Thinker, Gaoler, Soldier, Spy: Sir John Peyton (1544-1630) and Early Modern Intelligence-Brokering in the Tower of London

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Abstract: Through analysing local administrative records, state administrative records, and personal correspondence, this article demonstrates how Sir John Peyton's role as Lieutenant of the Tower of London (1597-1603) provides us with a hitherto unexamined opportunity for commissioning, extracting, brokering, and obtaining intelligence. In doing so, it makes the case for re-examining the often-overlooked contribution of Elizabethan and Jacobean administrators to the history of intelligence-gathering in early modern England, here focussing on the position of the Lieutenant of the Tower of London.

I

Previous studies of early modern intelligence brokers, or those who commissioned, reported, and exchanged information concerning domestic and foreign affairs, have focussed largely on the much-discussed figures of Elizabethan espionage, in particular spymasters such as Sir Francis Walsingham or Sir Robert Cecil.[1] Codebreakers including

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[1] For a discussion on current directions of scholarship in early modern espionage studies see the introduction to this issue. See also: Stephen Alford, *The Watchers*: *A Secret History of the Reign of Elizabeth I* (London,

Thomas Phelippes also feature heavily, as do some of the better-known field agents like Giordano Bruno, William Herle, and William Sterrell.[2] Looking beyond such familiar figures, however, this article examines the ways in which Sir John Peyton utilised his position as Lieutenant of the Tower of London as an opportunity to commission, extract, and exchange intelligence. It uses state and local administrative records as well as personal correspondence held in the State Papers, the British Library, the Tower of London, the Folger Shakespeare Library, and the National Archives to examine the wide variety of ways in which intelligence was collected and the nature of the intelligence assembled and commissioned by Peyton. This case study offers a fresh perspective on how the Elizabethan

2012); Alford, *Burghley: William Cecil at the Court of Elizabeth I* (New Haven & London, 2008); Alford, *The Early Elizabethan Polity: William Cecil and the British Succession Crisis 1558-1569* (Cambridge, 1998); John Cooper, *The Queen's Agent: Francis Walsingham at the Court of Elizabeth I* (New York, 2012); Robert Hutchinson, *Elizabeth's Spymaster: Francis Walsingham and the Secret War that Saved England* (London, 2006); Stephen Budiansky, *Her Majesty's Spymaster: Elizabeth I, Sir Francis Walsingham and the Birth of Modern Espionage* (London, 2005); Alan Haynes, *Walsingham: Elizabethan Spymaster and Statesman* (Stroud, 2007); Patrick Martin, *Elizabethan Espionage: Plotters and Spies in the Struggle between Catholicism and the Crown*, (Jefferson, 2016); Hsuan-Ying Tu, 'The Pursuit of God's Glory: Francis Walsingham's Espionage in Elizabethan Politics 1568-1588', unpublished PhD Thesis (York, 2012); Christopher Mains, 'Sir Robert Cecil and Elizabethan Intelligencing 1590-1603', unpublished PhD Thesis (Open University, 2021).

[2] Robyn Adams, 'A spy on the payroll? William Herle and the mid-Elizabethan polity', *Historical Research*, 83/220 (2010), pp. 63-81; Stephen Alford, 'Some Elizabethan Spies in the Office of Sir Francis Walsingham', in Adams and Rosanna Cox (eds), *Diplomacy and Early Modern Culture* (London, 2011), pp. 46-61; Robyn Adams, 'A Most Secret Service: William Herle and the Circulation of Intelligence', in Adams and Rosanna Cox, *Diplomacy and Early Modern Culture*, pp. 63-81; Adams, '"The service I am here for": William Herle in the Marshalsea Prison, 1571', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 72/2 (2009), pp. 217–38; Christopher Andrew, *The Secret World: A History of Intelligence* (London, 2018), pp. 158-90.

and Jacobean government gathered intelligence by focussing, for the first time, on the office of the Lieutenant of the Tower.

Sir John Peyton is a textbook example of an early modern administrator and public servant. Born in Knowlton, Kent in 1544, he steadily accrued a wealth of military experience together with a title, honours, and estates that were acquired through grants, business ventures, and marriage. Peyton curried favour with the Lord High Treasurer William Cecil and often acted as a messenger of news and intelligence. He had served under Sir Henry Sidney in Ireland from 1564-76 and was a member of Sidney's household. In a letter to Henry Sidney, Burghley wrote 'your last letters I received were brought hither yesterday by Mr Payton, whom I lyke very well'.[3] Peyton also fought alongside the Earl of Leicester in the Netherlands between 1586-7, where he served as Lieutenant-Governor of Bergen-op-Zoom, and was knighted for his efforts. He later drew on this military experience in a four-page document entitled 'On Soldiery', which presented a scheme to cut government spending, whilst improving martial service.[4] Peyton held a wide variety of offices both in local government and at a national level. Peyton was MP for King's Lynn (1572, 1584, 1593), Middlesex (1597), and Weymouth and Melcombe Regis (1601); Justice of the Peace for Ely (1579), Middlesex (1579, 1597), and Norfolk (1581); Sheriff of Norfolk (1588-9); Colonel of the Queen's Bodyguard (1588); Deputy Lieutenant of Cambridgeshire (1588-96); Receiver of the Keys to the counties of Norfolk, Huntington, and the city of Norwich (1593); Lieutenant of the Tower (1597-1603); Commander of Musters (1598); and Governor of Jersey (1603-28). Peyton was well-connected with statesman and courtiers. His friends included Sir Philip

[3] The National Archives, London, State Papers [hereafter TNA, SP] 63/25 fo. 190.

[4] TNA, SP, Lansdowne Vol/81 fo. 37.

Sidney, who wrote to his father-in-law, Francis Walsingham, in May 1585 noting that Peyton was 'one whome from my chyldhod I haue had great caws to loue'. Sidney later called in favours for Peyton and once asked Walsingham to 'recommend mr Ihon Peitons bill' with 'som speed'.[5] Similarly, it was most likely through Robert Cecil's influence that Peyton became MP for Weymouth and Melcombe Regis in 1601.[6]

Peyton amassed wealth through canny business deals and acquired properties, rewards, and grants for loyal service to the crown and court.[7] In many of these endeavours, Peyton frequently worked alongside his son. Publicly, Peyton and his son —also named John Peyton (1579-1635)— dutifully carried out their administrative responsibilities, often at great personal expense. Privately, however, they commissioned, conveyed, and procured intelligence of national and international significance, using travel, surveillance, infiltration, and interception, as means of acquiring covert knowledge which could be used for political gain and patronage. As Sebastian Sobecki observes, both father and son 'specialized in procuring domestic and international intelligence'.[8] This type of patrilineal business arrangement was not unusual for the time. There are several notable contemporary

[5] Roger Kuin (ed.), *The Letters and Correspondence of Sir Philip Sidney*, 2 vols (Oxford, 2012), p. 1098.

[6] N. Nuidge, 'Sir John Peyton', *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1558-1603*, (ed.), P.W. Hasler: https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1558-1603/member/peyton-john-i-1544-1630 [accessed 8 May 2023]. Peyton would also sit on the committee pertaining to the Dunkirk Pirates, 1601.

[7] Peyton owned a patent on salt at King's Lynn market and held the patent on a nearby market at Setchey.

[8] Sebastian Sobecki, '"A man of curious enquiry": John Peyton's grand tour to central Europe and Robert Cecil's intelligence network 1596–1601', *Renaissance Studies,* 29/3 (2015), p. 395. Whilst Sobecki's article focusses on the younger Peyton's espionage activities abroad, this study will concentrate on the intelligence brokering undertaken by his father concerning domestic and foreign matters.

examples of Elizabethan intelligencers who worked closely with their fathers and inherited their forebear's communication and intelligence networks as well as their court connections: the collaboration of William and Robert Cecil, for example, or the sharing of intelligence between Cecil and the Earl of Essex with their father-in-law, Francis Walsingham. Of greatest significance to this article is Peyton's tenure as Lieutenant of the Tower of London and the opportunities it afforded for gathering and managing intelligence.

II

The Lieutenant of the Tower was a much-coveted office which came with its own distinct privileges and opportunities for economic gain, not to mention access to sensitive political information. It was imperative that the incumbent possessed a thorough understanding of ongoing domestic and foreign threats. The position had an annual salary of £200, together with what we would nowadays call an entertainment allowance.[9] It also came with lodgings in the Tower, formerly known as the Queen's House, giving Peyton a London residence. The role brought Peyton into contact not only with leading statesmen of the realm such as Robert Cecil, Charles Howard, Julius Caesar, Thomas Howard, and Roger North, but also

[9] Although Peyton asserted that his post made him poorer it nevertheless brought opportunities for economic gain. Prisoners themselves were expected to pay for everything including food, medicine, stationery, firewood, and various charges levied by their gaoler. If prisoners wanted a mattress or bed, they had to pay for it and gift it to Peyton upon their release. See: Washington DC, Folger Shakespeare Library, X.d. 326; Tower of London, TOL/MSS/Prisoners/250. For more on Tower prisoners see: Brian A. Harrison, *The Tower of London Prisoner Book: A Complete Chronology of the Persons Known to Have Been Detained at their Majesties' Pleasure, 1100-1941* (Leeds, 2004).

with the monarch. Whilst there were opportunities to make influential connections it was a thoroughly enervating and gruelling role.

A central bastion of defence, located directly on the river Thames, the Tower of London, as well as functioning as a royal palace, an arsenal, a mint, and the royal menagerie, housed the most important prison in early modern England and had been a place of incarceration from the twelfth century. Serving directly under the Constable of the Tower, the Lieutenant was responsible for maintaining the armaments, fortifications, and sanitation at the Tower and also oversaw the everyday management of the prison, including prisoner interrogation.[10] The position was usually occupied by a politician, or someone who had seen military service.[11] Peyton was both. The expected length of tenure varied. Some role holders, such as Sir Richard Berkeley, left swiftly of their own accord; others, such as Sir Michael Blount were imprisoned; some died prematurely in post.[12] One Lieutenant, Sir Gervase Helwys, was hanged for his involvement in the Overbury Plot. The position was not for the faint-hearted; it required patience, expertise in diplomacy, foresight, a careful ear, as well as a strong constitution for overseeing torture, persecution, and capital punishment.

[10] For Peyton's declaration on the state of the Tower see: TNA, MS Eng hist e 195.

[11] Previous role-holders include: Sir Richard Cholmondeley, Sir Edmund Walsingham, Sir Owen Hopton, and Sir Drue Drury.

[12] On Blount see: Roger B. Manning, 'The prosecution of Sir Michael Blount, Lieutenant of the Tower, 1595', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 57/136 (1984), pp. 216-24. Berkeley served as Lieutenant for less than a year (September 1596-July 1597). His former prisoner, John Gerard, suggested that after two months Berkeley 'freely resigned [...] because he no longer wished to be an instrument in such torture of innocent men': *John Gerard: The Autobiography of an Elizabethan,* trans. P. Caraman (London, 1951), p. 114. Peyton's successor, Sir George Hervey, died in post in 1605.

Peyton supervised the imprisonment and execution of those involved in the rebellion led by Robert Devereux, Earl of the Essex in February 1601. He was personally responsible for leading Essex to his execution on the morning of 25 February and for ensuring that the earl did not attempt to justify or excuse his actions from the scaffold.[13]

Whilst executions at the Tower were scarce, with prison stays usually reserved for those charged with treason and sedition, torture was regularly practiced there. The Lieutenant was responsible for supervising the arrest of high-ranking political prisoners and the receiving of prisoners into the Tower, which usually involved introducing Tower protocol to inmates and assigning them a gaoler. Peyton himself performed searches of certain prisoners, as was the case with Essex on 18 February 1601.[14] Within twenty-four hours of apprehension, Peyton, and others such as the Attorney-General Edward Coke, would interrogate new inmates. Custody plans would then be made. Sometimes this was as simple as arranging close confinement, where the prisoner was prohibited visitors, outside privileges, or even daylight. Torture warrants were often granted.[15] On other occasions, as discussed further below, Peyton tactically constructed plans that set self-incriminating traps

[13] *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Most Honourable the Marquess of Salisbury, K.G., Preserved at Hatfield House, Hertfordshire* [hereafter cited as *CMS*], ed. R. A. Roberts, et al., 24 vols (London, 1883-1976), 14, before 25 February, 1601, p. 170; TNA, SP 12/278 fo. 223. Peyton was well-rewarded for his service in February 1601. At Cecil's encouragement, Elizabeth granted Peyton the manor of Doddington, Cambridgeshire and in the same year arranged for him to take up a seat as MP for Weymouth and Melcombe Regis. Peyton, along with other officials, also benefitted from the selling of the estates and fines of Essex's collaborators and personally received the sum of £1,500: PC 2/26 fo. 335.

[14] *CMS*, 11, February 18, 1601, p. 69. Other prisoner searches, for example, include William Wade instructing Sir Drue Drury to search Peter Wentworth in July 1596: *CMS*, 6, 25 July, 1596, p. 284.

[15] PC 2/24 fo. 225; TNA, SP 14/1/41.

for prisoners. Reasons for imprisonment varied. Some prisoners were experienced plotters, assassins, or spies; others were religious non-conformists suspected of treason. Many were a mixture of both. The historian John Hayward, for example, was imprisoned from 1600-03 for publishing *The First Part of the Life and Reigne of King Henrie IIII* (1599). The book was dedicated to Essex and seen by some of the Star Chamber as propaganda on behalf of the earl. It was only with James VI and I's pardon that Hayward was released.[16]

Peyton's tenure at the Tower of London began in 1597 and lasted six years. The late 1590s was a trying period for Elizabeth's government and an especially turbulent time to be the Lieutenant responsible for high-profile prisoners such as John Gerard, James FitzGerald, Essex, Walter Raleigh, Henry Brooke, and Henry Wriothesley. The succession crisis was spiralling and religious tensions between Protestants and Catholics continued to escalate.[17] Assassination attempts on the queen's life had increased following Pope Pius V's Papal Bull of 1570 and the Jesuit English Mission (which began c.1580) was gaining support.[18] As Lieutenant, Peyton heard the testimonies of apprehended would-be assassins and state conspirators, and as such was uniquely placed to gather and collate first-hand intelligence. An examination of how Peyton gathered intelligence, and how it was handled and managed

[16] TNA, SP 12/278 fo. 20. For more on Hayward see: Alzada J. Tipton, '"Lively patters…for affayres of state": Sir John Hayward's *the Life and Reigne of King Henrie IIII and the Earl of Essex*', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 33/3 (2002), pp. 769-94.

[17] Catholic Mass was outlawed in England in 1559.

[18] The 1570 Papal Bull promised Catholics absolution if they executed Elizabeth I. For more on this and the English Catholic community see: John Bossy, 'The character of Elizabethan Catholicism', *Past & Present*, 21 (1962), pp. 39-59; Bossy, 'Rome and the Elizabethan Catholics: a question of geography', *The Historical Journal*, 7 (1964), pp. 135-42; Bossy, *The English Catholic Community 1570-1850* (Oxford, 1976).

thereafter, opens up a new seam of primary evidence for understanding the development of the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean intelligence community. Unlike many other administrative positions, the Lieutenant was afforded the opportunity to extract political information directly from prisoners, usually under the threat —and act— of torture. The Tower itself served as a repository for examinations, diplomatic letters, and prisoner profiles.[19] Peyton not only had access to many personal libraries of prisoners such as Raleigh and Cobham, and the Tower's own library, but to the information stored in the Tower's archive, held by the Keeper of the Records.[20] Peyton also utilised contacts abroad in Italy, Bohemia, Switzerland, and Germany, in the form of communications from his son who provided intelligence to Robert Cecil.[21] During his six years as Lieutenant, Peyton himself sent over seventy extant letters to Cecil, many of which contained new intelligence. This sharing of news and intelligence was key to the position of Lieutenant, and would continue long after Peyton relinquished his role.

Modern historians concede that what constitutes a spy or spying in this period is sometimes problematic to define due to the very fluid nature of intelligencing.[22] Nadine

[19] BL, Cotton Titus B/VI fo.247.

[20] The record keepers during Peyton's tenure were Michael Heneage (1578-1600), William Lambarde (1601), and Peter Probie (1601-2). The records formerly held at the Tower were moved to the Public Record Office (PRO, now TNA) in 1860, the Tower of London holds few documents in its modern archive.

[21] *CMS*, 8, 14/24 May, 1598, p. 166.

[22] Nadine Akkerman, *Invisible Agents: Women and Espionage in Seventeenth-Century Britain* (Oxford, 2018), p. 4; Christopher Andrew further discusses how diplomacy and intelligence-gathering overlapped in *The Secret World*, p. 4; Ioanna Iordanou, *Venice's Secret Service: Organizing Intelligence in the Renaissance* (Oxford, 2019), p. 164; Adams, 'A Most Secret Service: William Herle and the Circulation of Intelligence', in Adams and Cox (eds), *Diplomacy and Early Modern Culture*, p. 63; Alford, 'Some Elizabethan spies', p. 47; Alford, *The*

Akkerman writes that 'like the spies themselves, definitions of early modern "professions" are slippery, and to catch an "intelligencer" in one definition is next to impossible'.[23] 'Over time', Akkerman continues, 'diplomacy and intelligence became inextricably connected' thus complicating attempts to create conclusive definitions.[24] Sir Thomas Palmer, in his 1606 *Essay of the meanes how to make our trauailes, into forraine countries, the more profitable and honourable*, splits intelligencers into two categories: 'base' and 'honest'.[25] Palmer states that honest 'intelligencers' are state-employed and 'to be secret above ordinarie', 'to keepe themselves from being knowen', and 'able to endure all things'. Base intelligencers, however, are not 'honourable'. Unlike Ambassadors, Messengers, and Commissioners, instead, they belong to a 'devilish profession'.[26] The official capacity in which Peyton conducted intelligence-gathering would place him more in the former 'honest' camp. Similarly, Ioanna Iordanou also writes that 'by the sixteenth century the word "spy" had assumed negative connotations'.[27] She gives a very helpful definition: 'spy' was 'most commonly used to indicate an enemy's informant or someone who reported on the suspicious behaviour of fellow citizens', whilst '*confidenti*' was used to describe reliable

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Watchers, p. 14. Elizabeth Williamson, '''Fishing After News'' and the Ars Apodemica: the intelligencing role of the educational role in the late sixteenth century', in Joad Raymond and Noah Moxham (eds), *News Networks in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden, 2016), pp. 542-62.

[23] Akkerman, *Invisible Agents,* p. 4.

[24] Akkerman, *Invisible Agents,* p. 5. Christopher Andrew further writes about how diplomacy and intelligence-gathering overlapped in *The Secret World*, p. 4.

[25] Sir Thomas Palmer, *Essay of the meanes how to make our trauailes, into forraine countries, the more profitable and honourable* (London, 1606), p. 3.

[26] Palmer, *Essay of the meanes,* p. 3.

[27] Iordanou, *Venice's Secret Service*, pp. 162-4, 187-8.

employees of the state.[28] Those acting in the interest of the state were honourable, whilst those acting for the enemy were corrupt. This delineation, however, is confusing due to the lack of professionalisation of the occupation. 'The distinction', Iordanou argues, 'between a spy—a person actively recruited, authorized, and instructed to obtain information for intelligence purposes—and an informer (or 'intelligencer')—someone who voluntarily initiated information-gathering processes in the hope of a reward and, on occasion, a formal appointment by the government—is blurred'.[29]

As for the information that was gathered, Robyn Adam notes, 'many intelligence letters from the period are simple reports, listing facts with little attempt to decorate the information with social niceties'.[30] Peyton's son, for example, provides lots of detail in this manner.[31] Peyton in his letters to Cecil, however, analyses the information collected, shares his planned response, and often asks Cecil for any further instructions he may have. Peyton himself (using Iordanou's terms) was both a spy and intelligencer. He was active in recruiting intelligencers, gathering counter-intelligence, the placing of stool pigeons, managing counter-disinformation, and routinely undertaking measures of surveillance. He was uniquely positioned as Lieutenant to gather, intercept, and act upon any intelligence he commissioned, received, or discovered. Acknowledging the potential overlap of these roles, Stephen Alford distinguishes, 'a spy could be an 'intelligencer', though perhaps an

[28] Ibid., p. 162.

[29] Ibid., p. 164.

[30] Adams, 'A Most Secret Service', pp. 63-91.

[31] *CMS*, 8, 14/24 May, 1598, p. 166.

intelligencer was not always a spy'.[32] As we shall see, Peyton went one step further than most intelligencers and acted upon information he gained. Not only did he intercept, extract, and manage intelligence, but he commissioned his own Jesuit-hunting intelligence network. The intelligence Peyton gathered contributed to the arrest and systematic torture of many enemies of the state. Whilst Peyton was not the only state administrator to have succeeded in doing this, he is one of many that have, until now, been all but forgotten.

III

The position of Lieutenant was a key role in Cecil's domestic intelligence network and the relationship between Lieutenant and Secretary of State was integral to the smooth handling of threats to the monarch and state. Stationed at the Tower, Peyton was in the perfect position to organise, commission, and receive intelligence. The ebb and flow of prisoner testimonies and state-sanctioned examinations organised by Peyton allowed him to utilise information before it had been relayed back to Cecil and the Privy Council. This afforded Peyton three advantages. The first was that he was often presented with an opportunity to carry out his own private investigations ahead of any action on the Council's behalf. Second, Peyton received information that had not been 'spun' or mediated for anyone else's subjective purposes. Third, possession of privy information could enhance Peyton's own political standing. Peyton was a manager of intelligence, and could choose whether to report it or not.

[32] Alford, 'Some Elizabethan spies', p. 47. For more on the fluidity of intelligencers see: Adams, 'A Most Secret Service', pp. 63-91; Jason Powell, 'Servants, Scholars, and Spies: William Welder and William Swerder in England and Abroad' in Adams and Cox (eds), *Diplomacy and Early Modern Culture*, pp. 30-45; Williamson, '''Fishing After News'', pp. 542-62.

Peyton's tenure began shortly after the Tower had taken charge of the Jesuit priest John Gerard, who was moved from the Clink Prison in Southwark, to the Salt Tower at the Tower of London in April 1597.[33] Gerard had been on the run from the authorities for several years and was a popular figure in the Catholic underground. The state-employed torturer, Richard Topcliffe (1531-1604), subjected Gerard to a sustained programme of torture shortly after he was incarcerated. Gerard details his ordeal in his memoir, in which Topcliffe is described as a 'Veteran of Evil'.[34] During Peyton's appointment as Lieutenant, he witnessed and took part in state-authorised violence against both men and women.[35] He was present for the torture of prisoners at the Tower, and was sometimes present for torture that occurred offsite in one of London's other prisons, or in Topcliffe's own private residence near the Gatehouse prison in Westminster.[36] Ultimately, the Star Chamber, monarch, and Parliament sanctioned the torture and incarceration of all prisoners associated with treason, sedition, plotting, or anything threatening national security. These cases often meant dealing with high-profile political prisoners, most of whom were held at

[33] Harry Potter, *Shades of the Prison House: A History of Incarceration in the British Isles* (Woodbridge, 2019), p. 51.

[34] Gerard, *Autobiography,* p. 114.

[35] It is important to remember, that women were also hunted and interrogated by Peyton and his colleagues for their involvement in domestic and foreign affairs. See, for example, Anne Line (1563–1601), who was hanged for harbouring Catholic priests. The harbouring of priests had become a capital offence since the Jesuit Act of 1584 and many women were convicted of this crime.

[36] London's prisons included: the Gatehouse; the Fleet; the Marshalsea; Bridewell; Southwark Counter; the Clink; Wood Street Counter; the White Lion; East Smithfield; New Prison; the King's Bench; Poultry Counter; Newgate; Ludgate; Finsbury; Lord Wentworth's; St Katherine's, and the Tower.

the Tower, and were frequently discussed between the Lieutenant and the Star Chamber.[37] Cecil and others liaised directly with Peyton, sometimes several times a day.

Peyton did not personally torture Gerard (since it occurred prior to Peyton's appointment), but he was present for the examinations of William Alabaster, Edward Squire, William Monday, Thomas Lea, and John Hayward.[38] Peyton also heard prisoner confessions on a daily basis, including the 'wild and fantastic' claim of Valentyne Thomas,[39] who swore that the King of Scots entreated him to 'stabbe' the Queen.[40] It should be noted that there were no legal implications for gathering information under state-sanctioned torture.[41]

On 5 October 1597, Gerard and John Arden escaped from the Tower and Peyton was responsible for relaying this news to Robert Cecil:

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[37] *CMS*, 11, 14 March, 1601, p. 127; *CMS*, 12, 14 August, 1602, p. 297; TNA, C 43/4/33; TNA, PRO 30/53/2/93; TNA, STAC 8/5/12; TNA Talbot Papers, MSS/3192-3206.

[38] For Alabaster see: SP 12/275 fo. 53; for Squire see: SP 12/268 fo. 144; for Monday see: SP 12/268 fo. 164; for Lea see: SP 12/278 fo. 104; for Hayward see: SP 12/278 fo. 20, SP 63/207/4 fo. 161. For more on Squire see: Cooper, *The Queen's Agent,* p. 193; for Lea see: William J. Tighe, 'Five Elizabethan courtiers, their connections, and their careers', *British Catholic History,* 33/2 (2016), pp. 211-27. For more on imprisoned recusants see: Clare Talbot (ed.), *Miscellanea Recusant Records*, *Catholic Record Society, 53* (London, 1961); Haynes, *The Elizabethan Secret Services*, pp. 62-5; Alford, *The Watchers*.

[39] Alford, *The Watchers*, p. 322.

[40] TNA, SP, 52/63 fo. 81.

[41] Edward Coke famously stated that 'Mr Topcliffe has no need to go about to excuse his proceedings in the manner of his torturing', see: Roy Kendall, *Christopher Marlowe and Richard Baines*: *Journeys Through the Elizabethan Underground* (Vancouver, 2004), p. 325.

> Their escape was made very little before day, for on going to Arden's chamber in the morning, I found the ink in his pen very fresh. The manner of their escape was thus. The gaoler, one Bonner, conveyed Garret into Arden's chamber when he brought up the keys, and out of Arden's chamber by a long rope tied over the ditch to a post they slid down upon the Tower wharf. This Bonner is also gone this morning at the opening of the gates. […] I have sent hue and cry to Gravesend, and to the Mayor of London for a search to be made in London.[42]

Although Bonner was responsible for Gerard and Arden's escape, the buck stopped with Peyton. No disciplinary action was taken against Peyton for failing to foresee or prevent Gerard's getaway, but he must have become keen to make amends for this catastrophic beginning to his tenure. Tellingly, Peyton put up his own reward of £60 to be there at the apprehension of Gerard; this was over a quarter of his annual wage, which speaks volumes about his commitment to ensuring Gerard's re-capture.[43] Peyton's new career had started on the back foot and he needed to work hard to regain Cecil's confidence. To aid this, Peyton began sharing his own intelligence with Cecil.

Peyton was receiving foreign intelligence from key places of political interest across Europe including the Holy Roman Empire and Italy and was forwarding this information to Cecil. In exchange, his son received money directly from the government, in a pattern that

[42] *CMS*, 7, 5 October, 1597, p. 417.

[43] *CMS*, 11, 27 August, 1601, p. 362.

continued throughout his son's six years of travel across Europe.[44] In May 1598 Peyton's son wrote to him from Krakow noting that his party had left Prague 'as signified in our letters of 10/20th April' and he had previously enclosed 'the particulars of the taking of Raab'.[45] Peyton's son noted that his group awaited 'a supply of money from Mr. Wrath from Nurnberg'.[46] Peyton was receiving intelligence from his son who was working for Cecil.[47] The Mr Wrath mentioned in the letters was most likely John Wroth, 'a long-time Venetian-based spy for Cecil's father, Lord Burghley'.[48] On 18 July 1599, Peyton once again wrote to Cecil enclosing a letter from his son in Padua. Whilst the letter itself demonstrated the continued cultivation and exchange of European diplomatic intelligence, the postscript speaks directly of the means by which Peyton might obtain information himself. He informed Cecil that he wished to delay the manacling and torture for 'some 20 days' of John Lylly, a lay priest and servant of Gerard, 'who hath confessed himself to be the practiser of Garard's escape'.[49] Instead of moving ahead with torturing Lylly, he proposed a meticulous plan:

[44] Ibid. p. 394; Sobecki, 'John Peyton's *A Relation of the State of Polonia* and the accession of King James I, 1598—1603', *The English Historical Review*, 129/540 (2014), pp. 1079-97; Sobecki, 'A new manuscript of John Peyton's *A Relation of the State of Polonia* (1598–1619)', *The Library,* 16/1 (2015), pp. 80-7.

[45] *CMS*, 8, 14/24 May, 1598, p. 166. The taking of Raab refers to the 1598 retaking of Raab, or Györ, in northwest Hungary, from Turkish occupation, by the Hungarian and Austrian army.

[46] Ibid.

[47] TNA, SP, 12/274 fo. 173.

[48] Sobecki, '"A man of curious enquiry"', p. 403.

[49] *CMS*, 9, 18 July, 1599, p. 237.

> [I] find it a far better means to discover their traitorous consort by taking some time to work upon him by one of my servants, whom I have lodged with him of purpose: and to forbear his torturing for some 20 days, if it so stand with your Honour's pleasure. This Lylly is acquainted with all the Jesuits and seminary priests, and with their projects and favourers, and able to discover most of any one amongst them.[50]

Peyton, an experienced interrogator, understood that installing a 'stool pigeon' into the prisoner's cell might yield more results than routine torture.[51] Evidently, however, more direct means of extracting information was still required and Peyton oversaw at least one three-hour torture of Lylly, who was subsequently kept in close custody for four months.[52] According to Gerard, 'close prisoners' were 'to all intents and purposes dead men, for no one can communicate with them'.[53] Details of Lylly's torture and imprisonment appear in the *Testimony of Father Tesimond*, the memoir of a Jesuit priest who arrived in London in March 1598. Tesimond wrote about a conversation that took place between Lylly and the Lieutenant regarding the attempted capture of the English Jesuit Henry Garnet (1555-1606). In this conversation, the Lieutenant asked Lylly for the location of Garnet's house, but when

[50] Ibid.

[51] Stool pigeon: an informer who elicits secrets in the guise of a friend or fellow inmate and reports that information back to the authorities.

[52] *CMS*, 9, 18 July, 1599, pp. 195, 237.

[53] Gerard, *Autobiography,* p. 140.

Lylly replied that he did not know where Garnet was, the Lieutenant retorted that 'if you do not know it, we do and we are so certain about it that we expect to have him soon in hands'. The Lieutenant taunts the prisoner with information already obtained. Tesimond goes on to describe the Lieutenant as 'a man of great cruelty towards Catholics, but above measure hostile to our society'.[54] The Lieutenant responsible would have been Peyton, although Gerard's memoir identifies Sir William Waad as the man conducting Lylly's torture.[55] Despite being a close prisoner, Lylly, who 'was extremely afflicted', managed to get a message to Garnet to warn him of an impending raid through befriending his gaoler, who unwittingly let him send a note asking for items from friends, secretly informing them of the peril they faced.[56] Garnet's house was ultimately abandoned.

Throughout Peyton's tenure, increasing numbers of Jesuit priests were imprisoned at the Tower and other nearby prisons, such as the Counter, the Clink, and the Gatehouse. Some prisoners were sent to Wisbech, Cambridgeshire, and when that prison overflowed in 1601, thirty-seven priests were relocated to Framingham Castle, Suffolk. Troublesome priests were sent back to the Tower and in December 1598 Peyton was instructed to receive Giles Archer and William Edmondes, two Jesuits from Wisbech Castle.[57] Over the next few years, the Tower's prisoner levels grew rapidly offering further opportunities for Peyton to extract intelligence; his interrogation of Jesuits increased.

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[54] John Morris (ed.), *The Testimony of Father Tesimond,* in *The Troubles of Our Catholic Forefathers Related by Themselves*, vol 1 (London, 1872), p. 180.

[55] Gerard, *Autobiography*, p. 198.

[56] Morris, *The Testimony of Father Tesimond,* p. 180.

[57] PC 2/24 fo. 189; PC 2/23 fo. 218.

In June 1599, Cecil was forwarded a letter that has been intercepted at the Tower. The letter was written by an unnamed Catholic concerning Christopher Bagshaw, a Catholic priest and former inmate of the Tower (1587) who was imprisoned in Wisbech in 1593. The letter also mentioned George Blackwell, the Archpriest of the English Mission (appointed 1598), the exiled priest Robert Persons, and Cardinal Cajetan who was heavily involved in the Archpriest Controversy (1598-1602).[58] These were key names that Peyton would have been looking out for in his attempts to piece together a better understanding of Catholic attempts against the state. The author wrote:

> I have written often unto you, but it seemeth it came not to your hands. [...] When Doctor Bagshaw was sent for as guilty with the assassins suborned in Spain to kill her Majesty, I was put in amongst them, and this last week I was admonished of a warrant to fetch me up for the Book

[58] For more on the Archpriest Controversy and Robert Persons see: Susan Doran and Paulina Kewes (eds), *Doubtful and Dangerous: The Succession Crisis in Late Elizabethan England*, (Manchester, 2014); F. Edwards, *Robert Persons: The Biography of an Elizabethan Jesuit, 1546-1610* (St Louis, MO, 1995); Victor Houliston, *Catholic Resistance in Elizabethan England: Robert Persons's Jesuit Polemic, 1580-1610* (Ashgate, 2007); K.J. Kesselring, 'License to kill: assassination and the politics of murder Elizabethan and Early Stuart England', *Canadian Journal of History*, 48/3 (2013), pp. 421-40 ; Thomas Ridgedell, 'The Archpriest Controversy: the conservative Appellants against the progressive Jesuits', *British Catholic History*, 33/4 (2017), pp. 561-82; Eamon Duffy, 'William, Cardinal Allen, 1532-1594', *Recusant History*, 22 (1995), pp. 265-90; T.H. Clancy, *Papist Pamphleteers: The Allen-Persons Party and the Political Thought of the Counter-Reformation in England*, *1572-1615* (Chicago, 1964); Stefania Tutino*, Law and Conscience: Catholicism in Early Modern England, 1570–1625* (Aldershot, 2007).

> of Titles whereof I was accused, but letters were intercepted above a year ago containing my mislike and condemnation of the book, which happily delivered me from peril at this time.[59] [...] We are soldiers that in these whole wars have been in the forefront and should know more perfectly than he what is expedient for England. *Currebamus bene, cur nos impedit.*[60] […] Consider therefore the depth and peril of the assassins lately suborned. Her Majesty and Essex on the one part were in their warrant to be despatched […] Then Mr. Bl[ackwell] must have resigned his cap and pall to Persons [...].[61]

The author recognises that previous letters did not reach their intended recipient, acknowledging the likelihood of interception. The endorsed assassinations of Elizabeth I and the Earl of Essex are discussed and the treasonous letter had great utility, as evidence of growing dissent between Catholic factions. It was typical of the kinds of information that the Lieutenant intercepted and annotated, and the discussion of a dispute between Persons and Blackwell gives greater insight into how some Catholics felt pulled in different

[59] The 'Book of Titles' refers to a 1594 book by Robert Persons entitled *A conference about the next succession to the crown of England divided into two parts* [...] that discusses the succession crisis and England's alternative options. Christopher Bagshaw (1552-1625) was an English academic and Catholic priest who had opposing views to Persons. He had been imprisoned in the Tower in 1593 and was subsequently held at Wisbech Castle. It was reported that he, along with William Weston, was responsible for the Wisbech Stirs.

[60] Translation: we were running well, why did it stop us?

[61] *CMS*, 9, 15 June, 1599, p. 202.

directions. This letter acknowledges the dispute between Blackwell and Persons over the leadership of the English Mission.[62] The author also casts doubt on whether Blackwell was still Archpriest and the implications of this would have been of great interest to Peyton and Cecil.

Writing from the Tower on 15 August 1599, Peyton again alerted Cecil to intelligence from his new charge William Alabaster who 'has some secret matter of importance touching the State'.[63] A week later, Peyton interrogated Thomas Crispe, a priest who confessed to Blackwell.[64] Crispe does not incriminate anybody else and denies knowing any matters concerning threats to the state. After two demanding years of interrogations and examinations Peyton remarked to Cecil that Jesuits 'swarm about this city, and in the counties, recusants do by their means daily multiply'.[65] Peyton implored Cecil to intervene. Accordingly, Peyton's own intelligence brokering increased.

Like Cecil, and before him Walsingham, Peyton remained active in the hunt for Persons, the fugitive Jesuit priest who had dogged and evaded Elizabeth's spymasters for over two decades. The Lieutenant had Persons in his sights when he interrogated the

[62] For more on Blackwell see: Peter Lake and Michael Questier, *All Hail to the Archpriest* (Oxford, 2019), pp. 73-93. For more on Catholic priests in prison see: Lake and Questier, 'Prisons, priests and people', in Nicholas Tyacke (ed.), *England's Long Reformation 1500-1800* (London: 1998), pp. 195-235.

[63] *CMS*, 9, 9 August, 1599, p. 282.

[64] *CMS*, 9, 24 August, 1599, p. 318.

[65] Ibid.

escaped seminary priest Thomas Wright on 24 July 1600.[66] He ascertained, rather disappointingly, that Wright 'Never wrote to Father Parsons nor any other in Rome, Spain, or elsewhere since coming into England'.[67] The last known letter of intelligence from Peyton's son, was dated December 1600 and addressed to 'my master'. Peyton wrote to Cecil: 'I received yesternight this letter enclosed from my son. Thorpe mentioned in my son's letters is the party directed for Spain'.[68] The Thorpe in question was most likely Thomas Thorpe (1569-1625) —later best known as the printer of Shakespeare's sonnets (1609)— who had been travelling across Europe towards Spain.[69] Thorpe had previously met with Robert Persons in Madrid and it is likely he was headed back there.[70] Comparing intelligence sent by Peyton's son with his examination of Wright, it is clear that he was still interested in anyone connected with Persons and his circle. Persons himself, however, had moved from Seville to the English College in Rome in April 1597 and would remain there until his death in 1610.

[66] Wright is the priest who is said to have converted the poet Ben Jonson to Catholicism. For more on Wright see: Ian Donaldson, *Ben Jonson: A Life* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 138-44; Theodore A. Stroud, 'Ben Jonson and Father Thomas Wright', *ELH*, 14/4 (1947), pp. 274-82.

[67] TNA, SP, 12/275 fo. 58.

[68] *CMS*, 10, December, 1600, p. 434.

[69] Patrick H. Martin and John Finnis, 'Thomas Thorpe, "W.S.", and the Catholic Intelligencers', *English Literary Renaissance*, 33/1 (2003), pp. 3-43.

[70] Thorpe also had a prior connection to the Catholic fugitive Sir Francis Englefield (d. 1596) and had stayed with him at his home in Madrid.

Peyton's tenure at the Tower was not the first or the last time that Cecil would count on him to hunt, manage, and detain errant Jesuits. It had become Peyton's expertise.[71] He was also familiar with Wisbech Castle and how it operated as a prison for Catholic priests. He knew the faces of many of those imprisoned there, having interrogated them directly. He had played an active role in de-escalating the so-called Wisbech Stirs (1594-5), a heated conflict between different factions of the Catholic clergy imprisoned at the castle.[72] Although the Stirs were pacified for a while, they were re-ignited with the Archpriest Controversies.[73] He also knew the political and confessional landscape of East Anglia, having lived there, and was well-versed with sympathisers in the local area, as well as with the shipping routes from Norfolk, which was key to understanding how priests were smuggled out of England. Peyton was also very familiar with the Jesuit network operating across the country. Years later, in 1612, Cecil again instructed Peyton and his son to attend to Wisbech Castle, an errand which drew on experienced gained in former Tower duties and their work with the Wisbech Stirs.[74]

[71] Peyton had also sat on a parliamentary committee concerning recusancy laws on the 25 January 1581.

[72] See Lake and Questier, *All Hail to the Archpriest*, pp. 37-57; P. Renold (ed.), *Catholic Record Society: The Wisbech Stirs 1595-1598* (London, 1958).

[73] See: Ridgedell, 'The Archpriest Controversy'; Patrick Martin and John Finnis, 'The secret sharers: "Anthony Rivers" and the Appellant Controversy, 1601–2', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 69/2 (2006), pp. 195-238; T.D. Atkinson et al., 'Wisbech: recusants in the castle', in R.B. Pugh (ed.), *A History of the County of Cambridge and the Isle of Ely: 4* (London, 2002), pp. 252-3; Michael Questier, *Catholics and Treason: Martyrology, Memory, and Politics in the Post-Reformation* (Oxford, 2022).

[74] TNA, SP 12/275 fo. 5; PC 2/28 fo.13.

In addition to tracking and managing Jesuits, Cecil often entrusted Peyton with the direct handling of secret state service, including the briefing and financing of unofficial agents. The account of the receipts of the Exchequer between Michaelmas 1599 and Michaelmas 1602 includes money spent on 'Ambassadors and intelligencers', amounting to £18,696 and two shillings, and money spent on the Lieutenant and the Tower totalling £11,169, eighteen shillings, and five pence. [75] Peyton used funds from both of these budgets, as well as from his own pocket. On 15 July 1600, Peyton wrote to Cecil confirming that the footman of James FitzGerald, the Earl of Desmond, 'is come to London […] a man well acquainted with the state of Munster. According to your pleasure I have directed him to you, and will despatch his footman after John Poore…'.[76] A few days later, on 18 July, Peyton gave 21*l.* 1*s.* 0*d.* to Desmond's footman 'for her Majesty's service'.[77] Desmond (1570-1601) was a long-term detainee of the Tower and a high-value political prisoner. He was arrested in 1584 and served sixteen years under Tower arrest before being 'released' under the careful watch of Sir George Carew, the President of Munster. The Queen and Council instructed that Desmond was to be employed in Ireland 'in some special service' and '100^{li} to be paied to our loving freind Sir John Peyton […] for the use of the said James FitzGarret'.[78] Cecil was hoping to use FitzGerald in an attempt to avoid further rebellion in Munster in a plan devised by Essex and Carew. This episode demonstrates Peyton's direct and continued involvement with foreign affairs as well as domestic matters, which involved

[75] TNA, SP 12/285 fo. 43.

[76] *CMS*, 10, 15 July, 1600, p. 235.

[77] *CMS*, 10, 18 July, 1600, p. 238.

[78] *Acts of the Privy Council* [hereafter *APC*], ed, J. R. Dasent et al., new series, 46 vols, (London, 1890-1964), XXX, p. 590; SP 63/207/5 fo. 213.

state protection and state prisoners. It illustrates too, the extent to which, through his role as Lieutenant, Peyton was entrusted with managing high-level sources of intelligence beyond the immediate confines of the Tower.

Such trust may, however, have been jeopardised several years earlier in a curious case involving Peyton's family. In April 1598, an anonymous informant wrote to Sir Geoffrey Fenton, a stateman and later Secretary of State for Ireland, with a startling piece of intelligence that, if true, would further damage England's relationship with Spain and Ireland and also affect Peyton's reputation. 'The Earl of Desmond's son', the informant wrote, 'is escaped out of the Tower of London, by means of the Lieutenant of the Tower's daughter, who is gone with him; and [they] are arrived in Spain'.[79] The informant attempts to confirm the veracity of his tale by revealing that 'the advertiser had it from one that had it from the Bishop of Derry [...] some seminary priest or other comes with it with intelligence to Tyrone'.[80] The daughter of the Lieutenant would have been his step-daughter, Frances Bell (1577-1657), who was married to Anthony Dering, Peyton's second in command at the Tower.[81] Frances was living at the Tower during her father's tenure, and gave birth to a son there in January 1598.[82] It is unlikely that this claim was accurate in any

[79] TNA, SP 63/202/2 fo. 80.

[80] Ibid.

[81] For more on Dering and his oaths taken at the Tower see: Kent History and Library Centre, U1107/010; U1107/E14.

[82] Frances Dering had at least fourteen children. In 1599, she gave birth to another son, John, at St Katherine's Dock, nearby the Tower. By 1600, however, she returned home to Kent and buried another one of her children. For more on the Dering family see: Harrison Dwight Cavanagh, *Colonial Chesapeake Families: British Origins and Descendants* (Indiana, 2014), pp. 162-70.

way, as there are no corroborating accounts. It is, however, highly intriguing, as we know that Frances did have access to Desmond and would have been acquainted with a long-serving prisoner of such high rank. She had been at the Tower at the time of the accusation, as the record of her son's birth attests. Despite the extant evidence supporting this claim, Fenton wrote to Cecil asking if this was true.[83] This demonstrates that Peyton's role and reputation were clearly significant enough to be worth undermining.

Peyton's Jesuit-hunting, and his search for Gerard and those connected to Persons, resumed in earnest in 1601. That summer, John Byrde, an intelligencer and informer, was looking for work and wrote to Cecil with news of Gerard. Byrde had been a long-time informer for Cecil and had previously sent him letters of intelligence and worked for him in Ireland.[84] He claimed to have twenty-eight years' service. Cecil granted him an audience but Byrde was desirous to share his news personally with the Lieutenant. Byrde asks for money to ensure the capture of Blackwell, stating he would employ a man and a woman to help him and require £100 to split between them. For the apprehension of Gerard, Byrde asks Cecil for 100 marks, as Peyton 'has promised to give 60*l*. for Jerrard (so as he may be at the taking of him)'.[85] This was either an existing arrangement between Peyton and Byrde, or a reward offered to anyone, by the Lieutenant, for Gerard's recapture. This episode demonstrates the depth of Peyton's commitment to personally funding a network of intelligencers for this particular quarry.

[83] TNA, SP 63/202/2 fo. 78.

[84] BL, Lansdowne, vol/70 fo. 206; PC 2/19 fo. 508.

[85] *CMS*, 11, 27 August, 1601, p. 362.

Byrde noted that it would be 'as great a piece of service as ever was undertaken by any private man'. Pleading his case for continued employment, Byrde stated he would be fearless in his mission, 'without shrinking at any dangers', 'enabled by power and purse [...] for his assistance and rewarding of such espials, intelligencers, and other necessary service doers, without which no services of weight may be achieved'.[86] Byrde also suggested that women had a key role to play in the passing of messages, the smuggling and housing of priests, and the preparing and planning of secret Masses. In his letter, he listed the involvement of five women who aided Gerard and three potential women who could aid him in the apprehension of Blackwell and Gerard. Ultimately, however, despite Peyton's commitment and investment, Gerard would continue to evade both the Lieutenant and the authorities at large. After his escape, Gerard spent several years in England, and after the execution of Henry Garnet, he left for Rome and died there at the English College in 1637. As his peers in the Elizabethan intelligence community discovered repeatedly, good intentions expressed by putative agents were not always enough to yield successful results.

Despite Peyton's attempts to distance himself from the Tower following the events of 1601, on which more below, his duties and responsibilities continued into the reign of Elizabeth's successor James VI and I. In April 1603, Peyton wrote to Cecil concerning the Lieutenancy, asserting that, 'The importance of the office was never so great'.[87] Arguments over the succession crisis had brought years of uncertainty and the early months of James's reign were a politically sensitive time, as was the beginning of any new regime.

[86] Ibid.

[87] *CMS*, 11, 17 April, 1601, p. 169.

Writing in July 1603, Peyton, and a number of others including the Bishop of London and William Waad, wrote to Cecil about a matter of treason. Peyton and Waad's investigations and interrogation of prisoners had led them to discover two plots. Griffin Markham, a friend of Cecil's, had been caught up in the Bye Plot and the Main Plot, which were discovered in June and July 1603, respectively. The Main Plot --a plot to remove the king and replace him with his cousin, Arbella Stuart--was allegedly directed by Cecil's brother-in-law, Henry Brooke, Lord Cobham, and also involved Walter Raleigh. The Bye Plot, meanwhile, was a scheme that proposed to seize the King at Greenwich and dispose of Elizabethan noblemen at the heart of government, for which the Catholic priest William Watson was identified as the principal instigator. In the letter, Peyton not only identified the plotters, but asked whether Cecil was happy for these details to be sent in a letter, in case they were intercepted. Peyton had extracted intelligence of 'great and detestable treasons as ever were intended or imagined [...] Markham's offence is in the highest degree'.[88]

A proclamation for the apprehension of Markham, Watson, and the Catholic priest William Clerk, was sent on 16 July 1603. Markham was described as of being 'of a bleake complexion' and 'hurt in his arme received by the shot of a Bullet'.[89] On 23 July, Markham was arrested.[90] The examination of Watson at the Tower, under the aegis of Peyton, took place on 12 August 1603 and he therein implicated Markham, as well as the Catholic brothers George and Henry Brooke, Cecil's brothers-in-law.[91] One week later, Watson made

[88] *CMS*, 15, 13 July, 1603, p. 183.

[89] TNA, SP 14/187 fo. 8.

[90] TNA, SP 14/2 fo. 225.

[91] TNA, SP 14/3 F/42; SP 14/3 fo. 57.

an additional statement confirming his declaration and took the conspirator's oath.[92] Markham was sentenced to death for his involvement in the plotting and it was remarked that he made 'my Lord Cecill weepe aboundantly' at his sentencing.[93] Markham was brought to the scaffold to be executed, although the death sentence was commuted at the last minute. Markham was exiled and in exchange for this royal clemency ended his days abroad as a mercenary and informant. Markham had earlier been in receipt of letters of intelligence during his time in the Tower and remained a valuable asset whilst in exile, sending multiple letters reporting on European intelligence to Cecil.[94] Peyton had spent his tenure as Lieutenant intercepting intelligence, extracting intelligence from those in prison, and commissioning multiple agents to acquire information on his behalf, but in the case of Griffin Markham, he had been involved in uncovering one of the most significant plots to threaten the life of the new king.

IV

By 1603 Peyton was exhausted. Two years earlier, he had complained to Cecil, 'I have continued almost five years in this place, and I now crave leave to go into the country for some five or six weeks, leaving as my Deputy, Mr. [George] Harvy, my son [Anthony]

[92] TNA, SP 14/3 fo. 51.

[93] BL, Egerton MS 2877, fo. 175v.

[94] BL, Cotton Caligula E/X fo. 268; SP 14/43 fo. 122. Markham kept a relatively low profile abroad although he was involved in a duel in the Low Countries about the Gunpowder plot in 1609. Markham died penniless, still in exile, despite making many pleas to return home, sometime after 1644. TNA, SP 14/34 fo. 117; TNA, SP 77/8/19; TNA, SP 77/8/137.

Deering'.[95] By July 1603, James VI and I invited Peyton to step down from his position at the Tower and take up the position of Governor of Jersey, which was formerly held by Raleigh. James instructed George Harvey to receive the Lieutenancy of the Tower, and his post was to commence before Peyton left.[96] Peyton wrote to Cecil to say that he was 'exceedingly gladde his goode friend Sir George Harvy shall succeed me'.[97] Although Peyton, now fifty-nine years old, was moving on to take up another position, which he would retain for an astonishing twenty-seven years, Peyton's successor at the Tower died in post two years later, aged seventy-two. Writing to Cecil, Harvey's son Gawen, proclaimed that the 'troubles of this office have hastened his end'.[98] By 10 September 1603, Peyton took his formal oath to become Governor of Jersey and left the Tower.[99] Peyton dedicated himself to reforming Castle Elizabeth and undertaking a plan for the improvement of the island's fortifications, he also continued to report intelligence on foreign ships entering English waters.[100]

Withdrawing from the Tower was not an entirely smooth process for the Peyton family and the intelligence-gathering conducted during his tenancy threatened to jeopardise his future. In September 1603, Peyton provided Cecil with a lengthy account that rebutted claims concerning a potentially treasonous conversation he was alleged to have had with Henry Clinton, the notorious second Earl of Lincoln.[101] Lincoln wrote to Cecil to declare that

[95] *CMS*, 11, 23 September, 1601, p. 394.

[96] TNA, SP 14/2 fo. 230.

[97] TNA, SP 14/2 fo. 225.

[98] *CMS*, 17, July 1603, p. 357.

[99] TNA, SP 15/35; SP 14/4 fo. 28.

[100] TNA, PRO 30/53/2/93.

[101] TNA, SP 14/4 fo. 28.

one ‘Mr Trudgion’ had shared a conversation during the Queen's last illness, in which Trudgion had suggested that the Kings of Spain and France would not agree with the succession plan unless James VI and I became Catholic and that there was a nobleman willing to offer an alternative to this.[102] According to Alan Nelson, ‘Trudgion’ was a French Ambassadorial staff member.[103] Peyton's response to Cecil stated that the ‘great personne’ referred to by Lincoln (later revealed as the Earl of Oxford) was ‘so weake in boddy, in friends, in habylytie’ that he did not feel he needed to share this information with Cecil. To Peyton, the nobleman was not a legitimate threat.[104] Nothing more came of Lincoln's claims and Peyton was free to take on his position as Governor of Jersey without any further investigations. Happy with the prospect of his new position, Peyton wrote to Cecil in July 1603, to thank him for the promotion and pay rise (to £400 per annum).[105]

Controversy for the Peyton family did not stop there, however. In March 1604, Peyton's own son was interrogated by the Attorney-General Edward Coke on suspicion of subversion, conspiracy, forgery, assault, and subornation.[106] Charges had been brought forward for the alleged offence of carrying communications or ‘intelligence’ between Cobham and Raleigh, who were both imprisoned at the Tower.[107] Other defendants included Gawen Harvey, son of George Harvey, Peyton’s newly-appointed successor, as well as Richard Mellersh and Edward Cottrell, Raleigh’s keeper. Although Peyton’s son managed

[102] TNA, SP 14/3 fo. 134.

[103] Alan Nelson, *Monstrous Adversary: The Life of Edward de Vere 17th Earl of Oxford* (Liverpool, 2003) p. 411.

[104] TNA, SP 14/4 fo. 28. For more on this episode see: Nelson, *Monstrous Adversary,* pp. 410-20.

[105] *CMS*, 15, July, 1603, p. 215; *CMS*, 15, 2 August, 1603, p. 225.

[106] TNA, STAC 8/5/12.

[107] TNA, SP 14/6 fo. 53.

to defend himself during the interrogation, he immediately left the Tower, and temporarily withdrew from administrative duties. The scandal that tainted the Peyton family subsequently affected the Harvey family when George's son Gawen stood accused. Worse still, instead of preventing or foiling future treasonous plots, George himself was responsible for selling gunpowder, in 1605, to the radical Catholic Robert Catesby who intended to use it to blow up the Houses of Parliament.

Controversies and tensions notwithstanding, Peyton deserves a place in the history of Elizabethan and early Jacobean espionage, both for the service he conducted during his Lieutenancy and because his tenure demonstrates how those in administrative office could make a significant contribution to the Tudor and Stuart intelligence community. During Peyton's six years at the Tower, he made attempts to petition for better conditions for sick prisoners (such as Henry Cuffe), improve sanitation, and console distraught detainees such as Walter Raleigh.[108] He also witnessed the torture of numerous inmates, and presided over the executions of the Earl of Essex and Essex's father-in-law Sir Christopher Blount. Peyton knew how to manipulate prisoners and how to elicit information and could also favour prisoners he felt could be valuable to his plans, if he had 'a speciall regard for theire safe kepinge'.[109] Peyton interrogated prisoners by using a range of methods such as deprivation of food, sleep, sunlight, water, and fresh air. He also endorsed methods such as racking and manacling as a means to gather further intelligence.[110] In addition to the information he extracted, intercepted, stole, and tortured from prisoners, the evidence presented in this

[108] *CMS*, 11, 8 March, 1601, p. 112; Cuffe bequeathed £100 to Peyton in his will.

[109] *APC*, XXX, p. 768.

[110] TNA, PC 2/24 fo. 225.

article demonstrates that he also commissioned, bought, and procured intelligence for his own benefit as well as for 'her majesty's secret service'. Peyton also demonstrated experience, skill, and foresight in his strategies for prisoner incarceration. These techniques included deploying stool pigeons alongside suspected prisoners, as a means to extract key information which may not be freely given to the state. This arrangement of covert listening as well as the potential duping of a prisoner was one which Peyton often used prior to torture. Peyton also concealed and withheld information from prisoners, in an effort to control prisoner responses, alongside commissioning the surveillance of persons of interest outside of the prison, such as the recusant 'Mrs Skarlett' who smuggled priests and intelligence.[111]

When it came to his deployment of contemporary tools of spycraft, Peyton rarely used cryptography and steganography, but we do know that he intercepted and deciphered prisoner letters and was experienced with practices such as using orange juice to write invisible letters.[112] Peyton also utilised the Tower archives, a repository of maps, information, intelligence, and testimonies relating to prisoners and persons of national interest.[113] This material provided him with the potential for applying leverage over a prisoner using personal data, as demonstrated in the interrogation of John Lylly.

In the pursuit of intelligence-gathering, Peyton broke into homes, organised private search parties to hunt down suspects, and arranged surveillance missions. Private intelligencers reported to him and he paid for and instructed independent intelligencers. He

[111] *CMS*, 10, 3 May, 1600, p. 135.

[112] *CMS*, 7, 5 October, 1597, p. 417.

[113] TNA, SP 12/272 fo. 182.

also fed disinformation to sources, suspects, and prisoners. Peyton himself continued to collect intelligence beyond his tenure at the Tower of London, often sharing maps, sources, and intelligence with Cecil and Robert Cotton.[114] Peyton's legacy was that of a trustworthy, competent, and experienced military man turned administrator whose participation in the collecting and brokering of early modern intelligence has all but gone undetected.

Peyton's memory, however, was honoured by his grandson in 1644. Algernon Peyton presented to Charles I a *Collection of Instructions to Ambassadors* that his grandfather had collected, curated, and copied.[115] Peyton was both an administrator and an intelligence broker and these two things combine in this volume of official and unofficial ambassadorial instructions. The frequent overlap of these positions has been discussed at length by both historians of state formation and espionage.[116] Peyton's tenure as Lieutenant carried a significant burden of responsibilities, and saw some of the highest number of incarcerations and records of interrogations. Peyton successfully fulfilled his administrator role, and further honed his expertise in tracking and interrogating Jesuits and Appellants. In doing so, he provided a model for one of his successors as Lieutenant of the Tower, Sir William Waad,

[114] BL, Cotton Galba E/I; TNA, SP 15/40.

[115] BL, Sloane MS 2442. The volume is in part an encyclopaedic volume of diplomatic instructions, alongside copies of letters to ambassadors and foreign diplomats.

[116] Michael Braddick, *State Formation in Early Modern England, c.1550-1700* (Cambridge, 2000); Akkerman, *Invisible Agents*, p. 4; Nicholas Popper, 'An information state for Elizabethan England', *The Journal of Modern History*, 90/3 (2018), pp. 503-35; David Dean, 'Elizabeth's lottery: political culture and state formation in early modern England', *Journal of British Studies*, 50/3 (2011), pp. 587-611; Mark Taviner, 'Robert Beale and Elizabethan Polity', unpublished PhD thesis, (St Andrews, 2000); Patrick Collinson, 'Servants and citizens: Robert Beale and other Elizabethans', *Historical Research*, 79/206 (2006) pp. 488-511.

with whom he had earlier collaborated in Jesuit hunting, acts of espionage, and interrogation.[117] Peyton's time at the Tower provides a great example of how administrative office holders and not just field agents and codebreakers, were utilised by the government to collect, collate, and commission intelligence. It also demonstrates how such office holders could undertake their own investigations, commissioning private intelligence for political gain and patronage. The example of Peyton's Lieutenancy therefore offers an excellent opportunity for expanding our understanding of the many different positions still to be examined in early modern intelligence studies.

[117] On Waad see: N.M. Fuidge, *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1558-1603*: https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1558-1603/member/waad-william-1546-1623 [last accessed 8 May 2023].