



## Early Maps of Plymouth to 1620ish Martin Read

Over twenty maps of Plymouth produced prior to 1620 have so far been identified. Many were created for military purposes, most often for proposed improvements at time of war. Several of those listed below formed part of the extensive map collection of the Lord Treasurer William Cecil (1521-98), Lord Burghley, who was presented with maps to clarify spatial problems, such as the best locations for forts. Burghley's working papers seem largely to have been kept in his office and were passed on to the British Library (such as ES 9), whilst others were relegated to his library, now mostly in Hatfield House (such as ES 8 and ES 11) - these maps may have been kept for reference and not to be actioned.

There are few studies of these maps (see refs at end), with Peter Barber (2007) giving a general background view, whilst Mark Brayshay examined several (1987 and 1992). The numbering of the maps is taken from Elizabeth Stuarts' excellent 1991 book, *The Lost Landscapes of Plymouth*. Written well before the age of the internet, many of the maps are now available online and a link has been provided, where available. A few maps have been discovered online which were not in her book. Where online images were not found, a reference to any copy in The Box is given. Several maps can also be found in Crispin Gill's 1993 *History of Plymouth*.

### Catalogue of maps

**ES 1** – Map of SW England, Ca.1539

Exmouth - Padstow

Harbour chart of the SW made to show places of strategic importance. Focuses on anchorages, beaches, bays, vulnerable landing places and their defences. Religious establishments and important houses prominent. Some tide mills and ferries shown. Size of ships/boats in harbours indicates navigability.

See Brayshay (1987 and 1992)

British Library Cotton MS Aug I I 35-36, 38-39

<http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/unvbrit/s/001cotaugi00001u00035000.html>

**ES 2** – 'Plat of Plymo[uth]', Harbour chart of Plymouth Sound & estuaries, ?pre 1549

Rame Head – Calstock – Plymbridge - Mewstone

Map of Plymouth Sound, estuaries and environs. Settlements, fortifications, churches and prominent features named. Gallows on the Hoe, tide-mills and ferries shown.

Marquess of Salisbury, Hatfield House CPM I 36.

[https://eprints.soton.ac.uk/440946/1/RCZA\\_Cornwall\\_South\\_Coast\\_report.pdf](https://eprints.soton.ac.uk/440946/1/RCZA_Cornwall_South_Coast_report.pdf) - p132, Fig 7.1

**ES 3** – Harbour chart of Plymouth Sound, Post 1553

St Germans – Calstock – Plympton - Newton Ferrers

Plymouth and Tavistock shown with hamlets and minor settlements, including fortifications. Navigability shown by size of ships/boats. Large properties shown.

Box Ref 4/400 - Photograph of the original at Longleat House

Marquess of Bath, Longleat House

No image of this map has been found online

**Waghenaer** - The Sea Coasts of England, 'from Scilly to Plymouth' and 'between Plymouth and Portland', 1584

Scillies - ?St Ives – Yealm & Rame Head - Lulworth

'Zee caerte van Engelants Eyndt, alsoe hem tselfde Landt verthoont beginnede van Sorlinges tot Pleymondt.', 'Finis Angliae orae maritimae descriptio, et facies, a Sorlingis ad Pleymoutham' by Lucas Jansz Waghenaer

Engraved chart with Dutch text, printed in Leiden. Highly decorative depiction of the sea around the South West. Although full of inaccuracies, the chart's marking of safe anchorages and coastal silhouettes proved an invaluable aid to mariners.

Sea decorated with ships and monster; farms and livestock on land. Grotesque scrollwork cartouches. On the back is a Dutch description of the coast with woodcut views. Chart is from Waghenaer's Spieghel der Zeevaerdt.

NMM G223:2/5, (L8557-001)

<https://www.rmg.co.uk/collections/objects/rmgc-object-540452>

<https://inter-antiquariaat.nl/en/antiques/sold/england-coastal-chart-between-plymouth-and-portland-waghenaer-1584/>

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Zee caerte van Engelants Eyndt, alsoe hem tselfde Landt verthoont beginnede van Sorlinges tot Pleymondt. Finis Angliae orae maritimae descriptio, et facies, a Sorlingis ad Pleymoutham. Doer Lucas Jansz Wagenaer. RMG L8557-001.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Zee_caerte_van_Engelants_Eyndt,_alsoe_hem_tselfde_Landt_verthoont_beginnede_van_Sorlinges_tot_Pleymondt._Finis_Angliae_orae_maritimae_descriptio,_et_facies,_a_Sorlingis_ad_Pleymoutham._Doer_Lucas_Jansz_Wagenaer._RMG_L8557-001.jpg)

**ES 4** - 'Sr Ric Grenvyle for the fortifying of Plymm', defensive map around Plymouth Sound, ca.1586-8

Seaton - Saltash - Yealm estuary

Dawn by Sir Richard Grenville showing potential landing places with existing and proposed defensive measures around Plymouth Sound prior to the Armada. Writing in red ink indicates work to be done. Details of men/armaments, including guns and their firing ranges (relating to the size of gun). Far too many troops would be needed for the proposals to be practical. Homes of dependable landowners shown.

See Brayshay (1987 and 1992)

National Archives, MPF 6 (from SP 46/36/4)(Cat 2028)

<https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C3981950>

<http://www.cyber-heritage.co.uk/maps/hamoaz.jpg>

**de Bry** - The Sea Coasts of England, 'from Scilly to Plymouth' and 'between Plymouth & Portland', c1588

Scillies - Yealm & Rame Head - Lulworth

Engraved charts by Theodore de Bry, reworking Waghenaer's 1584 chart.

'The Sea Coastes of England, from the Sorlinges by the Landes End to Plymouth with the Havens and Harbroughes by Lucas Jansz Waghenaer, No.20'

'A description of the sea coastes of England between Plymouth and Portland. With the cheefest havens thereof, according unto their situation'

Lord Howard of Effingham ordered Waghenaer's sea atlas 'De Spiegel der Zeevaerd' to be translated. Commissioned by the Lord Chancellor, Sir Christopher Hatton, through the clerk of the Privy Council, Anthony Ashley. Taken from Anthony Ashley's English edition of 'The Mariners Mirrour', the first maritime atlas in English. Dutch text on verso.

NMM PBD8264(21), PBD8264(20), C4930, RMG F8007, RMG F8006

<https://www.rmg.co.uk/collections/objects/rmgc-object-542717>

<https://collections.rmg.co.uk/collections/objects/542769.html>

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The sea coastes of England, from the Sorlinges by the landes end to Plymouth with the havens and harbrowghes RMG F8006.tiff](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_sea_coastes_of_England,_from_the_Sorlinges_by_the_landes_end_to_Plymouth_with_the_havens_and_harbrowghes_RMG_F8006.tiff)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:A description of the sea coastes of England between Plymouth and Portland. With the cheefest havens thereof, according unto their situation RMG F8007.tiff](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:A_description_of_the_sea_coastes_of_England_between_Plymouth_and_Portland._With_the_cheefest_havens_thereof,_according_unto_their_situation_RMG_F8007.tiff)

**ES 5** - 'A Plott of all the Coast of Cornwall and Devonshire as they were to bee fortified in 1588 against the landing of any Enemy'. Map of SW England, ?post 1588

Land's End - Combe Martin - Dartmouth

Map of harbours in SW England. Little detail apart from place-names. Fine details are indistinct in the Plymouth area, but positions of soldiers, defences and ordnance are shown.

See Brayshay (1987 and 1992)

BL Cotton MS. Augustus I.i.6 [1798]

<http://www.cyber-heritage.co.uk/maps/west.jpg>

**ES 6** - 'discriptio[n] of a Tow[n]', probably made c1592-3.

Cawsand – Landulph – Plympton - Bovisand

Features of Plymouth and the surrounding area. Shows existing and proposed defences, including significant places nearby. The fort on the Hoe is the dominant feature of the map and the probable reason for its production.

Box Ref - 4/155

Hatfield House CPM I 41.

No image of this map has been found online

**ES 7** - Plymouth Sound, ?1590/1

An extremely rough sketch of Plymouth Sound.

Hatfield House CPP Supp. 10

No image of this map has been found, even in The Box.

**ES 8** - Map of the landscape north of Plymouth Sound, c1585-92.

St John's – Tavistock – Sheepstor - Staddon

Similar to ES 9. Probably related to the construction of Plymouth Leat.

Hatfield House CPM I 60

[http://www.leigham-manor.co.uk/liam\\_manor\\_map1.jpg](http://www.leigham-manor.co.uk/liam_manor_map1.jpg)

**ES 9** - Map of the landscape to the north of Plymouth Sound, c1585-92

St John - Mount Edgcumbe – Plympton - Sheepstor & Tavistock.

Similar to ES 8, possibly drawn by Robert Spry.

Shows important geographical features, focusing on the rivers around Plymouth including road system, settlements, churches, houses and beacons. Some of the defences. Anchorages marked by ships. Emphasises Plymouth Leat running from the River Meavy, the primary purpose of the map, with notes on its construction. Probable explanatory table and title on right cut out.

See Brayshay (1992) & Gill (1993) p123-9.

British Library BL Cotton Augustus I.i.f.41

<http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/unvbrit/a/001cotaugi00001u00041000.html>

<http://www.cyber-heritage.co.uk/maps/map4.jpg>

**Astor Armada Drawings** - First representations of the Spanish Armada, c1589.

Scilly – Plymouth, Fowey – Yealm, Fowey – Dartmouth, Looe - Torbay

Ten ink and watercolour drawings of the progress and defeat of the Spanish Armada. Thought based on set of engravings by Robert Adams, surveyor of the Queen's Works. Draughtsman unknown, but thought drawn shortly after the battle in the Netherlands. Used as models for tapestries that hung in the House of Lords.

<https://www.nmrn.org.uk/major-appeals/armada-maps/view-armada-maps>

**Armada Maps** - Charts of the track of the Spanish Armada, 1590

Prints made by Augustine Ryther, after Robert Adams

Progress and defeat of the Spanish Armada. The fleet off the coast of Cornwall on 29 July 1588 - English pursue the fleet east of Plymouth on 31 July - 1 August.

National Maritime Museum PBD8529(3-6), British Museum (1888,1221.8.2, 3 & 5)

<https://www.rmg.co.uk/collections/objects/rmgc-object-542823>

<https://www.rmg.co.uk/collections/objects/rmgc-object-542824>

<https://www.rmg.co.uk/collections/objects/rmgc-object-542825>

<https://www.rmg.co.uk/collections/objects/rmgc-object-542826>

[https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/search?keyword=armada&keyword=plates&view=grid&sort=object\\_name\\_\\_asc&page=1](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/search?keyword=armada&keyword=plates&view=grid&sort=object_name__asc&page=1)

**ES 10** – ‘Sa[in]t Nicholas Ilande by Plimmouthe’, dated 1592

Map by the military engineer Robert Adams showing fortifications and buildings, incl. the fort (built 1548). Adams was drawing attention to its importance in any plan for the defences. Road around island and guns firing. Boathouse and landing place.

Hatfield House CPM II 31

<http://www.indrakeswake.co.uk/Society/Images/Websize/drakesislandmap.jpg>

**ES 11** – ‘Plat of Plymoth’. Plan for the fortification of Plymouth, ca1590-92

Cawsand Bay – Stoke Damerel – Efford - Shagstone

Probably produced by 1592 for a local commission set up by the Privy Council to look at improving the town defences, with a proposed wall surrounding the town and a citadel on the Hoe. These seem to be superimposed on an existing map (possibly of 1590) showing the town in great detail.

Plan of town and surrounding area showing important features of the immediate coastline and estuary, roads and ferry crossings. Detailed plan of streets, large buildings, town wall, castle and fortifications. Measurements and descriptions of land given, incl. roads and later notes on the Leat.

See Brayshay (1992)

Hatfield House CPM I 35

<http://www.cyber-heritage.co.uk/maps/wall.jpg>

<https://www.britishempire.co.uk/images4/plymouthmapwalllarge.jpg>

**ES 12** – ‘The platte of ye forte upon ye hoo of Plimouthe’, 1593

Plan of the Upper Fort on the Hoe during construction, by Robert Adams.

A letter from Robert Adams, engineer, to Lord Burleigh, Lord High Treasurer of England [in response to requests to speed up fortifications following threats from Spain] detailing measurements of the Fort, explaining slow progression of building works and requesting more funds. Includes plans of fort indicating works in progress.

<https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/f2cbef1d-52de-402b-86b1-2dd28217f286>

Box Ref 467/2, 4/131 (See also 4/130 & 4/347-8)

National Archives possibly MPF 118, previously SP 12/245 f.31 or No 201 (Cat 12/245 no 2027)

No image of this map has been found online

**ES 13** – as ES 12, 1594

Upper Fort on the Hoe by ‘S.B.’, probably Simon Basil.

After the death of Robert Adams, his servant, Simon Basil, sent a plan to the Privy Council in 1594 showing the fort about 2/3 built.

National Archives SP 12/245 f32

No image of this map has been found online, or in the Box

**ES 14** – ‘Platt of Plimowth by [Si]r Ferd[inando] Gorges’, 1596

Plan by Sir Ferdinando Gorges, newly installed captain of the fort and island, showing the Hoe fort nearly completed. Positions of canons and other fortifications, captain’s house, soldiers’ barracks and chapel. Other buildings were presumably the stables & store. External access was across a timber bridge & through a gate in the curtain wall.

Box Ref 4/349 - Pcopy of original in NA

National Archives MPF 1/262 (from SP 12/262) (Cat no 2030)

<https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C3982206>

No image of this map has been found online, but an illustration based on the map can be found in Gill (1993) p113.

**ES 15** –. Plan of Plymouth and Plymouth Sound, 1601-1602

Penlee Point (SW) - Bovisand Bay (SE)

‘il novo recinto della fortificatione de la ville de Pleymouth’, the new enclosure of the fortification of the town of Plymouth

Sketched panoramic plan by Italian engineer Federico Genibelli of Plymouth Sound, Millbay, Hamoaze and Mount Edgcumbe. Shows fortifications and proposed town wall.

BL Cotton MS Augustus 1 i 40

<http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/unvbrit/a/001cotaugi00001u00040000.html>

**ES 16** – ‘Plimouth Forte’, 1601-2

Detailed plan of the Hoe fort by Federico Genibelli. Very similar to ES 14, but with more detail in places.

BL Cotton MS Augustus 1 i 42

<http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/unvbrit/a/001cotaugi00001u00042000.html>

**ES 17** – NW edge of Plymouth, Early 17thc

Thematic map showing the water system, mills and streams to the north and west of the town, possibly by Robert Spry. Also ownership of land, town gates, tuckers racks, conduit.

Box Ref 1/489

No image has been found online, but an illustration based on the map can be found in Gill (1993) p124.

This document was intended to show maps of Plymouth until 1620. However, there are very few maps of Plymouth from 1600 onwards. The map of Plymouth and the surrounding area during the Civil War siege is the earliest to show the town after 1620. There are various versions of Hollar’s siege maps, only some of them available online.

**ES 18-21** - 'A TRUE MAPP AND DESCRIPTION OF THE TOWNE OF PLYMOUTH', 1643 Siege Maps by Wenceslaus Hollar.

Rame Head – Saltash – Plympton - Wembury

Siege map of Plymouth, originally drawn in 1644 to illustrate a parliamentary pamphlet. Drawn almost a year after the events depicted, the map deliberately focused attention on a relatively isolated, dangerous Royalist attack in Dec 1643, unrepresentative of a "siege" lasting Dec 1642 until Jan 1646. Purports to depict positions of Royalist besiegers and Parliamentary defenders. The Plymouth waterfront is not represented in accurate detail and nor is the town, though some buildings can be identified. Indicates temporary and more permanent fortifications of the town.

See Brayshay (1992). He thought that the Ashmolean Museum map (shown in the paper) is the original Hollar print, with later manuscript copies found elsewhere. See also Gill (1993) p153

<https://www.rct.uk/collection/802337/siege-of-plymouth>

<https://militarymaps.rct.uk/other-17th-century-conflicts/siege-of-plymouth-1643-a-trve-mapp-and-description-of>

[http://www.castlesfortsbattles.co.uk/south\\_west/assets/siege\\_plymouth\\_1643\\_hollar.jpg](http://www.castlesfortsbattles.co.uk/south_west/assets/siege_plymouth_1643_hollar.jpg)

[https://hollar.library.utoronto.ca/islandora/object/hollar%3AHollar\\_k\\_0641](https://hollar.library.utoronto.ca/islandora/object/hollar%3AHollar_k_0641)

<https://c7.alamy.com/comp/2A7E5YM/vintage-map-of-the-siege-of-plymouth-which-took-place-during-the-english-civil-war-when-the-port-of-plymouth-devon-england-was-besieged-from-august-1642-to-january-1646-by-royalist-forces-loyal-to-king-charles-i-etching-by-bohemian-etcher-wenceslaus-hollar-from-1600s-2A7E5YM.jpg>

## References

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[https://press.uchicago.edu/books/HOC/HOC\\_V3\\_Pt2/HOC\\_VOLUME3\\_Part2\\_chapter54.pdf](https://press.uchicago.edu/books/HOC/HOC_V3_Pt2/HOC_VOLUME3_Part2_chapter54.pdf)

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