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SIR WILLIAM AND LADY ANN BROCKMAN OF BEACHBOROUGH, NEWINGTON BY HYTHE. A ROYALIST FAMILY'S EXPERIENCE OF THE CIVIL WAR

GILES DRAKE-BROCKMAN

A brief note in the 1931 volume of *Archaeologia Cantiana* describes how a collection of papers belonging to the Brockman family of Beachborough, Newington by Hythe, had come to light and been presented to the British Library.¹ The most illustrious member of this family was Sir William Brockman (1595-1654). Sir William had attended the Middle Temple in London (although it is not known if he qualified as a lawyer) and went on to hold a significant position in county society in Kent including being appointed Sheriff in 1642 (but see below). However he is best known for the noble part he played on the Royalist side in the Battle of Maidstone in 1648.

In fact, Sir William's involvement in hostilities against Parliament had begun much earlier, soon after the Civil War broke out. The king had raised his standard at Nottingham and formally declared war against the Parliamentarians on 22 August 1642. The first battle took place at Edgehill in September 1642 with the Royalists gaining victory. However, when the king's army advanced on London it was met by a large defence force and in mid-November the king withdrew to Oxford. It was at this point that Brockman endeavoured to raise a rebellion against Parliament in Kent. He was sent a commission of array by the king at Oxford while the earl of Thanet was despatched with a regiment through Sussex to support him. The revolt collapsed when a vital letter fell into parliamentary hands and Sir William was arrested on 28 November.² His imprisonment was to last for nearly three years.

Among the mix of legal, personal and domestic papers of the Brockman family found in 1931 is a series of correspondence relating to Sir William's imprisonment and the financial penalties he incurred. A selection of these letters is presented below with a commentary by the author (who is a direct descendant of Sir William's brother, Zouch Brockman). The

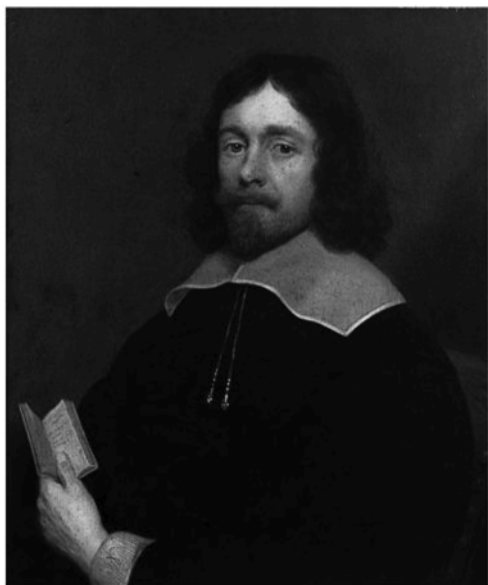


Fig. 1 Portraits of Sir William and Lady Brockman.
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correspondence is from William and his wife Ann (**Fig. 1**) to and from a range of officials in Parliament and its county administration in Kent.

The collection starts with a letter from Ann Brockman, dated 7th Feb 1644³ by which time Sir William had been imprisoned for over a year. Ann pleads that he be moved to a prison at 'Ostenhanger', i.e. Westenhanger castle, which is only three miles from the family home:

Letter 1

Feb 7 1644

The Humble petition of the Lady Brockman to the Honourable Committee for the Parliament Affaire in Kent

Sheweth, that whereas my deare husband hath been a prisoner in Winchester house,⁴ London for the space of thirteene monthes, and upwards: I am bold to crave this lawfull favour at your hands, that you would vouchsafe to use such meanes as your wisdome shall prompt unto you, for his Removall from thence to Ostenhanger where he may be secured as well as there, under the Gouvernement of the Ho:^{ble} Sr Edward Scott.

The maine end I aim at in this request is only the preservation of his health, wch I feare may be in some danger through the multitude of prisoners committed lately to that place from Arundell Castle, to the number of one hundred and upwards of wch companie divers have dyed since soe I commend this businesse to your serious and charitable consideration wherein if you shall gratify me I shall remaine gratefull to you and always pray for your welfare,

Ann Brockman

The next in the series (Letter 4) from Sir William makes specific reference to his being appointed Sheriff of Kent as well as describing the poor conditions in which he is held.

Letter 4

*To the Hono:^{ble} House of Commons in Parliament assembled
The humble petition of S^r: W^m Brockman of the County of Kent Knight
Shewing that yo^r petitioner for being nominated high sheriffe of the said Countie, although he never received any Comission, nor sworne, nor did execute the office or any parte thereof, was sent up a prisoner by S^r Michael Livesey⁵ the 28th of November, 1642 and was committed to Winchester house by order of this hono:^{ble} Assembly the 2[n]^d of December following, where he still remains to the greate damage of his estate and now much daunger of his life and health there being many comon souldiers dead and sicke in the said house.*

Yo^r petitioner therefore humbly prays this hono.^{ble} house will be pleased to grant him his liberty whereby he may be enabled to indeavour the preservation of his life and health, and a subsistence for himselfe and his family.

And he shall ever pray etc. Will: Brockman

In his letter he is clearly saying that he never formally took up the post of Sheriff. We are fortunate that Hasted clarifies the position:

Sir William Brockman of Bytchborough, in Newington, near Hyth, in the 18th year, being appointed by the king, then in arms at Oxford; but being a person of known loyalty to king Charles, he was soon superceded in his office by the authority of the parliament then sitting, and sir John Honeywood of Evington was appointed by them to serve the remainder of the year.⁶

The efforts of Ann and William to obtain better treatment for the prisoner did not go to waste, as Letter 5 confirms. Sir William's case was referred to a House of Commons committee set up to review the status of prisoners and on 27th February they received notice that his case would be referred for consideration.

Letter 5

Die martes 27 ffebr 1644

It is this day ordered by the Commons assembled in Parliamt that the humble petition of Sr W:^m Brockman be referred to ye consideration of the Committee appointed to confer with the Scotte Com:⁷ and to consider of some Course for ye Petitioners Relief and others of the like nature.

H: Byng Parl: D:

This letter from Parliament is actually confirmed by its own House of Commons records of business on the same date:

Twisden's &c. Petitions

Ordered, That the humble Petition of Sir Roger Twisden, and Sir Wm. Brockman, be referred to the Consideration of the Committee appointed to confer with the Scotts Commissioners, and to acquaint them with them; and to consider of some Course for the Petitions and others of the like Nature.⁸

Parliament had effectively granted Sir William consent to plead for an improvement in his situation and, ultimately, his release.

Whether Ann Brockman knew that they were making some progress is uncertain. It is clear that she and William were in regular contact and

so it is likely that they were coordinating their approaches to parliament. Ann wrote again, but the letter, in which she describes her sudden illness, rather than going direct to the committee for prisoners appears to have gone via William, as he is able to write an additional plea on the same paper around two of the folded edges of the page. He also pleads for a relaxation in the financial penalties imposed by Parliament. The response from the Committee is written on the same letter.

Letter 6

To the ho^{ble} Committee for Prisoners:

The humble petition of Dame Anne Brockman, wife of Sir Wm Brockman now p^rison in London.

Sheweth,

That yo^r petitioner about the begiminge of ffeb last petitioned the ho^{ble} Comittee in Kent for the removall of her Deare husband to Ostenhangar Prison in the countye aforesaid whence shee humblye [conceaved] his p^{son} might be sufficiently secured. And then being encouraged by their noble acceptance thereof & assent thereunto. [W^{ch}] withall thankfulness Shee acknowledgeth. Y^r pet^r now fallen very Dangerously sick is emboldened Humbly to pray the allowance & approbacion of this hono^{ble} Comittee for his removal wherby shee may be in hope to see him before shee dye The [considered] yo^r pet^r humbly prays yo^r hono^r will please to give p[resent] [.....] for [her] [said] husbands removal to the prison aforesaid:

And as Dutey shall ev^r pray etc

Ann Brockman

Much Ho^{red}, I have layen here in a sadd condition these 15 moneths and now it hath pleased God to visitt my wife with a very dangerous sickness, such a one as shee much feareth shee shall not live to see me, and therefore hath sent to me to use what meanes I can for my speedy coming to her, now hearing of your sitting at Knole^o and yt by your assistance I may obtaine this favour, I have made bold to write unto you, humbly requesting yt you wilbe a meanes whereby I may have soe much liberty as to goe downe for 2 or 3 weekes to comfort (if it not too late) her languishing state, and it may stand with your good [word obliterated] likinge to be removed to Ostinghanger prison, where I may be as well secured as here, these or one of them if you shall vouchsafe to grant me you shall for ever bind us to acknowledged our selves,

Your most obliged servante Will: Brockman

Sr being informed by an address which S^r Will: Brockman hath made to this Committee of ye indisposition of his owne health, and ye present dangerous condition of his Ladies sickness we have thought fitt to certifie you and ye rest of ye Committee for prisoners & we doe not apprehend any daunger to ye county by his remove to Ostinhager prison in Kent. And therefore if it shall please ye committee upon his petition to them to give

*way to it, wee shall willingly give our consent and remaine
Sr your humble servants: Ed: Monins, Nich: Miller, Aug: Skinner, Tho:
Seyliard, Humphrey: Scott, John Boys, Lambarde Godfrey Knowle 18
March 1644*

The approval to be moved from London down to Kent, so close to home, would have been a great fillip for Sir William. However, as we shall see below, this transfer to Westenhanger did not happen until 6 June; in the intervening time, however, he was allowed a short visit in March/April under guard to his home.

Early in 1644 Parliament offered an amnesty to malignants on condition that they took the Covenant, an oath agreed earlier (30 January) with the Scots calling for uniformity of religion between Scotland, England and Ireland, i.e. abolishing episcopacy and establishing a presbyterian organisation of the Church. Many Englishmen took the oath including Sir William Brockman, but most with varying degrees of reservation.¹⁰ Thus, on the same day that the Committee of Prisoners were deciding that Sir William was safe to move out of London back to Kent, he was taking steps to further demonstrate his repentance and harmlessness to the new regime by taking the oath at a local church (Letter 7).

Letter 7

*These are to certify, those, whom it may concerne, that Sr William
Brockman of Newington next Hide, of the county of Kent hath taken the
last Solemne Covenant (this 18th day of March 1644) this in the parish of
Alhallowes HonyLane
Witness [o] ... names subscribed*

*Dated Mar.18.1644 X Henry Vertue Rect.
Joett [...] Churchwardens
Luke [...]*

Although William took the covenant he also went to some lengths to define his interpretation of it:

Letter 8

*I have read this Covt: over and over, and as farr as I shall [con]c[e]ive in
my Conscience it is according to ye word of God, and soe farr as it is not
repugnant to my former lawfull oathes lawfully taken, being constreyned
I take it, in this sense, viz*

*To observe it according to my condition, place and calling, and not beyond
ye same, and as I shall find it according to ye word of God only.*

To endeavour ye extirpation of Episcopacy only soe farr as I can in my

conscience be convinced to be against sound doctrine, the power of Godliness and noe other wise.

With our estate and lives to preserve, (etc.) only soe farr forth, as I shalbe obliged to it by law, and noe further.

To discover Malignants) That is, such as of my owne certaine knowledg would divide ye King from his people, or yt shall make any faction contrary to what is according to ye word of God, ye power of Godliness, as is exprest in this Covenant.

That they may receive, such punishment as ye supream indications of both Kingdoms, or others having power from them shall iudge convenient) I conceive this to be, not any arbitrary punishment, but what they shall impose according to law, is intended.

To maintaine ye peace of both Kingdoms) According to my place and calling, soe farr as it is concluded by ye parliaments of both K:doms in their late Acts.

To assist those yt enter into this League Soe farr forth only, as by law I am bound.

Not to make defection to ye contrary part) I conceive ye contrary part to be, those mentioned in ye preface, by ye name, of ye enimies of God.

The comon enimies) Namely, Those under whose Antichristian tyranny, ye Churches of God are sayd to groane. In ye latter clause. Not to give our selves to a detestable Newtrality in this cause), yt is, fervently to profess, ye true protestant Religion, against Antichristian tyranny, and soe to continew all ye days of my life.

Which I pray God enable me to doe. Amen.

Sir William's reservations, if they were made public, did not go against him and, indeed, presumably on compassionate grounds he was granted permission to visit his home at Beachborough for 12 days.

Letter 9

Att the Comittee for Prisoners March 21t 1644

Wheras the Comittee of the County of Kent has certified this Committee that Sr William Brockman Kt is conceived by them to be noe dangerous person or likely to make any disturbance to that County, and they doe further certify the weake condition of his Lady [These] are therefore to authorize the Keepers of Sr William Brockman to goe along with the said Sr William to his howse in Kent and to return with him within 12 dayes and to give accompt to this Committee uppon his returne.

Richard Knightly

*To Alderman Bunce¹¹ one of the Sheriffes of London
vera Copia Testa Ja: Bunce*

By vertue of this above written order I doe give leave unto the said Sr William Brockman to goe unto his house in Kent near Dover with his Keeper Ja Yarrow and returne againe unto us in London by the 9th day of Aprill next...rnight be in Anno 1644

Ja: Bunce [v....]

As we have already seen, apart from the letters relating to the terms of Sir William's imprisonment there is ongoing correspondence with the appropriate authorities on the question of a relaxation of the sequestration order on his estate. Details of the role of the County Committee in the administration of these financial penalties is given by Eales.¹² No doubt encouraged with the progress made on his transfer to Westenhanger Sir William moves to regaining control of his assets. On 30 March William had roughed out a request to have his estate returned to his control (Letter 11, presumably written from Beachborough).

Letter 11

March:30 1644 To the Honourable S^r Edward Scott Knight, and Lambert Godfrey Esq. Deputie Lieutenants. The humble petition of S^r William Brockman Kt.

Sheweth yt where as my Estate is sequestred or rather stopt as M^r Lambard Godfrey told me at London for default of payment of certaine cesses granted by ordinance of Parliament w^{ch} Taxes are now all payd both by my wife: And also by my tenants, by deducting out of my Rents, I am emboldened (having tasted of your goodness in a large measure) to crave this favour; that you please to remove this sequestration, or stop. In regard a plenary satisfaction is made of all payments due from me to ye parliament.

Wherefore he humbly prayes you wilbe pleased to settle him, in his former condition of Estate.

And he shall ever pray etc.

The Committee for Sequestration considered Sir William's request at Scott's Hall, Smeeth, home of Sir Edward Scott. The Scott family had been in Kent at least as long as the Brockman's and they would have been well known to each other. (It will be recalled that in Letter 1 Ann Brockman made the request for her husband to be transferred to Westenhanger prison to be under Sir Edward Scott's governance.)

Letter 12 [Note on page reverse 'S^r WB's sequestracon taken off 1644']

At the Committee of sequestration at Scotts Hall, 3 Aprill 1644

Whereas the estate of Sr William Brockman Kt was sequestered & stay

made of his rents in the handes of his severall ten^{es} by order from the Committee of Sequestration for refuseall of the paym^t of certaine sesses duly payable to the Parliam^t which sayd sesses he hath given satisfied & payde It is ordered that his estate by discharged from sequestracon & the severall tenants are authorised to pay to him as to his wife theyre severall rents as formerly And the sequestrators are to forbear to demande & receive any of the sd rents or to proceed any further in the sd sequestracon.

Edward Scott

Lambarde Godrey

In Letter 12, the sequestration order against Beachborough appears to be lifted, officially allowing Sir William to retake control of his property. Other references indicate that even though a sequestration order might be lifted Sir William still had to make a payment to Parliament to secure the arrangement.

The granting of extra leave to remain at his home appears to have followed the lifting of the sequestration order:

Letter 13

Aprill 5 1644

To the Committe of the house of Com̄ons for prisoners

Whereas the said Committee is informed by Sr Edward Scot and Capt Thomas Brodnax of the sick and weake estate of the Lady ann Brockman And for that S^r William Brockman desires to stay in the countrie. It is this day ordered that S^r William Brockman shall have leave to stay at [A month] longer after his fower [te...e] dayes expired? And for soe doing this shalbe their warrant.

Richard Knightly

Ja: Bunce

Mr sheriff

Bunce

By vertue off this warrant above written I give full power & Authority

Ja:Bunce

The next document in the archive (apparently dated May 1644) is a page holding a series of draft letters and notes, written by William Brockman. In the first letter William reveals that Ann had actually moved up from Kent to London, to be close to him. However, Ann had apparently fallen ill at this time, and William was advised to send her back to Kent. In these circumstances Sir William requests that his transfer to Westenhanger be speeded up.

Letter 14

Hon^{ble}

I made bold about two Monethes since to crave ye assistance of this Ho^{ble} Committee for gaininge liberty to goe into Kent a remove to Ostinghanger prison which with all thankfulness I acknowledge I obtained in regard of ye weakness and ill disposition of my wife of which I make noe question but some of this Ho^{ble} company have certaine knowledg off. This I faine not for an Apologie, (I would it were otherwise with us) but Gods wilbe done. Since (with much difficulty) I brought her up to London hoping here to find some meanes of helpe, but I see by experience ye phisitions also advise yt ye Country is much better for her. Therefore my sute is as formerly, yt you wilbe pleased (if you admitt of this my humble request) to grant me your certificate to ye Ho^{ble} House of Commons for my remoueaill to Ostinghangar where I shalbe neere my weake and sick wife in this her extremity. This obtained I shall apprehend for a special favour and euer remaine yours in all observance. W: B:

And there finding my wife extreamely ill I entreated my neere Kinsman Capt Thomas Brodnax to write a letter (to Sr Henry Heyman) and yt he would solicit Sr Ed Scott for his approbation, who also sett his hand to it by whose meanes I hartily thanke them I had longer time of stay there allotted me.

My letter to Mr Westrowe¹³

Sr I must first crave your pardon for my unseasonable troubling you here in London, it was ye streightness of time, and my wives illness yt pressed me to it at yt time, and now I must plead ye same excuse these fines, where in I shall desire your favour in preserving this enclosed to ye Ho^{ble} Committee. I presume it wilbe noe way preiuditiall to you (it being only an humble request to be removed to Ostenhanger in regard of my wives weakness) nor (I hope) any thing yt ye Ho^{ble} Committee will except against. S^r I doe yt rather trouble you because I am confident you know ye truth of this my assertion, and therefore will (I presume) further my desire, and engage me to acknowledge my selfe, S^r your obliged friend and servant :W B

A copy of ye certificate from Knowle ye 22 May 1644

Wee doe humbly certify yt wee perceive it noe way preiuditiall to ye county or Kindome to have S^r W: B Remoueed to Ostinhanger in Kent according to his request, his Ladies indisposition being such as shee cannot without danger of life live out of ye Country. And therefore he desires to be neere her however it pleases God to deale with her.

*Ed: Monins Ant: Weldon**Blunt John Boys**To ye Ho^{ble} Committee for prisoners**The humble pet. of S^r W: B: K^r:**Sheweth**That your petition hauing formerly obtained favour of (Tho: Westrowe this*

Ho^{ble} Committee for liberty to goe in to Kent upon ye security of Sheriffe Bunce to see his distressed and sick wife, and hauing since brought her up to London in hope to gett some meanes of her recovery, but soe it is, shee remaining very ill, is advised by phisitions to returne againe into ye Country agayne.

Your petitioner humble prayes (and ye rather for yt he hath ye allowance of ye Committee sitting at Knowle for his remoueuall to Ostinghanger prison) yt this Ho^{ble} Committee will please to give order to Sheriff Bunce for your petitioners remove thither, yt soe he may be neere his house for ye comfort of his wife.

And he shall ever pray etc. Will: Brockman

On the 27th May 1644 Sir William received confirmation of his transfer to Westenhanger:

Letter 16

*At ye Committee for prisoners this 27 of May 1644
You are upon sight hereof to take into your custody ye body of Sr William Brockman K^t and him to detaine and keepe untill further order from ye House of Commons or this Committee.*

Richard Knightley

*To ye Keeper of Ostinghanger
prison in ye County of Kent*

*I came into Ostinghanger according to this aboue letter ye 6th of
June 1644*

The next letter is a receipt for £30.00 paid by Sir William as a loan towards the cost of paying for the support of the Scottish army. In it he is even guaranteed interest on the loan; although the handwriting has proved too difficult to identify the exact rate of interest payable.

Letter 17 [Title on reverse 'Scotts and Sturtons acquittance for 30£']

*The sixth daye of June 1644
Received the daye and yeare above written by us whose names are subscribed being Treasurers for the raising of money towards the payment of the hundred thousand pounds agreed to be forthwith advanced for our brethren of Scotland towards the payment of their Army raised for our assistance the some of Thirty pounds of William Brockman, Kni^{ght} dwelling in the p[ar]ish of Newington in the Countie of Kent, w^{ch} was assessed on him by the Assessors appointed for that pish by vertue of an Ordynance of both houses for that purpose wch is to be repayd unto the said William Brockman knight or his assignes with interest after the rate of [viii?] per Centum, after the repayment of such somes as have been*

*voluntary lent by waye of loane to the same purpose for repayment thereof
the publique faith of both kingdomes is engaged
received Thirtie Poundes:*

Robert Scott

John Sturton

One wonders just how voluntarily this loan was made and, indeed, whether there was ever any repayment. It is probable that this was part of the deal to get the sequestration order lifted from his estate.

Five months after his removal to Westenhanger prison, Sir William received a letter from the local parliamentary militia pressing Sir William for a contribution to their armoury. Sir William is asked for two muskets. He is also asked for two corsletts (armour). The following two letters are actually lodged in a different catalogue within the Brockman collection but they clearly fit the time and the subject.

Letter 18

Noble Sr:

*it was your promise to my Brother (as I am informed) to finde 2 [?] Corsletts
and 2 musketts in his Company, the which he listed accordingly in his
muster [.....] whereby many in the Hundred doe thinke there hath [...]
much parchiallitie [...], you only have beene exempted hitherto, when
none els but doe finde Armes according to their abilities. My request unto
you is, you would be pleased [.....] to provide two musketts and two
Corsletts or the Countries [...] the which I hope you will readily doe, in
respect they are but an easie proportion of your estate. And soe you are
most affectionately saluted by*

Yr respective friend and Servant

John Dixwell

Nov 28th 1644

Sir William followed up on this request (Letter 19).

Letter 19

*Hond Sr: I doe acknowledge I promised your brother to find such armes
as he should impose on me, but with this principle, yt he would give me
authority where by I might provide them without prejudice to him or my
selfe for I told him there was a rumour in ye Country yt I had 60 Armes
ready in my house, soe yt if I should make up any, they would have them,
some ground for their false suggestions, but presently after this my house
was searched and they had taken away from me by Mr Lambard Godfrey
by warrant from Sr Edward Scott (as I now best remember) and carried
to Scotts Hall, it is true, few of them were fitting for field service but
there were some musketts and cosletts yt were bought by your uncle Sr
[Bas...] which are, or may be (with little cost) made fitting, Yet I cannot*

but wonder what benefitt or loss it can be to any of ye Hundred, if there were partiality showed to any (but my comfort is, he lives not, ye hath not enemies) and I had thought, ye imprisonment of my body has been sufficient to have emptied Armes, but I shall [...] yt, and humbly request yt you would be ameanes where by I may have so many as you shall expect from me returned to me and now, yt I have order to provide them I will as suddenly as possibly they can be made ready and fitting for your service put them in ye keeping (being unwilling to give offence) of those men, whom you shall command [...] them. Thus with my most respectve Service to ye ever hn Mr Dixwell and your self presented I desire to be esteemed amongst ye rest a I have ever been. Now and am Sr, your affectionate friend & reall servant

WB

By March 1645 the authorities were prepared to relax the terms under which Sir William was imprisoned; a committee at the House of Commons granted him liberty from Westenhanger prison on condition he is accompanied by a prison official.

Letter 20

15th March 1645

*At the Comittee of the House of Comōns
for Examinations*

*It is this day ordered that Sr W^m Brockman have libertie for three dayes in a weeke to goe in custody of his Keeper about his [.....] if he desire the same, & that the restraint as a close Prissoner uppon him bee taken of.
Miles Corbett*

[other page]: *'the order for Sir William Brockman'*

Sir William had provided the authorities with a neat summation of his ordeal in a draft letter which concludes by requesting the escorted leave from prison.

Letter 21

...by ye fauour of this comittee was transmitted ['from London' scored out] to Ostenhanger; and sheweth, yt your petitioner hoped your owne conditions as well as his ['before this time' inscribed above] (yt Gentlemen considering anothers ruine + destruction) before this time, would have presented this solicitation of your mercy and fauour:

That he is not conscious to him selfe of ye least provocation of your displeasure, other than y^t non concurring in ye vow and covenant yet y^t proceeded from his Judgment not his will, & however; not confused upon any other by imprisonment but him selfe, as he conceiveth.

That where his conscience would permitt & give him leave, he hath

testified his obedience to ye parl: as by entring ye league and Covenant, & paying all such Taxes and sesses as were levied for ye defence thereof knowing yt without a par^r our Religion and liberties may be invaded.

That ye disturbances of ye Counties peace in ye late plott of Dover Castle¹⁴ neither [consulted] or dared to unite your petitioners affection to their unwarrantable and wicked courses.

That he confessed ye K: commissioned him for sheriff of this county but (he calleth God to witness) he did as little know there of before as he did after Act therein, & conceiveth it cannot be interpreted his fault, though it were his fortune to be nominated thereunto.

That he hath susteyned about two yeare and a quarters imprisonment to his infinite detriment almost to his undoing his tenants having cast a great part of his small estate into his hands, & now for a bout these ten weeks past he beleeveth his restraints not much inferiore to ye Irish villains after their reprisall. being debared from all sociall relations without a witness, who must be an Auditor, and possibly may proue an interpreter also of all passages, and soe what is pretended for a benefitt, may become a prejudice unto him.

Humbly prayeth you wilbe pleased to vouchsafe him yt favour, which, to many greater delinquents ['offenders' written above] hath been afforded. That he upon baile given for his good deportment & for his returne unto this place upon summons given from this Committee he may enjoy his liberty ['or if not soe, yett yt he may bee at home' written above], 2 or 3 nights in a weeke to take care for ye remainder of his (almost) ruined estate.

And he....

After all this time, hardship and activity, the final order for Sir William to be released from prison, on a tiny piece of paper, is short and to the point. It is easy to imagine the sense of relief Sir William must have felt on receiving it:

Letter 22

By virtue of an order of ye Committee of ye house of Comons for Examinations impowring us soe to doe, wee require you to lett at liberty ye person of Sr William Brockman Kt: he first payinge all dues of his imprisonment. And for soe doinge this shall be your discharge. Dated at Scott: Hall ye 12 of August 1645.

*Edward Scott John Honiwood
Robert Scott John Browne
Westrow*

*To Willm Spicer Keeper of
ye prison at Ostinghanger*

Sir William Brockman and the Battle of Maidstone, 1648

The Brockman papers do not shed any light on Sir William's involvement but this is well known from other sources. Nor do we have any direct evidence of his activities in the nearly three years after his release in August 1645. The events leading up to the battle may be briefly summarized.¹⁵ Anti-Parliament and anti-Puritan unrest in Kent had begun in late 1647 when the Canterbury authorities tried to enforce orders banning the celebration of Christmas Day, which happened that year to coincide with the City's Saturday market. Disturbances occurred when market stalls were forcibly closed. Over the next few days the number of dissidents was reinforced by outsiders and emboldened, they released people from prison and closed the City gates in the face of troops hastily gathered by the County Committee. A truce soon allowed the Parliament to regain control of the City and the ringleaders were tried in May 1648, but acquitted. A petition demanding a religious and political settlement that acknowledged the rights of both King and Parliament proved a rallying point for resurgent royalist feeling in the county. This coincided with a revolt of the Downs fleet. By the end of May there were over 10,000 armed Royalist sympathizers active in the county. A group of Kentish cavaliers lay siege to Dover castle and took control of those at Deal and Walmer and having secured these moved on towards Rochester and Maidstone.

Parliament ordered a rapid crushing of this uprising and Sir Thomas Fairfax, in command of 4,000 seasoned troops, left Blackheath and marched towards Rochester. Before reaching Gravesend he changed tactics, sending a small force to dispute Rochester, and turned his main body southward towards the main concentration of Royalist forces around Maidstone. When the Parliamentary force reached the steep escarpment at Ryarsh they could see the enemy encampment on Burham Heath, eight miles away beyond the Medway.¹⁶

By evening of 31 May the Parliamentarians were encamped four miles west of Maidstone on East Malling Heath. During the night the Royal-ists in the town hastily threw up earthworks and barricaded streets. Believing that Fairfax was bound to cross the river either at Aylesford or the Town bridge, strong guards were set at those points. Fairfax sent small feints towards Aylesford but his main body crossed by the bridge at East Farleigh (**Fig. 2**), turned east towards Maidstone and overwhelmed the rebels' guard at the bridge over the River Loose (see **Map 1**). The royalist forces were on the back foot from the start, being separated from their main force (at Burham Heath) the bulk of which did not become engaged in the battle.

By 7 pm on 1st June Fairfax was contesting the barricades at the bottom of Stone Street. Two regiments in the town one led by Sir William Brockman and the other by Sir John Mayney, his cousin, plus reinforcements from

Aylesford swelled the defenders to over 2,000. Intense street to street fighting took place throughout the evening in heavy rain until the rebels were overwhelmed the final stand being made in the churchyard of St Faiths.

An eye-witness account of the Maidstone battle is given by Matthew Carter who published a book in 1650 entitled *A most true and exact relation of that honourable and unfortunate expedition of Kent, Essex and Colchester*. Carter, who served as a senior non-commissioned officer in the hastily created army, attaining the rank of Quarter-master General, wrote his account whilst in prison, as a means of obtaining release through a display of public confession:

For in the night the lord Fairfax, with his whole body, marching downe towards Maidstone, and finding the River slightly guarded, about Farley Bridge beyond the town some two miles, easily got over; and with a strong party fell upon the towne, ere those within it were almost alarumed; in which town lay part of Sir John Maynies, and Sir Will. Brockmans Regiments enquartered, that never came to the Rendezvous, consisting of about eight hundred men.

At one stage, Carter records that the defenders almost pushed the parl-

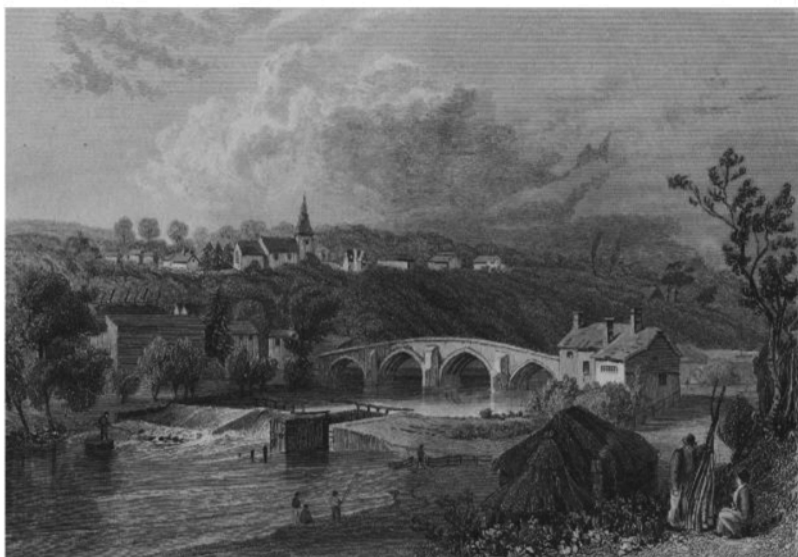
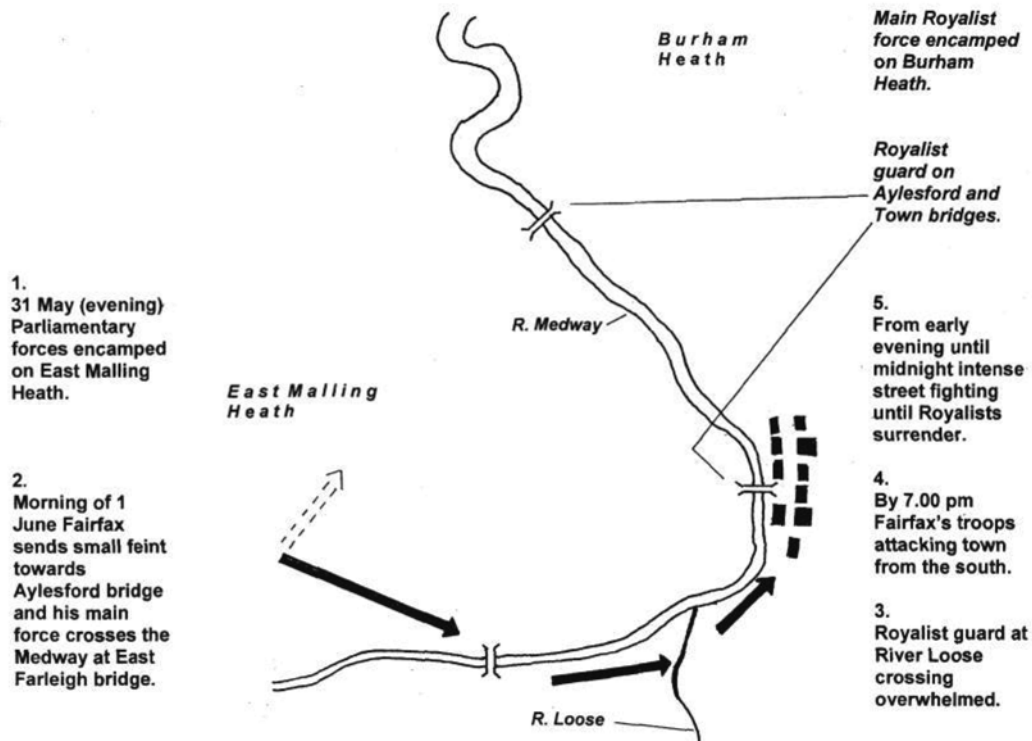


Fig. 2 East Farleigh bridge as shown in an early nineteenth-century print (looking west).



Map 1 The Battle of Maidstone, 1 June 1648, showing the five-mile advance by the Parliamentary forces to attack the Royalist positions in the town.

liamentarian army out of the town. However, Fairfax himself rallied his troops and they went forward again:

Fairfax finding his party in such disorder, even upon a Retreat, alighted from his Horse, and came himselfe with them to encourage them on, who were daunted by the unexpected courage of these defendants, that their disorder was like enough to have much endangered their whole Body.

But at the last, fresh men still powring their shot in upon them, they were beaten off from their Hedges, and forc'd to dispute the losse of their ground from place to place, against an extraordinary disadvantage, the Enemies Horse now breaking in upon them on all parts, and shewing but little remissenesse in their execution, when they had an opportunity to make any home Charge upon them; yet they left not their Courage with their ground, but still disputed the losse of every foot with as clear a Courage as if but still beginning to engage; from street to Street, and from Porch to Porch, often falling upon Enemy Horse with onely their Swords, in such a generous manner, as they seemed as prodigall of their Bloods, as they were of their Blowes, which they distributed in a plentifull manner on every one durst stand to receive them; insomuch that they put them to as often Retreats, by their so handsome and bold Encounters; but being still over-powred by the numerous reserves that continually advanced on them, were enforced still to Retreat, till at the last they came to the Church-yard, and from thence to the Church, quitting not any place dishonourably, or unhandsomely: So that they made the businesse so really hot, and difficult, that I am confident the Victors themselves would have wish'd to have rather been without that Victory, than to have purchased it at so dear a rate.

Sir William's involvement is also mentioned in the report to Parliament by Lord Fairfax himself:

To the Right Honourable the Earl of Manchester, Speaker of the House of Lord, pro Tempore, at Westm'r.

My Lord,

It having pleased God to give us a Victory against those who without and against the Authority of Parliament raised an Army, I held it my Duty to give your Lordship an Account thereof (in brief), Time not permitting me at present to give the Particulars at large. The Engagement with them began the last Night, about Seven of the Clock, near Maydstone, and continued a very fierce and hot Dispute until after Twelve, before we could be Masters of the Town: The Enemy, by reason of the continued Supplies which they received from their Forces by the Passage over Alesford, were enabled to dispute every Street and Passage. The choicest of their Forces (as we understand) were appointed for this Service; and the Lord Gowring commanded them as General. There was about Two Hundred

of the Enemy slain, many wounded, about Nine Hundred Prisoners, Four Hundred Horse, and Eight Pieces of Cannon, and great Store of Arms and Ammunition taken. Sir William Brockman and others of the Gentlemen are Prisoners. As God hath been pleased in Mercy to give you this Victory, so I desire that we may return all Thankfulness unto Him for it. I shall (as God shall enable me) improve this Advantage; and remain

Maidstone, [...] June, 1648.

Your Lordship's

Humble Servant,

T. Faifax.

Sir William was arrested after the battle of Maidstone and held for some considerable time. A reference in the Calendar of Rolls for 27 May 1651 states;

the Committee for Examinations to take care that Sir William Brockman and Jas Newman, prisoners in Dover Castle, be speedily examined and a report made, that further order be taken concerning them.

It is fair to assume that an additional reference to the fines imposed on Sir William (£500) and his brother Zouch (£350), along with various other people in 1651, arose as a direct consequence of the action at Maidstone.¹⁷

This collection of letters, so fortunately preserved, provides a very interesting view of a troubled time and the way in which it impacted on one family. But clearly there is a lot of detail about the Brockman family's activities at the period which is missing. Sir William died on 6 December 1654, aged 59. Ann lived until 1660 and they are both buried in the family plot at Newington.

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The British Library; for permission to reproduce the papers of the Brockman manuscript collection, © British Library Board 2009 (Add 42618).

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ENDNOTES

¹ The British Library, Brockman MSS. Add 42618. Miss Burford Butcher, 'The Brockman Papers', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, XLIII (1931), 281-3. It includes a Brockman family tree. The papers range in date from 1256 to the nineteenth century.

² Everitt, A., 1966, *The Community of Kent and the Great Rebellion, 1640-1660*, Leicester UP, p. 187.

³ To avoid confusion dates have been altered to the new style calendar throughout this paper, including within quoted letters.

⁴ The remains of Winchester House lie on the south bank of the river Thames in London, close to Southwark cathedral. In November 1642, the House of Lords had agreed that the house should be turned into a prison and Thomas Davenish was appointed keeper.

⁵ Sir Michael Livesey, first baronet (1614-1665), resided at Eastchurch on the Isle of Sheppey. He was prominent in the puritan movement in Kent and continued to play a prominent role in both the military and parliament throughout the period of the civil war and references note him as being amongst the most radical of figures of the day. In 1648, Sir Michael served on the high court of justice in the trial of Charles I and was one of the signatories of the king's death warrant. ODNB online.

⁶ Hasted, E., 'General history: Sheriffs of Kent', in *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent*: Volume 1 (1797), pp. 177-213.

⁷ 'Scottie Com:' may refer to Sir Edward Scott's Committee. This would make more sense as Sir Edward Scott was both the lathal head of the County Committee (for Shepway, where Brockman's home was located) with his headquarters at Scot's Hall from 1643 and he was also on the County Sequestration Committee. (Sir Roger Twysden also wrote to his (kinsman) Sir Edward Scott in 1643 seeking his support and asking for an explanation for his sequestration.) It seems that in Brockman's case, the Commons were delegating decisions on his petition to the relevant man on the County Committee.

⁸ House of Commons Journal Volume 3: 27 February 1643/4, Journal of the House of Commons: volume 3: 1643-1644 (1802), pp. 408-410. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk>.

⁹ Knole House (Sevenoaks) was used as the Headquarters of the County Committee for Kent during 1643-4, before the Committee moved to other locations. See Eales, J., 'Kent in the Civil Wars and Commonwealth', in T. Lawson and D. Killingray (eds), *An Historical Atlas of Kent*, Chichester, 2004, map p. 90.

¹⁰ Eales, J., 2001, 'Kent and the English Civil Wars, 1640-1660', in F. Lansberry (ed.), *Government and Politics in Kent, 1640-1914*, Boydell, p. 22.

¹¹ James Bunce was known to the Brockman family and in an exchange of letters between Sir William and Bunce in February 1643/4 they acknowledge each other as kinsmen (Letter 10), albeit on different sides of the conflict. William's wife, Ann, was the daughter of one Simon Bunce (d.1611) and from what can be gleaned through other genealogical information it can reasonably be concluded that James Bunce was a cousin of Ann's.

¹² Eales, 'Kent and the English Civil Wars, 1640-1660', p. 19.

¹³ Thomas Westrowe served in the House of Commons on their committee for raising war funds from Kent (7 May 1643). One other reference shows that Thomas Westrowe was appointed deputy Lieutenant Sheriff of Kent on 13 September 1643. Therefore, it would seem that Thomas Westrowe was the man that Sir William had to bargain with over the amount of the fine that had been assessed on Beachborough and whatever other land holdings Sir William had. ODNB online. See also Everitt, *op. cit.* (note 2), pp. 136-7; Thomas Westrowe was a committeeman of Mersham.

¹⁴ Eales, 'Kent and the English Civil Wars, 1640-1660', p. 22. A Royalist plot to seize Dover castle was uncovered and eight conspirators apprehended.

¹⁵ Ibid. pp. 23-6.

¹⁶ Everitt, *Community of Kent*, pp. 260-63.

¹⁷ There is a final piece of evidence on the financial penalties imposed on the Brockman family during the Civil War period. 'Zouch Brockman of Cheriton' appears in a list of c.350 Kentish gentry 'required to bring in particulars of their estates or security for their peaceable demeanour' for the inspection of the Commission who were charged to assess, levy and enforce an extraordinary tax. See P. Bloomfield, 'The Cromwellian Commission in Kent, 1655-7', in *Studies in Modern Kentish History* (eds A. Detsicas and N. Yates), KAS, 1983.