'An Elizabethan Progress: The Queen's Journey into East Anglia, 1578' - extract

by Zillah Dovey 1995

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## AN ELIZABETHAN PROGRESS

Foreword by David Loades

£3 10s 8d. (The losses were replaced later in the year at the great Stourbridge Fair outside Cambridge, the new pewter costing 30s.)

North continued to accompany the progress and returned to Kirtling only on 26 September. His quarrel with the Lord Chamberlain which had begun at Melford continued to rankle. Sussex was still complaining about him in November and the Queen herself had to intervene. Nevertheless, he remained in favour until his death at his Charterhouse home in 1600. He was buried at Kirtling, leaving the bulk of his estate to his nineteen-year-old grandson Dudley (whose name marked the North connection with the family of Lord Leicester, his godfather). His father, John, whose pursuit of the progress we have followed, had died three years earlier. Lord North also remembered his younger son and several other grandchildren, and rather belatedly, after all other legacies had been paid, he arranged for something to go to his younger brother, the (now) rather more famous Sir Thomas North, translator of Plutarch's Lives, from which Shakespeare drew his classical plots.

He also left money to eight villages around Kirtling and legacies to his servants, twelve, including the cook, by name and the rest listed as 'my gentlemen household servants', 'my yeomen household servants', including two footmen, and 'my menial servants'. Fourteen horses were specifically bequeathed, including a gelding to his secretary and, as an afterthought, 'my black nagge' to Sir John Cuttes, with whom the Queen was to stay later in the progress. Two of his physicians received money and one 'my wroughte velvett cassock . . . and my blacke sattin dublett'.

Three days before he died North added a schedule to his will, primarily to leave £100 in gold to the Queen 'in acknowlegement of my love and duety to Her Majesty from whom I have received advancement to honor and many and continuall favors', praying 'my deere soveraigne' to accept it as a testimony of loyalty.57

After dinner at Kirtling on Wednesday 3 September, Elizabeth and her entourage rode the 7 or 8 miles south to Horseheath Hall. Like Kirtling, it had been surveyed by William Bowles and also appeared on the map. The usual preparations were made by Gentleman Usher Symon Bowyer, who came on from Hengrave, and the Wardrobe Yeoman Raphe Hope, who came from Chippenham and stayed for three days.

The Queen's host at Horseheath was the second Sir Giles Alington, a proud but warm-hearted old man. His family had lived at Horseheath since the end of the fourteenth century as important local rather than national figures. This Sir Giles, one of ten children, had succeeded his father, the first Sir Giles, in 1522 and, like his ancestors, had played his part in the county, becoming a magistrate and Sheriff of Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire. He had married three times. His first wife, Ursula Drury, great-aunt to Sir William Drury of Hawstead, had died in 1552. So had their eldest son, leaving his father ten grandchildren to bring up. The eldest survivor of these, another Giles, had eventually married and had three children before he also died, in 1573. So his older boy, yet another Giles, became his great-

grandfather's heir. Meanwhile, the second Sir Giles had married a widow, Alice Elrington, who in about ten years also gave birth to ten children. In the space of about twenty-five years Horseheath Hall was home to over twenty children. Alice herself died in 1563 and it was Sir Giles's third wife, Margaret, another widow, who was the Queen's hostess. Those of the big families who survived would have left home by 1578, but the three great-grandchildren, boys aged five and six and a girl of seven, would have been there, kept well away from the Court unless invited to appear. It was the six-year-old who was to inherit his great-grandfather's property and wealth when the old man died eight years later and who would eventually become the third Sir Giles.

The Queen's lodging place contained great riches, many of them, as was fashionable, displaying a pride in family history. The house was decorated with forty heraldic shields, ten in the hall, twelve in the parlour and eighteen in the chapel, and Sir Giles lived in considerable style. He drank from his special silver-gilt cup – except when the drink was sack, for which he kept a different gilt cup. Before dinner and after eating oysters he washed his hands in a deep silver bowl and his table was furnished with silver candlesticks, two sets of covered bowls, silver-gilt salts and spoons. His stock of silver included two wine barrels, one with six matching flagons and the other engraved with his initials, a basin and ewer and many other pieces, most of them engraved with the Alington arms. Much of it would have been on display for the Queen's visit and some perhaps added to her own plate for the one dinner she took at Horseheath.

Lady Margaret herself owned rich jewels, including a gold pomander, a great pearl chain, sapphire and turquoise rings, gold chains, an agate decorated with four diamonds and a diamond flower; she could hold her own if invited into the Queen's presence. When Sir Giles died in 1586, his 'deare and welbeloved wife' was to keep the jewels, plate and linen she had brought him when they married and all he had given her since. In addition, she was to have several pieces of silver, her coach and two horses, a wagon with another two and some money. She was, he said, a wife whom he had 'great cause to love, like and trust', for he had seen 'her humble duty, good will and affection towards me and mine'. In fact, when she died six years after him, none of her wealth went to the Alington family. Perhaps because Sir Giles had chosen to be buried with his second wife in Horseheath Church, Margaret was buried with her first husband in London.

Sir Giles left expressions of affection and legacies to all his surviving children and their families and to many friends and servants. Several family members were to have gold rings bearing his arms and Ferdinand Parris, the Norfolk recusant who came from Linton, not far from Horseheath, and who was related to the Alingtons, was to receive a damask gown edged with velvet and furred with marten skins – it must have been very welcome during his spells in prison. Like other local landowners, Sir

Giles remembered the poor of his area and left money to each of four villages, £20 of which was to be distributed on the day of his funeral.

Like his neighbour Lord North, he also had an eye on Lord Burghley's grandchildren and he left a request that his heir should marry a daughter of Sir Thomas Cecil. In this at least he was more favoured than Lord North and the young Giles was indeed married to Dorothy Cecil. He followed the pattern established in three previous generations of this prolific – or well-recorded – family and eventually had at least nine children.<sup>58</sup>

Churchyard, commenting on the progress's entertainment at Horseheath, was not fulsome in his praise but everything went well, he said, and was well liked. Sir Giles had earlier created a very large deer park, where Elizabeth could well have gone hunting while her Council worked.

Her ministers cannot have had much leisure time. On the Thursday they met in Council twice. Only five members attended, Lord Warwick and Sir James Croft again being absent, but once more religion was on the agenda. The only Cambridgeshire recusant on their list, a young local man called Evans Fludd, was examined and found adamant in refusing to attend church. He was sent off to Cambridge, where, like others, he was to be confined and persuaded to conform. The Council instructed a reliable divine, Dr Ithell, to place him in a suitable house, to lecture him and take him to church to hear sermons. He had until Michaelmas to give in. In fact, he took a little longer but at the end of October the Council, hearing that he was 'reclaimed', ordered the Sheriff of Cambridge, with whom he had been lodged, to release him on bail but subject to surveillance. His local ministers were to certify his continuing attendance at church. His conversion evidently did not last, for by the beginning of 1580 he had been imprisoned in Cambridge Castle for over a year and was seriously ill as a result of the cold and narrowness of his cell. He was allowed to move to an approved house, where he could benefit from walks in the garden. This respite was later extended and eventually he recovered. He was released from prison but he never again abandoned his beliefs and continued to be pursued and fined.

The Council also discussed about a dozen other matters of varying importance. To help the Dutch and in response to a request which had come with the support of the Prince of Orange, Her Majesty was 'graciouslie inclined to do them good' and the Council sent instructions to the authorities in London to help Haarlem and Leiden to obtain supplies of English sheepskins over the next four years. They had already discussed at Woodrising and Chippenham their concern about the disputes which regularly arose when the Mayor of Dover was elected. Now the present incumbent was in trouble because he had forced a servant of Sir John Croft on his way through Dover to open his master's mail. The Mayor was to attend their lordships at the end of his term of office. (In fact, he was re-elected.) Other items dealt with that day included the murder of an official courier; three poachers, who were to appear before

them at the end of September 'wheresoever the Court shall then be'; the wax figures, which were to be re-examined; and the plague in London, which was beginning to be a serious cause of concern — traders were to be banned from going to the Michaelmas Fair in Canterbury lest they take the infection with them.

The following day, after discussion with the Queen, the Lords of the Council wrote jointly to the English ambassador in Paris. Now that the King of France's envoy was on his way home, Elizabeth wanted Sir Amyas Paulet to know what had been said to him on her behalf by her ministers. When de Rambouillet reported to his master, Paulet would be able to comment on his account of his dealings in England or reinforce the English view. The Council's carefully drafted letter set out five points made by de Rambouillet and the English considered reactions to them.

On the subject of marriage with the Duc d'Alençon, which had the support of the King of France, the Queen had commented rather tartly that she had indeed recently received letters and messengers declaring his love, but since there had been a two-year silence since the proposal was last heard of, she would need to give it some longer consideration.

The second and third points raised by the king's ambassador concerned the official French policy towards Spain and the Netherlands, of which Alençon's activities there might have given a false impression. Elizabeth had been pleased, said the Council, to hear that Henri III also wanted to see the Dutch reconciled to the King of Spain. She too respected Spain's sovereignty in the Netherlands and, the Council added smoothly, the Queen had done all she could by diplomatic means both to protect them from tyranny and to preserve them in their duty to King Philip.

As to the fourth point, France's traditional friendship with Scotland, they need have no anxieties about reports of Scottish approaches to Elizabeth. True, the young King James VI had let her know that, now he was twelve, he was taking over power from his regent Mortimer and hoped for her continued favour and advice. She was after all his nearest cousin and neighbour and so she had promised him help at any time. Surely in this King Henri would be with her rather than against her.

Finally Henri could rest assured that Mary Queen of Scots was well provided for in England. Any request she made would be met, as long as it had no ulterior motive. The Earl of Shrewsbury, her guardian, had full authority to give her as much freedom as she needed for her health and to replace her staff as necessary, including her old doctor and certain of her servants.

The Council concluded with a request that France should not give asylum to 'rebels, fugitives and bad-disposed persons' from England. The King of Spain had already banished such people from his domains.

The letter was to be carried by Paulet's own servant, Robert Osborne, who had been ready to leave while still at Kirtling two days earlier.

There was further evidence that the progress was approaching its end with the

departure of Lord Oxford. He had been with it all along and needed eight carts to carry his belongings back to London. His father-in-law, Lord Burghley, authorizing the expenditure, cannot have been sorry to see him go.

The progress was also slowing down. It is not certain when they left Horseheath but with all the Council business there and their anxiety about the plague ahead, they may well have stayed on until Saturday 6 September. Certainly by 8 September the Spanish ambassador in London had heard that the Queen was delaying her return because of the plague.