

The Muster at the King's Manor of Ampthill in 1536

This article has been prepared by Mike Turner, of Ampthill and District Archaeological and Local History Society, using information obtained from the Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, volume 11, October 1536. The picture is rather confused, illustrating the difficulties in communication in a time of near panic over the rebellions in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire. The numbers of men involved varies from correspondent to correspondent but some idea can be obtained of the numbers and the difficulties of providing arms and payment of the men.

For more detailed information try www.british-history.ac.uk which gives access to the Letters and Papers.

Rumours that the King intended to strip the churches of their valuables and impose an unprecedented tax upon the common people had contributed to an uprising in Lincolnshire in early October.

The rebellion needed putting down and King Henry VIII announced from Windsor his intention to advance against them in person or send some great personage against them. The Duke of Suffolk and other earls and lords with interests in that area, including Sir Francis Bryan were sent to face the rebels whilst a larger army was to be raised to ensure quiet in the rest of the country.

Letters were sent out under the Privy Signet from Windsor Castle on 7th October to various supporters of the King requiring them to prepare a number of men and horses fit for war, of whom so many were to be archers and to lead or send them to by the day of this month. The details would be filled in according to where they were being sent. Letters were to be written to the ports and all the sea coasts, from Kent to Cornwall to search what ships come along the coast.

About the 9th Oct. the Duke of Norfolk was ordered to go to Ampthill as High Marshal to set the army ready for the King to arrive to "view them and dismiss them from time to time with thanks and good entertainment" Also to be sent were money and a treasurer, 6 guns, 8 or 10 feet long, powder, gunners, bows etc and possibly coats for the gentlemen's servants.

The army was appointed to assemble on the 16th Oct at Ampthill. Some of the ordnance was heading for Stamford but could be diverted to Ampthill if requested.

Norfolk started rustling up all the gentlemen, abbots and priors who had been commanded to send men. He asked Thomas Cromwell to send him at least 400 bows and 500 sheaves of arrows because he was having trouble getting them.

On October 10th the Lord Chamberlain was sent to Ampthill to prepare food and lodging for the "King and his train and such as shall repair thither to attend on his Grace's person". He had a commission to command "by his billet". A number of local gentry were appointed to help him. The King was hoping to assemble 40,000 men at Ampthill within the six days.

On October 11th the Duke of Norfolk made arrangements to protect his own house and the sea coast and asked Cromwell to send the bows and arrows to Cambridge where his company would be passing through. He still needed more money for harness and coats for the men and asked for a licence for his men to take carts to carry his bills (weapons) from London. He also queried whether it might not be better for him to take his company to Huntingdon which would be nearer to the enemy.

On 12th October seventy seven letters were sent out countermanding the order for the King's

supporters to report to Amptill as the rebels in Lincolnshire had been overthrown. The persons addressed were to return home but keep an eye out for scattered rebels.

It was about this time that a rebellion was starting in Holderness and Yorkshire, later to be known as the Pilgrimage of Grace with Robert Aske as leader.

The Duke of Norfolk was on his way but still did not want to go to Amptill but would rather meet up with the King at Huntingdon. It was important for him to stay with his company to ensure they kept coming.

The Duke of Suffolk writes to the King to ask whether he will pardon the Lincolnshire rebels and thus allow his forces to proceed north towards the rebels in the North. They would then be in between the two rebel areas in case the Lincolnshire one rose again.

On 15th October the King agreed to the pardon for all except the ringleading gentlemen who would be questioned and released apart from some who for their offences should be sent to the King. Suffolk was instructed to go to Lincoln to hold that safe while the Earls of Shrewsbury, Rutland and Huntingdon with all the forces of Leicestershire and Nottingham were to proceed against the northern rebels.

On 17th October the Earl of Shrewsbury writes to the Duke of Norfolk stating that the rebels number 40,000 and increase daily while his force numbered only 7000 and he needed more men sent him from the mustering at Amptill. The King requests the Duke of Norfolk and the Marquis of Exeter with the Gloucestershire men numbering 5000 to advance towards the Earl of Shrewsbury. Sir Antony Browne having only 560 men readied was instructed to go with 10 pieces of ordnance to the Duke of Suffolk.

Money to pay the men was becoming an increasing problem. Wages of 8d a day was agreed for men on horseback but they must have different rates for those who fight on horseback eg lancers and mounted archers, and those who merely use horses to get there and fight on foot.

On 18th Oct Norfolk's men numbering over 4000 are at Cambridge, Exeter's were at Buckingham stayed by the countermand and the 5000 Gloucestershire men were at Stoney Stratford. Norfolk and the other lords were concerned that their men must be paid to avoid disorder. All complain that they cannot live on 8d a day. The Lord Steward (Shrewsbury) desired £20,000 and Norfolk needed at least £10,000 to avoid disruption among the men.

On 20th Oct Norfolk and Essex received orders from the Privy Council to join up with the Lord Steward(Shrewsbury) as soon as possible whilst 2000 persons on horseback and on foot were to be assembled at Amptill and sent to support Suffolk in Lincolnshire.

Norfolk, at Cambridge, was getting increasingly concerned about the orders being received from the Privy Council. He had sent some of his company home. All the army appointed to come to Amptill had been sent home. He was not prepared to let Suffolk have any of his armaments (six falconets, 20 small iron pieces carried in two carts, 1000 bows , 1000 sheaves of arrows and 500 bills)

Sir William Poulet and Sir William Kyngston reported to the Privy Council that the number of the army at this time assembled was 19,394 of which 2000 were added to Norfolk's own band along with 1000 Gloucestershire men and with Sir Antony Browne 560; with Exeter 2000 the residue returned "were able and well furnished". Poulet and Kyngston had left Amptill and were at Beaconsfield when they received letters asking them to retain 2000 men at Amptill. They said they would return to Amptill and do their best preferably to get horsemen but would reluctantly make up the numbers with footmen.

The King was concerned that with the number of rebels rising in Yorkshire there was a risk of a new uprising in Lincolnshire and hence Suffolk needed more support.

On 21st Oct the King sent out a circular letter thanking the persons for obeying the commission to muster and explaining that on hearing that the rebellion in Lincolnshire had been appeased he had deferred his journey to Ampthill and had sent many of his subjects home. He now understood there was an uprising in Yorkshire and although he had already sent forces to repress the same he thought it necessary to have an "army royal" in case he needed to advance in person. He requests the persons addressed to attend him "with men of whom shall be archers and be ready to advance at an hours warning to such a place as shall be appointed."

Poulet and Kyngston were requested to raise 2000 men and send them to the Duke of Suffolk, 1000 mks being provided for their "conduct money", and if the ordnance was still at Ampthill to send to Suffolk one cartload of bills, one cartload of bows and arrows, a third of javelins, with strings and 10 pieces of ordnance. All the rest of the ordnance at Ampthill was to be returned to Windsor.

Sir William Paulet and Sir William Kyngston, based at Ampthill, let the Lord Privy Seal, Thomas Cromwell, know that they had received news that the Duke of Suffolk and the Lord Admiral felt themselves strong enough with the help of local gentlemen in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire and had stopped Sir Antony Brown in Stamford. It looked likely that the rebels in Yorkshire would withdraw on the appearance of the Duke of Norfolk and the Lord Steward's forces. Paulet and Kyngston doubted they could easily raise the 2000 men. They would hold still until they heard from the King. "Every gentleman's band discharged upon the musters be sent home into their countries and so severed that they cannot be suddenly collected. The best horsed men went with Sir Francis Brian, and since with Sir Ant. Brown, so that the rest will be footmen, and not more than 500 or 600 in all."

On 22nd October the King sends a letter to the Duke of Suffolk noting the latter's report of proceedings and his query regarding how much to pay in wages. He notes that whilst he was entirely satisfied with the proceedings yet "the reports of the numbers of rebels sent at sundry times "by you, Sir Francis Brian, John Wingfield, and others" show some contrariety". However he had confidence in them. Each man on horseback was to have 8d a day, and the captains and petty captains their accustomed wages. He thanks them for not expending more than £2284. He sends John Gostyke £3000 to cover this. He wants Sir Ant. Browne to go to them with 600 men raised by Sir William Paulet and Sir William Kyngston at Ampthill. He instructs Suffolk to remain at Lincoln with his men unless Norfolk and Shrewsbury request help.

Sunday Oct 22nd Paulet and Kyngston reply to Cromwell that they had already sent the men home from Ampthill after the muster and they will not be able to raise 2000 men again at short notice. They were hoping to raise 600 men in the county. The messenger, Greneway from the Duke of Suffolk declared Lincolnshire quiet and Sir Ant. Brown stayed at Stamford to save money. The King wanted them to send to Suffolk the ordnance and artillery that Brown should have had but they answered that Norfolk took what he wanted for Brown and himself to Stamford. They have asked Brown to "learn my Lord Suffolk's mind" and to go to him with the artillery and his company of 500 men as well as the 600 able men well horsed returned. It appears he had little need of able men.

The loads of bows, arrows, strings, bills and javelins and ten pieces of ordnance that should have gone to Mr Brown, the King now asks to be held at Ampthill and if possible sent to Windsor but this instruction came to late because "the ordnance will be this Sunday in London and Windsor."

The Privy Council noted the difficulty in raising 2000 men and conveys the King's thanks for trying. Suffolk writes that he thinks he does not require more men, nevertheless, if Paulet and Kyngston can raise 500 or 600 men, they are to send them to him with ten pieces of ordnance. Paulet and Kyngston reply noting that Suffolk needs no more men and ordnance, so they have asked Sir Ant. Brown at Stamford to offer to go to Suffolk and the Lord Admiral. They also asked him to keep the number of men he has and send no more men back. Brown had already returned to them

for money 120 tall men horsed and they were aware that he had returned 500 at several times because they were more than the 560 wanted by Norfolk. They confirmed that all the ordnance left by Norfolk and Brown at Ampthill had gone towards Windsor and London as requested on Friday the 20th Oct.. If the King wanted them to continue to raise the 2000 men they would send for Sir John Bruges, Sir John Russell, Mr Welsh and others who have great numbers but it would take some time. Norfolk had said when departing that he would have men in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire provided he had enough money. Paulet and Kyngston would prepare 500 or 600 men, and ask whether they should they proceed or stay at Ampthill.

Monday 23rd Oct Norfolk had received £5000 and my Lord Marquis £500 for his movement from Ampthill to my Lord Steward. The Gloucestershire men had also been paid.

Paulet and Kyngston received notification from the King to send 600 men to Suffolk immediately. They reply that the best men from Beds, Bucks and Northants had already been sent with Sir Francis Brian, Sir William Aparre and Sir John Seint John but they would do their best. Regarding the request for ordnance to be sent immediately they reminded the Council that Norfolk had taken sufficient for himself and Sir Ant. Brown which is now at Stamford. The rest had already left Ampthill for Windsor and London. They noted that “this country is barren of men and victual, and we hear they are sore straited in Stamford for victual, as the whole army passes that way. Many of the army in going forward take men’s horse and mares from the plough, without any agreement or restitution.” They agreed to sort it out with justices of the peace so there would be as little hurt as possible.

They managed to raise 640 men from which they would select the best.

An account is given of the monies received at Ampthill for payment of wages £11,651-3s 0d. It was distributed as follows:-

£2500 to Duke of Norfolk; £500 to the Marquis of Exeter: £800 to Sir Nich. Poyntz, Sir Ant. Hungerforde, Sir Edm. Thame and Mr Anth. Kyngeston: £5,118-8s for wages and coats for the residue of the army at Ampthill, £2,200 for the army going forward with Norfolk and for Mr Gostwike; £500 to Norfolk by William Howard by command of Paulet and Kyngston; totalling £11,618-8s

The muster at Ampthill was over.

On 7th November Francis Halle on going to Ampthill reported to Lord Lisle that the King and Queen are in good health, and all things are well pacified in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire. The Duke of Suffolk, Sir Francis Bryan, Sir John Russell and Sir Anthony Browne were still at Lincoln. As is well recorded the ringleaders and many of the gentlemen involved in the two rebellions were executed in the following months.

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