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# BRISTOL AT THE TIME OF THE SPANISH ARMADA

JEAN VANES



BRISTOL BRANCH OF THE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

LOCAL HISTORY PAMPHLETS

*Hon. General Editor:*     PATRICK McGRATH

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*Bristol at the time of the Spanish Armada* is the sixty-ninth pamphlet to be published by the Bristol Branch of the Historical Association. Its author, Dr Jean Vanes, is a leading authority on the history of the city in the sixteenth century. She edited a volume of documents for Bristol Record Society on the overseas trade of Bristol and she has contributed two earlier pamphlets to this series. She has also written a history of the Red Maids' School.

The illustration on the front cover shows the *Ark Royal*, 1587, and is reproduced by kind permission of the Trustees of the National Maritime Museum.

The last two pamphlets in this series were considerably larger than usual, but no change was made in the price, because the Branch received two very generous donations which helped pay the cost. This pamphlet has not been subsidised, and it is necessary to increase the price to £1.50. In future, some pamphlets will be published at £1.00 and others at £1.50.

The pamphlet Appeal Fund, which is designed to put the series on a sound financial basis, is still open, and readers are invited to contribute. Donations should be sent to Peter Harris, 74 Bell Barn Road, Stoke Bishop, Bristol BS9 2DG. Cheques should be made payable to the Bristol Branch of the Historical Association.

Mr Sherborne's pamphlet on *The Port of Bristol in the Middle Ages* has now been reprinted, and *The S.S. Great Western* by the late Mr Grahame Farr will be available again in the near future.

A list of pamphlets still in print is given on the inside back cover. Copies may be obtained from most Bristol booksellers, from the shop in the City Museum, or direct from Peter Harris.

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BRISTOL  
at the time of the  
SPANISH ARMADA

JEAN VANES

## 1. BRISTOL 1570–1585

In a petition of 25 May, 1584, the Bristol men described their city as situated 'in an angle, between Somerset and Gloucestershire' and 'maynteined onlie by the trade of merchandizes.' It was mainly dependent, they said, upon the manufacture and export of coloured cloth, some of which was made in the city and some in Somerset. In addition, it served all the towns and creeks of the Severn valley as far up stream as Shrewsbury.<sup>1</sup> Roger Barlow also described the Severn trade as reaching to Shrewsbury and Bridgnorth, 'counties . . . of goodly pastures, meadowes and woods, grete plentie of corne, fyshe and flesshe.'<sup>2</sup> The city was a great centre of trade where raw materials and foodstuffs from the whole of the West country were manufactured and exchanged for imported commodities, either luxuries like wine, fruit, sugar and spices or the goods used in its industries, such as dyestuffs, oil and iron.

Visitors found it an attractive city, the castle and the old town on high ground between the Avon and the Frome, surrounded inside its ring of water by a double line of walls with towers and gates.<sup>3</sup> Its buildings, public and private, were fine<sup>4</sup> and there were many beautiful churches. The streets were clean, as a raker was employed to keep them tidy and there was 'no dunghill in all the cittie, but all convaied under the ground.'<sup>5</sup> Camden explained that fear of fracturing these underground drains, or 'gouts', was the reason for the use of sleds rather than heavy carts within the

1. B.L. Harleian MS. 368/106.

2. R. Barlow, *A Brief Summe of Geographie*, 47.

3. J. Leland, *Itinerary*, v. 86–7.

4. W. Camden, *Brittania* i. 86.

5. W.M. Smith, B.L. Sloane Ms. 2596 f. 77 and v. also printed by H.B. Wheatley and E.W. Ashby [eds.] *The Particular Description of England 1588* [1879].

town,<sup>6</sup> but it is often said rather that this was to avoid shaking the wine in the cellars beneath, some of them two storeys deep and strongly and sometimes beautifully vaulted.<sup>7</sup> Possession of a good cellar must have been quite valuable as they were frequently leased to merchants for extra storage and often figure in wills or as causes of dispute.<sup>8</sup> By the sixteenth century the water supply seems to have been quite good, with St. Edith's well in the centre of the town and several conduits bringing water from the surrounding hills. The Council frequently employed a plumber to maintain these conduits, particularly the Quay pipe which supplied the ships in the harbour, and to remove objects, such as dead cats, which occasionally fouled the water.<sup>9</sup>

Inside the gates the population was not divided into districts for each trade or social class, though there is no doubt some streets were more fashionable than others; for example, the difference between Wine Street and the nearby Pithay was very marked.<sup>10</sup> The whole Wine Street – High Street area included the markets and the shambles and many butchers, grocers and fishmongers lived there. Small Street was the fashionable area for the merchants during the sixteenth century, perhaps because it was near the Council House, rebuilt with a new merchants' Tolsey or exchange in 1550.<sup>11</sup> But throughout the City there was no absolute division; in Broad Street the gardener lived near the widow of the wax-chandler, whose other neighbour was a skinner, while houses further along the road were occupied by tailors, weavers, a baker and a vintner. In some streets, the tall houses of the merchants over-shadowed small cottages interspersed with stables and open ground.<sup>12</sup> Outside the walls to the north and west, around Broadmead and St. James', a number of tanners and brewers used the water of the River Frome in their workshops.<sup>13</sup> To the south west, near the Cathedral, on the west bank of the Frome, in the

parish of St. Augustine-the-less, were the homes of some gentry and Cathedral dignitaries and also many sailors, lightermen and ships' carpenters. It was a poor area with a shifting population including, by the end of the century, immigrant Irish and other transient labourers.<sup>14</sup> Between the rivers, Baldwin Street, Marsh Street, the Quay and the Back housed merchants, shipwrights and mariners with their warehouses and cellars. The Back Hall, where goods were bought and sold, the Merchants' Hall, the mariners' almshouses and the Chapel of St. Clement stood at the head of the marsh, which was sometimes used for grazing and where tree-lined walks made it a pleasant place in summer.<sup>15</sup> On the south-eastern side of Bristol, in the great bend of the River Avon, the Port Wall enclosed the suburbs of Temple and Redcliffe. This was mainly an industrial area of smaller craftsmen.<sup>16</sup> In the fifteenth century, some wealthy merchants, including William Canynges, had luxurious houses on Redcliffe Back,<sup>17</sup> but there is little sign of this by the sixteenth century. Subsidy lists and rent rolls show that this was an important cloth making and finishing area, where many of the houses had closes or yards with tentering racks and where dyers had their evil-smelling vats or 'settings' of woad. Many kinds of textile workers lived in this area, weavers, dyers, shearmen, coverlet makers, bedders, tuckers, cappers and tailors.<sup>18</sup> There were also a good many leather workers, including glovers and saddlers, and a number of men making metal goods, such as pewterers, wiredrawers and cutlers. These metal trades must have been encouraged by the setting up of a store-house for the King's lead at Redcliffe in the 1540s. This was followed by the mining of increasing amounts of lead in the Mendips and, later in the century, the import of considerable amounts of iron from South Wales.<sup>19</sup>

As the cloth industry declined or concentrated more on the dyeing and finishing sides, other industries began to take its place, among them the manufacture of brass and pewter goods, bell-founding, pin making, soap making and sugar refining, while rope making and the manufacture of leather goods remained important.

6. W. Camden, *Britannia* i. 86.

7. J. Latimer, 'The Civil and Military History of Bristol', *B. & G.A.S.*, xv [1890] 14. T.S. Pope, 'Notes on old Bristol Houses' *Proc. Clifton Antiq. Club*, i [1884–8] 172–4. J.E. Pritchard, 'Bristol Arch. Notes for 1909', *B. & G.A.S.* xxxii [1909] 315.

8. T.P. Wadley, *Notes of the Wills in the Great Orphan Book* [Bristol, 1886]. C 1/765/5–9.

9. C.E. Boucher, 'St. Edith's Well & St. Peter's Cross, Bristol', *B. & G.A.S.* lxi [1939] 95–106. *B.R.L.* 'The Pipes, Pumps & Conduits of Bristol'.

10. P. Slack, *Some Aspects of Epidemics in England*, esp. Table v. 137. [unpublished Oxford D.Phil. Thesis, 1972].

11. J. Latimer, *Sixteenth Century Bristol*, [1908] 29.

12. E 179/114/269.

13. E 179/114/269. B.R.O. AC/B 63 and Hollis, *Calendar of the Bristol Apprentice Book*.

14. A. Sabin [ed], *The Registers of the Church of St. Augustine-the-less, 1577–1700*.

15. W. Camden, *Britannia*, i. 86.

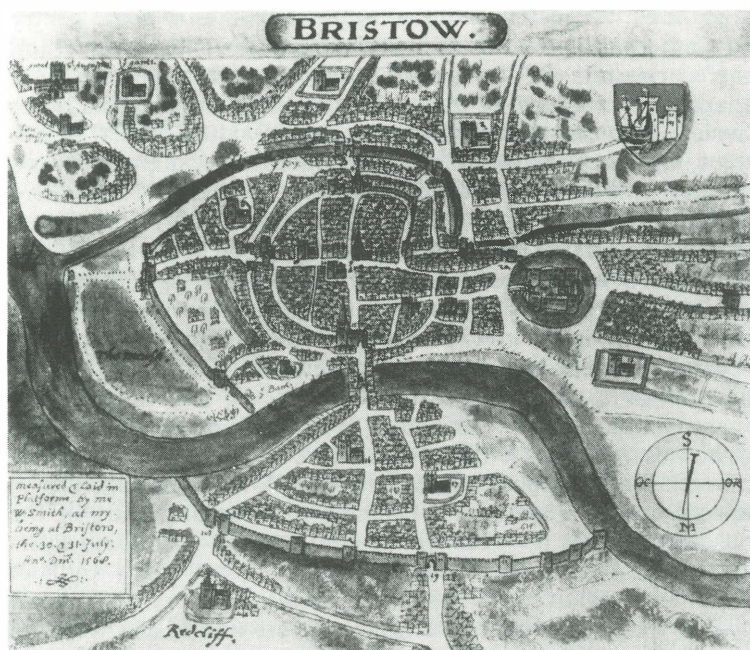
16. E 179/114/269, B.R.O. AC/B 63, B.R.O. AC/M 21/7, the rent rolls of Lord Lisle and Temple Fee.

17. E.M. Carus-Wilson, *Medieval Merchant Venturers*, [1967] 75–9.

18. I. Leadam, *Select Cases before the Star Chamber*, Selden Society xxv [1910] 254. B.R.O. AC/M 21/7. B.R.O. AC/B 63, E 179/114/269.

19. J.W. Gough, *The Mines of Mendip* [Oxford, 1930] 64–5, 83, 89. B.R.O. AC/B 63/210, 216, 266, 283, 284, 297. E 315/472/13, 14.





1. Bristol in 1568, W. Smith, *The Particular Description of England* [1588] Sloane MS. 2596 f77.  
[Reproduced by permission of the British Library Board]

However, it may well be that the transition was not an easy one, coinciding as it did in the late sixteenth century, with major changes in the pattern of world trade, national and international crises and with war and plague.

Contemporary maps show only a few buildings outside the walls on the north and east sides of the town but the 1524 and later subsidy rolls show a fairly large population there, with cottages around and beyond the great keep of the castle and some others on the Weir and at Broadmead. There were more around the granaries and store houses at the Old Jewry as well as at St. James and Christmas Street. From the stone bridge at Frome Gate the forest of masts and sails stretched westwards towards Brandon Hill and the new windmill, built there in 1570.<sup>20</sup>

Some of the inhabitants of the town rented gardens on St. Michael's Hill, but whether for drying cloth or for dove cotes or

20. W. Smith, *The Particular Description of England* [1588] Sloan MS. 2596, 77. John Evans, *A Chronological Outline of the History of Bristol*, [Bristol, 1824].

for growing crops is not known. Down by the river, the brewers and tanners used the then 'pure' water of the River Frome in their work, closely supervised by the Council, who frequently legislated against the addition of hops to the local brew. The noxious 'crock ale', the home brewed variety, was frequently outlawed, since the resultant noisy carousing kept the whole town awake as well as doing the revellers no good at all! The curfew sounded from St. Nicholas' Church at 9 o'clock, the gates were shut and the lantern was lit at the High Cross. After that, most people should be in bed, though the Council was often worried by complaints of, 'Divers lewd and idle persons tippling and gaming at unseasonable howrs'.<sup>21</sup> Working people had to be up early, 'by four the spinner is already at his wheel', by five on a summer morning 'the streets are full of people', and by six 'the shops are open and the school boy hard at his Latin and Greek'.<sup>22</sup>

It is possible to gain from the records some indication of the relative prosperity and importance of the various trades at the mid-century.<sup>23</sup> The merchants formed the richest, though not the largest group. In the twenty year period 1532–1552, 428 lads were apprenticed as merchants, or to the distributive trades, such as haberdashers, drapers and mercers. 111 such merchants and traders paid subsidy in 1545, of whom 78 paid on £10, 7 on £50 and Nicholas Thorne, the richest man in the town, paid on £300. Thus, almost three-quarters of the group paid on £10 or over.<sup>24</sup>

The various textile workers seem to have been the most numerous group, taking 879 apprentices in the twenty year period. However, only 44 textile workers paid subsidy and only 16 of those, as against the 86 merchants paid on £10 or more. The obvious poverty among the textile trades may account for the restrictive nature of many of the Ordinances of the Weavers' Guild and the frequent 'striefferes and controversies which were between the tuckers and shermen of Bristow,' and which continued throughout the century, the demarcation disputes which are often symptoms of a declining industry. The leather trades were next in importance, taking 605 apprentices. They were much more prosperous than the textile workers, the same number, 44, paying subsidy, though the industry probably employed many fewer workers. Also, 27 leather workers as against only 16 textile workers paid on £10, five on £50 and one, John Spring, on £100.

21. B.R.O. 04272/43r.

22. Nicholas Breton, *Fantastickes* [1626] W.G. Hoskins, 'Provincial Life,' in A. Nicoll, *Shakespeare Survey*, 17.

23. B.R.O. 04352, D. Hollis [ed], *A Calendar of the Bristol Apprentice Book 1*. B.R.S. xiv [Bristol] 1949. B.R.O. 04359 [1] E 163/12/2, E 179/114/269.

24. Hollis, *op. cit* App. C. 199–200.

The food and drink trades were quite important, 25 men paying subsidy, perhaps reflecting the need for supplies for victualling ships, as well as the demands of many visiting merchants. Of the 304 metal workers, only eight appear in the subsidy rolls with ten hoopers and one carpenter, a few barbers, hauliers and soap makers.<sup>25</sup>

It is clear from these figures that, although the merchants were a strong and wealthy group, yet the industrial workers were very numerous and the leaders of their guilds were substantial men, so that Bristol's dependence on overseas trade did not in the sixteenth century, permit the merchants entirely to dominate the town to the exclusion of other interests, as seems to have happened elsewhere.<sup>26</sup>

It may have been the increasing difficulties of trade during the wars of the later sixteenth century, the war with France, the problem of rising prices or the troubles of English merchants in Spain which caused the Bristol merchants to become more self-conscious as a group around 1550, when John Smythe compiled a list of 126 names headed, 'such as be marchauntes and hath sporonge of marchauntes.' Possibly he was helping to reorganise the membership of the Merchants' Company and prepare the 'Lamentable representation' which they presented to Edward VI in 1552, and as a result of which they received a new Charter. The new officials were to be Edward Prynne, Master, and Thomas Hicks and Robert Butler, Wardens. No craftsmen might trade unless admitted by the Company either after a seven year apprenticeship or by redemption. At about the same time, the Council House was rebuilt with a new meeting place for the merchants, an open piazza with five pillars supporting the roof and three tables under it.<sup>27</sup>

Some of the most bitter clashes arose from quarrels or rivalry between officials, as when the Sheriff of Bristol was accused of taking by force wheat already seized by Giles Dane, the customs man.<sup>28</sup> It was not unusual for the owners of goods taken by the customs to come by night with an armed gang to repossess them. Smuggling was endemic in the later years of the century when customs rates were high, voyages often perilous and the export of

foodstuffs and weapons forbidden. In 1587, at the time of St. James' Fair, some of the Bristol merchants who had secured a licence for the export of calfskins heard that some men of the Forest of Dean were loading skins aboard a French ship at Kingroad. Thomas James and twelve other merchants took the searchers' pinnace and, with a musket and some pikes went to seize the goods. There were eleven men from the Forest of Dean armed with bows, arrows and pikes and in the battle that ensued some of the Bristol men were injured. Thomas James then seized the musket and shot and killed John Gethin, the master of the other boat. He was eventually acquitted of murder, as having fired in self-defence, but while he was in prison the others shared his confiscated skins between them and the local Sheriffs tried to defraud him of all his possessions.<sup>29</sup>

Such grants of monopoly of trade in various goods, of which there were a great many in the later years of Elizabeth's reign, were very much hated by the other merchants, who evaded them whenever they could. A description of the provincial merchant as 'the stragler, shipping his Clothe and other commoditie in covert maner, hugger mugger, and at obscure ports,' making false entries in the customs books, importing aliens' goods and corrupting the Customs men, may be a clever piece of London propaganda but is, after all, not so far from the truth. The men concerned in smuggling were not an obscure group of disreputable characters; they were the leading merchants of the City, very few of whom are not mentioned in the records of the Exchequer Court. They were Mayors and Aldermen, Masters of the Merchants' Company and this was true throughout the sixteenth century but especially after 1570 when trade was uncertain, voyages to France and Spain were hazardous and customs dues very high. By the end of the century it had become a habit, perhaps even a necessity. They evaded payment of customs duty as they habitually evaded payment of subsidy and, in general, public opinion was on their side.<sup>30</sup> Confiscated goods especially ships, were undervalued; juries acquitted in the teeth of the evidence, and the guilty men of one year were the 'legal and honest' men of the next, assessing their friends' forfeited goods.<sup>31</sup> The question arises as to how far the Crown could afford to offend these men on whom it relied, not

25. B.R.O. 04387/144-9 v. F.F. Fox and J. Taylor, *Some Account of the Guild of Weavers*, 42-53. B.R.O. 04272/37 Fox and Taylor, *Weavers*, 70-1.

26. W.G. Hoskins, 'The Elizabethan Merchants of Exeter', *Elizabethan Government and Society* ed. S.T. Bindoff and others [1961] 165-6.

27. B.R.O. AC/b 63, 300 [A] - [B]. *Cal. Pat. 1550-1553*, 258. J. Evans, *A Chronological Outline of the History of Bristol*. P.C.C. 4 Powell, will of William Shipman.

28. E 159/328 Mich. 10 d.

29. A.P.C. XV 364, XVI 18-19, 336, 403-4. H.C.A. 1/3/92-3.

30. J.E. Neale, *Queen Elizabeth I and her Parliaments 1584-1601* [1957] 415, Sir Walter Raleigh's speech to the Parliament of 1601.

31. N. Williams, *Contraband Cargoes*, 29; 'Francis Shaxton', *E.H.R.* LXVI [1951] 394-5. G.D. Ramsey, *English Overseas Trade*, 186. G.R. Elton, 'Informing for Profit. . . ' *Cambridge Historical Journal*, xi [1954] 151, 166-7.



only for such taxes as were paid, but for ships and men in time of war and for the unpaid administration, not only of the City, but also of a considerable area of the local countryside, for many held country properties. They were alienated by the end of the century between the pressures of wartime embargoes, high taxation and the monopolistic selfishness of the Londoners, but for the time the fabric held and they remained, at least in outward expression, strongly loyal to the monarchy.

This was amply demonstrated when the Queen visited the City in August, 1574. The streets were mended and covered with sand; the High Cross, Lawford's Gate, New Gate and Frome Gate were painted and gilded and 130 pieces of cannon, two tons of gunpowder, with 400 infantry in the city livery gave Her Majesty a rousing welcome. The procession stopped in Christmas Street for the Queen to hear the orations from the boys of the Grammar School, but she soon wearied of their lengthy rhyming couplets and went on to the Great House on St. Augustine's Back where she was to spend the week as the guest of Mr. John Young. The cost to the Council for the week's celebrations seems to have amounted to £1,053 14s 11d.<sup>32</sup>

They might grumble about the expense but they had considerable civic pride and a unique independence. Only London and Norwich paid more in subsidy to the Crown and it is probable that while Bristol's population was around 10,000 that of Norwich was over 12,000 and that of London, which was even then experiencing its own population explosion, nearer to 60,000. But Bristol, which had been a city since 1542, claimed to be a county as well – 'the Bristolians,' it was said, 'will be a shyre of themselves and not accounted in any other shire.' About 20% of the money bequeathed for charitable purposes in the town was for municipal improvements; for building, cleaning the streets, improving the harbour and the water supply. Over 20% went on founding its own famous schools, while only ½% was given for fellowships and scholarships outside the town. The remaining approximately 60% was for the encouragement of apprentices, the founding of almshouses and the relief of poverty in a variety of ways – but almost all within the town. The majority of these bequests were in the form of a capital gift, usually as a charitable trust, administered by a group of their fellow Aldermen and Councillors, showing a

32. J. Nicholls, [ed.] *The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth I*, [1823] 396–408. John Latimer, *The Annals of Bristol in the Sixteenth Century*, [1970] 59–62. *A Bristol Miscellany*, B.R.S. XXXVII, 6–12, The Costs of Queen Elizabeth's visit to Bristol.

remarkable and for most of the sixteenth century, not unjustified confidence in the honesty of town government.<sup>33</sup>

They were extremely jealous of their rights, quick to assert their claim to Admiralty jurisdiction and to resist the encroachments of the President of the Marches of Wales and the petition of Gloucester to be an independent port. Similarly, none of the town's succession of powerful High Stewards, men like Leicester, Burghley and Essex, was able to exercise any right of patronage over the choice of Bristol's Members of Parliament. Throughout the century, the Council normally chose the Recorder and one of the Aldermen to represent them, increasing their payment as prices rose. By 1571, they were paid 4s a day and a lump sum for horse hire and other expenses.<sup>34</sup>

Many of the merchants lived very comfortably. Their stone-built houses in Bristol were three, four or even five storeys high, often with stables and courtyards backing on to another road or lane. Their inventories frequently show a dozen or fifteen rooms, often in two sections, one behind the other with a courtyard between and a covered gallery joining the two at first floor level. The shop with its 'beem of yron' and big weights and the counting house, its cupboards and table full of books and bills, might be at the front of the ground floor, with the kitchen and buttery with their shining brass and pewter vessels at the back.

Hall and parlour occupied the first floor with a deep bay window overlooking the street. The parlour had tables, chairs and stools, with cushions and wall hangings. Venice or Turkey carpets were often used to cover the table and cupboards held pewter, silver or 'parcel gilt' dishes and sets of silver spoons 'knoppid with lion's heads' or 'knoppid with th' Apostles.' Towards the end of the century the rooms were often panelled and had huge ornate plaster fireplaces, a few of which still exist in Bristol. The several bed-rooms, even those at the top of the house 'for apprentices' and servants, were well provided with furniture and linens.<sup>35</sup>

33. W.K. Jordan, *Philanthropy in England, 1480–1660; a study of the changing pattern of English social aspirations* [N. York, 1957]. Also *The Forming of the Charitable Institutions of the West of England*. . . [Philadelphia, 1960].

34. B.R.O. 00001, 2, 00015 [1] [2].

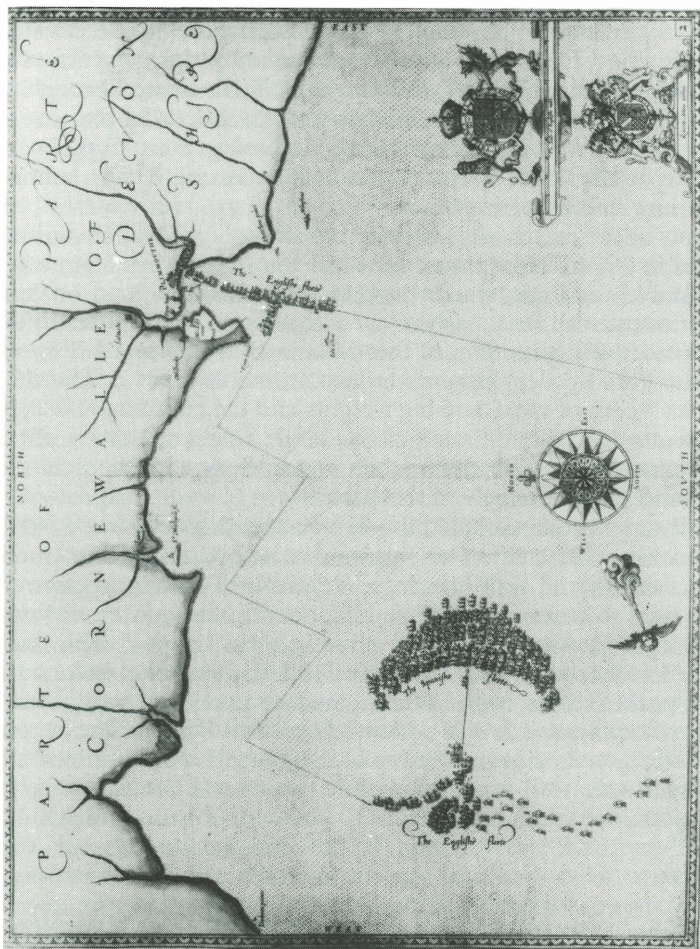
B.R.O. 04721/250.

B.R.O. 04264 [1] 72, 04721.

B.R.O. 04721/246–7.

B.L. Harleian Ms. 368/106.

35. B.R.O. AC/F8/1 Inventory of John Smythe. Inventory of John Whitson, P. McGrath, *Merchants and Merchandise in Sixteenth-Century Bristol*, B.R.S. [1955] 80.



2. The Armada off the coast of Cornwall.  
[Reproduced by permission of the Trustees of the National Maritime Museum]

Compared with this, the house of a craftsman would seem small and bare, but not necessarily squalid. When the house of a tiler was being repaired, six foot oaken boards were used for the kitchen floor and there were several glaziers at work in the City so probably many houses had glass windows.<sup>36</sup>

It would be a mistake to think of the mistress of either of these households as necessarily quite absorbed in her domestic duties. A few took young girls as apprentices in housewifery or sewing; a good many helped their husbands in the business. Walter Roberts' wife seems to have carried on his business when he was imprisoned by the Spaniards and Bridget Cut carried on her late husband's business after Nicholas died in 1582 until she married John Whitson in 1585.<sup>37</sup>

Most of these people were in some degree literate – merchants, their wives, craftsmen, town officials, even the official brokers of merchandise at the Back Hall, who were required to 'wrytt in a fair book, every bargayne and the names of the parties, the date, the price and the quantitie of all the marchandise and wares that shall pass through any of your handes.' John White of Bristol left 'fifty greate bookes of scripture and the lawe and xx small bookes english and latten of dyverse sorts' and also two bibles, a testament, two books of St. Augustine's works, a herball and a 'Cronacle of Fabian's making.'<sup>38</sup>

The later years of the century, however, were marked by increasing poverty and insecurity. Craftsmen, like masons and carpenters were paid by the day, smiths and paviours and glaziers by the yard or foot of work done. There were no pensions, and no insurance; no work – no pay and the death of the bread-winner could mean disaster for a family. Ships' masters and mariners were paid perhaps 18s to 25s for the voyage to Spain or the Mediterranean, with the right to load some cargo for their own profit and 'food' and 'clothes' – of a kind – provided. In 1580, carpenters were paid 1s a day, as were masons and plumbers, almost twice as much as in the 1530s. The tiler received 10d and his man 8d; labourers might have 6d or 8d.<sup>39</sup>

There seem to have been poor labourers always available to help carry wheat to the granary, to stack timber, to help plant trees, to clean out ditches and to help mend the banks of the river

36. B.R.O. 04026 [10] 1575–6.

37. J. Vanes, *The Ledger of John Smythe 1538–1550*, B.R.S. XXVIII [1974] 307. P. McGrath, *John Whitson and the Merchant Community of Bristol*, [Bristol Branch of the Historical Association, 1970] 8.

38. Will of John White, P.C.C. Welles 12. Inventory, B. & G.A.S. XLIII, [1921] 467–8.

39. B.R.O. 04026 [11] 21–24, 97–101, 152–159, etc.



and, at the end of the list, the poor man who was paid a few shillings a year 'for makinge cleane the house of office upon the key.' In the 1580s more homeless vagrants flocked to the city; poor women who sold nails, or tile-pins, and 'an old woman of Hambrook' who sold rough tiles. Large amounts of wheat and meal were purchased and stored in the granaries at the Old Jewry and, in November and December, 1587, the poor and homeless were sent to the House of Correction where they had food and shelter. In October 1585, the Mayor had 70 coal sacks brought to him at the Guild Hall and all that did not hold 2 bushels were burnt. In later years, bedding and sheets and coal were sent to the poor prisoners in Newgate in the cold weather.<sup>40</sup>

On other occasions the poor were sent into the country to beg. In 1571, the Council had badges 'of the Town's Arms to be cast in tin for forty badges to set upon 20 poor people to go into Somerset to seek relief.' At other times the Privy Council forbade the export of grain, as they did in 1575 and 1585 in response to letters from Bristol '... that divers persons have heretofore and at this presente doe lade great quantities of wheat with intente to transporte the same into Spaigne in disorderd manner . . . causing the enhansinge of the price . . . ' 1585 was particularly severe and the Mayor brought bread from Pensford and seized butter from a ship at Kingroad to sell cheaply to the poor commons.<sup>41</sup> On the 18th December of that year, the Council agreed that all assembled there should lend a sum of money to provide corn for the poor, 'in that tyme of dearthe and scarcity.' 'Which some of money was there upon freely lente by the persons then assembled to be repayed at the Feast of St. John Baptiste then following.'

Adam's Chronicle reports that £2,600 worth of wheat, rye, barley and malt were brought that year from Boston and Lynne in five ships for distribution in Bristol, Wales and the Severn area because wheat was 7s a bushel and the poor commons ready to rise for want of money to buy it. 'Also', the chronicle continues, 'for the provision of this City, here came in great store of corn from Dansk which made the prices to bate and did much good.'<sup>42</sup> A year later they were suggesting a charge on all goods brought to the town by water to be used to the relief of the poor people in the almshouse in the marsh.<sup>43</sup>

There was only one outbreak of plague during these years. In 1575, the plague broke out immediately after the St. James's Fair in July and raged for about six months. The Chroniclers suggest that a total of 1,900 people died including four ex-Mayors, John Northall, pewterer; John Stone, brewer; John Cutt and William Carr, merchants. The deaths of these elderly and wealthy gentlemen may suggest that this was an outbreak of pneumonic rather than bubonic plague.<sup>44</sup> A decree in the Council's Ordinance Book in 1585 that all dogs not kept for a necessary purpose were to be killed, 'for avoydinge of Infection this somer season,' achieved its object and there was no serious outbreak that summer.<sup>45</sup>

During the later years of the century, the city suffered severely from the occasional presence of large bodies of soldiers waiting for a favourable wind to carry them to Ireland. The city was required to feed them and sometimes to provide them with 'conduct money', and even to hire ships for their transport. In 1581, the total expenditure was £4,000 and recovering such sums of money from the hard pressed treasury was not easy. In the meanwhile, Councillors were told that if the money were not found to provide for the needs of the soldiers they would be billeted in their houses. The mere presence in the town of five or six hundred unruly ruffians caused the Council to take action. In August, 1579, the Chamberlain paid 8s 9d 'for making and setting up a gibbet in High Street, to terrify the rage of the soldiers, who were so unruly, both in fighting and killing.'<sup>46</sup> Only once was the Mayor thanked and praise given for a 'trust so honestly discharged . . . with no waste of the Queen's money,' when William Yate, Mayor of Bristol, accounted in June 1597 for the costs of victualling 800 troops for transport to Ireland.<sup>47</sup>

There were other grim reminders of the horrors of war such as the shiploads of Irish refugees who arrived in Bristol, some of whom were sent back, for Bristol had its own unemployed to care for by then. In 1583, the City Fathers were called to the Tolsey to see a very gruesome sight – the Earl of Desmond's head brought from Ireland 'pickled in a pipkin'.<sup>48</sup> The arrival in Ireland of a Papal army in 1579 seemed to bring war another step nearer.

40. B.R.O. 04026/11, 12.

41. B.R.O. 04272/32v. S.P. 12/105/94.  
B.R.O. 04064 [1]. B.R.O. 04264 [1] 3.

42. John Evans, *A Chronological Outline of the History of Bristol* [Bristol, 1824] 1585.

B.R.O. 04026 [11] 306, B.R.O. 04272/55 v.

43. B.R.O. 04272/59 r.

44. John Evans, *A Chronological Outline of the History of Bristol* [Bristol, 1824] 1585.

John Latimer, *Annals of Bristol*, vol. 1, 62–3.

45. B.R.O. 04272/54 r.

46. J. Latimer, *Annals of Bristol*, vol. 1. 73–5. B.R.O. 04264/1/55–7.  
Evans' *Chronological History* [1565].

47. A.P.C. xxvii 199–200 and see E 403/2559/166 r.

B.R.O. 04264 [1] 67.

48. B.R.O. 04026 [13] 218–221, Evans, *Chron.*, 1583.

## 2. SEVILLE

On the 19th June, 1564, Hugh Tipton, the Consul of the English merchants at San Lucar de Barrameda near Seville, called together the English merchants and factors left in the town. He wished them to witness a letter he had written to Sir Thomas Challenor, the English envoy at the court of Spain.<sup>49</sup> Tipton informed the envoy that a fleet of eight Spanish ships, returning from San Domingo, had anchored in the Azores where they found a Bristol ship of some 40 tons. The merchants on board were Giles White, Richard Barret and Thomas Smith. Walter Dowell was the master and there was a crew of 18 sailors. The only cargo was 20 packs of cloth brought to sell in exchange for the woad of the Islands. The Spaniards had fired warning shots 'and bad her to amain.' The Englishmen had obeyed without any show of force but were taken on board the Spanish ships, put in irons and very cruelly treated. When they reached Seville they were thrown into 'the coman pryson, among theves, chaynyd to and to together,' though they had broken no law. The letter was signed by Tipton and twelve other merchants, mainly Londoners.

This was only the first of many such incidents and, in the years before his retirement in 1570, Tipton was tireless in his care for the merchants and seamen imprisoned in Triana, the main prison at Seville. There the prisoners received no food except what their friends could supply and were often brutally treated. For a time, a warehouse at San Lucar was set aside as a hospital in which the poor prisoners could be nursed back to health when they were released.<sup>50</sup>

49. Cal.S.P. For. 1564-5, 499, 500, 581, 607. Tipton had been apprenticed to William Sprat at Bristol and must have known Giles White and the other Bristol merchants well.
50. P. Croft, *The Spanish Company*, London Record Society, vol. 9 [1973] vii-xxv. E.H.W. Meyerstein, 'Troubles of Devonshire Mariners in Spanish Ports,

A series of petitions from various groups of merchants brought before the Privy Council the difficulties that merchants faced in Spain in the late 1570s. Robert Tyndall and John Frampton complained that they had been imprisoned, tortured and all their money confiscated.<sup>51</sup> Robert Halton, the Bristol Chamberlain, then went to London with letters to the Earl of Leicester, asking help in a petition to the Queen concerning the recent loss of 13 ships and 5 barks. The only reply was that, 'Her Majesty was verie sorie'.<sup>52</sup> Finally, a number of Bristol men, including Robert Kitchin, William Salterne, William Ellis, John Barker, Thomas James, Mathew Haviland and John Oliver claimed they had suffered losses to a total of £45,000 through piracy and wreck and some of their best ships were stayed in Spain and Portugal with cargoes worth £10,000.<sup>53</sup> London merchants had already submitted similar petitions<sup>54</sup> and as a result, a new Spanish Company which covered the whole of the Peninsula, was granted a Charter on 8th July, 1577. A president and 40 assistants dealt with business in England and the merchants were to elect a Governor and six assistants in Spain. The total of 389 members included, as well as the Londoners, 74 from Bristol, 29 from Exeter, 26 from Southampton and 14 from Hull. John Barker of Bristol sometimes attended meetings of the Company in London 'being assistant general'.<sup>55</sup>

Even during the 1580s, English ships were not uncommon in Spanish Ports. As the merchants said, they were 'driven by necessity to trade as the birde is to fflye'.<sup>56</sup> In northern Spain, they loaded into barges off shore and traded through English residents or foreign merchants. They bought Spanish goods in Portugal, France or the Channel Islands or even visited certain Spanish ports; the Condado or Ayamonte in the south or Vigo in the north were particular favourites.<sup>57</sup> Vigo was in the territory of the Bishop of Compostela, exempt from Royal dues and from the severities of the Inquisition. There was a deep water port with a

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1550' M.M. xxxv [1949-50] 146-150. L. de Alberti and A.B. Wallis Chapman 'English Traders and the Spanish Inquisition in the Canaries', *T.R.H.S.* 3rd ser. iii [1909] 25-53.

51. 'the intollerable torments of the Stroppadoe . . . besides longe and miserable ymprisonments'. S.P. 12/1-20/54.
52. B.R.O. 04026 [10] 145.
53. S.P. 12/120/51.
54. *Cal. S.P. For. 1575-77*, 1132. S.P. 12/120/5-6.
55. P. Croft, *The Spanish Company*, xiii, xvii. P. McGrath, *Records Relating to the Society of Merchant Venturers*, 82. *A.P.C.* x 409.
56. B.L. Lansdowne Ms. 14/70.
57. P. Croft, *English Trade*, 149-163.





3. The *Revenge* in the battle.  
[Reproduced by permission of the Trustees of the National Maritime Museum]

safe harbour and the merchants were able to carry away their profits in specie, which they had great difficulty in doing from the Royal ports.<sup>58</sup>

The accounts of Bristol's trade with the Peninsula in the 1580s show a regular trade continuing though on a reduced basis.<sup>59</sup> The comment from the Fugger's correspondent in Antwerp was predictable, 'A sensible peace would be advantageous to both parties, as one can hardly prosper without the other.'<sup>60</sup> Trade remained somewhat uncertain; convoys were organised against the Barbary pirates,<sup>61</sup> ships were stayed, sometimes in England for service in Ireland,<sup>62</sup> sometimes in Spain, especially after England's support for Don Antonio of Portugal in the 1580s.<sup>63</sup> English merchants were sometimes seized by the Inquisition and imprisoned in Triana.<sup>64</sup> In 1593, Rice Jones, merchant of Bristol, remembered that the *Toby* had made many voyages since 1580, some to Andalusia. One, in 1583, returned with 180 tons of wine.<sup>65</sup>

The year of 1585 saw Elizabeth's treaty with the Dutch, Leicester's expedition to the Netherlands, the fall of Antwerp to the Spaniards and the seizure of all English ships in Spain.<sup>66</sup> Among those who were said to have lost money in Spain were Robert Kitchin £762 6s 3d, Thomas James £513 12s 3d and Ralph Hassall £654 19s 4d.<sup>67</sup> Kitchin was among those granted letters of reprisal, having fitted out the *Gift of God*, 150 tons, 'with 80 mariners and well armed against Spain';<sup>68</sup> while two years later similar letters were granted to Thomas Roche and Thomas Taylor to set forth the pinnacle *Advantage*.<sup>69</sup>

From 1587 the records for the rest of the century are mostly concerned with piracy and prizes; of Edward Lewis who bought two tons of oil and then feared that it would spoil before its

58. B.L. Lansdowne Ms. 14/71. J. Alban Fraser, *Spain and the West Country*, 163. Cal. S.P. Dom. Elizabeth Add. 20/99.

R. Hakluyt, *Voyages*, iv. 129.

59. B.L. Lansdowne Ms. 14/36, 41/43.

60. V. von Klarwill, *Fugger News Letters*, ii, 10.

61. *A.P.C.* xi, 137-8.

62. *A.P.C.* xii, 312.

63. V. von Klarwill, *Fugger News Letters*, ii, 46, 62. *ibid.* 144, 164, 183, 321, 327, 328.

64. S.P. 12/146/23 etc.

65. Req. 2/167/27. B.L. Lansdown Ms. 41/36, 10.

66. W.B. Wernham, *The Making of Elizabethan Foreign Policy 1558-1603*. [1980] 371-2. V. von Klarwill, *op.cit.* II. 92, 96, 98.

67. S.P. 12/191/34.

68. S.P. 12/180/15. R.G. Marsden [ed] *Documents Relating to the Law and Custom of the Sea*, 1. Navy Records Society [1915] 237-41.

69. B.R.O. 04721, 84v-85v.



ownership was settled; of Captain Waddon who landed his prize goods in the western ports because he 'visited a widow in Bridgwater'; of prizes of sugar landed in Bristol for the Queen, one of which also had 135 black slaves on board who were well cared for by the Council in one of the warehouses on the quay.<sup>70</sup> There were tales of a caravel owned by Thomas Aldworth which was taken over by her mutinous crew, renamed the *Tobacco Pipe* and then they were lucky enough to take a rich Indian prize; of the piratical wanderings of the *Raven* and the *Green Dragon*; of men taken prisoner and others escaping, even a ship making its escape with a Spanish official still on board.<sup>71</sup>

If the *Hopewell* really brought in a great treasure of 'Ollyvantes Teethe', with gold and other goods worth £30,000, there were many to claim a share, and this was little consolation to the clothiers and dyers of the surrounding counties, to the bankrupt Tewkesbury or Bristol merchants, or indeed, to those bankrupt in Seville in 1594, 'to be expected considering these ruinous days of war'.<sup>72</sup> On April 6th, 1587, Leicester wrote from Bath to Burghley and Walsingham, describing the great decay of trade and the resulting distress in the West Country. 'Bristol, [South] Hampton and other of the best towns are fast falling into decay. Measures must be taken for the revival of trade. Great credit is due to the clothiers, who keep many of the poor on work to their own loss.'<sup>73</sup>

It seems that a Bristol ship might sail to Spain with an Irish master, or cargo be sent in an Irish or Scottish ship and towards the end of the century a number of ships from Germany, Holland and Scandinavia took up the carrying trade between Bristol and Spain.<sup>74</sup> Perhaps a more serious problem was the export to Spain of goods most necessary to Spanish preparations for war; provisions, lead, powder, cannon and muskets, ships' tackle and pipe staves. The ships *Gabriel*, *Daisy*, *Lily*, *William*, *Jonas*, *Violet*, *Pelican* and others from the port of Bristol were reported to be carrying great quantities of these goods to Spain in 1587.<sup>75</sup> By the late sixteenth century large numbers of cast iron cannon were produced in Sussex. Cheaper and more plentiful as well as more

reliable than the old bronze guns, they were much in demand in Spain, where even the new arsenals set up in Seville were never able to meet the demand.<sup>76</sup> Iron was brought to Bristol in increasing quantities from South Wales, the lead mines of Mendip seem to have been booming and lead was exported to Spain to make bullets. The customs men were said to be accepting large bribes 'soe they passe Ordinaunce without number.' It has even been suggested that 'there were more English culverins in the Spanish fleet than there were in the English.'<sup>77</sup>

In spite of government proclamations to the contrary, guns and naval supplies, corn and other provisions continued to be exported, especially in the 1590s when widespread shortages throughout the decade and severe famines in certain areas meant that it was sometimes possible to make profits of 300 per cent. In Spain, particularly, agrarian depopulation and possibly changes in the weather pattern led to a desperate demand for imported food. The price of wheat trebled and Charter parties were ignored as ships rushed to the areas of high prices. From Bristol, food, especially wheat, butter and pilchards, was carried in huge quantities to Spain, together with munitions and ships' stores.<sup>78</sup>

By 1587 it must have seemed as if the whole round world was at war and that everywhere the Spaniards were gaining ground. Leicester had failed in the Netherlands after the death of William of Orange and the capture of Antwerp and returned to England leaving Parma to plan the invasion.<sup>79</sup> In France, the war of the Three Henries gave Philip good grounds for hope that he might inherit the leadership of the Catholic cause there. Mary, Queen of Scots, before her execution in 1587, had named him her heir in the three Kingdoms of England, Scotland and Ireland. He might yet rule over a re-united Catholic Europe, as well as his vast new territories beyond the sea.<sup>80</sup>

The Bristol merchants supported the Portugese Pretender, Don Antonio, who visited Bristol with Edward Prynne. In spite of the

70. A.P.C. xv 399. B.L. Lansdown Ms. 145/117/322. 145/115/82-4.  
71. H.M.C. *Vth Report*, App. 580. Records of Weymouth and Melcombe Regis. S.P. 12/268/11, S.P. 12/252/79, S.P. 12/284/107.  
H.M.C. Salisbury Ms. v. 164, ix. 296.  
72. E 159/400 Hil. 26, 180. Req. 2/30/64. A.P.C. xviii, 208, 253, 260. *Cal. S.P. Dom. Elizabeth* 247/29.  
V. von Klarwill, *op. cit.* 186.  
73. *Cal. S.P. Dom. Elizabeth* CC. 1587. S.P. 12/200/5.  
74. T.E.D. ii, 80-83. 'Contraband Trade between England and Spain, 1593.'  
75. A.J. Loomie, 'Sir William Semple and Bristol's Andalucian Trade, 1597-1598.' *B. & G.A.S.* lxxxi-ii [1962] 177-87. S.P. 15/30/62.

76. C 3/168/90. Req. 2/239/31, Req. 2/262/3. E. Straker, *Wealden Iron*. [1931] 144-154. H.R. Schubert, *The History of the British Iron and Steel Industry*, [1957] 255, 175-179. C.M. Cipolla, *Guns and Sails in the Early Phase of European Expansion, 1400-1700* [1965] 33-48.  
77. J.W. Gough, *The Mines of Mendip*. S.P. 12/218/30. M. Lewis, 'Armada Guns', *M.M.* xxviii [1942] [1943] also *Armada Guns* [1961].  
D.W. Waters, 'The Elizabethan Navy and the Armada Campaign', *M.M.* xxxv [1949] 103-104.  
78. B.L. Lansdown, Ms. 113/65. *Cal. S.P. Dom. Elizabeth*. 242/57, 239/92, 243/39, 271/85.  
79. W.B. Wernham, *op. cit.* 50-7.  
80. W.B. Wernham, *op. cit.* 74.

dangers, they continued to trade in the Atlantic Islands and on the coasts of Barbary and Guinea. The Mediterranean coasts of France, Italy, North Africa and the Levant became a winter voyage where they ran the gauntlet of the Barbary pirates and the Spanish fleets, relying on their superior speed and fire power and trading their fish, lead and cloth for fruit, dyestuffs, alum and spices.<sup>81</sup> Meanwhile, Drake, having taken the war against Spain around the world, in 1587, with his voyage to Cadiz, not only prevented the Armada from sailing that year, but returned to Plymouth with a rich prize, the *Great Carrack*, King Philip's own ship, full of treasure and spices.<sup>82</sup>

### 3. THE ARMADA AND AFTER.

After 1570, there are far more references in the town records to the purchase of uniforms and weapons. Some were, no doubt, to make a show for the Queen's visit, but many must also have been acquired in response to the urgent appeals of the Privy Council to prepare the town's defences in case of war, as they were required to do by the Militia Act of 1558.

During the Mayoralty of Thomas Chester in 1569-1570, 160 cassocks and breeches were provided for the soldiers and a drummer was employed. Later in the year, iron corselets were purchased and a number of hand guns so that shooting practice and matches could be held in the Marsh on Midsummer Day, St. Peter's Day and St. Bartholomew's Day. In 1572, the Mayor, John Brown, held the musters at Midsummer and St. Peter's Day and set up butts in the Marsh for the men to practice shooting.<sup>83</sup>

These and other martial preparations seem to have continued during the succeeding years. In 1576, there were trumpets and guns to greet the new Mayor, John Wade, on Michaelmas Day and a store of weapons was kept in the 'Armour House over the Tolsey', where a carpenter was allowed candles to work from 6 am. to 6 pm. towards the end of 1583.<sup>84</sup>

By 1585, relations with Spain were so strained that the trained bands mustered in College Green with their new banner and fringe on their pikes and marched to their several drums. This was followed in December by a muster of all able bodied citizens who were summoned by fifes and drums to a general muster at Addercliff, 'to choose their corporals'. In the following March the Trained Bands assembled again for a grand inspection by the Earl

81. E 190/1133/1. E 190/1132/7, 9, 10. E 190/1132/11.

82. K.R. Andrews, *Drake's Voyages* [1967].  
Neville Williams, *Francis Drake*, [1973].

83. B.R.O. 04026 [9] 22, 25. J. Latimer, *Annals of Bristol in the Sixteenth Century*, 37-8.

Evans' *Chron.* 1572.

84. B.R.O. 04026 [10] 144, [11] 236.

of Pembroke, who was Lord Lieutenant of Bristol and Somerset. After the martial display and a 32 cannon salute, the noble Lord was feasted and presented with two boxes of marmalade at Alderman Kitchen's house in Small Street.<sup>85</sup>

In July, 1586, the Trained Bands mustered again and yet again in the following September when the 'picture of a man' was set up in the marsh for gun practice. In February, 1587, a man was employed to clean and mend all the armour at the Tolsey and to mend the arrows and guns, cast bullets and put all in readiness for war. At the same time the Mayor and Councillors surveyed the town walls and had some repairs done. On February 8th, 1587, Mary, Queen of Scots was executed, an event which caused rejoicing in the City and which the citizens celebrated with a bonfire at the High Cross, 'Paid for wood for and making a bonfire at the High Cross, when the proclamation was made'. It was, however, a further step towards war with Spain since it left Philip as the obvious catholic claimant to the throne.<sup>86</sup>

By this time, invasion was generally expected and the Chamberlain records '1587, February, Paid to sundry persons who carried precepts of hue and cry to sundry places when the report was given that London was fired, and that armour should be in readiness, 3s 6d'. There was little certain news, as one of the Fugger's correspondents reported in 1585, 'as the sea remains so blockaded and shut off, commerce is quite at a standstill'. He believed there were many English free-booters at sea who captured Spanish fishermen and brought them back to England. 'They have to go to the mills all day and grind corn'. There seems to be little truth in this statement but there were many privateers, such as Robert Kitchin's *Gift of God* of Bristol, 150 tons, John Satchfield, Captain and Christopher Birkett, master, with 80 mariners and 'men of war', victualled for four months and carrying '24 cast pieces and fowlers of iron'. The Captain was bound not to attack any ships except those of Spain and to bring back all captured goods to English ports. Kitchin declared that he had lost goods and money in Spain to the value of £6,500.<sup>87</sup>

In 1588, Bristol's Trained Bands mustered as usual on Lady Day before their Captain-General '... to choose out trained soldiers', who were to train regularly. The Common Council purchased a new banner of taffeta nearly 40 yards long. They also ordered that

the town walls were to be 'looked unto' and the portcullises at the city gates.<sup>88</sup>

In the spring Bristol was called upon to provide three ships and a pinnace, manned, armed and provisioned for war. They sailed for Plymouth in April, *The Great Unicorn*, 140 tons, 60 men, *The Minion*, 250 tons, 110 men, *The Handmaid*, 80 tons, 56 men and the pinnace, *Ayde*, 60 tons, 26 men. Little is known about them except *The Minion*, which was built in 1581 by Thomas Kelke and William Gittons. In 1584, her master was William Freekes. The ships were provisioned for only two months so that in June the City Chamberlain received a letter from Lord Admiral Howard at Plymouth, requesting supplies. The Council appealed to the Queen that the expense 'doth growe too burthensome'. However, the Privy Council insisted that they should pay for the supplies for a further two months, promising that Her Majesty's victualler, Mr. Darell, would eventually defray the charges. The local Chronicles also report that at St. James' Fair that year, all the canvas on sale was bought to provide tents for the army at Tilbury.<sup>89</sup>

When, on Friday, July 29th, Howard and Drake heard from Tom Fleming that the Spanish fleet was off the Lizard, they had some 90 ships with them; 19 of the Queen's ships and the rest armed merchantmen. Among the latter were the ships of the West Country ports including Bristol. They were obviously much inferior to the Royal ships in armament and in speed and sailing qualities, 'If you had seen that which I have seen . . . you would have said that we had been little holpen by them, otherwise than they did make a show'. Medina Sidonia made no such distinction when he saw them all emerge from Plymouth against the south-westerly breeze to seize the weather gauge, 'Their ships being very nimble and of such good steerage, as they did with them whatsoever they desired',<sup>90</sup> he wrote.

Already, printed lists of all the Spanish ships were on sale in Antwerp but it was soon clear that the Spaniards were not planning to land and fight, but to join Parma in the Netherlands for a concerted attack and invasion somewhere between Dover and the mouth of the Thames. There were indecisive skirmishes in the Channel in which two Spanish ships were captured but, by the

85. B.R.O. 04026 [11] 306. J. Latimer, *Annals*, 80-81.

86. J. Latimer, 81. B.R.O. 04026 [12] 24. J. Latimer, 84.

87. J. Latimer, 87. Klarwill, *Fugger Newsletters* II 96-98.  
J.W. Damer Powell, *Bristol Privateers and Ships of War* [Bristol, 1930] 345-6 App. C.

88. J. Latimer, 92.

89. Dasent, *A.P.C.* n.s. xvi, 1 April, 1588, 29-30, 134.  
B.R.O. 04264 [1] 4. J.W. Damer Powell, *Bristol Privateers and Ships of War*, [Bristol, 1930] 50. Evans', *Chron.* 1588  
J. Latimer, *Annals* I, 92-3.

90. Lieut.-Commander D.W. Waters, R.N., *The Elizabethan Navy and the Armada Campaign*, *Mariner's Mirror*, vol. 35, 90-138.



time the fleets anchored in Calais Roads, they had expended a great deal of powder and shot to little purpose.<sup>91</sup>

In Bristol that week the Queen's Players came to town and were well paid for their acting. Beacons had given warning of the approach of the Spanish fleet, the country was full of rumours and a messenger was sent to the south coast, 'to understand some news of the fleets'.<sup>92</sup> At Calais, Seymour came in to join the rest of the fleet with his squadron of 35 ships, leaving Justin of Nassau to blockade the coast where Parma waited. His boats which were to ferry the soldiers across the Channel were not ready, the weather was stormy and he had little idea of where Justin and the Dutch fleet might be. He thought the Armada already defeated. Howard, Drake and the other English Captains held a council of war and decided that the only way to break the close formation of the Spaniards was by fire ships. They chose 8 ships of 90 – 200 tons, much larger than was usual for the purpose, which were filled with combustible materials and all their guns double shotted. Wind and tide were favourable and the Spaniards, terrified that these might be more of the 'hell burners' with which the Italian, Giambelli, had caused such devastation at Antwerp, cut their cables and fled in disarray. The battle which followed in mist and rain through the Dover Straits and into the North Sea seemed indecisive. Howard sent for more powder and shot and more victuals with the message, 'Their fleet is mighty great and strong and yet we pluck their feathers little and little.' But the Armada, its great ships leaking, its stores depleted, its crews cold, sick and wounded turned away into the North Sea to face a long and dangerous voyage back to Spain.<sup>93</sup>

In Bristol, in early August, a letter was received from London bringing 'certain news' of the scattering of the Armada, the bearer of such good tidings being rewarded with 13s 4d. The Queen's Players and tumblers were again in the town and contributed to the merriment.<sup>94</sup> The Queen, herself, had enjoyed a visit to her army at Tilbury. She rode through the ranks with only four men escorting her, Leicester and Essex riding on either side and the Earl of Ormonde and Sir John Norris on foot. Her army was to see her and they cheered her to the echo. She enjoyed herself so much that she stayed overnight and returned next day to deliver a very famous speech.

'My loving people, we have been persuaded by some that are careful for our safety, to take heed how we commit ourselves to armed multitudes for fear of treachery. But I assure you, I do not desire to live to distrust my faithful and loving people. Let tyrants fear. I have always so behaved myself that, under God, I have placed my chiefest strength and safeguard in the loyal hearts and good will of my subjects: and therefore I am come amongst you as you see, at this time, not for my own recreation and disport, but being resolved, in the midst and heat of the battle, to live or die amongst you all, and to lay down for my God and for my kingdom and for my people, my honour and my blood, even in the dust. I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too and think foul scorn that Parma or Spain, or any prince of Europe should dare to invade the borders of my realm: to which, rather than any dishonour shall grow by me, I myself will take up arms, I myself will be your general, judge and rewarder of every one of your virtues in the field. I know already for your forwardness you deserve rewards and crowns; and we do assure you, in the word of a prince, they shall be duly paid you'.<sup>95</sup>

In Bristol on November 24th, a great thanksgiving service was held to celebrate the victory. It was attended by the Mayor, Robert Kitchen, the Aldermen and Councillors, with the Masters of Companies who went in procession to the Cathedral to hear a sermon and afterwards gave money to the poor.<sup>96</sup>

The war continued for another 15 years, however, and during these years the Privy Council received innumerable complaints of loss of trade, bankruptcies and attacks on shipping. Reading dyers bemoaned their poverty, probably feeling the loss of their continental markets. A Burgess of Tewkesbury complained of being ruined by the embargo on trade with Spain. The Devon ports blamed the innumerable patents to search ships for prohibited goods and the dangers of so many pirates for the decrease in their trade and even the Londoners grumbled at the increased cost of Bordeaux wine. English goods had become dear and of poor quality, so were difficult to market. In 1594, the Fugger's man in Antwerp reported news of bankruptcies in Seville, 'Such insolvencies and difficulties are to be expected considering these ruinous days of war'.<sup>97</sup>

91. R.B. Wernham, *Before the Armada*, 390–408.  
Garrett Mattingly, *The Defeat of the Spanish Armada*, 231–268.

92. J. Latimer, 93. Evans', *Chron.* 1588.

93. Mattingly, 269–289.

94. J. Latimer, 93. Evans', *Chron.* 1588.

95. Garrett Mattingly, *The Defeat of the Spanish Armada*, 295–6.

96. J. Latimer, 93. Evans', *Chron.* 1588.

97. A.P.C. xvii, 208, 253, 260. Cal. S.P. Dom. CCXLVII, 29.  
B.L. Harleian Ms. 288, 236r. B.L. Lans. Ms. LXXXI 53.  
Klarwill, *Fugger News Letters*, I 186.

An edict of 1591 forbade English merchants to deal in Spanish goods and the Bristol Council seems to have tried to share what trade there was.<sup>98</sup> A series of petitions from Bristol to Burghley gave a graphic description of the plight of the town, 'of diers, weavers and cloth workers here which did keepe one with another at the least sixe or eight men at work are now goers from dore to dore to begg their bread'. They wished to be allowed to trade to Venice and Turkey which the London merchants had monopolized with 'not onelie the greatest parte of forrayn places of commerce, but the iron of Wales, the leadde of Mendipp and the calamyne stone, being the commodities of theis partes'. Certainly in 1600, the customs men at Bristol received instructions from Lord Buckhurst to forbid six ships preparing in Bristol from sailing to the Levant.<sup>99</sup>

In 1598, Lord Burghley considered the desirability of peace with Spain, listing the port towns which were 'manifestly decayed', and including Bristol in the list. Some seamen turned to privateering but it is doubtful that this was as profitable as normal trade and, in 1597, the Lord Admiral agreed that the existing restraints on trade were 'to the great hinderance of Her Majesties Customs and the decay of the general state of the Citie, this hard time of dearth considered'. The merchants could go ahead with their voyages, but leave bonds in the Customs House to return in a month or six weeks.<sup>100</sup> This was made possible partly by the expedition of the previous year to destroy the shipping and port installations at Cadiz. From 1591, suitable men between the ages of 18 and 50 in Bristol and Somerset had been pressed into service and it was becoming increasingly difficult to recruit trained seamen, but in December 1595, the Privy Council wrote to the Mayor ordering private ships to be in readiness to serve with the Navy by the end of March, 1596. Victuals and munitions for five months should be provided 'at the charge of the chief officers and men of best ability' as in 1588. Bristol and Somerset must provide three ships and grain should be shipped to Bristol from Gloucestershire, Worcestershire and Wiltshire. Somerset was to contribute £600, Gloucester £200, Worcester £40 and Tewkesbury to contribute £40 towards the Gloucester total, but very little of this money was ever received from the counties. In the letter sent to Bristol the Council spoke of rumours of invasion in the following spring and the need

for the Navy to be put in readiness and ended, 'It is well known that you of the port of Bristoll have at this presente good furniture of divers Shippes of good burthen and meete to be Employed in that service'.<sup>101</sup>

The Mayor, William Parphey, set about organising the ships and men for the expedition. The costs of training soldiers, their powder, match and wages would be paid by the Chamber of Bristol and allowed later by the Government auditors. They secured three ships, the *Unicorn*, rated 250 tons, the *Pleasure*, 250 tons and the *Exchange*, 200 tons, 'victualled for five months and manned from hence with one Captain and 50 mariners in every ship: the charge whereof every way in victualling and furnishing them in warlike manner, already disbursed, amounted to £1,640 7s 8d, as by the particular accounts may appear'. In addition there were the Captains' and mariners' wages to be paid on their return and tonnage to the ship owners but they had received from the surrounding counties only £336 12s. He begged that the 'poor estate of this city may be relieved in this heavy burden'.<sup>102</sup>

It was 3rd June before the expedition set sail from Plymouth, nearly one hundred ships sailed under the joint command of the Lord Admiral and the Earl of Essex, with Lord Thomas Howard as Vice-Admiral, Raleigh as Rear Admiral and Sir Francis Vere as General of the troops, 'It was as beautiful a sight as the sea ever held,' even according to the Spaniards when the ships reached Cadiz three weeks later. The fleet was divided into four squadrons in addition to the Dutch contingent, with 6,400 sailors, 6,500 soldiers and about 2,600 Dutch. Shipping in the harbour was fired and sunk and the town was looted and burned. Treasure and ransoms seemed to be their only thought and the great galleons of the flota were burned before the English could reach them, so they went on to raid Faro and Loulé.<sup>103</sup>

A popular ballad which commemorates the expedition to Cadiz.

#### *The Winning of Cales.*

Long the proud Spaniard  
advanced to conquer us,  
Threat'ning our Country  
with fire and sword,

98. B.L. Lans. 66/91. B.R.O. 04272/63 v.

99. B.L. Lans. 86/13. B.L. Lans. 84/24. B.L. Cotton Nero B VII f. 185.

100. S.P. 12/266/3. K.R. Andrews, *English Privateering Voyages to the West Indies, 1588-1595* [Camb. 1959] 17, 19, 60, 65, 84-5. B.R.O. 04264 [1].

101. A.P.C. xxi, 213. A.P.C. xxv 122-5, 158-9, 224-6, 237-8, 274-5, 299-8, 461-2. B.R.O. 04264 [1] 8.

102. H.M.C. Salisbury Ms. pt. vi p. 278. B.R.O. 04272 p. 63 v.

103. J.B. Black, *The Reign of Queen Elizabeth* [Oxford, 1937] 364-5. M. Waldman, *Sir Walter Raleigh* [1943] 115-129.

Often preparing  
 their Navy most sumptuous,  
 With all the provision  
 that Spain could afford.  
 Dub, a dub, dub  
 thus strikes their Drummes,  
 Tan ta ra ra, tan ta ra ra.

Unto Cales cunningly  
 came we most happily,  
 Where the Kings Navie  
 securely did ride,  
 Being upon their backs,  
 peircing their butts of sacks  
 Ere that the Spaniards  
 our coming descried.  
 Tan ta ra ra ra, Englishmen comes  
 bounce abounce, bounce abounce  
 Off went our guns

There you might see the ships,  
 how they were fired fast;  
 And how the men drowned  
 themselves in the sea,  
 There you might hear them cry,  
 wail and weep piteously;  
 When as they saw no shift  
 to escape thence away.  
 Dub a dub, etc.

This runs through a dozen verses describing the sinking of the Spanish ships, *Saint Philip*, *Saint Andrew* and *Saint Mathew* and how before the sack of the town:

Now quoth the noble Earl, [Essex]  
 courage my soldiers all,  
 Fight and be valiant,  
 and spoil you shall have,  
 And well rewarded all,  
 from the great to the small:  
 But look that woman  
 and children you save,  
 Dub a dub, etc.

The Spaniard at that sight,  
 saw t'was in vain to fight

Hung up their flags of truce,  
 yeelding up the town.  
 We marcht in presently  
 decking the walls on hie,  
 With our English coulors,  
 which purchased renown:  
 Dub a dub, etc.

Entring the houses then  
 of the richest men,  
 For gold and treasure  
 we searched each day:  
 In some places we did finde  
 pies baking in the ovens,  
 Meat at the fire roasting,  
 and men ran away.  
 Dub a dub, etc.

and

When the town burnt in a flame,  
 from thence we came.<sup>104</sup>

It seems that the Bristol ships, *Exchange* and *Unicorn* acquitted themselves well in the battle and also John Hopkins, fishmonger, 'set forth a ship, and in person went captain to Cades action. At whose return he was with much joy met by the citizens on Durdham Down, and in the evening was a gathering of much people in the streets and rejoicing of lamps of divers colours and tallow candells and a great bonfire at the High Cross, very beautiful to behold'. Hopkins was elected Mayor in 1600, when he received £9 5s from the Chamber 'for the loan of four pieces of ordnance put aboard the *Pleasure* of Bristol in the voyage for Cales'.<sup>105</sup>

The Privy Council was concerned about the disappearance of the spoils, especially from the ships *Mary Fortune* and *Unicorn*. The one belonging to John Hopkins, probably the *Mary Fortune*, was rumoured to contain goods of great value. The customs man and other officials had been prevented from boarding the ship by Thomas Parre, 'a Captain, Andrewe Batten, the Master of the

104. Thomas Deloney, *The Winning of Cales*, in *The Horizon Book of the Elizabethan World*, Lacy Baldwin Smith [1967].

105. B.R.O. 04264 [1] 43-4. Damer Powell, 24-25.  
 J. Latimer, *Seventeenth Century* 15.



*Unicorn*, his mate and others who presently the first night that they came into the roade and the next morning fell to romaging of the said shipp, and with small boates discharged divers chestes and trunckes laden with goodes of great value'. Even the seamen had resisted the searching of their sea-chests. The Mayor of Bristol was ordered to investigate and report, but it was very unlikely that he would be inclined to do so since he was owed such large sums by the Queen. In 1600, it was decided to use some of the treasure in petitions to the Queen and the Council.<sup>106</sup>

During the sack of Cadiz, some of the sailors had found a Danish ship of 400 tons, laden with salt. The Spaniards had imprisoned the Master, but the sailors seized the ship, set sail and brought her back to Bristol where she stayed for two months until her owners came to ransom her and the cargo was unladen. There was also a prize of sugar at Bristol about which Lord Thomas Howard wrote to Cecil, 'We are loath to make restitution of goods so hardly gotten. But the Rear Admiral hath taken a sure course, for he hath sold the sugar prize at Bristol and paid himself, with his officers and company . . . . If it be allowed he is beforehand; if not, he sweareth desperately you shall never get groat back again from him.' One Bristol sea-captain received distressing news that autumn – that his little spanish daughter was in Cadiz at the time of the raid. Her guardian writes, 'I was at Calis when you and all that Armada came . . . . I made every enquiry for you, but could find no-one to defend my house from pillage or prevent Catalina, your daughter, and her sisters and mother being taken from me; whilst you were pillaging the land and making banquets and feasting.' He gives a new address and suggests some things Captain James may send to his daughter, which should be sent by an Irish ship or through France or Flanders. Also enclosed with this is a letter from the lady who cared for the child, telling of their poverty and difficulties since the sack of Cadiz. The letters are addressed to 'Jeronimo Yvanes, yngles, natural de Bristol, captain de la armada yngles, en Londres.' These letters seem to have been intercepted and no more is heard of the little Katherine except that, in January 1597, a John James sailed from Bristol to Ireland in a barque called the *Katherine*, carrying munitions in the Queen's service. It is just possible that Katherine received news of her father, with the 'mantle' and other clothes her guardian had suggested.<sup>107</sup>

Bristol's campaign of petitions to the Queen and the Council resulted in a number of orders from the Council to the Deputy

Lieutenant of Somerset but without any tangible result. The Council noted in October 1596 that Bristol claimed to have lost £12,000 'by sea' in the last three years 'if the report of the petitioners for the cittie of Bristoll be true.' Bristol was claiming also that the Cadiz expedition had cost the City £2,500. In February 1597, they pointed out that Somerset's payment of £600 was needed for the first part of the reimbursement of the expenses to Thomas James and Thomas Gennings who had set forth the ship *Pleasure*, but in June 1597 Somerset still had not paid and the Privy Council was becoming exasperated with the 'contynuall complaints and petitions where with wee are importuned from Bristol'. In November, 1599, Essex sent one of his Captains to review the Trained Bands. He reported that he had found them unarmed and unready which argued a great want of care in the town officials. This provoked a sharp reminder from the Privy Council to the Mayor, 'This your slender regard deserveth much to be blamed . . . . The Council . . . . do mervell greatly you have been so negligent'.<sup>108</sup>

In the summer of 1599, there were signs that the City was re-organising the Trained Bands and renewing its defences, but the debts of 1596 were still not paid. The Privy Council declared itself amazed that 'a cyttie of that wealthe and reputation' should not have paid its debts first and collected the money later. 'For the good name of the City they should have been paid'. When, in 1600, the owners of the *Exchange* began a suit in the Court of Requests, the City Fathers set up a small committee to confer with the Lawyers for their defence, pleading that Bristol was 'exceedinglie decayed and ympoverished through the longe restrynte of trade'. On the 23rd December, 1600, it was decided that the Committee should meet with Mr. Meredith to agree the charges due to the owners of the *Exchange* and also to confer with the owners of the *Unicorn* 'to sette down the Charges which they demaunde for the Service at Cales', and so, at last, the matter was settled.<sup>109</sup> Already, at the end of May, 1597, a letter from Lord Admiral Howard had given permission for the restraints on shipping to be ended and the merchants to proceed with their trade and, even if restraint again became necessary, ships of under 40 tons could still sail with certain safeguards. On 3rd February, 1599, the men who had been captured by the Spaniards at Cadiz came home and more were released the following year on the

106. A.P.C. xxvi 136 10th Aug. 1596. B.R.O. 04264 [1] 43.

107. H.M.C. Salisbury Ms. pt. vii, 454-5; vii 317; Pt. vi, 501, 518. A.P.C. xxvi, 452.

108. A.P.C. xxvi, 146, 260-2, 491; xxvii, 192-3; xxviii, 111-112.

109. A.P.C. xxix, 335. xxx 785-6. B.R.O. 04264 [1] 24-5, 43-4. A.P.C. xxxi 367-8. xxxii, 31-2. B.R.O. 04026 [14] 148. Req. 2/266/48. B.R.O. 04264 [1] 44.



4. The track of the Armada, 1588.  
[Reproduced by permission of the Trustees of the National Maritime Museum]

accession of Philip III to the throne of Spain. In Antwerp there were rumours of peace and in London Sir Julius Caesar pondered the advantages of peace and the ancient trade with Spain, 'which for bringing in of money was very beneficiall to this realm'.<sup>110</sup>

By 1598, Bristol ships were making regular voyages to the Mediterranean ports such as Civita Vecchia, Zante, Mallorca, Venice, Toulon and Cephalonia as well as to the Guinea coast of Africa, the Atlantic Islands and North America. By 1605, the merchants felt strong enough to leave the London Company and petition for their own Charter on which are the names of almost a hundred members.<sup>111</sup>

The years 1594–1597 were famine years when, after four good years in northern Europe, cold rainy summers ruined the crops and prices doubled. Shakespeare described the scene of rain and floods where

The ploughman lost his sweat, and the green corn  
Hath rotted ere his youth attained a beard:  
The fold stands empty in the drowned field,  
And crows are fatted with the murrion flock.

It also seems probable that the population had increased considerably in the previous years with no serious outbreak of plague to cut it back, but with the war to destroy the livelihood of many of the towns-people, even in the good years it was necessary to buy in corn for distribution to the poor. In 1594, the Mayor, Francis Knight, bought corn for the common people and Thomas Aldworth also was said to have spent £1,200 on corn for the poor, bringing some to the market each day to keep the price steady. In the autumn of 1595, grain was still scarce and the Mayor, William Parphey, asked John Whitson to obtain some in London. Thomas Offley of London contracted to obtain 3,000 quarters of Danzig rye at 28s a quarter. The Mayor thought this much too dear, but when the rye was delivered it was worth 44s or more on the market and so scarce that the Mayor would have paid the market price for it. However, Whitson let them have it at cost 'and within 20 days after, this rye was all sold at 5s 0d the bushel, much under the rate of the market; many pecks and half bushels was given among the poor of this City'. The following year, it was agreed that each Alderman and Burgess should provide one meal a day to as many

110. B.R.O. 04264 [1] 9. H.M.C. Salisbury Ms. ix, 57.  
*The Chamberlain Letters*, I, 11. B.L. Lansdown Ms. II CLX, 21/84, V. von Klarwill, *Fugger News Letters*, II, 315.

111. B.R.S. xxxi, 161–3. Merchants' Book of Trade, A.C.L., 25306.



poor people as he could, 'whereby the poor of our City were all relieved and kept from starving or rising'.<sup>112</sup>

The profit from the sale of the Danzig rye was used to obtain an Act of Parliament validating the procedures of the the Bristol Court of Orphans, relieving all the charity estates from the penalties of the Mortmain Statutes and strengthening the powers of the Mayor as Guardian of the Orphans. The Act also validated the setting up of Queen Elizabeth's Hospital in Bristol, 'an hospitall for the needfull relief and education of poore Childrene and fatherless infantess within the said Cittie'.<sup>113</sup> The Council later took steps to secure the future of the Bristol Grammar School and a Grammar School 'founded in the Parish of Redcliff', a school run by the Merchants' Company and an old school room over Frome Gate to provide 'a schole house to teach children to Knitt . . . wosted hosen' there. In 1611, a man and woman were settled in a house in Temple Parish, 'to teach such poor children as shall be sent thither to learne to spynne', a project which continued for several years.<sup>114</sup>

In 1603, there was a serious outbreak of plague in the city. Early in the summer it was known to be in London and word was sent from Bristol that no-one should come to St. James' Fair unless he had a certificate from the Lord Mayor of London that the house from which he came had not been affected by plague in the previous six weeks. All goods coming into the city should be stored for a time at the bell founder's house at Lawford's Gate. All these precautions were fruitless, however, and plague was soon raging through the city. The Chronicler says that it began in Pepper Alley, off Marsh Street on the 18th July and that, by Michaelmas, fifty people were already dead. The new Mayor, John Whitson, immediately called for a special tax on the more wealthy citizens of 2s in the pound according to the assessments in the Subsidy Book,

112. Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* II, 1, 93.  
E.M. Leonard, *The Early History of English Poor Relief* [Camb. 1900] 122.  
*Adams' Chronicle of Bristol*, 149-50. *The Maire of Bristowe is Kalendar*, 63.
113. *Adams's Chronicle*, 50. Cal. Pat. 35 Eliz. 21 March.  
J. Latimer, *Bristol Charters*, 49.  
Sir Simonds D'Ewes, *The Journals of all the Parliaments during the reign of Queen Elizabeth*, [1682] *The House of Commons*, 564-5, 571. *The House of Lords*, 532.
114. Bristol Municipal Charities, Charters 163/9, 10, 11.  
B.R.O. 04264 [2] 10v, 63, 64. B.R.O. 00577 [1] 1b.  
B.L. Egerton Ms. 2044/36 f. 34. Cal. Pat. Elizabeth, v, 1569, 72, 165-6, C 66/1071/. B.R.O. 04421 [3] a 245r. B.R.O. 04026 [12] 126, 141, 190. Cal. S.P. Dom., Elizabeth, CCLIV, 6 [1595].  
T. Manchee, *The Bristol Charities* [Bristol, 1831] 265-7.  
*Adams's Chronicle*, [ed. F.F. Fox, Bristol, 1910]  
B.R.O. 04264 [2].

'For and towards the Relief and Mayntenaunce of the poor people within the City yn this time of Infection'.<sup>115</sup>

Measures were taken to isolate those infected by the plague, 'and . . . whole howsholdes from goying abrode out of there howses untill order be taken for there release,' and a Mr. Coleman was paid 3s 4d 'for burying dead people out of the hospital'. On the 7th May, 1604, there was another levy of 2s in the pound for the poor and for those who were infected. By the end of February, 2,956 people had died, some 2,600 of them from plague and many of those who could fled into the countryside. For those who stayed the Council seems to have introduced some form of quarantine and, a few years later they were planning to set up a pest house.<sup>116</sup>

The plague was followed, in the winter of 1606-7, by serious flooding and then by a frost so severe that even the small birds died, 'that in riding 100 miles in summer a man could scant see a blackbird'. Corn was very dear that year and again, in 1608, the harvest failed and there was a serious shortage until, as the Chronicler reports, 60 foreign ships arrived in the port with grain. The following year the harvest was so good that wheat prices fell to 4s a bushel.<sup>117</sup>

It was during the hard winter of 1607 that the Mayor, wishing to know 'how much corn would serve the whole [city] by the week,' took a 'view in this city to know how many people were in it: and there were found of all sorts 10,549' This was a fall in the population from something like 12,500 in the 1580s. More of the effects of war and plague in these years is shown in the parish registers. The central parishes of All Saints, St. Werburgh's and Christ Church were least affected by the plague of 1603, perhaps because many of their inhabitants were cleaner and better fed and lived in stone-built houses with some air and space. It may well be also, that many of the wealthy citizens who lived in this area were able to send their children and women-folk to friends in the country before the infection reached Bristol.<sup>118</sup>

Some of the parishes most severely hit by the plague were those where the lath and plaster cottages of the poor clustered around the rivers and docks; parishes such as St. Philip and St. Jacob, St. James, Temple and St. Mary Redcliffe. The difference between the parishes of St. Werburgh's and St. Augustine's in these years is

115. B.R.O. 04264 [1] 79-85. B.R.O. 04264 [2] 1, 128r.  
J.E. Nicholls, *Alderman John Whitson, His Life and Times* [Bristol, 1870] 18-19.
116. B.R.O. 04264 [1] 79, 80, 83. B.R.O. 04026 [4] 150.
117. *Adams's Chronicle of Bristol*.
118. P.A. Slack, *Some Aspects of Epidemics in England 1485-1640*, [unpublished Oxford D.Phil. Thesis, 1972], 31, 36-7, 137, 140.



also quite instructive, the former a fairly wealthy parish, with several well-known families of merchants and drapers; the latter with some gentry and Cathedral dignitaries but also with many sailors, lighter-men, shipwrights, a rope-maker, a lime-burner, and a gun-powder maker, with servants and gardeners.

Both parishes seem to have had a fairly good decade in the 1580s, with St. Werburgh's showing a marked excess of christenings over burials, which continued until after 1600. This contrasts with St. Augustine's particularly in the 1590s and it may well be that the children in the wealthier parish suffered less from malnutrition and the various diseases associated with it. The difference in the illegitimacy rate is marked. Only once in 50 years and over 450 christenings at St. Werburgh's was doubt politely expressed about the identity of the father. At St. Augustine's quite plainly, 9 bastards were begotten in adultery in 30 years and some 350 christenings. Did fathers at St. Werburgh's take more care of their wives, daughters and maidservants? Or were they more adept at organising shot-gun weddings? Were social and religious taboos stronger there?

Poverty, vagrancy and crime appear frequently at St. Augustine's – never at St. Werburgh's. This becomes particularly marked among the burials of the 1590s; 'A poor olde Welshman, whose name we could not know,' 'Ellin a poore woman that came out of Ireland,' 'a poore strainge man that died at Brandon Hill whose name we could not know' and several others, 'John Scryven, out of Christian burial because he was excommunicated,' 'Harry Harden, an Irishman, executed for his crime on Mighell's Hill, and then, at the end of that terrible plague year, 'In August, 1604, was executed Elizabeth Hobbs for murthuring her childe begotten in adultery and buried the same day in St. Augustin's Churchyard.'<sup>119</sup>

It was many years before Bristol recovered fully from the effects of the war with Spain and those who had taken part in the action or suffered its consequences were long dead. Remembering it 400 years later and our own more recent conflicts, we might say with Erasmus, 'War is a fine thing to those who know it not.'

#### Abbreviations used in the Footnotes

A.P.C.	<i>Acts of the Privy Council</i>
A.C.L.	Avon Central Library
B. & G.A.S.	<i>Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society</i>
B.L.	British Library
B.R.S.	Bristol Record Society
Cal. Pat.	<i>Calendar of the Patent Rolls preserved in the Public Record Office</i>
Cal. S.P. Dom.	<i>Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series</i>
Cal. S.P. For.	<i>Calendar of State Papers, Foreign Series</i>
D.N.B.	<i>Dictionary of National Biography</i>
E.H.R.	<i>English Historical Review</i>
H.C.A.	High Court of Admiralty
H.M.C.	<i>Historical Manuscripts Commission</i>
M.M.	<i>The Mariner's Mirror</i>
P.C.C.	Wills proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury
Req.	Proceedings in the Court of Requests
T.E.D.	<i>Tudor Economic Documents</i> 3 vols. ed. R.H. Tawney and E. Power
T.R.H.S.	<i>Transactions of the Royal Historical Society</i>

119. A. Sabin [ed.], *The Registers of the Church of Saint Augustine the Less*, [B. & G.A.S., 1956].  
B.R.O. Parish Registers of St. Werburgh's Church.

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