

## The scramble for the seas : the ballad evidence of Sir Andrew Barton

The presence and importance of the sea as a factor that has helped shape the history of England since at least the Roman invasions of 55-54 BC (less successful, incidentally, than most of Caesar's other military ventures ...) need no particular urging or demonstration. Nonetheless, a bird's-eye view would necessarily survey the waves of invasions and settlements that, one after the other, came dashing over the centuries upon England's shores; not to mention the requested invasion of 1688, Angles and Saxons, Scandinavians, Normans, they all crossed the whale's path and cast anchor in England's green and pleasant land. In the course of this retrospective voyage through the oceans of History, one would inevitably stop at the so-called 'Discoveries' of the 15th-16th centuries, meet their navigators, sailors and pirates extolled by Richard Hakluyt (1553?-1616), face an anonymous crowd of merchants and witness the huge expansion of trade, largely to the benefit of the 'discovering' countries as prescribed by the economic Gospel Adam Smith (1723-90) would later baptize as "mercantilism".

In the 18th century, England's world supremacy (Britain's, after the Anglo-Scottish Act of Union, 1707) begins to emerge; and once again, notwithstanding military and diplomatic skill, a consistent policy of colonization, territorial enlargement and intensification of trade links, supported by the dramatic expansion of manufactured goods since the late 17th century, and the boost given at State level to the world of finance, one would ascertain the largely naval basis of such a supremacy (even the name of the crash of 1720 – The South Sea Bubble – bears naval overtones ...). The great explorers and commanders of the late 17th to the early 19th centuries would also come on board : men

like John Benbow (1653-1702), George Anson (1697-1762), James Cook (1728-79), Lord Nelson (1758-1805) towering above them. One would probably listen to Lord Palmerston singing Rule Britannia, Thomson's prophetic anthem, with jingoistic confidence; nearer our own time, Margaret Thatcher would herself provide another version, à propos some hitherto obscure islands south of nowhere (Falklands/Malvinas, 1982). Finally, if one looks at the British Commonwealth, the sea will probably come across as the embracing geographical factor that brings about a new Elizabethan "union of hearts".

The immemorial age, as well as the pervasive richness, of England's relationship with the sea has, no doubt, left a blazing trail in English literature, from the early 'novels' of the 18th century --- Defoe's Robinson Crusoe (1719), Swift's Gulliver's Travels (1726) and Smollett's Roderick Random (1748) among them --- to a genre which, to a certain extent, may perhaps be viewed as their literary successor : the adventure novel, e.g. Stevenson's Treasure Island (1881 and 1883), R. M. Ballantyne's The Coral Island or C. S. Forester's novels. Connected with the experiences of self-knowledge and inner growth, the motifs of the sea and/or the island flow, of course, through such different texts as Coleridge's The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner (1798), Conrad's novels or Golding's Lord of the Flies (1954), to name but a few. Within the hazy bounds of "popular verse", one would probably come across a few examples either congratulatory or elegiac like the ones dedicated to Lord Willoughby (c.1586), Captain Ward (early 17th century), Admiral Benbow or Lord Nelson. Attention should also be paid to all-time favourites like the old sea shanties (see, for instance, CARPENTER (ed.) 1990: 143-67) often performed by military bands and in Promenade Concerts, to songs like "A life on the ocean waves", "What shall we do with the drunken sailor", "Portsmouth", and so on;

if one looks round the corners of one's memories, "My bonnie lies over the ocean" will also probably spring up to mind. And then, of course, there are the sea ballads like the one we will be dwelling on : Sir Andrew Barton, one of the earliest and, according to some, one of the best.

Before we look at it in some detail, a few introductory words may be found useful. In all probability, the text dates from the beginning of the 16th century, although the earliest copy seems to be the one found in the famous Percy Folio (mid-17th century), parts of which were 'edited' by Thomas Percy (1729-1811) in Reliques of Ancient English Poetry (1765); the manuscript itself, eagerly kept secret by Percy, would only be published a century later (HALES and FURNIVALL (eds.) 1867-8). However, two pieces of evidence suggest that the ballad was already a popular one by the time Percy's Reliques gave it a wider currency. Firstly, a prose version had been published in 1723 by the unknown editor of A collection of old Ballads (probably Ambrose Philips, 1675?-1749; see PHILIPS (ed.) 1723: I, 159), a significant fact, considering it occurs at a time when, in the wake of Addison's influential review of Chevy Chase (The Spectator, nos. 70 and 74, 1711, quoted in ARNOLD (ed.) 1932: 378-87), interest in popular poetry in general and ballads in particular was dawning. Secondly, several broadside copies of Sir Andrew Barton can be found in the ballad collections that survive from the late-17th century onwards assembled by men like Anthony Wood (1632-95), Samuel Pepys (1633-1703), John Bagford (1651-1716) and the 3rd Duke of Roxburghe (1740-1804). Sir Andrew Barton is also included in most modern anthologies (see, for instance, QUILLER-COUCH (ed.) 1910: 684-97, GRAVES (ed.) 1957: 99-115 and 157-8 and KINSLEY (ed.) 1982: 508-19) which prompts us to acknowledge that the version used

here is the one transcribed in F. J. Child's monumental and still definitive edition of the English and Scottish popular ballads (CHILD (ed.) 1965: III, 334-50).<sup>1</sup>

As far as Sir Andrew Barton is concerned, the curtains go up to disclose a meeting between King Henry VIII (1509-47) and eighty worthy merchants of the city of London who voice their grievances at the attacks launched against their ships by a Scottish pirate (later to be named, or rather identified, as Sir Andrew Barton) whose audacity and prowess are causing huge losses. This pirate's victims include the Portuguese (st. 39, l. 3 and st. 59, l. 4), a point to which we shall obviously return; but for the time being, suffice it to say that the ballad actually mentions some trade routes<sup>2</sup> which reminds us of the boost given by Henry VII (1485-1507) to commercial navigation through such measures as the creation of the Merchant Navy and the Navigation Act (1485) or John Cabot's pioneer exploits in Newfoundland and Nova Scotia (1497). As we have said, the pirate's name is not mentioned by the plaintiffs themselves, which is rather odd, although he will be promptly identified by the man who volunteers to give him chase, Lord Charles Howard, thereby appeasing Henry VIII's proverbial anger.

Before we proceed, some names do require clarification. Historically speaking, this Lord Charles Howard (1536-1624), High Admiral of England and patron of the company of actors known as the Admiral's Men, was not a contemporary of Henry's reign (1509-47), but rather Elizabeth's (1558-1603); he was, in fact, granted the earldom of Nottingham in 1596, a fact alluded to in the ballad as the reward for Barton's defeat (st. 78, ll. 3-4). This anachronism, whether due to corruption or adaptation of the text, may indeed have a simple, though significant, explanation if one bears in mind that Charles Howard was also the commander of the English fleet that fought the Spanish

Armada in 1588, an event understandably deemed worthy of every possible praise. As we shall see, another Howard was, in fact, implicated in Barton's capture and death ... but more of that later. As to the title and noble condition of the Scottish pirate,<sup>3</sup> Child argues it may be ascribed to an imitation of Sir Andrew Wood, Scotland's famous naval commander (CHILD (ed.) 1965: III, 335).

Apart from the six hundred men readily granted by the king, Lord Charles Howard chooses as his captains Peter Simon, who will lead one hundred gunners (a point which, incidentally, illustrates a phenomenon roughly contemporary with Henry VIII's reign, viz. the emergence of artillery in the context of warfare, including naval warfare as the famous Henrician "broadships" illustrate), and William Horsley, a Yorkshire man who is able to engage one hundred archers.<sup>4</sup> More important than the numbers which are, in all likelihood, purely conventional, both captains play a decisive role in Lord Howard's victory over Sir Andrew Barton: Simon's first discharge manages to sink Barton's pinnace right at the outset, a surprising achievement in the light of the cautionary instructions and advice (st. 21) given by Henry Hunt, from Newcastle-upon-Tyne, a former prisoner of Barton's. Horsley's arrows are also extremely well aimed at, killing Gordon, Hamilton (sts. 53 and 56) and Barton himself, whose death occurs in the grand old heroic manner though at the expense of verisimilitude, if one recalls his decision, after suffering the first wound, "(...) to lay mee downe and bleed a-while, / and then I'll rise and ffight againe." (st. 65, ll. 3-4) ... As to Henry Hunt, who had been held captive by Barton himself, his release upon the oath of not giving away Barton's position at sea barely lasts for one day; in fact, this gentlemen's agreement goes down the drain as Hunt leads Lord Howard to Barton and proves instrumental in the English victory by bringing

down the foremast of the Scottish ship. Barton's head, cut off by Lord Howard (st. 69, ll. 1-2), is carried away to London as a token to the king, the queen and the ladies at court ... a gruesome display which is, however, deeply rooted in history if we recall such examples as the public exhibition of Wat Tyler's head in London Bridge (1381) or the ones that throughout the centuries used to be stuck on pikes and hung in Micklegate Bar, York, thus adorning the city where white roses first blossomed ...

Let us however sail on and point out some of the most blatant inconsistencies the text fails to hide from its present-day readers, an audience surely far different from the original 16th century one when recitation and listening, rather than writing and reading, still clung to the helm of ballad literature though the times they were a-changing thanks to the appearance and diffusion of a new type of ballad: the "broadside" ballad (see, for instance, FIRTH 1908: 21-50 and 1968: 1-33, ROLLINS 1919: 258-339, SHEPARD 1973 and 1978 and BOLD 1979: 66-82). Apart from the immediate and somewhat unwarranted identification of Sir Andrew Barton, whom the dispirited merchants had only mentioned as a "proud Scott" (st. 6, l. 3), by Lord Charles Howard (st. 10, l. 1), Hunt's advice that the pinnace, strongly apparelled with thirty guns (st. 28), should be attacked first (st. 31) does not tally with her immediate sinking after Simon's first discharge (st. 44); besides, apart from a few shots (st. 41), her guns prove largely ineffective. In fact, artillery does not seem to be Barton's trump card, unlike the beams stored in the topcastle (st. 27, l. 2) whose purpose or function remain partially obscure, though they were presumably to be thrown down on the heads of the enemies. Be it as it may, those beams are equally ineffective, although much of the fighting between the English and the Scots actually revolves around assailing and defending the topcastle. Finally, Barton's much

praised armour of proof, inherited from his brother John (st. 59), provides little help, even if we ascribe it all to the fact that the events are clearly narrated from an English, not Scottish, point of view.

According to F. J. Child, the stretch of time taken up by the events bears its own incongruencies (CHILD (ed.), 1965: III, 337); it makes in fact little sense that the English sail out “on the day before midsummer-euen (sic)” (st. 17, l. 3), meet Henry Hunt three days later (st. 18, l. 1) and Sir Andrew Barton on the following day (st. 33, ll. 3-4) only to enter London harbour “(...) the day beffore Newyeeres euen (sic)” (st. 71, l. 3). As we shall see, the few chroniclers and early historians who, closer to the events, do actually record Barton’s defeat and death at the hands of the English, fall out when it comes to determining the causes of the incident, presenting whatever historical evidence there may lurk behind the ballad, even naming individuals; to make matters worse, this is precisely the stage when Portugal comes into the picture of what has hitherto looked very much like an Anglo-Scottish feud.<sup>5</sup> Before we examine it in further detail, we would like to acknowledge our debt to Professor Child’s introduction to the ballad, which has proved of great assistance both in terms of the historical reconstruction of the whole episode and the mediation of the statements put forward by Edward Hall (c.1499-1547), George Buchanan (1506-82) and Bishop Lesley, which we shall be reviewing in the next few pages along the lines drawn by Child himself (CHILD (ed.) 1965: III, 335-6).

In Edward Hall’s version of the events, in June 1511 a complaint was made to King Henry VIII, then staying in Leicester, against Andrew Barton, a Scot who was waging acts of piracy on every ship he chanced to meet claiming they were Portuguese; apparently this blank excuse also applied to English merchant ships, an untoward side-

effect of the world's oldest alliance ... According to Hall, Sir Edmund Howard, Lord Admiral, and Lord Thomas Howard, the Earl of Surrey's son, were commissioned by the English king to go after Barton which they obligingly did, the former being responsible for the seizure of the Scottish bark ('Jenny Pirwyn') and the latter for Barton's death and the taking of his ship ('The Lion'); it should, however, be noted, following Child's corrections, that Sir Edmund Howard was never Lord High Admiral, unlike two of his brothers, Edward and Thomas, who held office in 1512 and 1513 respectively, <sup>6</sup> slightly later than the actual historical events narrated by Hall.

The chronicler's account also makes perfectly clear that Barton's death, the seizure of the ships and the ensuing complaints made by the Scottish king (James IV, 1488-1513) to his English counterpart raised once again the spectre (which would soon become a reality) of a renewal of war between the two countries; Henry, however, played the whole affair down by claiming that the rightful killing of a pirate was hardly worth a breach of peace. It may perhaps be added that this peace had been negotiated with and sealed by James IV's marriage to Margaret Tudor, Henry's sister, in 1502-3. The dove of peace's flight would, however, prove a short one ... Taking the issue one step further, the fact that James's death at the battle of Flodden (1513) was a direct result of the renewal of war raises, in our view, the fascinating possibility that such renewal may well have been, at least to some extent, triggered off by the momentous events surrounding Barton's career.

Before we examine George Buchanan's statements, we cannot help drawing attention to two prefatory remarks; firstly, to the fact that Buchanan was himself a Scot, like Barton whose surname, incidentally, is rendered as "Breton" by the Scottish

historian; and secondly, to the fact that Buchanan was invited to teach at the University of Coimbra in 1547 before being imprisoned by the Inquisition between 1549 and 1551. Without being too adamant, we would venture to say that Buchanan's not altogether pleasant Portuguese experience may well have led him to look into and write on the Barton affair.

In Buchanan's view, Andrew Barton (or Breton) was a trader whose father had been robbed and killed by the Portuguese in Flanders. Andrew took his case to a Flemish court and pressed charges against the Portuguese, who were sentenced to pay compensation. However, their failure to do so and the fact that the Portuguese king (presumably D. Manuel I, 1495-1521) insisted on turning a blind eye to the convicted party, in spite of the diplomatic effort carried out by the Scottish king himself, led Andrew Barton to ask for and obtain a letter of marque (see STEINBERG and EVANS (eds.) 1974: 222) thereby licensing or legalizing his piracy. Apparently, Barton's retaliation was an effective and fruitful one causing the Portuguese king to suggest to Henry VIII that Barton should be eliminated to everyone's advantage ... including, of course, England's. The mention made by our king (or so Buchanan says) to the danger of having a Scottish pirate at large at a time when there seems to be an impending war between England and France hints both at the centennial "Auld Alliance", first established by Edward I (1272-1307) in 1295, and the slyness of the Portuguese whose portrayal is none too flattering.

Unlike Hall, Buchanan names Thomas Howard as Lord Admiral (as we have said, he did succeed his brother Edward in 1513) without mentioning the Earl of Surrey's son at all; however, the narration of events at sea is quite similar to Hall's, though Buchanan

extolls Barton's bravery and heroic resistance to a much bigger party, a stance which may perhaps be put down to patriotic leanings. If the allusion to a single commander brings this account closer to the ballad's, Buchanan's statement seems to suggest that the English intervention in a dispute between Scotland and Portugal was totally uncalled for or, to put it another way, the English had been led or dragged into it by the cunning Portuguese.

Finally, Bishop Lesley's account may arguably be viewed as a mixture of Hall's and Buchanan's. In fact, if Hall's references to two Scottish ships, their names and two English commanders are fully echoed by Lesley (including Hall's mistake regarding the Lord Admiral's identity, which, as we have said, is erroneously given as Edmund, instead of Edward), Lesley's version, like Buchanan's, implies that the English had become involved in an alien dispute at the cost of jeopardizing the peaceful relations then existing between the two neighbouring countries. In spite of this affinity which one may perhaps explain through the fact that Lesley and Buchanan were both Scots and contemporaries, Lesley's distinctive hallmark lies in the fact that it is Barton himself who reminds the English of the Anglo-Scottish peace, although sadly to no avail. Once again, for the third time running, the English king's position is that Andrew Barton's death is not worth the outbreak of war even if a committee is set up to look into matters still causing contention between England and Scotland.

All things considered, it is probably fair to say that these reports make it notoriously difficult to assign or divide responsibilities between the Portuguese (whose original offence was made worse by the refusal to pay for it and the unwillingness or inability of the Portuguese king to see justice done), the Scots (who, carried away by their

own anger, may have retaliated indiscriminately or against the wrong people) and the English (who, rightly and wrongly, had chosen to interfere). Some clarification has been provided by a friend of Sir Walter Scott's (1771-1832) : John Pinkerton, himself a Scot and a keen ballad-collector whose words on the Barton affair are partly quoted in our source:

“In the year 1476 a Portuguese squadron seized a richly loaded ship commanded by John Barton, in consequence of which letters of reprisal were granted to Andrew, Robert, and John Barton, sons of John, and these letters were renewed in 1506, ‘as no opportunity had occurred of effectuating a retaliation;’ that is to say, as the Scots, up to the later date, had not been supplied with the proper vessels. The king of Portugal remonstrated against reprisals for so old an offence, but he had put himself in the wrong four years before by refusing to deal with a herald sent by the Scottish king for the arrangement of the matter in dispute. It is probable that there was justice on the Scottish side, ‘yet there is some reason to believe that the Bartons abused the royal favor, and the distance and impunity of the sea, to convert this retaliation into a kind of piracy against the Portuguese trade, at that time, by the discoveries and acquisitions in India, rendered the richest in the world.’” (CHILD (ed.) 1965: III, 334-5).

Child's footnote, which again resorts to Pinkerton's data, is no less illuminating:

“The letters granted to the Bartons authorized them to seize all Portuguese ships till repaid 12,000 ducats of Portugal. Pinkerton remarks: ‘The justice of letters of reprisal after an interval of thirty years may be much doubted. At any rate, one prize was sufficient for the injury, and the continuance of their captures, and the repeated demands of our kings, even so late as 1540, cannot be vindicated. Nay, these reprisals on Portugal were found so lucrative that, in 1543, Arran, the regent, gave similar letters to John Barton, grandson of the first John. In 1563 Mary formally revoked the letters of marque to the Bartons, because they had been abused into piracy.’” (*ibidem*: 334).

In the light of these quotes, the earliest historical origins of an exploit (Andrew Barton's defeat and death) credited in the ballad to Lord Charles Howard, whose adult life spans the second half of the 16th century (see above, 4-5), seem indeed to lie in the late 15th century. If we piece together all the early dates that make up this historical jigsaw, we would then have a first offence, allegedly committed by the Portuguese (1476), the Scottish and the Portuguese kings being, respectively, James III (1460-88) and D. Afonso V (1438-81); the renewal of letters of marque (1506) in the reigns of James IV (1488-1513) and D. Manuel I (1495-1521); and finally Andrew Barton's defeat and death (1511) at the hand of the English, whose sovereign was then Henry VIII (1509-47). It is perfectly reasonable to assume that a ballad celebrating this deed would presumably date from the early 1510s, the period which, incidentally, seems to have witnessed the birth of the broadside ballad (BOLD 1979: 67). One cannot, of course, be certain about it, but we would venture to suggest that an earlier version of Sir Andrew Barton may well have been obliterated by, or adapted into, the existing version, an hypothesis which might account for the references to Lord Charles Howard, who also lived at a time when piracy was a much more widespread reality, and his reward as the new earl of Nottingham. Poetic liberty and historical gratitude would justify the anachronism and the attribution to the new earl of glorious deeds committed by his elders, although one cannot rule out the possibility that the person who first composed, recited or printed the ballad in its present form became genuinely confused by the names of all those Howards and Bartons floating around.

Before we conclude, we have tried to find any historical record or trace of this dispute between Scotland and Portugal, although it must be admitted that our research

was neither an extensive nor a particularly fruitful one. As far as Scotland is concerned, we were in fact unable to come across any signs of an immediate Scottish reaction to the robbery and homicide perpetrated by the Portuguese in 1476, in James III's reign. His son and successor, James IV, did, however, nurture a deep interest in naval matters, a piece of information whose relevance is strengthened by the fact that he was, after all, Barton's contemporary and the monarch responsible for the renewal of the letters of reprisal to the Bartons in 1506, seven years before his fall at Flodden Field, at the outset of another Anglo-Scottish war. In the words of J. D. Mackie:

“The Treasurer's Accounts show that the king paid much attention to guns and gunnery and, by 1508, he was casting good cannon of his own in Edinburgh Castle.

Equally marked was his interest in the Navy. He had inherited one famous captain, Sir Andrew Wood, and, during his day, the family of the Bartons at Leith provided him with other good seamen. In 1493 he ordered all burghs to provide a boat of twenty tons, and to conscript strong, idle men for the crews. Before long he was building ships, both in the Firth of Forth and the Firth of Clyde; the James and the Margaret were both of respectable size, and the great St. Michael, completed in 1511, was a wonder of the age. Before his reign was done he had ten big and sixteen small vessels.” (MACKIE 1964: 128)<sup>7</sup>

There is also another indication that the events narrated in Sir Andrew Barton did in fact take place in James IV's reign. As we have seen, some of the accounts examined above make it abundantly clear that the English determination, eventually put to practice, to punish Barton, whom they regarded as a pirate, occurred at a time when the two countries were at peace; all those accounts actually take a step further in suggesting that this peace might be impaired, even imperilled, by Barton's death ... a prospect which, according to Bishop Lesley, is raised by Barton himself. Professor Mackie underlines the

fact that, in spite of the renewal of the “Auld Alliance” with France (1491-2), in the beginning of the 16th century James’s intentions towards England were indeed of a peaceful nature as demonstrated by the fact that “the marriage treaty (1502) was flanked by a treaty ‘for perpetual peace’ between the two kingdoms – the first ‘peace’, as opposed to a ‘truce’ since that of 1328 – and, by an instrument to ensure that ‘incidents’ on the Borders or at sea should not become casus belli.” (MACKIE 1964: 130); moreover, this very treaty was renewed by Henry VIII in 1509. However, according to Mackie, James’s intentions were soon to be undermined by Henry’s bellicose disposition towards France (Scotland’s ally through the “Auld Alliance”) and Scotland herself since at least 1511 ... the year of Andrew Barton’s death.

Let us then re-examine the situation from the viewpoint of Portuguese history and recede our steps back to 1476, when the initial aggression allegedly took place. Although D. Afonso V was still reigning (1438-81), the Regent was at the time prince D. João (the future D. João II, 1481-95) who in 1474 had already been entrusted with the definition, coordination and execution of our atlantic policy (SERRÃO 1980: 81). Moreover, towards the end of his reign D. João would play a decisive role in the Treaty of Tordesilhas (1494), blessed by Pope Alexander IV, which materialized the restrictive thesis of the mare clausum. Considering James IV’s and D. João II’s similar interests, it will not be too difficult to imagine how both kings (who also tipify, in some respects, the “new monarchy” characteristic of late 15th and 16th century Europe) could be at odds over navigation matters. True, in 1506 (when the letters of reprisal were granted to the Bartons) and 1511 (when Andrew Barton was killed) our king was no longer D. João II, but D. Manuel I (1495-1521); nevertheless, any dispute, diplomatic or otherwise, between

Scotland and Portugal would still make perfect sense, D. Manuel reaping the fruits sown by his cousin, brother-in-law and predecessor.

At a time when so much emphasis is laid on the fact that oceans, a common asset of mankind, rather than separating continents, nations, peoples and races, should in fact help to bring them closer, reading the old sea ballads like Sir Andrew Barton can be much more than a refreshing experience. Apart from its artistic-literary merits, some of which are highly characteristic of the genre (the blunt vitality that presides over the narration of events stripped down to their bare minimum, the use of stanzaic parallelism, poetic realism, and so on), the ballad focuses on problems whose historical, economic and political nature (the battle between opportunity and dogma impersonated in the mare clausum/mare liberum debate, the scramble for products, markets and colonies whatever lip-service might be paid to pure missionary zeal, etc.) need no stressing. There is, however, a moral or ethical side which should not be overlooked or dismissed as irrelevant, encompassing, for instance, the doubtful legality of such phenomena as piracy and the letters of marque, the validity of converting the open seas into private roads, the righteousness or goodness of asserting one's supremacy in whatever field by crushing one's weaker opponents or the right of some countries to 'discover', colonize and exploit others, whatever form these actions may take.

Two circumstances seem to place this ballad in an age of transition. The first one, of a geopolitical or geostrategical nature, might perhaps be described as the gradual displacement of the old European alliances based on territorial (in the sense of land) imperatives which were, in fact, beginning to be challenged by the novel importance of the seas and the oceans which would, incidentally, reveal new lands beyond the

reassuring confines of mother Europe, giving rise to new alliances and antagonisms. In terms of warfare, it also looks like as if the supremacy long held by the longbow was on the brink of being challenged (firearms being the rising star), although, on the evidence of the ballad, the English bows still proved far more effective than Scottish guns ...

Some brief remarks should, however, be added. In the first place, Henry VIII, whose passion for armoury was to be the driving force behind the setup of the royal collections now housed in the Tower of London, was also an accomplished archer; besides, “in 1511 he reissued the old Statute of Winchester of 1285 to remind everyone of the weapons, armour, and horses each class must possess. (...) Acts were passed for the encouragement of archery and the building of shooting butts on every village green where everyone was to practise on holidays. Every man between sixteen and sixty years of age must possess a bow and know how to use it.” (NORMAN and POTTINGER 1979: 147). Though no examples are given, another author alludes to the “(...) numerous administrative measures which were continued into the sixteenth century in vain attempts to preserve archery from the advance of firearms on the one hand and on the other from the attraction of sports which were condemned as riotous and degenerate, such as dicing, quoits, football and tennis.” (HOLT 1984: 145). These measures remind us once again of James IV, Barton’s and Henry’s contemporary, if we recall that “(...) James was of martial mind and showing himself a true prince of the Renaissance in developing the military power of his country. Acts of parliament bade his subjects practise archery instead of golf and football (...)” (MACKIE 1964: 128). On the face of present day evidence, it seems neither sovereign was entirely successful ...

Finally, we believe Sir Andrew Barton also opens up paths which may to some extent modify our knowledge or perception of the historical phenomenon of piracy. To give an example, though the English piratical tradition is too well established a fact, both historically and fictionally, this ballad -- which may arguably be regarded as a naval equivalent of the “border ballads” Scott took such delight in and eagerly collected in his Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border (1802-3) – actually portrays a Scottish, not English, pirate who ends up being punished by the hitherto victimized English. Speaking of which, it is debatable whether English large scale piracy (unlike French) really took off until the late 1560s and 1570s; its effects were to be felt by Portugal, accurately if conveniently regarded as a part of Spain, from the 1580s onwards ... though by then several decades had elapsed since Barton’s death.

At the other end of the chronological spectrum reflected in the ballad, we feel tempted to say that the early origins of piracy, namely its 15th century ones, still remain somewhat underrated and therefore partly unexplored, although attention has already been drawn to the fact that “a pirataria representou (...), no século XV, uma importante actividade económica e, se ela se opôs a relações comerciais pacíficas, não as destruiu (...). Assim se explica a permanente alternância entre a preparação de viagens de corso e o recorrer ao poder central para lhes pôr fim.” (SERRÃO (dir.) 1979: V, 97). The entry dedicated to the historical relations between England and Portugal also states that “durante o século XV ratificam-se várias vezes os tratados de aliança (1435, 1436, 1439, 1440, 1471, 1482, 1489 e 1499), a despeito das queixas que a cada passo os mercadores e os monarcas dos dois países apresentam de infracções aos tratados.” (ibidem: II, 322). Further research into the incident of 1476 would perhaps ascertain whether it was an

isolated crime committed by the Portuguese or the tip of a hitherto uncharted piratical iceberg; should the latter be indeed the case, then, like in the far more celebrated mastery of the seas, Portugal may also have taken an early lead.

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<sup>1</sup> No. 167 in Child's anthology; the version we'll be referring to is that of the Percy Folio and the longer one (text A, 82 stanzas) rather than the shorter broadside version (text B, 64 stanzas).

<sup>2</sup> Both historically and geographically, the references to Flanders, France and (twice) to the "Burdeaux voyage" (st. 4, ll. 1-2 and st. 23, l. 2) suggest with some accuracy the strongest products, commercial links and trading partners of medieval and early modern England, namely the export of raw wool and textiles and the import of wine.

<sup>3</sup> In the words of Lord Howard himself, "men calls (sic) him Sir Andrew Bartton, knight." (st. 21, l. 4).

<sup>4</sup> The words used throughout are "bowman", "bowmen" applicable both to the longbow and the crossbow; in favouring the former we follow CHILD (ed.) 1965: III, 338.

<sup>5</sup> There are in the ballad two surviving traces of the Portuguese connection: the first one occurs when the appearance of the Admiral's ship in the guise of a merchant ship prompts Andrew Barton to boast that "there is neuer (sic) an English dog, nor Portingall, / Can passe this way without leaue (sic) of mee." (st. 39, ll. 3-4) and the second one when Barton acknowledges the fact that the armour of proof he is putting on had once belonged to his brother John ("Amongst the Portingalls hee did itt weare.", st. 59, l. 4).

<sup>6</sup> Through their half-brother William, it follows that the three of them (Edward, Edmund and Thomas Howard) were uncles of Lord Charles Howard, whom the ballad presents as Lord High Admiral. The importance of the Howard family in 16th century England is thus clearly demonstrated, not to mention Henry VIII's fifth wife, Catherine Howard, or the East Anglian Catholic branch that supported Mary Tudor's accession in 1558; one of its members, Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk, was also behind Mary Stuart's bid for the throne, being executed by Elizabeth I's decree in 1572.

<sup>7</sup> This "great St. Michael" is probably the same ship as the "Great Michael" described by F. J. Child as "(...) a ship two hundred and forty feet long, with sides ten feet thick, and said to be larger and stronger than any vessel in the navy of England and France." (CHILD (ed.) 1965: III, 335, footnote); besides, its skipper was Robert Barton, Andrew's brother (ibidem).

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