

## **Pirate Marts and Knockdown Prices: Piracy, Class, and Economics in Early Modern England**

**Claire Jowitt**

This chapter explores the ways class and economics intersect in early modern pirate marts. It starts from the premise that such marts are a form of ‘economic warfare’ since pirates, as non-state actors, by selling goods at much reduced prices, challenged policies of state regulation.<sup>1</sup> The implications of this argument for understanding connections between licit and illicit economic activity and the relationships between the various individuals and groups involved in pirate marts are considered through a discussion of the trading practices in a specific location and at a particular historical moment of concentrated activity: Studland Bay in Dorset in the early 1580s.<sup>2</sup> The alliances formed and broken between these maritime predators and the buyers of their wares on the Isle of Purbeck and beyond tell important new stories about how pirate identity negotiates broader and deeper early modern tensions associated with social degree. As we shall see, pirate marts are traditionally understood as examples of wholesale and indiscriminate challenges to the dominance of higher social groups; however, this chapter about the operation of the business of piracy in Purbeck offers a more nuanced account of these economies than has previously been provided.<sup>3</sup> In what follows, I show how resemblances between the ethos of pirates and aristocrats based on shared cultural values – a veneration of swashbuckling action and martial prowess – result in Purbeck in surprising alignments between these groups forged by opposition to the ideologies and behaviours of early modern middling sorts, merchants, yeoman, and husbandmen. This reading of Studland Bay’s pirate marts uncovers a history of triangulated and shifting class relations and alliances, as it reveals how relations with pirates function as proxy vehicles for a mounting rivalry between the values and favoured forms of behaviour of aristocratic and mercantile classes. Before focusing on Studland Bay in detail, in order to understand the ways early modern men

---

<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of early modern mercantilism and doctrinal and policy approaches see Robert B. Ekelund, Jr. and Robert F. Hébert, *A History of Economic Theory and Method* (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2007), especially Chapter 3 “Mercantilism”, pp. 44–67.

<sup>2</sup> Histories of piracy most frequently understand the late sixteenth century as a period of state-sponsored piracy with pirates acting as “instruments of empire” until c.1670, when “commercial piracy” became the dominant form, organised by merchants and tolerated by communities to enable the circulation of scarce commodities. See, for example, Robert C. Ritchie, *Captain Kidd and the War against the Pirates* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986). By contrast, this chapter focuses on aspects of “commercial piracy” from an earlier period than is traditionally associated with the term.

<sup>3</sup> Piracy is most prominently represented as class struggle and, in some cases, social protest in the work of Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700–1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Christopher Hill, “Radical Pirates?”, in *The Collected Essays of Christopher Hill, Volume III: People and Ideas in Seventeenth-Century England* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987), pp. 161–87.

and women experienced and viewed pirate marts as well as to explore the complexity of contemporary responses to the challenge to early modern mercantilism posed by this form of unregulated trade, this chapter begins with an analysis of an early seventeenth-century cultural representation of a pirate mart.

### **1. Pirates as Economic Radicals?**

In 1613, the prolific pamphlet and verse writer Samuel Rowlands (c. 1573–1630) included a short poem called “Lightly come, Lightly goe” in his collection of verse *More Knaves yet? The Knaves of Spades and Diamonds. With new Additions*. Rowlands’ work is characterized by its focus on the follies and humours of lower middle-class life in London, and *More Knaves yet?*, his fourth collection of topical verse sketches about the Vice Figures of the Knaves of Clubs, Diamonds, Hearts, and Spades, sits squarely within this tradition. Unusually for an early seventeenth-century publication, the Epistle at the start of the collection is dedicated to “any Man, but especially to Fooles and Mad-men” rather than an elite Lord or Lady, the standard recipients of textual dedications at the time, as writers sought coterie preferment and financial support through their work. In keeping with the satiric tenor apparent in the Epistle, Rowlands’ “Knave” poems construct swaggering, competitive, and brutish knave figures, and the fourth installment of the series describes the particular rivalry between the Knaves of Diamonds and Spades.

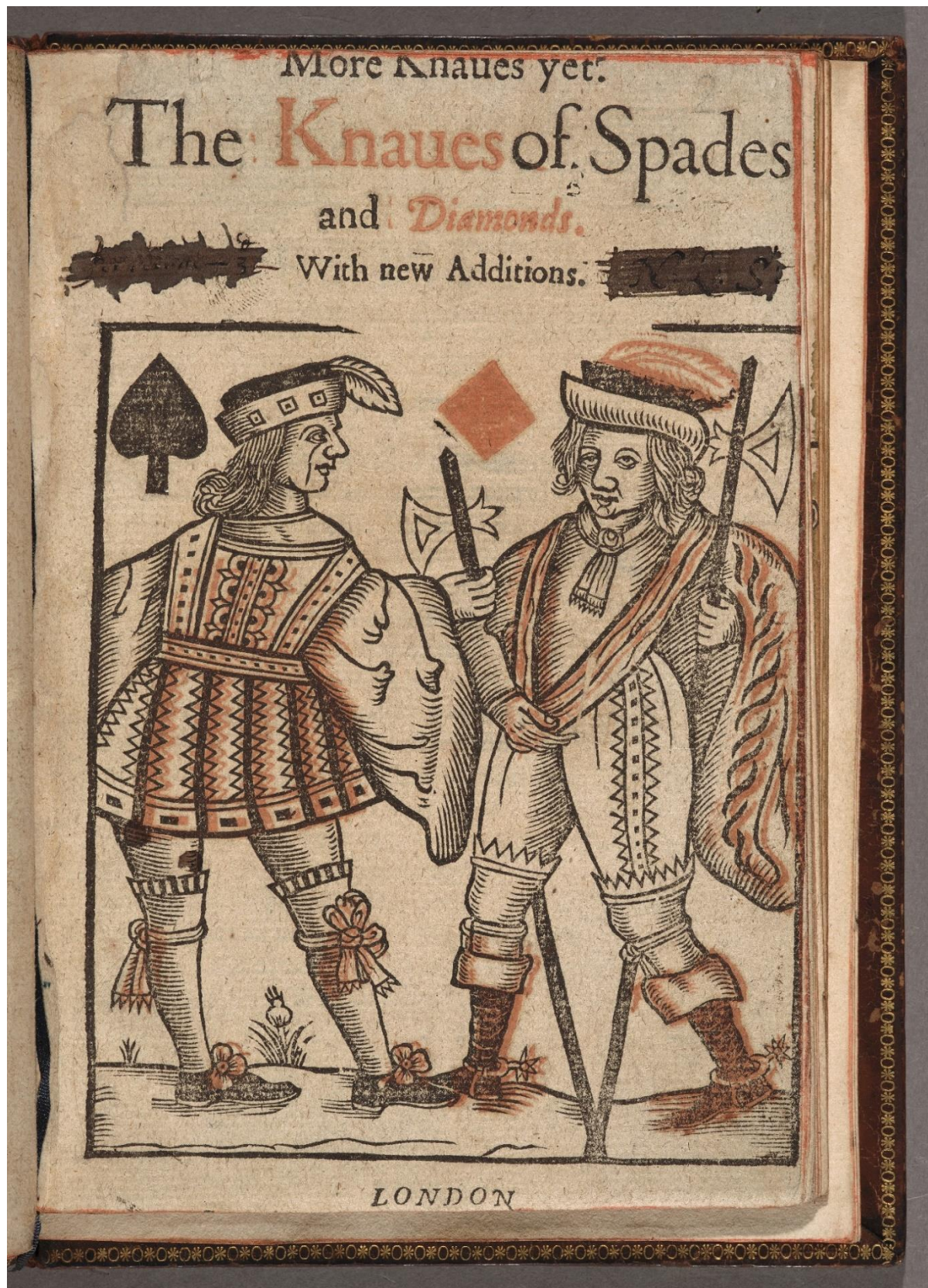


Figure 1. Samuel Rowlands, *More Knaves yet? The Knaves of Spades and Diamonds. With new Additions* (London: Printed by Edward Allde for John Tap, 1613), Title Page. RB 31781, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California

The Knaue of *Diamonds*.



The Knaue of *Diamonds* promised before,  
That he would be for *Sea*, and *Spade* for *Shore*.

*Neptunes owne Knauery.*

**T**He *Ocean Monarch Neptune*, in whose *Pallace*,  
*Thetis*, with all her *Mermaids* made abode:  
Mounted the crooked *Dolphin* for his solace,  
And from his *Court* vnto the *Shore* he rode,  
Where he encounterd with his lustfull eyes,  
A richer beauty then was *Paris* prize.

*Caneus*, sweetest faire *Theffalian* mayd,  
Her did his lust with rauishment defile:  
As *Tarquin* delt with *Lucrese*, so he play'd.  
The *Dolphin* was his pander: all the while,  
To *Iupiter* shee did lament the rape:  
And he transform'd her into manly shape.

*The Picť.*

Figure 2. Samuel Rowland, *More Knaves yet? The Knaves of Spades and Diamonds. With new Additions*, A4r. RB 31781, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

The story of their adventures the collection relates is how the Knave of Diamonds goes to sea and the Knave of Spades remains on land, and the verses recount their picaresque, roguish encounters in these separate spheres. At sea, the Knave of Diamonds swiftly runs into pirates and Rowlands' collection includes several poems concerned with the events and characteristics of pirate life and death.

Explicitly and in keeping with Jacobean state policies, Rowlands' collection of pirate poems expresses a politically conventional hostility to the crime of piracy and the men who commit acts of violence at sea. For instance, in the first poem in the pirate sequence, "The Picture of a Pirat", Rowlands describes the Crown's hoped-for pirate career trajectory as a life of "outrageous evils" apparently inevitably leads pirates to "Anker at the Gallowes" in punishment at Wapping, the traditional site for pirate execution.<sup>4</sup> Comprising just 18 short lines, the brevity of the poem seems designed to match the length of a pirate's career at sea, which on average extended merely to a year or two, though more early modern pirates either abandoned the activity or died at sea than were executed.<sup>5</sup> In 1613, Rowlands' references to pirates were topical since following James I and VI's ending of the Anglo-Spanish war in 1604, the problem of piracy amongst English seamen became particularly acute. Though repeated and increasingly draconian royal proclamations against piracy and those that aided or abetted it were issued on behalf of the king, and some pirates were brought to justice through execution, English pirates still pillaged at will in spite of the best efforts of the English navy to reduce their numbers.<sup>6</sup> Since the Crown was unable to rid the seas of this large number of pirate vessels and faced increasingly vociferous international condemnation because of their attacks on foreign shipping, in 1611 James I accepted a Dutch request to search the Irish and English coasts for pirates, a revealing admission of English naval weakness.<sup>7</sup> In addition, James began to negotiate with pirates concerning granting them pardons, though this was recognized as a policy that undermined his prestige and position: it was "more for the King's

---

<sup>4</sup> Samuel Rowlands, "The Picture of a Pirate", *More Knaves yet? The Knaves of Spades and Diamonds. With new Additions* (London: Printed by Edward Allde for John Tap, 1613), A4v.

<sup>5</sup> See Marcus Rediker, *Villains of All Nations* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004), p. 9.

<sup>6</sup> For histories of piracy in this period see, for instance, Philip Gosse, *The History of Piracy* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1932); Peter Earle, *The Pirate Wars* (London: Methuen, 2003); David Cordingley, *Under the Black Flag: The Romance and the Reality of Life among the Pirates* (London: Random House, 1995); David D. Hebb, *Piracy and the English Government 1616–1642: Policy-Making Under the Early Stuarts* (Aldershot: Scolar, 1994); Janice Thomson, *Mercenaries, Pirates and Sovereigns: State-Building and Extraterritorial Violence in Early Modern Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); and most recently Elaine Murphy, "Early Modern English Piracy and Privateering", in *The Routledge Companion to Marine and Maritime Worlds 1400–1800*, ed. by Claire Jowitt, Craig Lambert, and Steve Mentz (London and New York: Routledge, 2020), pp. 368–87.

<sup>7</sup> Earle, *The Pirate Wars*, p. 60.

honour to consume them all than to accept any to mercy” according to the Privy Council.<sup>8</sup> In 1612, he issued a General Pardon on terms highly favourable to the pirates, allowing them to keep their plunder if they surrendered.<sup>9</sup> As a result, Rowlands’ emphasis on pirates in the collection reflects both the interest and anxiety generated by the pirates *and* the state policies designed to deal with them. The pirates’ executions in Rowlands’ verses are a description of what James had struggled to achieve politically or practically, since the king’s prestige had been diminished and there was no noticeable effect in actually diminishing the number of English pirates at sea.

In contrast to the apparent political orthodoxy of Rowlands’ other pirate poems, “Lightly come, Lightly goe” expresses an entirely different perspective on piracy, showing pirates mixing seemingly freely with Londoners in order to sell their booty, and justifying verbally and loudly their trade by depicting themselves as economic radicals whose trading practices benefit the wider population.

Captaine, ti’s we do make things cheape or deare,  
As by our peny-worths it doth appeare.  
A yard with us is just in length a pike:  
To buy silkes so, what man is’t will dislike,  
Or say we use our customers amisse?  
Your London measure (friends) comes short of this,  
Bee’t three pile Velvet, Sattin, Taffaty,  
A Souldiers Pike’s the Ell we measure by.  
Thus much for Mercers: next for Grocers trade,  
Our weight is like unto our measure made,  
Our pound’s a Cannon bullet, good downe waight,  
In Spice, or Suger, this is no deceit.  
Then for our wines (the squeaking Vintners Art)  
We can affoord them for a penny a quarte.  
Yea fill yon pintes even by the bucket full,  
But how can this be, saith some simple gull,  
That never travail'd out of Bow bell sound?  
Marry Sim-simple heare and stand thy ground.  
That which we have, we steale from friends and foes,

---

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Earle, *The Pirate Wars*, p. 61.

<sup>9</sup> Earle, *The Pirate Wars*, p. 61.

It comes good cheape, and so good cheape it goes.<sup>10</sup>

In this cheerfully anti-establishment poem, the pirates explicitly proclaim the remarkable value their international goods represent to their customers and, as part of their marketing pitch, celebrate how they are able to undercut merchants' prices. For example, the pirate announces to his prospective customers that pirates measure their cloth in "Souldier's Pike's", referring to the infantry weapon of between about ten and twenty feet in length, rather than measuring in either the yard of thirty-six inches, or the standard tailor's "Ell" of forty-five inches. The pirates' customers can enjoy similarly exceptional deals in dried grocery goods and in vintnery, since 'pirate' measures are here also exorbitantly generous, with pirates charging only a penny for a quart (two pints) of wine, for instance. Such modest 'pirate' prices enable expensive foreign and luxury goods to be within the reach of all sectors of the population. "Velvet, Sattin, Taffaty" and "Spice, or Suger" were normally imported goods only within the purchasing power of the wealthy, or, in the case of rich fabrics, there was a further rebellious dimension to selling them to the poor. According to the sumptuary laws, these fabrics were exclusively for the use of the elite classes, since prohibitions about wearing certain types of cloth were regulated by social degree. In 1566, for instance, a decree stated that "No man under the degree of a knight or of a lord's room [...] shall wear any hat or upper cap of velvet [...] on pain to forfeit ten shillings".<sup>11</sup> Pirates thus provide the poor with access to textiles from which normally they were doubly debarred, due to both the price of the material *and* their social status.

As a result, the poem represents pirates as economic radicals, and perhaps (using anachronistic terminology) as 'class warriors', who through their use of bargain prices break the dominance of the London Guild Companies who regulated trade by fixing prices for goods, with the result that the majority of the population could never afford imported luxury items. Under Elizabeth I, price regulation had been further strengthened and codified by the Statute of Artificers (1563), a law that outlined specific enforcement duties of local justices of the peace, aldermen, and local administrators.<sup>12</sup> This poem, then, hints at the economic challenges and class-based radicalism these Jacobean pirates represented to the mercantilism of early modern trade companies and, because in the early modern period mercantilism is profoundly connected to the operations and rise of the nation state, to government itself.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Samuel Rowlands, "Lightly come, Lightly goe", *More Knaves yet?*, B2v.

<sup>11</sup> Quoted in Linda Levy Peck, *Consuming Splendor: Society and Culture in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 6.

<sup>12</sup> Ekelund and Hébert, *A History of Economic Theory and Method*, p. 53.

<sup>13</sup> For discussion of Renaissance history in terms of commodities and material culture, see Lisa Jardine, *Worldly Goods: A New History of the Renaissance* (New York: Nan A. Tales, 1996).

Pirates disrupt the legitimate business of the circulation of goods at fixed prices, changing the established channels of distribution and, through selling worldly goods cheaply, foster a popular, folk identity, like Robin Hood, as champions of the poor and deserving.<sup>14</sup> ‘Black market’ practices are thus glamorized, and hence exculpated. As Eric Hobsbawm influentially writes concerning banditry, “[i]n a society in which men live by subservience, as ancillaries to machines of metal or moving parts of human machinery, the bandit lives and dies with a straight back”.<sup>15</sup>

Notwithstanding this cultural – and romanticized – representation, this chapter questions whether actual pirate marts were indeed examples of ‘Robin Hood economics’ that, by characterizing themselves as taking from the rich to give to the poor, defied traditional hierarchies.<sup>16</sup> Should we see pirate marts as part of a bottom-up economic and social challenge to the control of elite and mercantile classes in an increasingly globalized world? Alternatively, are histories and narratives at work here that are more complicated? Are the pirates actually operating as a vehicle for elite state actors, who through their exploitation of the actions of non-state actors such as pirates maintain their financial status quo in the face of rising mercantile power of the ‘middling’ sort? In other words, is there a more complex story of triangulated ‘class warfare’ to tell here, where pirates act as proxy vehicles for the most elite, aristocratic levels of early modern society in their desire to contain the influence of the mercantile classes? These are important questions to address in order to understand the ways piracy and ‘degree’ intersected in early modern England, sometimes in unexpected ways.

Rowlands’ poem is clearly set in London: the “gull” who questions the pirates’ knockdown prices appears to be a stuttering “Sim-simple” that “never travail’d out of Bow bell sound”. The poem’s location is thus highly specific, placing the pirate mart in Cheapside, one of the principal mercantile areas of early modern London (a ‘cheap’ is a medieval word for a ‘market’),<sup>17</sup> and within the sound of the church bell of St. Mary-le-Bow. The principal targets of the pirate mart are the exploitative practices of the merchants of the London Guilds, yet the poem also takes a swipe at the ‘simple’ location-defined and apparently regularly overpaying customers, whose lack of worldliness and experience has apparently led them to

---

<sup>14</sup> For discussion of the political meanings of early Robin Hood stories see A. J. Pollard, “Political Ideology in the Early Stories of Robin Hood”, in *Outlaws in Medieval and Early Modern England: Crime, Government and Society, c. 1066–c. 1600*, ed. by John C. Appleby and Paul Dalton (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 111–28.

<sup>15</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, *Bandits* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), p. 114.

<sup>16</sup> In economics, the ‘Robin Hood effect’ occurs where income is redistributed to reduce economic inequality. The effect is named after Robin Hood, who is often said to have stolen from the rich to give to the poor, though as Pollard argues, “[r]ather they [bandits] rob the undeserving and help the deserving, of whatever social rank” (Pollard, “Political Ideology in the Early Stories of Robin Hood”, p. 116).

<sup>17</sup> *OED*, “cheap” n1, 1.2a, “The place of buying and selling; market”.



accept economic exploitation. Implicit, therefore, seems to be a defence of the pirates' economic model, as though they indicate they steal from "friends and foes" indiscriminately. The word "friends" is not used straightforwardly as an unequivocally positive term here. It appears in line 6 in parenthesis with "(friends)" seemingly used ironically by the speaking (pirate) voice to refer to the pirates' main interlocutors and antagonists, their trade rivals the London Guild merchants. With the inferior "London measure" used by these so-called "friends" for weighing guild-supplied goods, the disparity in the price of items between the two sorts of trader is emphasized. In other words, these "friends" are in fact trade rivals, and read in this way, the pirates' apparent indiscriminate manner of selecting their prey – "we steale from friends and foes", they say – appears significantly less heinous. To put it simply, no "friends" in the standard sense of the word are in fact robbed by pirates, the poem suggests.

## **2. Pirate Marts and Global Goods in 1580s Studland Bay**

A focus on the history and location of Studland Bay, on the 'Isle' of Purbeck in Dorset, allows the exploration in the rest of this chapter of equally provocative questions regarding piracy and relations between individuals and groups of different social degree. Purbeck is not an actual island, but a peninsula with water on three sides, giving the area a remote and isolated quality, and hence making oversight by state authorities difficult. Here, from 1581–83, a number of well-known pirates held regular and highly popular marts or "fairs" (as they were euphemistically called) to sell stolen goods at knockdown prices, with the apparent permission, indeed connivance, of various levels of state authority and the active support of the local population.<sup>18</sup> Studland Bay briefly became an entrepôt for goods taken from ships from across Europe – but in addition to English vessels, principally from Scotland, the Baltic, the Low Countries, France, Spain, Portugal, Italy and elsewhere – laden with cargoes of widely divergent natures and values from all over the world, from precious saffron to the more prosaic but useful chemical brimstone, and everything in between: early modern maritime predation was international on a global scale.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> C. L'Estrange Ewen, "The Pirates of Purbeck", *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society*, Volume 71 (1949): 88–109, at 101.

<sup>19</sup> On the global dimensions of maritime predation see Lauren Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).



Figure 3: 1585–86 “Survey of the Isle of Purbeck” by Ralph Treswell. Supplied by the Dorset History Centre and reproduced by kind permission of the National Trust.

Ralph Treswell’s stunning map shows the natural advantages of Studland Bay in the Elizabethan period (the coastline has changed considerably since then), and this geography was a key factor in attracting pirates. Unlike Poole Harbour and Lulworth Cove (just West of the ‘Isle’), which had comparatively narrow entrances and hence required a favourable wind to exit them, the tidal stream at Studland Bay, which flowed outwards for 17 out of every 24 hours, gave pirate ships good odds in evading capture if the local authorities attempted an ambush. In the 1570s, West Lulworth had been popular with pirates as a site to unload their booty, with the town’s quay populated with storehouses and other buildings erected for use by pirates in the distribution of stolen goods. With this open proliferation of buildings used in defiance of the law came the risk of notice by state authorities. After a clampdown against the Lulworth operation and key individuals concerned in it by the Privy Council in 1577, and an order in 1579 to destroy across Dorset creeks all buildings erected for pirate use, the pirates transferred their business to Studland Bay and used the more remote and desolate Purbeck as the base for their distribution network.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> See Rachel Lloyd, *Dorset Elizabethans: At Home and Abroad* (London: John Murray, 1967), especially Chapter 1 “Pirates and Smugglers”, pp. 6–61.

An important factor in sustaining the pirates' Studland activities were the several, and competing, legal jurisdictions over the Dorset coast in the Elizabethan period, with rival Vice Admirals of Dorset and of Purbeck. In the early 1580s, Thomas, the first Viscount Howard of Bindon, and Sir Christopher Hatton, Vice-Chamberlain and Queen Elizabeth's favourite, occupied these roles respectively. In addition, there were also separate courts at Weymouth and Poole, where the Mayor of each town claimed authority over Admiralty matters, though some of the key office holders had posts or exerted influence in more than one jurisdiction. Finally, there were also local Commissioners for the reformation of piracy appointed by the Privy Council.<sup>21</sup> Predictably, these overlapping levels of legal authority led to confusion, arguments, loopholes, and lawlessness. Since Purbeck was a separate jurisdiction with its own Vice Admiral, Petty Sessions were held there twice a year presided over by the Mayor of Corfe Castle, an office held by John Uvedale in the early 1580s. Inhabitants of the 'Isle' were therefore not answerable to Petty Sessions outside Purbeck, and the Sheriff of Dorset could not arrest them without the permission of the Mayor of Corfe Castle: naturally enough, islanders rarely co-operated with 'outsiders'.<sup>22</sup> Pirates could thus play off officials from competing jurisdictions against each other to secure their own best advantage. For example, in 1583–84 a row erupted between the Mayor and burgesses of Poole, and the Privy Council appointed Dorset commissioners. A case concerning losses sustained by Bartholomew Belpitt, a merchant from Melcome Regis (a town close to Weymouth), against a gang of eight pirates was brought to the Poole court by the Dorset commissioners. In open court, one of the pirates said to the Mayor of Poole "if he were stayed in Poole and there charged he would make such discovery and confession against the said men of Poole as all they should have small joy to see him hanged".<sup>23</sup> Of course, under threat of exposure for their own wrongdoing, the Poole authorities allowed this pirate and three of his companions to escape, and the Mayor of Poole refused to co-operate with the Commissioners' further attempts to bring the four remaining pirates to justice through trial before them. Instead, the Mayor sent the remaining pirates to gaol in Dorchester and refused to give them up to the Commissioners for additional examination.<sup>24</sup>

In part because of geography and local tidal currents, and in part due to the advantage pirates gained from exploiting competing and antagonistic jurisdictions, in the early 1580s Studland Bay became the most popular anchorage in the whole of Britain or Ireland amongst

---

<sup>21</sup> For a discussion of the competing jurisdictions relating to coastal Dorset and the key individual post holders, see Lloyd, *Dorset Elizabethans*, pp. 8–9, 11–19.

<sup>22</sup> Lloyd, *Dorset Elizabethans*, p. 30.

<sup>23</sup> S.P. 12/169, f. 33; Lloyd, *Dorset Elizabethans*, p. 37.

<sup>24</sup> S.P. 12/169, f. 33; Lloyd, *Dorset Elizabethans*, p. 37.

Elizabethan buccaneers with their ‘global’ cargoes. Those Purbeck residents prospered who found ways to take advantage of the pirates’ presence, through victualling the pirates, entertaining them in the Isles’ three inns, or by receiving goods. Hence, due to these conditions, Studland Bay became the site of a thriving shipboard marketplace for the fencing of goods by the most powerful pirate captains of the day and their master mariners. Regular visitors included the high-profile pirate captains William Arnewood (alias Arnold), Clinton Atkinson (alias Smith), Thomas Beavin (alias Bethewen), Philip Boyte, Stephen Heynes (alias Carless), John Piers, Thomas Walton (alias Purser), and William Valentine (alias Vaughan). In the years 1581–83, records suggest that there were upwards of 40 pirate ‘fairs’ held in Studland Bay, suggesting a rate of about one market per month on average, though of course markets’ actual occurrence was irregular, dependent on the pirates’ ‘catch’ and other contingent factors.<sup>25</sup>

Given the opportunistic, unpredictable, and international dimensions of piracy, the stolen goods for sale in these marts were naturally diverse in both range and geographic origin and varied by occasion. Wares for sale at different ‘fairs’ included: herrings, salmon, gammons of bacon and other meat, hides, furs, wool, damask, silk, linen and other cloth, cochineal, brimstone, building materials, lead, bell metal, pewter, indigo, sugar, saffron, soap, jewels, wine, raisins, prunes, figs, oil, hops, pepper, salt, and many other things. Sensationally, on one occasion in June 1581, Heynes brought in a cargo that included 360 parrots, “54 munkeys, apes and other beastes”, some of which he intended for sale and others as gifts to his aiders and abettors.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, this colourful and valuable cargo provides a particularly visible, and no doubt noisy, marker by which to trace the pirates’ influence, as its distribution shows both the geographical and social extent of their networks.<sup>27</sup> When one of Heynes’ crew, a local man from Fontmell Magma, was despatched to bring the animals ashore, he was arrested on the beach in Studland and, unusually, taken for interview in his hometown by one of the lower ranking officers, perhaps with the expectation that his friends and neighbours would help him escape. However, the pirate was apparently able to bribe his captor with £20 and a parrot in exchange for his freedom, with the bird seemingly acting as a love token for the interrogator’s sweetheart, a woman from Christchurch. In fact, the animals

---

<sup>25</sup> See in particular, L’Estrange Ewen, “The Pirates of Purbeck”, 103. See also C. L’Estrange Ewen, “Organised Piracy round England in the Sixteenth Century”, *The Mariner’s Mirror*, 35 (1949): 29–42.

<sup>26</sup> Stephen Heynes captured the *Esperance* of Dieppe on 10 June 1581, with a cargo of 405 tons of brazil wood, 12 puncheons of pepper, 6,000 weight of cotton wool, 360 parrots and 54 monkeys, apes and other beasts. See HCA 1/41; L’Estrange Ewen, “The Pirates”, 92; Lloyd, *Dorset Elizabethans*, pp. 46–7.

<sup>27</sup> On the early modern trade in exotic animals see Caroline Grigson, *Menagerie: The History of Exotic Animals in England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

soon featured in many local households. Lady Howard, the Vice Admiral of Dorset's wife, had a parrot and a monkey at Lulworth Castle before long; Uvedale, the Mayor of Corfe Castle, had a pair of parrots; Captain Phillips, Commander at Brownsea Castle, had a monkey and parrot; the deputy-Searcher of Poole had a parrot; and a monkey and four parrots departed for new homes in the Isle of Wight.<sup>28</sup> From this evidence it is apparent that the pirates' goods, and hence their connections, penetrated to the highest social levels of Dorset and beyond. Records of the price of some of the pirates' goods survive in depositions given to the High Court of the Admiralty in 1583, when the Crown attempted to break up the pirates' Studland trade. These accounts indicate just how inexpensive were even the pirates' more exotic wares. Wool supplied by them, for instance, cost between £3 and £4 for a bag of 6 tods (168lbs), that is about 4 or 5d per pound. This was approximately half the standard retail price, since a stone of wool cost about 10 shillings or 120d, and hence the usual retail price per pound was between 8 and 9d.<sup>29</sup> Parrots sold by the pirates were even better value; they cost between 4 and 5s each, and normally retailed at about 11s, though price was dependent on breed and rarity and, for instance, there is a record of Secretary of State Sir Robert Cecil paying as much as £20 for a "white parrot".<sup>30</sup> By the mid sixteenth century, there was a well-established global parrot trade, with birds from Africa, South America, and India, and elsewhere, regularly arriving into England, and aviaries established in many of the great houses to display the owner's collection, taste, and sophistication.<sup>31</sup>

The Studland pirate marts appear to have provided highly organized and vibrant buying opportunities for their customers, regularly attended by the gentry and their representatives from across the region and further afield, including Corfe, Worth, Kimmeridge, Knowle, Bere, Stowborough, Wareham, Lytchett, Poole, Christchurch, Hurst Castle, the Isle of Wight, and even London. Customers for the 'fair' arrived by road or water, and small tender boats were used to ferry them across to the pirate ship. On fine days, the pirates would display their goods on deck, arranging silks and damasks to make a colourful display, and offering free samples of wines, fruit, and other produce to encourage prospective purchasers to buy. Some pirate crews clearly wore a kind of livery, similar to noblemen's servants: for instance, Heynes dressed his crew of about 30 seamen in suits of green cotton

---

<sup>28</sup> See HCA 1/41. On the early modern parrot trade see Bruce Boehrer, *Parrot Culture: Our 2500-Year-Long Fascination with the World's Most Talkative Bird* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), pp. 50–82.

<sup>29</sup> According to the National Archives currency converter for 1580

<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter/>. All price conversions use this converter.

<sup>30</sup> On Cecil's parrot see Max H. James, *"Our House is Hell": Shakespeare's Troubled Families* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989), p. 115.

<sup>31</sup> L'Estrange Ewen, "The Pirates", 103; Grigson, *Menagerie*, pp. 10–15.

cloth, with his mate attired in scarlet cotton cloth.<sup>32</sup> The pirate captains also dressed flamboyantly, though this was not necessarily a special display for their customers, since fine clothes were standard attire for many pirate captains even at sea. John Stow's account of the pirate Clinton's execution in 1583 for example asserts that the pirate's "murrey velvet dublet with great gold buttons, and his like coloured venetians layd with great gold lace [...] he had worne at the seas".<sup>33</sup> Intriguingly, Clinton claimed in his confession (10 August 1583) that he had bought rather than stolen this spectacular mulberry-coloured (murrey) and gold trimmed suit from a Dorset gentleman for £5, a significant sum of money.<sup>34</sup> Reminiscent of the circulation of Heynes' parrots and monkeys to influential clients, Clinton's claim that his vibrant purple-red apparel was acquired via a voluntary transaction with an elite individual points to something that is key more broadly to understanding the operation and success of the Studland Bay pirate 'fairs' in these years. Good relations and even, at times, trade partnerships and alliances between the pirates and the Purbeck gentry and their officials, facilitated by bribes and shared interests no doubt, but also supported by apparently cordial, even close, connections, were critical elements of the pirates' business model. Moreover, contributing to this closeness, symbolically at least, was the way that the pirate captain and crew and even the ship were dressed in apparent imitation of elite houses and their inhabitants. The fine clothes, the liveried men, the expensive and exotic animals, and other luxury trappings, all displayed the pirates' access to types of worldly goods that by both tradition and law, as well as by price, were normally reserved for aristocrats and gentry. Pirate ships, in this reading, might be seen, culturally, legally, and financially, as carnivalesque sites of misrule, where disrupting and disruptive behaviours were condoned, even supported, by the elite social groups that the pirates' behaviour and accoutrements, large and small, aped. Within this site of cornucopia and plenty, it must have appeared to customers that the world was turned upside down as flamboyant pirate 'kings' held sway over their shipboard domains.<sup>35</sup>

### **3. "They are my masters"? Piracy and Social Relations in Studland Bay in the 1580s**

---

<sup>32</sup> See HCA 1/40, f. 151; John C. Appleby, *Under the Bloody Flag: Pirates of the Tudor Age* (Stroud: The History Press, 2009), p. 20; Lloyd, *Dorset Elizabethans*, p. 45.

<sup>33</sup> John Stow, *The Annales of England* (London: By Peter Short, Felix Kingston, and George Eld for George Bishop, and Thomas Adams, 1605), p. 1175.

<sup>34</sup> Equivalent to more than £1000 in modern prices, reflective of the high cost of fine clothes in Tudor England.

<sup>35</sup> For the political dynamics of pirate 'kings' see Claire Jowitt, *The Culture of Piracy, 1580–1630: English Literature and Seaborne Crime* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2010).

The extraordinary level of activities in Studland Bay in the early 1580s were, in part, due to the personalities, experiences, situation, and inclinations of the individuals involved. Hatton, as a leading courtier, was largely absent as Vice Admiral of Purbeck, with estates and business elsewhere. He was also, however, by temperament a man that encouraged and supported adventures and adventurers, investing in overseas voyages of trade and exploration throughout his life, including Francis Drake's first English circumnavigation of 1577–80, Martin Frobisher's three voyages in search of the North-West Passage in the 1570s, and a number of later voyages.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, since some 'pirates', as experienced seamen known for their fearlessness and aggression, participated in a number of Crown and privately sponsored voyages, moving apparently effortlessly between licit and illicit activities, Hatton may have had previous legitimate dealings with members of the Studland pirate community.<sup>37</sup> Certainly the queen's senior advisors noticed Hatton's friendship to pirates. After the West Lulworth investigation, and in the year in which Drake left England on his epic voyage with two of Hatton's nominees as part of the company, William Cecil, Baron Burghley and Lord High Treasurer, rebuked Hatton for his relationship with the notorious Welsh pirate John Callice (or Callis).<sup>38</sup> Notwithstanding this reprimand, records indicate that Hatton continued to benefit financially from the pirates' Dorset activities, receiving a "pipe" of wine (i.e. a butt, with a capacity of 1008 pints) in February 1582/83 from Arnewood, for instance. Hatton's position as Vice Admiral gave him rights of "prisage" – a portion of the cargo from every ship carrying wine and landing at Purbeck – so perhaps this wine was paid to fulfil this privilege rather than reflecting any particular friendship or partnership between Hatton and Arnewood. Some pirates bragged openly of their impunity from prosecution due to their closeness to Hatton, with Richard Bucklet, master of the *Anne*, taken by the flamboyant pirate Heynes in October 1582, reporting that the pirate boasted he "had better freindes in Englande than eanye alderman or merchant of London had, naming Sir Christopher Hatton".<sup>39</sup> As we have seen, Heynes was a pirate who dressed his crew in livery and gave new recruits to his service a uniform in apparent imitation of aristocratic practice, suggesting he had a

---

<sup>36</sup> Wallace T. McCaffery, "Sir Christopher Hatton, (c. 1540–1591)", ODNB,

<https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-12605>.

<sup>37</sup> This was particularly marked in the early 1580s when, with commissions from Don Antonio (the pretender to the throne of Portugal), a group of anti-Spanish Protestant adventurers plundered Spanish and other shipping. Callice served on such voyages, and a number of pirates – including Clinton – were involved in the planned expedition to the Azores during 1581. See Appleby, *Under the Bloody Flag*, pp. 151, 173, 183.

<sup>38</sup> McCaffery, "Sir Christopher Hatton", ODNB; Eric St. John Brooks, *Sir Christopher Hatton: The Queen's Favourite* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1946), p. 115. In 1577, Callice was arrested in the Isle of Wight and, in order to negotiate a pardon from the Crown, he gave details of his accomplices and supporters. See Appleby, *Under the Bloody Flag*, pp. 148–9.

<sup>39</sup> L'Estrange Ewen, "The Pirates", 97.

particularly acute awareness of the markers of ‘degree’ and aristocratic pretensions. Heynes’ competitive assertion of the closeness of his friendship with Hatton – he says he was “better freindes” with the nobleman than others, such as aldermen and merchants, of higher degree than himself – can be seen as a strategy to marginalize and undermine the influence of the mercantile and civic business classes. Perhaps merely bravura, the pirate’s claim of intimacy with the nobleman aims to discourage disgruntled merchants whose ships the pirate had attacked from seeking redress, since it implies that civic authorities will be powerless in their pursuit due to the sway of his more powerful patron: big fish eat little fish,<sup>40</sup> in other words.



Figure 3: Sir Christopher Hatton, unknown artist, oil on panel, circa 1588–1591; painted to commemorate Hatton’s appointment as Chancellor of the University of Oxford in 1588. © National Portrait Gallery

During the day if pirate ships acted as colourful marketplaces, at night they were illicit sites of entertainment for raucous drinking and gaming, where established social distinctions completely broke down. When questioned by the High Court of the Admiralty, Uvedale reported that in 1581 he saw a fellow official at Corfe named Thomas Ayres, with other

<sup>40</sup> This popular proverbial phrase dates back to c.1200; see, for instance, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/338694>; in William Shakespeare and George Wilkin’s play *Pericles* (c. 1608) the following exchange occurs between two fishermen: ““Master, I marvel how the fishes live in the sea” “Why, as men do a-land – the great ones eat up the little ones””. William Shakespeare and George Wilkins, *Pericles*, ed. by Suzanne Gossett (London: Thompson Learning, 2004), 2.1.26–28.



officials and gentry, carousing and playing dice with the pirates on their ship.<sup>41</sup> Of particular note in relation to an analysis of the pirate ship as a carnivalesque, topsy-turvy world are the socially disruptive activities of the notorious, thought-to-be insane Henry Howard, eldest son of the Vice Admiral of Dorset, Thomas Howard of Binden. A great friend of Ayres, Lord Henry regularly socialised with the pirates, despite – or perhaps because of – his father’s considerable displeasure. Indeed, Howard’s particular friendship with Ayres, who worked for his father’s rival the Vice Admiral of Purbeck, seems intended to irritate the elder Howard further. Certainly, a report to the Privy Council in 1581 complaining of Lord Henry’s eccentric behaviour indicated that the Viscount had asked his son not to associate with Ayres, but without success in breaking the friendship. The same document also singled out Lord Henry’s relationships with pirates as particularly noteworthy, and strange, to his contemporaries, since he did not maintain friendships only with pirate captains, as did other aristocrats: “Lord Henry deals with every pirate that comes hither, keeping company with every bo’sun and the rest of the sailors, not fit to accompany with”.<sup>42</sup> Degree – even in pirate circles – was crucial in determining appropriate social interactions: aristocrats and gentry might mingle with pirate captains, as the hierarchy on ships represented a type of intersectional, seaborne shadow-world of their legitimate land-based equivalent units, the country house. By disregarding prohibitions about the importance of preserving distinctions in social degree in his friendships with Ayres and pirate crewmembers, it seems that Lord Henry’s behaviour was far more challenging to early modern aristocratic orthodoxies than was piracy *per se*.

The relationship between pirate captains and their aiders and abettors from the lower ranks of Dorset officials, made up from husbandmen and yeoman classes, operated somewhat differently and, it seems, more fractiously. Though the queen had appointed Hatton to the role of Vice Admiral of Purbeck in 1571, since he was largely absent, by 1577 he had installed Francis Hawley as his Deputy. Hawley held this office until his death in 1594, a clear indication of Hatton’s continued support for his Deputy even after the exposure and punishment of the Studland pirates in 1583.<sup>43</sup> Indeed, Hawley was a key individual mentioned repeatedly in Admiralty records and depositions concerning the pirates’ activities in Studland between 1581 and 1583. When questioned himself by the authorities, Hawley is reported to have said of the pirates, “*They are my masters*” [my emphasis], adding a status dimension to

---

<sup>41</sup> L’Estrange Ewen, “The Pirates”, 101, 90.

<sup>42</sup> S.P. 12/148, f. 51. Lloyd, *Dorset Elizabethans*, p. 40.

<sup>43</sup> For an account of the investigation and trials see L’Estrange Ewen, “The Pirates”, 105–6; Lloyd, *Dorset Elizabethans*, pp. 50–6.

his claim in his defence of not having sufficient resources to bring them in. Notwithstanding his alleged subservience to the pirates, Hawley and his men regularly requested, and received, substantial bribes from them. In his confession and at his trial, Clinton recounted numerous transactions with the Studland officials Hawley and his deputies Uvedale, Mayor of Corfe Castle, and Thomas Ayres, steward there. On one occasion, the pirate said he gave “to each £10 to have their goodwill and favour in that island which they from time to time have promised him”.<sup>44</sup> However, the economic relationship clearly went much deeper than simply cash payments for “goodwill”, with Corfe deputies acting as suppliers of pirates’ commodities on a significant scale to merchants as far away as Bristol, Dorchester, Shaftesbury, and beyond, and being paid both by the pirates, and as middlemen through selling on the pirates’ goods at profit. Depositions indicate that another of Hawley’s officers, George Fox, was a particularly frequent customer on board the pirate ships visiting every day “to see wat he could get”.<sup>45</sup> However, the Corfe official most heavily involved in supporting the pirate ‘fairs’, and acting as a middleman with merchants, was Ayres. In 1580, for instance, the pirate George Blunt believed that Ayres would buy from him the *whole* of his cargo of flax, cables, poldavies (sailcloth), pitch, hops, and wax, and Ayres’ carts were often engaged night and day in transporting pirate goods.<sup>46</sup>

The importance of social degree in determining the nature of the pirates’ relationships is striking, as it is apparent that there was a struggle for dominance between the pirates and their middling and lower rank partners at Corfe, as each sought economic mastery and power within their relationship of mutual dependence. These officials were not well-off individuals, owning only small parcels of land, and the income they accrued from their transactions with pirates was essential to their livelihoods.<sup>47</sup> Hawley, in particular, with a large family and a project to build a new house in the early 1580s, and an uncertain income, appears to have been over-extended financially. Certainly in June 1583, Clinton had what was clearly a serious standoff with Hawley when the latter ordered the pirate that “he [Hawley] sholde have first sight of his goodes before he [Clinton] made sale thereof” from two captured French ships with Flanders commodities on-board.<sup>48</sup> Hawley wanted the first pick of the most profitable goods, and an argument ensued when Clinton would not give to him a valuable

---

<sup>44</sup> Lloyd, *Dorset Elizabethans*, p. 51.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 29, 47.

<sup>47</sup> In 1581, Hawley’s possessions in Purbeck totalled 14 acres of pasture in Studland, 39 acres of arable land, and common and pasture for 200 sheep; he also had a moiety of the Manor of Affligton, and 34 acres of pasture in the Manor of Easington. See Lloyd, *Dorset Elizabethans*, p. 34.

<sup>48</sup> L’Estrange Ewen, “The Pirates”, 98, 101.

tapestry (“a faier pece of arace worcke”). According to Clinton’s confession of August 1583, the quarrel was so bitter that it resulted in Hawley contacting the pirate Purser to see “if he [Purser] could betraye him [Clinton] and deliver him on shore”. Purser, however, would have none of it, and replied with a telling challenge to Hawley “willinge him to come and do yt himself”.<sup>49</sup> Purser’s reported remark was pointed in distinguishing the contrast between the operational abilities and personal attributes of pirates and local officials. Hawley was neither a fighting man – “I am not prone to deal in price of blood” he wrote to a member of the Privy Council in 1582 – nor was he possessed of the munitions to bring in Clinton himself, and would require the pirates to betray each other in order to assert his dominance.<sup>50</sup>

Only three months after Hawley’s and Clinton’s row over the arras work the pirate was dead, executed in August at Wapping, having been taken in an orchestrated pirate hunt by two of the queen’s ships, the *Bark Talbot* and the *Unicorn*, despite Hawley having promised three times – for escalating sums of money – to ensure Clinton’s survival. First Hawley promised for £20 to arrange that Clinton’s trial would be held in Dorset, for a further £40 he colluded in an escape plan, and finally he promised for £100 more to procure a pardon “if the worst happened”.<sup>51</sup> However, powerful individuals on the Privy Council determined to bring the pirate to justice apparently outmanoeuvred the Deputy Vice Admiral and Clinton was sent to London with approximately 42 other pirates, where he was questioned, possibly tortured, tried, and executed on 30 August. Indeed, records of the Privy Council show that four days *prior* to the pirates’ trial, ten of them – including Clinton – were recommended for execution “for example” with “the rest to passe under her Ma<sup>tes</sup> mercie and pardon”.<sup>52</sup> Clinton also attempted to negotiate a pardon, offering £800 in compensation to the merchants he had robbed, to be recovered from the money he was owed “for goodes w<sup>ch</sup> he had sold unto them of his piracies”, but without success.<sup>53</sup> Yet, notwithstanding Clinton’s abundant evidence concerning Hawley’s longstanding support for piracy and his corruption, the Deputy Vice Admiral faced no charges, though Ayres and other Corfe Castle officials received reprimands and heavy fines. Indeed, Hawley appears to have gained preferment from the exposure of the pirate network, since in the autumn of 1583 he became Commissioner for the reformation of piracy in Dorset. Even in his execution speech, printed shortly after his death, Clinton was publicly railing against his betrayal, without naming individuals, by former friends like Hawley “whome I have holpe whilst I in hap did live”. Such men now silently witness his

---

<sup>49</sup> HCA 1/42; L’Estrange Ewen, “The Pirates”, 101.

<sup>50</sup> S.P. 12/156, f.7.

<sup>51</sup> Lloyd, *Dorset Elizabethans*, pp. 53–4; L’Estrange Ewen, “The Pirates”, 104–5.

<sup>52</sup> See Jowitt, *The Culture of Piracy*, p. 20; L’Estrange Ewen, “The Pirates”, 106.

<sup>53</sup> Letter from Lord Burghley to Dr Aubrey, 15 August 1583, HCA 14, 22, no. 176.

execution like “sensles stones”, he says, yet previously were more loquacious in telling tales against him, as their “double tongues [...] do me wrong”. In fact, he meaningfully comments, there has proved no one “more my foes then whome I pleased most”.<sup>54</sup> Perhaps Hawley simultaneously ensured his own position and enacted revenge on Clinton and Purser as pirates who had defied him? Certainly, other equally high-profile pirate captains received pardons, and low-ranking pirates suffered execution.<sup>55</sup>

In 1580s Studland it is clear that there were complex and shifting relations between groups of people of different social degrees within the Purbeck pirate economy. The support of Hatton, one of the most prominent and powerful aristocrats in England, and the intimacy of Henry Howard’s relationships with pirates, are particularly striking features of the Studland pirate marts. What exactly motivated these aristocrats to become so intimate with pirates? Perhaps it was simple greed, with elite classes determined to make a quick profit. Maybe it was also pleasure and devilry; there is a long history of aristocrats and gentry enjoying ‘rough’ company. However, in allying with the pirates, there may be a powerful further motive: the growing economic rivalry and social antagonism between elite and merchant classes in the late sixteenth century. As mercantile classes became increasingly powerful, as Laura Stevenson has argued, this group, who did not yet have their own ideological and conceptual frameworks, began to define itself through opportunistically appropriating chivalric values of the elite classes, since chivalry was the most highly regarded contemporary secular ideology.<sup>56</sup> Describing mercantile behaviour in chivalric terms eroded the expected difference in ‘degree’ between aristocrats and merchants. Fabulously wealthy ‘merchant princes’, such as the Mercers’ Company member Sir Thomas Gresham (later royal banker and founder of the Royal Exchange in the City of London) engaged in international commerce on vast and lucrative scales, rivalling the aristocracy for prestige and influence.<sup>57</sup> More broadly, since Livery Companies and Guilds could influence prices and supply of goods not just in London but more broadly across England, the alliance between elite classes and pirates in Studland disrupted the economic dominance of these powerful but geographically distant

---

<sup>54</sup> Anon., *Clinton, Purser & Arnold, to their countreyemen wheresoever. Wherein is described by their own hands their unfeigned penitence for their offences past: their patience in welcoming their Death, & their duetiful minds towards her most excellent Maiestie* (London: John Wolfe, 1583), B2r.

<sup>55</sup> In addition to Purser and Clinton, the prominent pirates William Ellis, William Valentine, and Thomas Beavin were also executed, but the others, named John Pollard, Edmund Copinger, Robert Woodman, and John Ellis, were lower ranking or new recruits. The tenth pirate, William Arnewood was in fact pardoned, despite the inclusion of his execution speech in the broadside *Clinton, Purser & Arnold, to their countreyemen wheresoever*. See L’Estrange Ewen, “The Pirates”, 106.

<sup>56</sup> See Laura Caroline Stevenson, *Praise and Paradox: Merchants and Craftsmen in Elizabethan Popular Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

<sup>57</sup> See John Guy, *Gresham’s Law: the Life and World of Queen Elizabeth’s First Banker* (London: Profile Books, 2019).

merchants, thus attacking the material base upon which their ideological transformation was predicated. The involvement of prominent London merchants, such as the draper and stapler John Johnson,<sup>58</sup> who bought pirate goods through intermediaries, and either sold them back to the original owners or to the Crown if no owner came forward, indicates the scale of the profits made legitimately by members of the mercantile community. Pirate marts challenged the economic model of the London and other guilds, something that perhaps suited an aristocracy threatened by the increasing power of the merchant classes and their assault on traditional aristocratic ideological dominance. There is perhaps an affinity between aristocrats with pirate captains, who liked to represent themselves as petty kings at sea (“Who reigned more than I that ruld the coast?” questions Clinton in his execution speech), formed through a shared frame of reference that lauded individual ‘great’ men.<sup>59</sup> Using Hobsbawm’s terms, aristocrats and bandits were groups who valued a “straight back”, and as a result they shared bonds mysterious to men such as officials and the commercial classes who accepted “subservience” as their natural state.

### **Conclusion: Why Studland Bay Piracy Matters**

I began this chapter by focusing on the semantic inconsistency in Rowlands’ poem where those called ‘friend’ by pirates were, in fact, rivals – ‘frenemies’ in modern terms. Defining who should be considered a friend, a foe, or indeed a frenemy, was a repeated concern for the pirates of Studland Bay in the early 1580s. Heynes claimed he was “better freindes” with Hatton than the pirates’ social superiors, and Lord Henry drew attention to himself because he appeared to *like* the pirates so much. Yet, if pirates colluded in their economic exploitation by aristocrats, far greater tension is apparent in the relationships between pirate captains and Purbeck officials. In these relationships, ‘friend’ was clearly an especially unstable and shifting identity, since (as quoted above) Clinton’s scaffold speech bitterly bemoans the way former allies had become “foes”. More generally, though support from officials also clearly served the pirates’ interests at a practical level, and access to less-than-half-price goods financially benefitted all who bought them, the symbiosis of the relationship was often clearly under strain. Hard-up officials sought to exploit the pirates, and without the cachet of superior degree to generate respect, pirate captains seem to have chaffed at being treated as lackeys by such men, especially since pirates saw officials as lacking skills as fighting men. The affinity between pirate captains and aristocrats, with their shared ethos based on the value of martial

---

<sup>58</sup> <http://tudorcoast.docuracy.co.uk/johnson/>; see Lloyd, *Dorset Elizabethans*, pp. 50–1.

<sup>59</sup> Clinton, Purser & Arnold, *to their countrey men wheresoever*, Bv. On the “History of the Great Men”, see Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* (London: James Fraser, 1841).

proWess, was absent from the relationships with officials, where more prosaic skills such as administration, bureaucracy, and organization were dominant. In Studland, middle- and lower-ranking officials with their attention to detail and efficiency, with regular habits and settled locations, were the natural partners of the mercantile classes rather than glamorous, but fleetingly present and unreliable pirates. These officials thus established mercantile networks and supply chains from whichever pirate ship happened to be present in Studland. Such men established the terms of the transaction, and took the lion share of the profits, but took little risk. Clinton, for instance, who before he became a pirate was a haberdasher in “grace church street”, and who still had a brother in trade in London, was less reliant perhaps than other pirates on the officials’ trade networks, and also more familiar with the profits middlemen might make.<sup>60</sup>

After the naval operation against the pirates in Studland Bay in the summer of 1583, pirate marts never again flourished there to the same extent. Yet this period of intense but fleeting activity reveals how complex were the social relationships forged and tested through the business of piracy on the ‘Isle’. Traditionally early modern pirate marts are seen as a bottom-up challenge to the dominance of all groups higher up the social scale. The business of piracy in Purbeck, however, suggests that there were surprising similarities between the ethos of pirates and aristocrats, based on valuing singular swashbuckling exploits of ‘great’ individuals, and this resulted in their alignment at the expense and disparagement of the bureaucratic ideologies and rapaciousness without risk of the middling sorts. Nuanced and shifting stories of triangulated class relations and alliances operated in early modern Studland, where the growing competition between the ethos of aristocrats and gentry against the mercantile classes is expressed by each groups’ relations with pirates. Within the broader trajectory of the history of English piracy, the short-lived mushrooming of pirate marts peddling international goods in Studland Bay in the early 1580s perhaps looks forward to the type of pirate – as agents of international commerce – that was to become dominant by the late seventeenth century. In this later period, merchants and officials co-operated with pirates across the globe to provide scarce goods and trading with menaces became international business-as-usual. But just as the Studland pirate marts – briefly so successful and lucrative – were not a long-term phenomenon, neither was late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century commercial piracy and marauding; the seeds of destruction were in their very successes, as

---

<sup>60</sup> As recorded in the entry concerning Clinton’s death in the 1583 parish records for St Botolph’s Aldersgate. See Thomas R. Forbes, “Life and Death in Shakespeare’s London: Parish Records Yield Important New Data on Infant and Child Death Rates, Plague Fatalities, Accidents, Murders, Executions – and a Vivid Picture of Daily Life”, *American Scientist: The Scientific Research Society*, 58 (1970): 520.

both provoked brutal responses from the authorities. If pirates of the sixteenth century are traditionally seen as a group at the vanguard of empire formation, the Studland Bay markets tell a different but related story from that period, pointing proleptically to a type of pirate – as vehicles of international commerce – that became dominant a hundred years later. But with both pirate incarnations, when the success of their marauding and commercial activities either made them too noticeable or broke out on a global scale, state authorities decided to eliminate the piracy and pirates they could no longer control and intervened against them with the full force of state apparatus.

## **Bibliography**

### **Manuscript Sources**

The National Archives of the United Kingdom (TNA) Kew

HCA 1.

HCA 14.

S.P. 12/156, f.7.

S.P. 12/148, f. 51.

S.P. 12/169, f.33.

### **Printed Sources**

Anon., *Clinton, Purser & Arnold, to their countreyemen wheresoever. Wherein is described by their own hands their unfeigned penitence for their offences past: their patience in welcoming their Death, & their duetiful minds towardes her most excellent Maiestie*. London: John Wolfe, 1583.

Appleby, John C. *Under the Bloody Flag: Pirates of the Tudor Age*. Stroud: The History Press, 2009.

Benton, Lauren. *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400–1900*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Boehrer, Bruce. *Parrot Culture: Our 2500-Year-Long Fascination with the World's Most Talkative Bird*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010.

Brooks, Eric St. John. *Sir Christopher Hatton: The Queen's Favourite*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1946.

Carlyle, Thomas. *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History*. London: James Fraser, 1841.

Cordingly, David. *Under the Black Flag: The Romance and the Reality of Life among the Pirates*. London: Random House, 1995.

Earle, Peter. *The Pirate Wars*. London: Methuen, 2003.

Ekelund, Jr., Robert B. and Robert F. Hébert. *A History of Economic Theory and Method*. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2007.

L'Estrange Ewen, C. "The Pirates of Purbeck", *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society*, Volume 71 (1949): 88–109.

L'Estrange Ewen, C. "Organised Piracy round England in the Sixteenth Century", *The Mariner's Mirror*, 35 (1949): 29–42.

Forbes, Thomas R. "Life and Death in Shakespeare's London: Parish Records Yield Important New Data on Infant and Child Death Rates, Plague Fatalities, Accidents, Murders, Executions – and a Vivid Picture of Daily Life", *American Scientist: The Scientific Research Society*, 58 (1970): 520.

Gosse, Philip. *The History of Piracy*. New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1932.

Grigson, Carolin. *Menagerie: The History of Exotic Animals in England*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Guy, John. *Gresham's Law: the Life and World of Queen Elizabeth's First Banker*. London: Profile Books, 2019.

Hebb, David D, *Piracy and the English Government 1616–1642: Policy-Making Under the Early Stuarts*. Aldershot: Scolar, 1994.

Hill, Christopher. "Radical Pirates?", in *The Collected Essays of Christopher Hill, Volume III: People and Ideas in Seventeenth-Century England*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987. 161–87.

Hobsbawm, Eric, *Bandits*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969.

James, Max H. "*Our House is Hell*": *Shakespeare's Troubled Families*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1989.

Jardine, Lisa. *Worldly Goods: A New History of the Renaissance*. New York: Nan A. Tales, 1996.

Jowitt, Claire. *The Culture of Piracy, 1580–1630: English Literature and Seaborne Crime*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2010.

Lloyd, Rachel. *Dorset Elizabethans: At Home and Abroad*. London: John Murray, 1967.

Levy Peck, Linda. *Consuming Splendor: Society and Culture in Seventeenth-Century England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.



McCaffery, Wallace T. "Sir Christopher Hatton, (c. 1540–1591)", ODNB, <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-12605>.

Murphy, Elaine. "Early Modern English Piracy and Privateering", in *The Routledge Companion to Marine and Maritime Worlds 1400–1800*, ed. by Claire Jowitt, Craig Lambert, and Steve Metz. London and New York: Routledge, 2020. 368–87.

Pollard, A. J. "Political Ideology in the Early Stories of Robin Hood", in *Outlaws in Medieval and Early Modern England: Crime, Government and Society, c. 1066–c. 1600*, ed. by John C. Appleby and Paul Dalton. Farnham: Ashgate, 2009. 111–28.

Rediker, Marcus. *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700–1750*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

Rediker, Marcus. *Villains of All Nations*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2004.

Ritchie, Robert C. *Captain Kidd and the War against the Pirates*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986.

Rowlands, Samuel. *More Knaves yet? The Knaves of Spades and Diamonds. With new Additions*. London: Printed by Edward Allde for John Tap, 1613.

Shakespeare, William, and George Wilkins. *Pericles*, ed. by Suzanne Gossett. London: Thompson Learning, 2004.

Stevenson, Laura Caroline. *Praise and Paradox: Merchants and Craftsmen in Elizabethan Popular Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

Stow, John. *The Annales of England*. London: By Peter Short, Felix Kingston, and George Eld for George Bishop, and Thomas Adams, 1605.

Thomson, Janice. *Mercenaries, Pirates and Sovereigns: State-Building and Extraterritorial Violence in Early Modern Europe*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.