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LEVIES FROM KENT TO THE ELIZABETHAN WARS (1589-1603)

By J. J. N. MCGURK, M.PHIL., F.R.HIST.S.

IN a very true sense the defeat of the Spanish Armada marked the beginning rather than the end of the war with Spain; nevertheless, the victory of 1588 did increase the self-confidence of the governing classes and intensified the spirit of English nationalism. Spain, however, did not accept 1588 as a final defeat, and for the next fifteen years she remained at war with England making some further attempts at invasion, notably in 1596, with a second Armada of 100 ships and 16,000 men, and again the following year, with 136 ships and 9,000 men. On both occasions the wind was favourable to England.

During the civil war in France there was a decided danger that Spain might secure naval bases in Brittany or Picardy which, no doubt, would have been used against this country.¹ Again, Ireland, in the dangerous years of the Tyrone rebellion, became the 'postern gate' through which the Spaniard intended and planned a further invasion of England.² Throughout the last decade and a half of the Elizabethan reign, invasion was periodically expected and prepared for in special musters, fortification at the vulnerable landing-places and in a well-organized system of coastal watches and beacons to warn of the enemy's approach.³ Because of its proximity to the theatres of war on the Continent and the exposure of its many ports and inlets, the shire of Kent played an important role in the continuing state of war with Spain after the defeat of the Armada in 1588.⁴

The levies of men and arms sent out of Kent show how one shire of England was deeply affected by the political scene abroad and also reflects government policy in confining its efforts to sending military aid to the threatened territories of the Low Countries, France and Ireland. The Privy Council appreciated the difficulties and the importance of getting troops quickly to the Netherlands; so, in respect of the wars there, it tried to lessen the distance to be covered by recruiting heavily in Kent. The council's orders constantly stressed that, as far as possible, men were to be chosen from those willing to do service

¹ J. B. Black, *The Reign of Elizabeth, 1558-1603*, 2nd ed., 1959, 406-8.

² L. Boynton, *The Elizabethan Militia*, 1967, 53.

³ *A.P.O.*, xxx, 414-16; *C.S.P.D.* (1591-1594), 38, 82, 94, 196, 208. And see Lambeth Palace MSS. 1392, ff. 10, 26, 29 for examples.

⁴ J. N. McGurk, 'Armada preparations in Kent and arrangements made after the defeat', *Arch. Cant.*, lxxxv (1970), 91-3.

abroad.⁵ This was very much the ideal; yet, the reality of the situation in these later years of Elizabeth was that rogues and vagabonds were often drafted in place of the reliable troops the government would have liked. Another course of action it would have liked to avoid was that of drafting men from the trained bands of the shire,⁶ who, in fact, formed the backbone of the county's defence. Again, the government would have liked to have avoided using the stores of arms and military equipment intended primarily for the use of these trained bands but, in actual practice, they were often drawn upon to fit out the levies for the overseas service. The government must have been conscious of the fact that the national militia, such as it was, was customarily exempt from foreign service, and indeed from being sent out of its county of origin. There were no doubt many in Kent who would have agreed with Sir John Smythe when he voiced the view, at the musters in Colchester in 1596, that parliamentary sanction was necessary before troops could be levied for service overseas. At his subsequent trial before the Star Chamber Court, he hinted that Sir Roger Manwood of Sandwich agreed with his sentiments.⁷

In the years prior to the Armada victory, the Privy Council stressed in their orders to the lords lieutenants of Kent that the trained bands were not to be sent on overseas service. For instance, in 1587 Lord William Cobham, then Lord Lieutenant of the county of Kent, had to raise 300 troops to serve under the Earl of Leicester in the Netherlands; none were to be taken from the trained militia, and Leicester sent over his own captains to 'view' the recruits in Kent.⁸ After 1588, the council was not so insistent that the trained bands be kept in the shires, doubtless it was thought that the real danger from Spain was over. Policy, too, had changed to favouring attack as the best form of defence and as possibly the least expensive method of conducting the continuing war with Spain.⁹

Arrangement for and contribution to the ill-starred Portugal expedition of 1589 impinged heavily on the county of Kent.¹⁰ The ablest soldier of the day, Sir John Norris, and the hero of the Armada, Sir Francis Drake, laid proposals before the queen and council in September 1588, for equipping the expedition with 8,000 soldiers, ships and provisions. They asked for the authority to exercise martial law and,

⁵ *A.P.C.*, xiv, 55-6.

⁶ *H.M.C., Salisbury*, iv, 468.

⁷ C. G. Cruickshank, *Elizabeth's Army*, 2nd ed., Oxford, 1966, 10-12; there the case of Sir John Smythe is told in full.

⁸ D593/S/4/11/2, Staffs. Rec. Office—a copy of the council's letter in Sir John Leveson's lieutenancy papers.

⁹ J. A. Williamson, *The Tudor Age*, 1953, 404, where the author states that 'the expenditure on armies was more than four times that on the Navy', that is to say in the 1590s.

¹⁰ D593/S/4/11/5.

LEVIES FROM KENT TO THE ELIZABETHAN WARS

in general, to have the approval of the Crown.¹¹ A commission was finally granted but on more restricted lines than their original proposals.¹² In the last days of December, Lord Cobham received his orders to levy men and arms in Kent,¹³ so too, did the lord lieutenants of the other twenty-five southern shires to do likewise in their counties. Cobham instructed his two deputies, Sir Thomas Fane and Sir Henry Cobham, his brother, to see that 200 foot soldiers and 75 pioneers were raised in Kent for the Portugal venture.¹⁴

In the chain of command within the lieutenancy in Kent the details of the recruitment of this particular force can be followed from the Privy Council's initial letter to Cobham through to the deputies' letters to the constables and even down to the latter's instructions to the churchwardens for the collection of the money in those parishes where the men were levied. Sir Henry Cobham, the deputy in the lathe of Sutton-at-Hone, estimated (in his instructions to the constables of the Hundred of Shamwell) that three-quarters per head would cover the cost of a sword and dagger for the eighteen men to be levied in that hundred, and that they should also have enough money over to provide for their journey to Gravesend. The constables were further instructed to accompany the men to that port and to bring the money there by seven o'clock on the morning of the 18th of January, 'so that they maie immediatelie by the tyde of the same houre be conveighed to London by suche as shalbe readie theare for their conductinge'.¹⁵

The towns along the Thames estuary had been given orders earlier in the month to provide billets and provisions for the levies;¹⁶ a series of complaints followed, especially when it was learned that troops from shires other than Kent might well be billeted there. Such objections were to be much more loudly heard in the days of the Stuarts and were, indeed, given a certain immortality in the famous Petition of Right. However, in 1589 the citizens of Gravesend, for instance, were heeded since the justices of the peace in that area, William Lambarde, Sir John Leveson, William Sidley and Sir Henry Cobham were asked to have the contingents bound for Gravesend in the first place, to be then 'lodged in the villages nexte adjoyning'.¹⁷

It is also reasonable to suppose that the council was conscious of the fact that Kent had contributed substantially in men and arms the previous year and this may very well explain why the only military equipment required of the county for this new levy was swords and

¹¹ P.R.O. SP.12/216/33, 59; 217/7, 14, 15.

¹² *Ibid.*, 219/37, 45, 49.

¹³ *A.P.O.*, xvi, 418, 421, 423; B.M. Harl. MSS. 168, f. 118.

¹⁴ D593/S/4/11/5.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 12/4, letter to the Constables of Shamwell, 12th January, 1589.

¹⁶ *A.P.O.*, xviii, 86-8.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, xvii, 11, 15, 25, 34, 37, 58.

daggers; doubtless, the government was going to supply the rest of the martial equipment. A note of leniency is therefore clearly struck in the original order to Lord William Cobham:¹⁸

'... in respecte of the late charges that the said countie hath sustayned in the laste yeare there shalbe for the present no other chardges than in furnishinge the numbers of souldiers with swordes onlie and soe much money in thear purses to bring them to the sea syde ...'

Arrangements at the local level, however, did not run smoothly; chaos ensued when the council changed its original orders. Lord Cobham had to instruct his deputies that the place of assembly had been altered to Canterbury, the port of embarkation changed to Dover and the date of departure postponed until the 25th of January.¹⁹ Further postponements for the entire expedition were also announced; at first, to the end of February and, then, to the middle of March. The consequently increased charges on the county because of these delays negated any abatement the county was first given. At length, by 23rd February, the commanders received their final orders to depart and part of the forces embarked at Dover and the rest at Plymouth.²⁰ Such changes of dates, delays for winds and tides, increased charges and resulting complaints from the ports were all familiar features in Kent whenever the county sent out men to the continental wars or to Ireland.

The queen's hostility to this expedition is as well known as is its disastrous outcome. The number of men levied may have been between 15,000 and 22,000 strong and the total loss may have been somewhere in the region of 6,000 to 10,000.²¹ Survivors who returned to England were discharged on 25th July with 5s. each. It may very well be assumed, since it was common practice, that many sold their uniforms and arms to supplement their miserable reward. Others turned to vagabondage²² and four, who had served in this particular expedition, were hanged for riotous behaviour at Westminster—such was the pay they gave soldiers for going to the wars that one of them is reported to have shouted out on his way to the gallows.²³

Even heavier demands were made on Kent that autumn of 1589 when the county was asked to furnish 1,000 soldiers to serve with Lord Willoughby in France where they were to aid King Henry IV in repulsing the forces of the Catholic League.²⁴ Sir Thomas Wilford

¹⁸ Lambeth Palace Library MSS. 1392, f. 38.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, f. 39.

²⁰ P.R.O. SP.12/222/89, 90, 91.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 223/59, 74; 225/26, 27, 31.

²² *A.P.C.*, xviii, 420, 422. Provost marshals were appointed to deal with these outbreaks of vagabondage.

²³ E. P. Cheyney, *A History of England from the Defeat of the Armada to the Death of Elizabeth*, 1914, i, 184.

²⁴ P.R.O. SP.12/226/13; *A.P.C.*, xviii, 119, where Lord Cobham is told of Willoughby's appointment.

LEVIES FROM KENT TO THE ELIZABETHAN WARS

was appointed colonel of the Kent force, and Sir Thomas Fludd from Milgate in Maidstone was appointed paymaster in France.²⁵ The date of departure was fixed for 20th September. Lord Cobham had to have all ready at Dover including ships for their transport and enough supplies collected for ten days' provisioning.²⁶ It was a frantic autumn for the Kentish deputies justices and constables. In his capacity as Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, William Brooke, Lord Cobham, sent out orders to the mayors and chief officers of Dover and Rye to make choice of victuallers in those ports for the provisioning of the recruits.²⁷

On occasions of foreign expeditions such as this one many young gentlemen put themselves forward as volunteers; no doubt, many joined the armies going abroad in the hope of eventually gaining a captaincy. It is not known how many flocked to join Willoughby's expedition. The government, however, was concerned that such volunteers might take their horses with them and so denude the county of defence. Lord Cobham, on the advice of the council, sent further orders to the above-mentioned ports that they were to 'staie horses unless (their riders) had a warrant of Her Majestie's owne hande or six of the lords of the council'.²⁸

Lord Willoughby, the commander-in-chief, wanted the full say in the choice of captains;²⁹ this caused much dissension in Kent from would-be captains. John Leveson, for instance, complained bitterly to Lord Cobham about his omission from the original list of captains chosen.³⁰ To support his claim he said that the men he had levied were in a grave state of discontent at the thought of their having some strange captain to lead them and that he was very disappointed that he had not been given this chance. He went on to say how many in his part of Kent, near Rochester, who had lately returned from the Low Countries railed against their captains for their present destitute state; he feared that his good neighbours would get 'like intertainment' from Willoughby's captains. He finally remarked that he certainly would not like to be made the hand to deliver his men over to any other captain. These cogent arguments to the very influential Lord Cobham had the desired

²⁵ *A.P.C.*, xviii, 131; *H.M.C.*, *Salisbury*, iv, 558.

²⁶ *P.R.O.* SP.12/226/62; *A.P.C.*, xviii, 86, 87, 119-21. Lord Cobham levied 900 men on the understanding that 10 per cent. dead pays were customarily allowed.

²⁷ *A.P.C.*, xviii, 119.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.*

²⁹ In the event the privy council decided the list of captains to be employed, see *H.M.C.*, *Ancaster*, 288.

³⁰ D593/S/4/22/20, Sir John Leveson to Lord Cobham. This particular group of letters (S/4/22) were formerly in the William Salt Library, Stafford, under Ref. 1709, Bundle 11, but since they were obviously Leveson letters they are now catalogued with the Leveson lieutenancy papers (D593/S/4) and are referred to as such throughout this article.

effect, for in the list of captains eventually drawn up by the council is found the name of John Leveson.³¹ Among other captains those chosen from Kent were Sir Thomas Scott of Scot's Hall, John Scott of Nettlestead, John Cobham and Edward Brooke; the last three named were later to serve in the Irish wars.³²

While, in general, Lord Willoughby had little cause to be proud of his army, he did report that those from London and Kent were better equipped than those from Sussex and Hampshire.³³ Nonetheless, he did privately complain to Lord Cobham about a company he personally inspected in Kent at Sittingbourne on account of its poor quality but, even then, he reserved his more vehement strictures for the post-master at Sittingbourne on account of his lack of co-operation in not immediately providing him with post-horses on the occasion of such urgent business.³⁴

Once again, difficulties were experienced in providing victuals for so many recruits, particularly from the small port and town of Rye, one of the Cinque Ports. The council suggested to Lord Cobham that Dover should supply the companies from Kent; Cobham protested that Dover was too poor to do this; then, with wry humour, the council proposed Sandwich, whose citizens, it alleged, had been very accustomed to supplying the enemy.³⁵ In the end, it is not clear which town finally did the provisioning. Those levied in Hampshire were supplied out of Portsmouth, their port of departure. However, at the eleventh hour, the entire expedition was almost cried off; but Willoughby was not to be denied his hour of glory, so he set sail with the Kent and London companies from Dover before the council could send an order to stop the expedition. Its fate in France is well known from Willoughby's journal of events over there;³⁶ they took part in no pitched battles, but were worn away in desperate marches, hostile encounters with the French peasantry, whom they were supposed to be helping, by hunger and disease and by desultory attacks on fortified castles, where a man inside was worth a company without cannon on the outside. Of the calculated 3,600 soldiers that went over with Willoughby scarcely more than a 1,000 came back to England in January 1590.³⁷

It was not until July the following year that the council wanted a record of men and arms returned from this ill-fated expedition. Then, Lord Cobham, as Lord Lieutenant of Kent, was directed to order the

³¹ P.R.O. SP.12/226/32; H.M.C., *5th Report*, pt. i, 135; H.M.C., *Ancaster*, 288.

³² See below.

³³ See *A.P.C.*, xviii, 166, where justices from Sussex and Hants. were brought before the Privy Council because of their poor choice of men and arms.

³⁴ D593/S/4/11/17, Lord Willoughby to Lord Cobham, 25th September, 1589.

³⁵ *A.P.C.*, xviii, 92.

³⁶ B.M., Cotton MSS. Galba, E. vi, 413-19.

³⁷ *A.P.C.*, xviii, 334-45; a full account of this campaign can also be found in E. P. Cheyney, *op. cit.*, i, ch. 11, and in C. G. Cruickshank, *op. cit.*, 245-50.

LEVIES FROM KENT TO THE ELIZABETHAN WARS

captains, who had served, to conduct an inquiry into the numbers of men and amounts of armour returned.³⁸ It was feared that few arms had been restored to the shire, consequently the county would have to make a new charge for further provision of arms to the stores. The justices of the peace in the districts where the soldiers were equipped had to certify to the council the numbers of men who had returned and the state of their armour.³⁹ Throughout the proceedings that followed there was apparently more concern over the arms and armour than the men who had returned. Sir John Leveson's report to Lord Cobham on the matter is a very full one, while also being a lucid, if not lurid, account from first-hand experience of the realities of foreign service as he recounts the fate and fortunes of his own company.⁴⁰ On the question of the return of arms, Leveson pointed out to Lord Cobham that by martial law all soldiers who had fought in the face of the enemy were entitled to keep their arms as their own.⁴¹ In any case, he said, his men were not hirelings but:

'the owners of their own arms, their sonnes or near kinsmen, or suche old souldiers, as wear at my charge hired to be as instructors fo the rest and furnished by the countie, who freely gave them their armes and some money to send them in their places. I had not to do to take the armes from the one nor the other, from the first beinge their owne or their fathers . . . nor from the seconde because they wear given them . . .'⁴²

Leveson went on to give a report also on Captain Edward Brooke's company since they were from his own lathe of Sutton-at-Hone. Brooke's company of 150 men had 81 pikes and the pikeman's necessary armour, 81 corselets, 18 muskets and 36 calivers.⁴³ Many of his men were lost when their ship sank off the coast at Boulogne; some survived, but he could not say with certainty how many, since many of them were 'hirelings without anie certain knowne dwelling in this Countrie'. As for the arms, Brooke did send 12 breast-plates, 12 backs of corselets, 7 calivers and 5 muskets (of which 'the stockes, breeches, pannes and lockes of the most wear broken'⁴⁴) to John Harding of Greenwich.

Leveson wanted the Privy Council to know, through Lord Cobham, a prominent member, how his company in France was forced to abandon a great part of their provisions, and, of how in their march from Paris to the coast, they had to throw away bedding, trunks and tents which, he claimed, were of far greater value than the arms, and

³⁸ D593/S/4/22/18, is a copy of the council's letter of the 5th July, 1591.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, ff. 19, 20.

⁴¹ Despite many consultations with many military historians, I have not found any reference to this point of military law elsewhere.

⁴² D593/S/4/22/19.

⁴³ Obviously fifteen dead pays in this company of 150 were allowed.

⁴⁴ D593/S/4/22/19, v.

that the baggage he himself abandoned was worth £100. Some of the men were so sick and weary that they threw the heavy armour into ponds and those who did manage to get to England had to sell anything they had to keep alive; so, he concluded, 'I doe not see how anie better retorning of armes could be made.'⁴⁵

The county of Kent had hardly recovered from the effects of Willoughby's expedition when the Queen issued orders,⁴⁶ in mid-January 1591, for fresh levies to be sent to the aid of the King of France; the county of Kent was asked to contribute 300 able men to a grand total of 3,000 to be sent under the command of Sir John Norris. Lord Cobham, with an eye to relieving the shire, ordered 270 men to be recruited on the grounds that the then usual rate of 10 dead pays in every hundred would have been deducted in any case by the captains.⁴⁷ Three-quarters of the Kentish company were ordered to be pikemen and the remainder musketeers. The county was to be reimbursed the cost of victualling, transportation and coat and conduct money on application to Sir Thomas Shirley, the Treasurer at War.⁴⁸

This new demand was spread as evenly as possible over the entire county so that each of the five lathal divisions of the shire should furnish 54 men; and, in keeping with the Privy Council's proportion of arms, 40 of these were to be pikemen and 14 musketeers.⁴⁹ However, as these orders filtered down to the justices and constables in the localities, the theoretically neat arrangements of the Council and of Lord Cobham became confused, perhaps, deliberately so. The justices and the constables were reluctant to recruit the men too far in advance of their departure, since the county had to provide their victuals; the thought of later reimbursement was hardly sufficient encouragement. Their dilemma of trying to avoid expense and yet to have the men ready to march at an hour's warning, which was the Council's desire, was one that constantly occurred on the occasion of sending out troops.

In this conflict of interests, Sir John Leveson appears to have had the relief of the county at heart when he wrote to George Rivers and Robert Bing, justices in his area of Sutton-at-Hone, advising them not to make any further directions on this service until they heard again from him.⁵⁰ However, recruitment went on as planned but, then, the usual difficulties of keeping the men, once recruited, were experienced. Captain Edward Brooke, one of the survivors from Willoughby's fiasco, sent his regrets to Sir John Leveson that 'divers of his souldiers

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, f. 20 r., Sir John Leveson to Lord Cobham, 28th August, 1591.

⁴⁶ *A.P.O.*, xx, 206.

⁴⁷ Lambeth Palace Library MSS. 1392, f. 30d. and D593/S/4/22/26.

⁴⁸ P.R.O. SP.12/238/99.

⁴⁹ Lambeth Palace Library MSS. 1392, f. 30d.

⁵⁰ D593/S/4/22/27r. Sir John Leveson to the justices at Sutton-at-Hone, February 1591.

LEVIES FROM KENT TO THE ELIZABETHAN WARS

are runne away with their armes', but he named only Thomas Shaw, Isaac Best, Robert Horne and Thomas Buttes;⁵¹ desertion at the port of embarkation was an all too common phenomenon.⁵² February 22nd was the fixed date of their departure for France, but on that day fresh orders came from the council that the more efficiently trained and equipped county bands were to be sent in place of the recent raw levies.⁵³ The King of France had apparently asked for veterans. In normal practice, these were taken out of the army in the Low Countries and the raw recruits sent to fill their places; in this way, the Lowlands became a veritable training ground for the English levies of the period.⁵⁴ The departure date was postponed until the new bands had been organized and viewed by the muster-master. Captain Johnson was sent down into Kent by the Privy Council for that purpose.⁵⁵

His report to Lord Cobham, emphasizing the bad state of the arms and armour and the lack of training among the 'so called trained bands', which he inspected at Dover, eventually reached the ear of the queen. The consequent inquiry in Kent engendered much ill-feeling against Johnson and led to accusations and counter-accusations among the captains and deputy lieutenants in the county as each tried to shed the blame on the other. While Johnson's original complaints were directed against those responsible for the state of the trained bands from the eastern half of the shire, yet the entire episode before its conclusion involved almost every man of note in the county's government.⁵⁶

There is plenty of evidence that this particular service was badly performed even apart from the muster-master's report. John Richers, a justice in the Weald, for instance, wrote to Roger Twysden, of Roydon Hall, about it all saying that the arms were so bad, the men so unruly and the captains so discontented that it proved a 'verie untoward piece of service'.⁵⁷ Some of the impressed men in Twysden's area of East Peckham ran away from the constables and others were of such poor quality as fighting men that they had to be dismissed. There were also defaulters in Sir John Leveson's area around Rochester.

The expedition, however, did finally set sail for Brittany on 27th April. Sir Thomas Churchyard, frequently a muster-master in

⁵¹ Lambeth Palace Library MSS. 1392, ff. 50, 64, 65.

⁵² Desertion was noticeably more rife among levies destined for the Irish wars later in the reign, see below and throughout the *Calendars of State Papers* for 1599, 1601-1603.

⁵³ D593/S/4/22/28d. Lord Cobham to his deputies, 22nd February, 1591.

⁵⁴ See J. E. Neale, 'Elizabeth and the Netherlands', *English Hist. Review*, xlv (July 1930).

⁵⁵ D593/S/4/22/29v. A copy of the council's letter of 19th February, 1591.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, ff. 30-3.

⁵⁷ Lambeth Palace Library MSS. 1392, f. 68, John Richers to Roger Twysden, 1st March, 1591.

Kent, accompanied it and later wrote a vivid account of the campaign.⁵⁸ Since the fighting dragged on into the following year, Sir Norris' small army of two to three thousand needed additional aid and so, at the queen's request, the shire of Kent⁵⁹ sent over a further 50 able men in October 1592. Later in that same year, another quota of 100 pioneers were sent out of Kent to aid Essex at Dieppe,⁶⁰ but their charge on the shire was relatively lighter than the equipping of pikemen or musketeers. Perhaps the Privy Council was aware of the heavy demands made on Kent during these years when it asked Lord Cobham to send up a certificate of all the levies sent out of the shire on foreign service in 'recent' years.⁶¹ The Council also wanted a full account of all the armour taken out of the county stores and of what had been returned. The deputy lieutenants sent in their findings to Sir John Leveson, who then consolidated the figures for Lord Cobham and for the Privy Council. The following is a summary of Sir John's certificate.⁶²

July 1585	150
July 1587	300
January 1589,	200 and 75 pioneers
December 1589	900
March 1590	200
November 1591	100 pioneers.

Popular sentiment in Kent and in the nation at large had turned against the demands of the French wars. When the last order in October 1592 to send 50 able men to Sir John Norris in Brittany filtered down to the hundreds and parishes, the justices and constables in Kent began to cavil at this new charge. The Privy Council itself spoke of 'the infinite and great murmeringe of the English nation at home, being thereby dayly more and more unwilling to suffer any of their neighbours or frends to yeald willingly, as in the beginning they did, to go unto Fraunce'.⁶³ The 'murmuringe' in the county of Kent may have been heard in London since the 50 men for Norris were discharged when they reached the port of Rye; many of the recruits simply disappeared with their coats and arms.⁶⁴ In May the following year (1593), Kent sent out 300 more men when it was thought that the enemy would lay

⁵⁸ Thomas Churchyard, *The Service of Sir John Norris in Brittany in 1591*, 1604.

⁵⁹ P.R.O. SP.23/242/85 and D593/S/4/22/50.

⁶⁰ D593/S/4/10/10 and S/4/22/23-5.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, S/4/22/41, a copy of the Privy Council's letter to Lord Cobham, 23rd July, 1592.

⁶² *Ibid.*, f. 42v. to 43.

⁶³ Cited in E. P. Cheyney, *op. cit.*, i, 285.

⁶⁴ D593/S/4/22/51, 52, 53.

LEVIES FROM KENT TO THE ELIZABETHAN WARS

siege to Boulogne⁶⁵ and, in July, another company of 150 (effectively 135 to allow for 10 per cent. dead pays) was demanded from Kent to be sent to France⁶⁶ under the leadership of Sir Oliver St. John, who later distinguished himself at the battle of Kinsale in Ireland.⁶⁷ A decidedly cynical attitude is observable among the justices in Kent as this latest order reached them: Robert Bing, of Wrotham, suggested to Roger Twysden that it was needless to muster men again at such a busy time—musters at harvest time were always resented in any case since they conflicted with a countryman's ideas of priority. No doubt Bing, like many others, had learned that long delays and cancellations could make the immediate carrying out of such orders needless at worst and expensive at best, so he said that it would be time enough to do this mustering when it became quite clear that the soldiers would actually be required.⁶⁸ In the event, his casualness was rewarded because the order was countermanded on 5th August just a week before the given date of departure.⁶⁹

Similar counter-orders, delays and difficulties characterized the later levies from Kent to the wars in Brittany. Captains still complained of the poor quality of the men from Kent. Captain Morton, for instance, must have added to Sir John Norris's discouragement when he wrote to him of the very poor sort of men he was about to bring over to him out of Kent.⁷⁰ Again, those taken up in the shire in 1594 had such a long delay in Gravesend that many absconded from the captain's charge; fifteen of their names were sent to the Council, which then ordered Sir John Leveson and Sir Thomas Scott to have these men traced and imprisoned.⁷¹

While the government was pouring men and money into the military campaigns in northern France and the Netherlands between 1590 and 1595, new dangers were appearing in Ireland. As early as May 1593, Sir Walter Raleigh warned Sir Robert Cecil:⁷²

'We are so busied and dandled in these French wars, which are endless, as we forget the defence next the heart. Her Majesty hath good cause to remember that a million hath been spent in Ireland not many years since . . . (but) the King of Spain seeketh not Ireland for Ireland but having raised up troops of beggars in our backs, shall

⁶⁵ Lambeth Palace Library MSS. 1392, f. 80—a copy of the queen's letter to Lord Cobham, 24th May, 1593. D593/S/4/22/68-80 are details of the arrangements made and include assessments for the necessary military taxation.

⁶⁶ U1115/06/16 (Scott Papers in the Kent County Archives).

⁶⁷ *Calendar of the Carew MSS.*, 184.

⁶⁸ Lambeth Palace Library MSS. 1392, f. 83, 22nd July, 1593.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, f. 83d.

⁷⁰ U1115/06/23, Lord Cobham to Sir John Leveson enclosing a copy of Morton's letter.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, ff. 25, 26, copies sent to Sir Thomas Scott with the certified list of the fifteen names, signed by W. Waad.

⁷² H.M.C., *Salisbury*, iv, 310.

be able to enforce us to cast our eyes over our shoulders while those before us strike us on the brains . . . prevention is the daughter of intelligence.'

The queen was weary with reading the dispatches from Ireland, and Cecil hardly needed the warning as the news from Ireland,⁷³ then (1593/4) was that Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone, was about to come out in open rebellion. But Raleigh may have been right in 1593 because it was too late to talk of prevention the following year.⁷⁴ By the summer of 1595, the rebels had taken Monaghan, and the fort on the Blackwater, and had threatened Newry, then the most northerly point of the Pale. From then until the end of the Nine Years' War in Ireland, the queen and Council displayed extraordinary energy as reinforcements constantly crossed the Irish Sea.⁷⁵

The county of Kent, however, was only asked for six light-horsemen⁷⁶ in that critical summer of 1595. Lord Cobham requested and was granted the abatement of one light-horseman to make it administratively convenient to demand one horse, rider and equipment from each of the five lathal divisions of Kent.⁷⁷ In the event, this was one of the more efficiently performed services in the period in the shire; some doubts were expressed as to whether the cost should be a common charge on the whole county or was to be borne only by those who kept horses.⁷⁸ The justices of the peace decided the matter (and in their own favour since all of them kept horses)⁷⁹ at a meeting in the Star tavern in Maidstone when it was agreed that a collection be made from all those rated in the last subsidy at £10 in land and those rated at £15 in goods.⁸⁰ To buy the horse, equip both rider and horse, and pay their way to Chester, a main port for embarkation to Ireland, it was thought that £27. 8s. would cover the cost. However, Sir John Leveson found that it cost £31. 8s. to send his light-horseman, Hugh Southern.⁸¹ It was soon recognized that war has a necessarily inflationary effect on prices. Much more evidence to the fact can be found in the increasing amounts paid, for instance, to the treasurers at war in Ireland, to the navy treasurer,⁸² to the mayors of Chester⁸³ and Bristol and to such merchants

⁷³ *Cal. SP. Ireland* (1592-1596), 105, 106, 113, 129, 296, 299-300, 303, 308.

⁷⁴ P.R.O. SP.12/252/15, 16.

⁷⁵ This is evident from the multiplicity of references to men sent to Ireland in the *Calendar of the State Papers* for the years 1592-1602.

⁷⁶ Lambeth Palace Library MSS. 1393, 'Levies of arms and men in Kent', p. 5.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, loc. cit.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, ff. 8, 9, 22, 23.

⁷⁹ The provision of lighthorse was the special provenance of the justices.

⁸⁰ Lambeth Palace Library MSS. 1392, f. 23, 'At a conference at Maydstone, xviiiith June '95'.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, loc. cit.

⁸² Such payments increased as the war effort became greater in the late 1590s for examples of them see P.R.O. SP.12/232/87; 240/110; 249/8, 125/268/82.

⁸³ £1,745 14s. 8d. was paid to the Mayor of Chester, for instance, for sending out 16 munition ships to Ireland, see P.R.O. SP.12/270/14.

LEVIES FROM KENT TO THE ELIZABETHAN WARS

as Bromley and Babington,⁸⁴ who supplied apparel for the levies for Ireland.

Contemporaneously with the war in Ireland, those on the Continent continued; Calais fell to the enemy in April 1596. Kent was called upon to provide 200 soldiers to be ready at Dover by 16th April. Sir Thomas Wilford and Sir Conyers Clifford⁸⁵ were to lead the entire army, which was to be recruited from all over the realm. None were to be taken from the trained bands, 'masterless' men could be taken up.⁸⁶ Still, the grandiose plan to relieve Calais was then abandoned in favour of launching a direct attack on Spain itself, yet the 200 who had been recruited out of Kent for Calais and waited at Dover were sent home and their equipment restored to the county. Eventually, in July, 50 were sent to Picardy to supplement the companies there⁸⁷ and, in September, another 135 went under the leadership of Captain John Brooke to Boulogne.⁸⁸ Furthermore, as a massive attack was expected, probably on Boulogne, from the forces of the Cardinal of Austria, another levy of 300 were sent out of Kent. On this occasion, the sheriff, Sir Moyle Finch, was responsible for levying them since the lieutenantancy was vacant on the death of William Brooke, 10th Lord Cobham.⁸⁹

One of the first duties of Henry Brooke, his son and heir, and also Lord Lieutenant of the shire and Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports like his father, was to see that his area of jurisdiction furnished 400 soldiers for the relief of Ostend; but no sooner were they assembled at Dover than they were discharged.⁹⁰ Nevertheless, the new and 11th Lord Cobham was congratulated on the efficiency with which he discharged his militia duties on this occasion.⁹¹

The following year (1598) was one of almost uniform success for the rebellion in Ireland. In August, at the Yellow Ford, English arms met with a most significant defeat,⁹² at a time when the threat that Spain would come to the aid of the Irish was more than a mere rumour.⁹³ However, as the summer of 1599 advanced, the Privy Council feared that the threat was aimed at England and not at English forces in

⁸⁴ These merchants were paid £14,846 19s. for; summer wear and £24,833 12s. for winter wear for the soldiers—P.R.O. SP.12/270/15.

⁸⁵ Sir Conyers Clifford later lost his life in Connaught in 1599; see H.M.C., *Salisbury*, ix, 300.

⁸⁶ *A.P.C.*, xxx, 307.

⁸⁷ Lambeth Palace Library MSS. 1393, 24.

⁸⁸ D593/S/4/10/9.

⁸⁹ J. J. N. McGurk, 'Lieutenantancy in Kent, c. 1580-1620', University of London, M.Phil. thesis, 1971, 93.

⁹⁰ *A.P.C.*, xviii, 81-5.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 95.

⁹² G. Hayes-McCoy, 'Strategy and Tactics in Irish Warfare, 1593-1601', *Irish Hist. Studies*, ii, 255-79; H.M.C., *Salisbury*, viii, 409-12, which gives Captain Richard Cuny's description of the full military disaster as he reported it to the Earl of Essex.

⁹³ P.R.O. SP.12/270/31.

Ireland. Raleigh's warning may not have been necessary in 1593, but had Cecil re-read his letter in 1599 may it not have sounded like a prophecy on the eve of fulfilment?

It was the Welsh counties⁹⁴ which were very heavily drawn upon to send soldiers to the Irish wars in the early 1590s but, in the last phase of re-conquest under Lord Mountjoy, levies were raised all over the realm.⁹⁵ Kent sent about 80 horsemen and 350 infantry directly to the Irish wars between the autumn of 1598 and that of 1602.⁹⁶ This contribution may appear paltry if it is not recalled that another 700 infantry left Kent for the Netherlands to release veterans for the Irish campaign, which was then considered too rigorous and too critical a military situation for raw recruits.⁹⁷ It is impossible to tell how the Kent troops fared in Ireland either with Essex in 1599 or with Mountjoy, when he redressed the former's abortive campaign in Ireland, with his victory at Kinsale over both Spaniards and Irish.⁹⁸

About 3,750 soldiers were sent out of Kent to the continental wars and about 1,330 went to Ireland between the defeat of the Armada and the end of the queen's reign. This represents an annual average of 338 troops sent out from one shire. Apart from the city of London, the shire of Kent transported more men into France than any other in England. Again, with the same exception, Kent sent more into the Low Countries. This may well have been because of the proximity of the county both to the seat of government and also to those particular fields of war; and, it may well have been, that the council considered Kent wealthy, which is also indicated by the number of horses and horsemen the county supplied.⁹⁹

A county's contribution to military campaigns abroad can hardly be measured even in statistical terms; it is impossible to estimate how many soldiers actually arrived at the theatre of war, desertion was prevalent, especially among those sent into Ireland. In Chester, there was a current saying: 'Better be hanged at home than die like dogs in Ireland.'¹⁰⁰ Many even when they got there deserted to the enemy,

⁹⁴ For Welsh statistics see C. G. Cruickshank, *op. cit.*, 25.

⁹⁵ *C.S.P.D.* (1598-1601), 147-51, 159, 348, 352, 353, 444, 447; *ibid.* (1601-1603), 116, 128, and 179 are references to some examples.

⁹⁶ D593/S/4/69 (i-ix) is a group of 56 documents relating to Kent levies for the Irish wars in 1600-1602. The present writer is considering this new evidence in another article.

⁹⁷ D593/S/4/69/viii and P.R.O. SP.12/268/122; 269/6; 270/10.

⁹⁸ *C.S.P.D.* (1601-1603), 128, 132-3, 141-2. In Captain Dutton's report of Kinsale, p. 132, 'Tyronne and O'Neill with 6,000 Spaniards . . .', should be read as 'Tyronne and O'Donnell, etc. . .'. The articles for the agreement of the Spanish withdrawal from Ireland are printed in the *Calendar of State Papers, Ireland* (1601-1603), 272.

⁹⁹ P.R.O. SP.12/260/43; 226/18; 269/6 and throughout D593/S/4. See also P. Laslett, 'The Gentry of Kent, in 1640', *Cambridge Historical Journal*, ix (No. 2, 1948).

¹⁰⁰ Cited in A. L. Rowse, *The Expansion of Elizabethan England*, 1955, 97.

LEVIES FROM KENT TO THE ELIZABETHAN WARS

tempted by offers of higher pay, others sold their weapons for food and some slipped back on the next ship returning to England.¹⁰¹ However, to have made the re-conquest possible many must also have fought honourably with both Essex and Mountjoy. In the various accounts of the Irish campaigns, many Kentish captains are mentioned among the best soldiers, such as Edward Moore, Sir John Scott, Sir Oliver St. John, Sir Calisthenes Brooke, John Brooke, as well as others whose christian names are not known, like Captains, Roper, Trevor, Dodington and Blundell.¹⁰²

If it is impossible to tell how many actually went out to the wars, it is also well nigh impossible to record how many returned alive. Some, who did, were maimed for life, sorry reminders in their native parishes of the realities of foreign service. Those who could prove that they had been 'hurt in the wars' were entitled to a disablement pension from the special funds set up in the counties.¹⁰³ A commission was established in the 1590s to examine vagrant and maimed soldiers; their names were enrolled in such a way that the following information could be immediately ascertained: their christian and surnames, places of birth, where levied, date, and the names of the captains under whose leadership they had been wounded.¹⁰⁴ But money from public funds was never sufficient; private benevolence and special collections for the maimed were always needed. In Sandwich, the Lord Admiral gave permission for guns to be sold to buy provisions for the wounded.¹⁰⁵ Sir John Hawkins founded almshouses in Chatham for the relief of destitute and wounded seamen.¹⁰⁶ Nevertheless there was official and, indeed, humanitarian concern by the queen and Council and Parliament as can be seen from the Act of Parliament in 1593 which made it obligatory on the justices to levy rates to provide for the relief of the maimed in the wars.¹⁰⁷

As in every period of war, Elizabethan military matters were not just the concern of combatants; as we have seen, every officer in local administration was occupied in levying, raising necessary funds to equip the levies, commandeering supplies to feed and clothe them and in the pressing of ships and sailors to have them transported abroad. The shire of Kent, like so many others, groaned under the heavily increasing burden of military taxation as the people grew sick of the

¹⁰¹ For examples see *Cal. S.P. Ireland* (1596-1597), 179, 358; (1598-1599), 31, 274.

¹⁰² Calisthenes Brooke was wounded at the Battle of the Yellow Ford, see G. Hayes-McCoy, *Irish Battles*, 1969, 117.

¹⁰³ 35 Eliz., c.4; 39 Eliz., c.21 and 43 and 44 Eliz., c.2 and c.3.

¹⁰⁴ P. L. Hughes and J. F. Larkin, *Tudor Proclamations*, no. 745.

¹⁰⁵ Fa/AC/3, f. 44r. (Kent County Archives), wardmote in Faversham, 7th October 1597.

¹⁰⁶ E. Hasted, *Kent*, viii, 526.

¹⁰⁷ 35 Eliz., c.4.

foreign wars. Many, no doubt, were as oblivious of the government's great need for money as they were of its overall policies abroad. The strain on Kent manifested itself in unco-operative apathy to military service, in exploitation of the Exchequer on the part of the captains, in bickerings among the militia leaders and in a local sensitivity to the criticism by the government's professional military agents, the muster-masters.

Many of the sons and grandsons of the Kentish families that had fought the Elizabethan wars overseas would, under forced loans, billeting of troops, and other excessive demands, rise in rebellion against the monarchy in the civil war.¹⁰⁸ But many of these provocations were present in Kent while the queen lived, especially in the last disenchanting decade of the reign; yet, as William Lambarde assured Lord William Cobham at a particularly trying time when the shire was apparently over-taxed with demands for men and arms, he feared no mutiny because he knew the loyalty of the county would not permit the common man, for any reason, or in any numbers, to lift his hand against his queen.¹⁰⁹

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¹⁰⁸ A. Everitt, *The Community of Kent and the Great Rebellion, 1640-1660*, 1966, *passim*.

¹⁰⁹ D593/S/4/11/1 (i-iv), this is apparently an unknown letter of William Lambarde's, dated 13th December, 1587. It takes the form of a lengthy account to Lord William Cobham of the state of preparedness in Kent before the Armada of 1588. At that time no one knew the county better than Lambarde; he had written the famous *Perambulation of Kent* in 1576, yet he had settled in Kent, near Rochester, only in 1570. See W. Dunkel, *William Lambarde: Elizabethan Jurist, 1536-1601*, New Jersey, 1965.