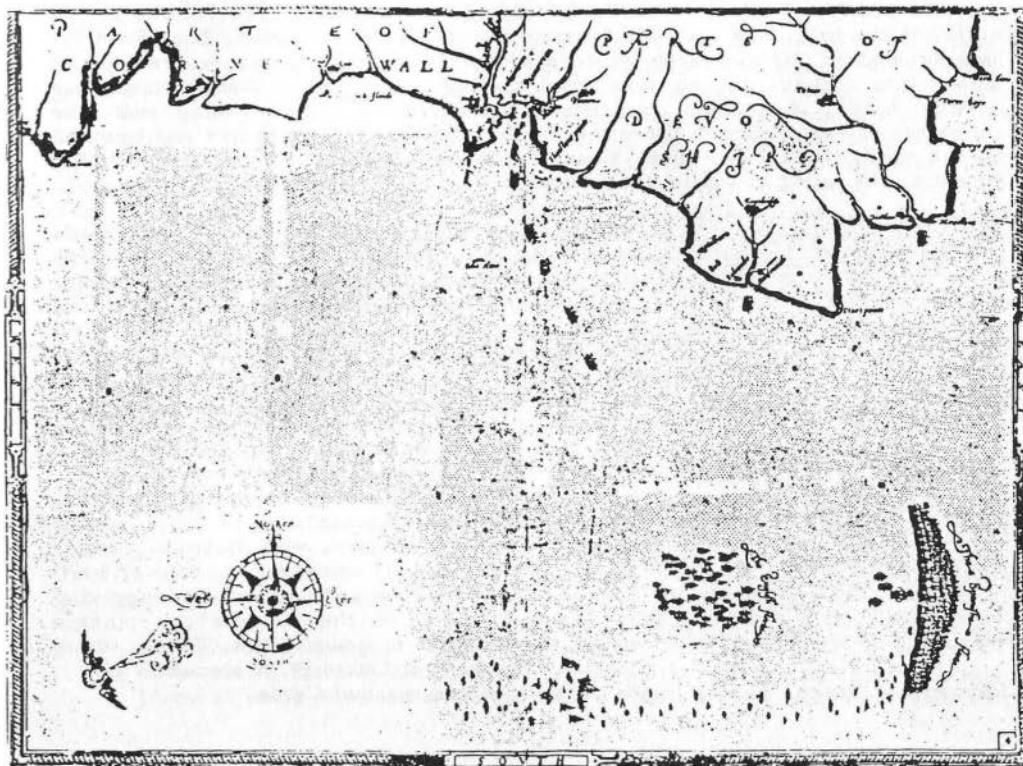
The Armada was first sighted from land off the Lizard on July 19th and the Spaniards saw the first firebeacons bursting into flame to flash the news across the country. The flames at Start Point were seen from Dartmouth and the Beacon Park firebeacon lit to pass the signal inland to Oldstone and Fire Beacon Hill at Dittisham and from there to Torre Hill and the Warberry in Torbay.

The sight of the Armada from the land was awesome. The great galleons sailed in the form of a mighty crescent, with its points backward and some 7 miles apart. As well as the galleons, which were wholly sailing ships, at the points of the crescent were some galleasses, these were ships which were partly driven by oars manned by galley slaves. One observer marvelled at the sight as they advanced, as he put it, "very slowly, though with full sails, the wind being, as it were, weary with wafting them, and the ocean groaning under their weight". Certainly nothing like it had ever been seen before in naval warfare. They numbered 132 ships, of a total weight of 60,000 tons, and carried 8,766 sailors, 2,088 galley slaves, 21,855 soldiers and 300 priests and officials of the Inquisition

who were expected to be very busy in Protestant England. The master plan was that they should sail to Calais and there take on board a further 17,000 soldiers from the Spanish army under the Duke of Parma in the Netherlands. These were reputed to be the best trained soldiers in Europe, and with years of fighting experience and an excellent general would have made short work of the likes of the Devon farmhands sent up to guard the Queen.

England's only chance was to use her navy to stop the ships landing the troops on her shore. Against this large Armada, the official Royal Navy, recently vastly improved by John Hawkins, a kinsman of Drake from Plymouth, had only 18 large and 7 smaller galleons, backed up by a number of small but useful pinnaces. To these were added armed merchantmen, privateers, coasters and ships hastily converted for war like the "Cressant". Besides the Plymouth based fleet, another fifty ships were in reserve near the Thames, so that in numbers the English had more ships than the Spanish. The tonnage of the English fleet was about half that of the Spaniards, and they carried only about half the number of men. This however had advantages, as all men were expected to be both sailors and soldiers, with no passengers who could only be useful when boarding the enemy or fighting ashore. English galleons had better guns which could fire eighteen pound shot a distance of 1,000 yards or more from their culverins. They were designed to destroy enemy ships from outside the range of the Spanish guns, and prevent them coming close enough to grapple and board when their soldiers on board would have been brought into the action.

All day on Sunday, 21st July, the English fleet followed the Armada, firing their guns at them, keenly watched from the shore no doubt. By the evening however, they had to pause to conserve gun powder: the Government had been to mean, or short of cash to see that they had sufficient.

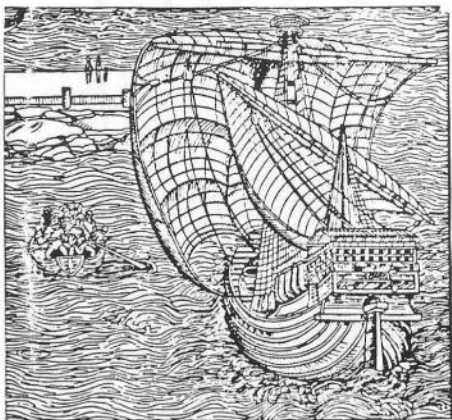


In the night, when they were somewhere off Torbay, one could say the Spaniards scored two "own goals". In a tremendous explosion the gunpowder store on the San Salvador blew up, setting fire to her. Medina Sidonia sent pinnaces to tow her away to safety, and take off the wounded. Later, badly burnt, she was captured and towed into Weymouth.

More or less at the same time, the flagship of the Andalusian Squadron, The "Nuestra Senora del Rosario" under Don Pedro de Valdes, collided with another and lost her bowsprit. There was general confusion in the dark with the sea getting rougher, and in a further collision, the fore mast broke and fell upon the main mast. The London privateer, the "Margaret and John, later claimed to have tried to take the crippled ship during the night, and to have frightened away some Spanish ships trying to rescue the crew or remove her treasure. Sidonia seems to have decided then that further attempts of rescue would endanger the whole Armada and sailed on leaving her to her fate.

At first light, Sir Francis Drake in the "Revenge", with the "Rowe Bucke" and two pinnaces, came upon the "Rosario" drifting helplessly - a typical example of his privateer's instinct to find a rich prize - even if it meant slipping away from the main fleet. The "Rosario" was larger than the "Revenge", well armed with over 400 men aboard. However, on hearing that he was faced by Drake himself, Don Pedro surrendered without firing a shot, on the promise that the lives of his men would be spared. Although the reputation of Drake in Spain was of a formidable fighter he was recognised as a gentlemen and known to be merciful to prisoners.

Drake took Don Pedro and forty of his officers prisoner onto the "Revenge", and promptly relieved them of 15,000 ducats, 3,000 of which he kept himself, justifying this afterwards by saying he had only three pounds in the world, at the time. The rest was "shared merrily by his soldiers". The "Rosario" he entrusted to Captain Jacob Whiddon of the "Rowe Buck", and ordered him to take it into Torbay. And so it was that the only large prize taken in the whole Armada battle, her arms, provisions and treasure intact, was, with the assistance of some Brixham fishermen, towed into the shallow waters and beached on the sands by Torre Abbey. Since the "Rowe Bucke" could not risk running aground, she sailed round into the Dart.



While Howard and Drake pursued the Armada towards the Isle of Wight, they sent fast pinnaces to the ports along the coast to remove the powder and shot from any captured Spanish ships and send it off to the fleet at top speed. The first thing therefore that Sir John Gilbert and George Cary did on the arrival of the "Rosario" was to remove all her powder and shot and send it around by boat to Dartmouth to be loaded aboard the "Rowe Buck", which left to rejoin the fleet. They sent off "all the shipping and maryners in all our county so employed" to help in the great battle. Sir John Gilbert claimed later that on July 22nd he had sent off from the Dart, with victuals, powder and shot, the "Commande", "Samaritan", "Elizabeth", and "Phoenix" as well as supplying the "Rowe Bucke" and the "Chance", a pinnace sent in by Howard to collect shot. These, along with the "Elizabeth of Leistoff", hastened to join

Howard and Drake, who by Sunday 27th July had reached Calais.

The Armada had dropped anchor in the exposed shallows off Calais waiting to take aboard Parma's soldiers from the Netherlands. However the Dutch rebels had blockaded their ports to prevent barges carrying the soldiers from leaving. They were the only vessels able to sail in these shallow waters, and it would take two weeks to march the men overland.

The English fleet waiting out at sea for a chance to attack noticed the wind had changed and was blowing directly onshore. Drake ordered fireships to be prepared from some of the smaller ships among the merchantmen. One of these was the "Elizabeth of Leistoff", whose owner Thomas Meldrum later claimed £416.10s for the loss of his ship and stores, which there was no time to remove. The fireships were loaded with barrels of tar and faggots piled on top, then as night fell they were set on fire and carried by wind and tide towards the Spanish Fleet. In the panic that followed - for this was a greater threat to these wooden ships packed with gunpowder than gunfire - the crews cut or slipped their anchor cables and struggled desperately to escape. Several were burnt, others wrecked by running on shore. Those who managed to escape were scattered, their formation gone, and all in danger of running aground on the sandbanks.

Forced by wind and the pursuing English fleet to sail north, they soon had passed the ports of the Netherlands and all hope of picking up Parma's troops. They narrowly escaped being wrecked on the Goodwin Sands, and sailed into the North Sea in the direction of Scotland. The battle was effectively over: Spain had lost the chance to invade. Those vessels still afloat had to sail round the north of Scotland and the west of Ireland, one after another becoming wrecked along these unknown coasts. Of the 132 which passed Plymouth in July, barely 50 returned to Spain. One more was wrecked in Devon on its way back, blown off course by a gale whilst rounding Ireland, its weakened crew hopelessly lost, the hospital ship "St. Peter the Great" foundered on rocks at Hope Cove in October.

Meanwhile back in Torbay, Sir John Gilbert and George Cary were faced with the problem of what to do with the "Rosario" and nearly 400 Spanish prisoners. Where were they to be kept? Who was to pay for their food? Where were men to be found to guard them? An even greater problem was how would the local people react and be kept from slaughtering them. Remember they had been told how the Spaniards had treated the English sailors and made them into galley slaves. Even the Sheriff of Devon thought they "should have been made water spaniels", (i.e. thrown overboard to drown). A troop of horse was used to cover the landing of the prisoners onto Torre Abbey Sands, from where they were placed into a large barn near Torre Abbey, then owned by Sir Edward Seymour, which to this day still bears the name "The Spanish Barn".

As the local gentry had no money from the government to deal with the crisis, and had to spend their own until repaid, if ever, it was not surprising that they helped themselves to the goods on the captured ship. Cary wrote later "We have bestowed four pipes of wine, the one on my Lord Seymour for cumbering his house with these Spanish prisoners, until the ship was cleared, not knowing otherwise where we should have bestowed them"

Following the surrender of the "Rosario" a letter was sent on 27th July by Cary and Gilbert to Walsingham and the Council in London marked "Hast, Hast post hast, Hast for your life". One can imagine in those days a despatch rider setting off on horseback to ride the 180 miles, speeded on his way at every change of horses by showing these words. They wrote in the letter:-

"...there is almost four hundred soldiers and mariners all which we have taken out of the ship and brought hither under safe guard unto the shore, (some 20 or 30 mariners only excepted, which we have left in the said ship



to be the better help to bring the said ship into safe harbour, there being at this present time, through the occasion of her Majesty's service, great want of mariners of our own country.) We desire to know your resolution what should become of these people, our vowed enemies. The charge of keeping them is great, the peril greater, and the discontentment over the country greatest of all, that a nation so much disliking unto them should remayne amongst them...We are thus bold..to give them their maintenance of such provisions as remaineth on the said ship.

They asked for the Council's instructions what to do with them.

It is clear from this that the intention was to take the "Rosario" round into the "safe harbour" of Dartmouth as soon as possible, but this was an exceptionally rough summer, and she remained in Torbay for nearly five weeks. Cary and Gilbert, on instructions from the Council, made an inventory of the goods on board her. Here the problem was that every one, from the local gentry to the ordinary folk had a long tradition of pilfering from captured or wrecked vessels, Gilbert and Cary being no exception. A letter from Cary, dated the 29th August, puts the situation then:-

"Touching these Spanish prisoners, whom we would have been very glad they had been made water spaniels when they were first taken. Their provisions which is left to sustayne them is very little...Their fish savors so that it is not to be eaten and their bread full of worms. The people's charity towards them is very cold, so that if there be not order forthwith taken by your Lordships they must starve. They are many in number and divers of them already very weake and some dead".

Concerning the inventory of the "Rosario"'s goods, he says that 13 guns had been taken out of the ship, ten by Whiddon for the "Rowe Bucke", two by a pinnace sent by the Lord Admiral which also took powder and shot, while the "Samaritan" (Gilberts ship) had another, as well as ten musketts and calyvers.

"The "Rowe Bucke" had also divers pipes of wine and two of oyle. Sir John Gilbert and I have left out of the inventory four pipes of wine, two for him and two for myself, but if it be not their Lordship's pleasure to bestowe the said two pipes in us I will pay for them with all my heart, as the rest are sold. For in no case will I use any deceit."

Gilbert and Cary, writing jointly on August 29th, gave further details about what happened to the ship and the prisoners. The ship was now in the haven of Dartmouth, and they enclosed a bill of the expenses for eight boats to tow her round from Torbay. The number of prisoners remaining was:-

"397, whereof we sent to My Lord Lieutenant five of the chiefest of them, whom his Lord has committed to the town prison of Exeter, and we have put 226 in our Bridewell (amongst which all the mariners are placed which are 61)".

From a later letter it seems that these 226 had been moved out of Torre Abbey Barn, and taken to the house of correction (or Bridewell) near Exeter, where on October 14th Cary wrote that their number was now only 211.

Meanwhile since August 29th, the remainder of 166, were placed on the "Rosario" to live on what remained in store. Of the contents of the ship Cary explained that the small ordnance (guns) were laid on shore, "lest it be embezzled away". (Some of it, Cary had revealed, had found its way onto



Gilberts own "Samaritan".) There were 85 pipes of wine so badly conditioned they made but 67 full pipes, and some of those were eager (fizzy). It would seem that Cary and Gilbert were being held responsible for the general scramble to grab the valuables on the ship, which of course, in a prize should be shared between the Queen and Sir Francis Drake.

The "Rosario" was now in Dartmouth Harbour, with 166 prisoners on board. The Council in London ordered that a daily allowance of 2d or 3d should be paid per head for their maintenance, promising to repay this from the treasury. Gilbert according to Cary, refused to advance any money out of his own pocket for this purpose, Cary alone did so, otherwise, he claimed, they would have perished. There was clearly friction between himself and Gilbert over this because he wrote that Gilbert would not take any trouble without there was profit and that 166 of the prisoners remaining aboard ship near his house at Greenway were busy everyday labouring in the garden in the levelling of his grounds. This suggests that the "Rosario" was anchored in the deep water between Noss and Greenway. Of the goods which had been which had been on the "Rosario" he writes

"I see there is such havoc made therof that I am ashamed to write what spoils I see. And though I have spoken and written to Sir John Gilbert to understand of what is become of all the wines I left in his custody, yet I can receive no direct answer from him; but this I know from others, that all the best wines are gone".

Of the prisoners the Council resolved to give them their freedom, upon a ransom for each one of 10 ducats and the Prince of Parma was asked to provide the necessary money and ships. In May of 1589, Queen Elizabeth granted a passport "for the safe coming of a certified person to be sent by the Duke of Parma to England, to satisfy and pay the sum of money agreed upon for the ransom of the Spanish prisoners".

If the Spaniards went home, what happened to the "Rosario"?

White in his History of Torquay, says that her figurehead afterwards adorned the entrance to one of the building yards of Dartmouth and for more than a hundred years the bell which summoned the men to work was attached to it. There are many stories that timbers from an Armada ship were used in the town, for example to make the gallery of St. Saviour's church. However the "Rosario" was taken to Chatham to be broken up, so these stories are untrue. It may be that such timbers came from the "Madre de Dios", captured in 1592.

The "Cressant" and the "Hart" both returned safely after four months service with the navy. One wonders how many survived the battle, particularly as one entry lists the amount "payd to Pultron, a badde Surgeon for the Harte £2 (for four months service)" when the going rate for a surgeon was 15s a month.

One of the borough records tells how payments were made to the owners of the ships, and to all those who had supplied her with goods. The owners of the "Cressant" were Richard Kelly of Kingswear, who owned a quarter share, John Smith, John Trenheale, Leonard Dow and John Norman. Richard Kelly much later claimed he had never been paid, which the Dartmouth Corporation denied. It was given in evidence in a lawsuit about this, that the owners were to be paid, for the use of the ship, at a rate of two shillings per ton per month, and as a favour to the owners it was rated as 150 tons, being seventy more than the ship did contain. No one seemed to have been ashamed to admit this blatant piece of overcharging, even in a court of law. The sum paid to the owners was said to be £260.