

The Bobsie Letter

HR22/1

November's Document of the Month is this letter from Sir Henry Puckering to Sir Robert Holte. Written in July 1667, the letter advises Holte (or 'Bobsie' as Puckering affectionally refers to him as in this letter) to contribute funds to the Exchequer to assist in resisting an invasion by the Dutch "*Provide your purse, and send it into the Chequer. The Dutch cannot be beaten out without it*"¹. A full transcript of the letter has been provided separately.

¹ Bobsie letter, Warwickshire County Record Office, HR22/1.

Bobsie
Warwick 5th July 1662

Provide your purse, and send it into the Chequer.
The Dutch can't be beaten out without it. And
tell mee howe what time you thinke of going
up to London, that wee may meeete before, I will
be there at the first sitting (God willing) and so must
every one that will doe good. My service to my
best sister, and all the family I am

Your undoubted friend
A. Puckering

Letter from Henry Puckering of The Priory, Warwick to Sir Robert Holt (Bobsie), 2nd Baronet, Warwickshire County Record Office, HR22/1.

Based on the date of the letter, it is likely that Sir Henry is referring to the Second Anglo-Dutch War, which was fought between 1665 and 1667. It is believed that the four Anglo-Dutch Wars stemmed primarily from commercial rivalries between the two nations, and they were fought mainly in naval battles.² When Puckering was writing, the conflict was in fact soon to come to an ambiguous end, when the Treaty of Breda was signed on 31st July 1667.³ The treaty was, in essence, a trade agreement, and while it may have briefly ceased fighting between the English and the Dutch, it was not long before the conflict resumed in 1672 after England allied with France against the Dutch Republic.⁴

Sir Henry also asks his friend when he will be heading to London. Given that Puckering and Holte both held positions in the government at this time, it is likely that the “first sitting” refers to a meeting of parliament which the two were intending to attend.

It is unclear who Sir Henry is referring to with the endearment “my best sister”, as their families were not related, but given the familiarity between Henry and “Bobsie”, it may be that he is expressing his affection and best wishes for Sir Robert’s wife, or for another member of the Holte family.

Sir Robert Holte

Sir Robert Holte was born in c.1625 to Edward Holte and his wife Elizabeth. He inherited the baronetcy of Aston, Warwickshire, from his grandfather Thomas, who built Aston Hall. He was awarded the title of High Sheriff of the County of Warwickshire and Deputy Lord Lieutenant in 1660. In the following year, he was appointed member for the county of Warwickshire, and he was also one of the commissioners appointed to cause the city walls of Coventry to be destroyed⁵. His family were Royalists during the English Civil War and were left with large debts in the aftermath. He was married twice. His first wife Jane died in 1648 after giving birth to their son Charles. He later married Mary, with whom he had seven children. He died on the 3rd October 1679 aged 54⁶.

Sir Henry Puckering

² Encyclopaedia Britannica, Anglo-Dutch Wars <https://www.britannica.com/event/Anglo-Dutch-Wars>

³ Encyclopaedia Britannica, Treaty of Breda <https://www.britannica.com/event/Treaty-of-Breda>

⁴ Encyclopaedia Britannica, Dutch War <https://www.britannica.com/event/Dutch-War>

⁵ Alfred Davidson, *A History of the Holtes of Aston: Baronets*, Allen E. Everitt, 1854, page 29.

⁶ A.M. Mimardière, *Holte, Sir Robert, 2nd Bt., [c.1625-1679] of Aston, Warws.*, *The History of Parliament*, <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1660-1690/member/holte-sir-robert-1625-79> (accessed 08/10/2021).

Born Henry Newton in 1618, Puckering later inherited the title of his uncle's family along with their estate in Warwickshire. Among his inheritance was The Priory at Warwick, the site of which the Record Office sits on today. As a royalist in the First English Civil War, Sir Henry was set to rejoin the King's forces in 1648, before being imprisoned by the opposing side. Puckering was only released on the understanding that he would return to live quietly in the country.⁷

Following the Restoration, King Charles II founded the office of Paymaster of the Forces in 1661, a role which Puckering was the second to occupy, taking over the position in 1676. In this capacity, Sir Henry was partly responsible for the financing of the British Army, which explains why he was seeking payment from Sir Robert into the Exchequer, the department for the government's accounts.⁸ Sir Henry was only in his position of Paymaster of the Forces until 1679, after which he was elected as a member of parliament for Warwickshire.

Unfortunately, Sir Henry outlived all of his sons, causing the baronetcy to die out. Upon his death at the age of 83 in 1701, Sir Henry was buried in St Mary's Church, Warwick.⁹

⁷ Information gathered from History of Parliament, *PUCKERING (formerly NEWTON), Sir Henry, 2nd Bt. (1618-1701), of The Priory, Warwick* <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1660-1690/member/puckering-sir-henry-1618-1701>

⁸ Information gathered from Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, *Puckering [formerly Newton], Sir Henry, third baronet* <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-20057>

⁹ History of Parliament, *PUCKERING (formerly NEWTON), Sir Henry, 2nd Bt. (1618-1701), of The Priory, Warwick* <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1660-1690/member/puckering-sir-henry-1618-1701>