

## Pendennis Castle menaced, and the menace met

Extracts from: *Pendennis & St. Mawes: An Historical Sketch of Two Cornish Castles.*  
By S. Pasfield Oliver (1875)

**1645/46:** On 17<sup>th</sup> March, 1646, Sir Thomas Fairfax had quartered two regiments in Pennycomequicke: and he himself, with the best of his party, was established in the part of Arwenack house, which they had saved from the burning, the day previous. With these two regiments they intended to block up Pendennis castle on the land side. (p.39)

**1645/46 :** A very interesting letter “From Truro the 19<sup>th</sup> of March, 1645,” (i.e. 1646) is printed in a pamphlet printed March 26<sup>th</sup>, entitled “*Sir Thomas Fairfax’s taking of Dennis Castle,*”

Oliver [extracts] - “The fort [St. Mawes] on the East side of **the harbour of Faymouth** (sic), and right over [opposite] *Pendennis* castle is yeilded up by Bowthan (Lieutenant thereof) unto the General five days since [March 14<sup>th</sup>]. Yesterday .. *Dennis* castle was yeilded up [March 18<sup>th</sup>] ... it will prove to be of very great help to us, for the taking in of **Pendennis**, means that our ships lying there, may prevent (by the help of St. Mawes) the conjunction of any ships for the relief thereof:”

“I went with the General to receive the possession of this fort, and in the way, the Generall went into *Arwinkle* (sic), Sir *Peter Killigrew*’s house, where and in the **Village of Pennicomquicke** we had quartered two regiments for the blocking up of Pendennis castle on the land side.”

“The day before the General sent thither those two Regiments, the enemie (sic) in the castle set on fire Sir *Peter*’s house, and burned a great part thereof down to the ground, and would have done the like with *Pennicomquicke* (sic), had not our men’s unexpected coming prevented them in the castle ... [from so doing]”

The man of war [Man-of-war, ship] that hath 40 pieces of Ordnance in him which lyeth a ground [aground] on the North side of the Fort, let us passe very quietly through *Pennicomequick* (sic), and to *Arwinkle*, which lies within half musket shot of the enemies Out-works [battlements/ walls] but is blinded by the houses and the trees, so that they cannot see those that are at the other side of the house; but when we came off and were past *Pennicomequick*, and advanced into an open field in our way back to *Perin* [**Penryn**], the ship that lay at the North side of the castle let fly at us, but their shot did us no harm, though the bullets flew very near us, and one grazed no far from mee, which wee found, and was a **bullet of some 12 l. weight.**” [12 lbs]

“As soon as the General came to *Peryn*, he caused a summons to be drawne up, and sent it via his Drum-Major unto the Governour (sic) of the Castle, requiring him to yield it unto him for the use of the Parliament, using diverse reasons to perswade him thereunto; But Arundell of Treverse [Trerice], who is the Governour thereof, gave him a peremptory denyall,<sup>1</sup> saying he was 70 years old, and could not have many dayes to live, and would not in his old years blemish his honour in surrendering thereof, and would be rather found buried in the ruines thereof, than commit so vilde a treason. ... it is victualled (as they say) for nine or ten

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<sup>1</sup> “And having taken less than two minutes resolution, I resolve that I will here bury myself before I deliver up this castle to such as fight against his Majesty [Charles I]. John Arundel of Trerise, 18 March 1645. [i.e.1646]

months, and they have in it about 1000 or 1200 men, all desperate persons and good souldiers; and they have powder and shot great store, and at least 80 great Guns mounted, besides 40 in the ship which lies on the North side of the castle. Therefore the General resolves to block it up very close both by Land and Sea: which hee may the better doe, in regard that we have *Denis* Castle, and the Haven of *Helford* on the west, and *St. Maws* on the east.”

[Note *Denis & Pendenis* ]

Writing from Truro, he continues; “If we draw a line thwart [across] the narrow necke of Land, a little on this side of *Arwinkle* house, which is not above Musquet shot over : *Pendenis* (sic) Castle will remaine unto them but as a close and sure prison, and so in the end the belly will conquer them, without striking of a stroake.”

“... the Country reports [that] they have a very great masse of wealth in **this castle**, [Pendennis] for this **was ever a place the enemy [royalists] did confide in**: I verily believe that if the Workes [are] perfected for blocking them up, 2000 good foote [soldiers] would keep them in. *Pennicomquicke* and *Penryne* (sic) will be able to entertain [accommodate] them very well.”

“This last night, **one of the ships that came down with Sir George Askew**, fell into the Harbour of *Falmouth*, on the *St. Mawes* (sic) side, and notwithstanding both the Block-house, and the Bulwarke at the poynte of *Pendennis* shot very furiously at her, yet she came very safely into the Harbour, and **so passed upon the Tide, to a place in the harbour called *Mawpasse* passage, where a frigot (sic) of *Dunkerks* had run herself aground and which came in on purpose to assist Pendennis Castle**. She had 26 pieces of Ordnance [cannons], and though our men entered her, yet she stood very stoutly to her defence, yet at last we mastered her, and took all the men out of her, and put in her about 50 men of our owne, and so intend to make her a Man of Warre to serve the state, and she may prove very usefull, for she is an exceedingly good sailer, and will be good against our enemies’ navigable ships, that we may so take them.” T. M.

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To whom the letter was written, or by whom, does not appear. The writer seems to have been of good position in Thomas Fairfax’s army; and it may have been Sir Richard Fortescue whom he addressed. (Oliver, p.42)

The taking of the frigate is, with some additional particulars, mentioned, under date “Thursday March 19<sup>th</sup>” in a newspaper headed “Perfect Occurances of both Houses of parliament, and Martiall (sic) Affairs.” – “***we have taken a ship at Falmouth, that fought some houres; it is laden with wine, some letters are intercepted to the king, and others also from Ireland.***”

The “Moderate Intelligencer” (no.56) of Saturday March 28: “*Letters from the west tell us... As for Pendennis, they [royalist soldiers] are blades of the right stamp, and having within, **200 Tun of wine**, spare not to be daily drunk, and this the Governour encourages, that their discontents take not overmuch hold on them, which are very great already, **they are at sixpence per diem**, nor will that hold long.*”

“Sir Ralph Hopton and lord Capel embarked at Pendennis, and joined the Prince of Wales at Scilly, on April 11.” (Oliver p.44 q.f. *Life of Fairfax*, p.267)

1646: On 11<sup>th</sup> April, the Council of War at Pendennis castle, wrote a letter of intelligence and entreaty to the prince, informing him that the quarters of the enemy were at Arwenack house. They preyed that their garrison, which was in a bad state, and there was a great want of clothes, be quickly supplied from France and Ireland. The letter was signed by John Arundel and 21 others. (Oliver p.44 q.f. Clarendon State Papers, no. 2171). Enclosed in this letter, was a paper, showing the “provisions designed” for the garrison of Pendennis, for 1500 men, for 6 months, (the list ending with 20 gross of tobacco pipes), to be sent from Ireland. (no.2195)

The [entrenchments](#) of [Fairfax’s] blockading forces extended close to Arwenack, many still conspicuous in 1824 (when Hitchins and Drew’s history was published), [stretching from the bottom of the Rope Walk behind Arwenack across the isthmus to the sea.](#)

On 30 April, 1646, from on board His Majesty’s ship the St. Andrews, Captain Batten, the “vice-admiral of the parliament’s navy, investing Pendennis” summoned the castle to surrender to the parliament. Viz;

*“ I am sent hither for the blocking up of the castle by sea, as the Land forces do on Shoare. I do, in the name of both the Honourable Houses of Parliament, demand your castle to be delivered unto me, to be put into such hands, as may keep it, for the use of the King and Parliament, which if you consent to, I shall promise all those that are desirous to go for **Oxford** passage by sea for **Weymouth**, and from thence safe conduct thither. And, if there be any gentlemen that desire to go for **France**, safe passage thither in these ships under my command.”*<sup>2</sup>

Captain Batten kept 10 large Boats and Barges well manned, before the mouth of the harbour every night, drawing them off in the morning. One morning a Shallop got in by stealth, which caused great triumph in the castle, but *t’was conceived that little relief was in it, save a hogs-head or two of Wine..* The Enemy in the castle kept fires all night, for direction to any Relief that should make towards them. “Captain Batten doth what he can to hinder, but he wants [needs] shallops and pinaces.” (Oliver pp.50)

June 12<sup>th</sup>, 1646 (Whitelock chronicles, p.208) that “A ship was taken with ammunition and provisions for relief of Pendennis Castle, and diverse letters [intercepted](#) in her.” The House ordere, in respect the [Letters were in ciphers](#), that they should be referred to a committee “*to finde out the key to the ciphers.*” (Oliver p.49)

Oliver, quotes from Sprigge’s Anglia Rediva, published 1647 (pp. 302-3): “*About the latter end of July the [royalist] Enemy made a sally by Botes to fetch in reliefe, but were forced back with loss, About ten days before, a summons was sent them, but they, in the hope of getting Relief by Ships from **Saint Mallowes**, returned a deniall; and after those Ships were by contrary windes beaten to **Morleys**,*<sup>3</sup> *yet the enemy persisted in his obstinacy.*”

In August, 1646, John Arundel ordered “*horses within the garrison .. be killed for beefe.*”

Monday August 10th, 1646: Commissioners from both sides met<sup>4</sup>. They sat in consultation until Wednesday noon, and then broke off in great discontent. Colonel Fortescue,

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<sup>3</sup> *Saint Mallowes*, meaning St. Malo, and *Morleys*, meaning Morlaix.

<sup>4</sup> The names of those for the Parliament included Col. John St. *Aubin*, High Sherriffe.

Commander of Fairfax's army, finding this unexpected rupture, recalled a meeting on Friday the 14<sup>th</sup>, and all agreed by the 15<sup>th</sup>, towards night, save the time of surrender: On 16<sup>th</sup> August, 1646, they agreed to the articles, and signed them. The surrender was to take place at 2 p.m. on the afternoon of Monday 17<sup>th</sup> August, 1646.

The second article (bizarre, but, reflecting royalist's pride) included : “ That John Arundel of Trerise, esq., Governor of the said Castle of Pendennis, with his family and Retinue,... All Gentlemen, Clergymen and their families and servants .. Shall, march out of the castle with their Horses, complete Arms, and other equipages, according to their present or past Commands and qualities, with flying Colours, with Trumpets sounding, Drums beating, Matches lighted at both ends, Bullets in their Mouths, and every soldier 12 charges of powder, with bullets and match proportional, with all their own proper Goods, Bag and Baggage, with a safe passage to *Arwinch-Downs*<sup>5</sup>. And because his Majesty hath neither Army nor Garrison in England to our knowledge, they shall lay down their Arms (saving their swords)... And as many as desire it are to have Passes from the Commanders in Chief, to pass to their several dwellings, or beyond the seas, As they shall desire, and not be plundered, searched, or injured in their march.

Article 3. [excerpts] That *the Prince's servants* with their arms...Commanders, Officers, Clergymen [etc] ...There *shall be provided* by the Vice-Admiral a sufficient number of navigable vessels, *with a Convoy for their safe Transportation from the haven of Falmouth*, within 28 days of the Surrender of the castle, to be landed at the *Maloes, in France*; and in the mean time to be assigned free quarters in convenient places by Col. Fortescue, Commander in Chief.

Article 4. [excerpts] That Col. Wise, and all his officers and Soldiers of his Regiment, or as many as desire it, be shipt in *Falmouth*-Harbour .. and landed in *Swansea* in Wales: And that as such as ore of the County of *Cornwal* (sic), be shipt and landed at *Looe*; and those that be of Devon, to be landed at *Yalme*.

Article 5. [providing for the needs of Officers and soldiers] It is promise and consented to by the Commissioners for the Leaguer, that **Five Hundred Pounds Sterling** shall be delivered - a 8 o'clock To-morrow morning at *Penrin*, to be distributed...

31 August, 1646: The “Perfect Diurnal” (no. 162) mentions letters from captain Batten, and says “*The number of soldiers marching out of Pendennis was 800, who laid down their arms halfe a mile from the castle, and disbanded. Most of the Officers & Gentlemen intend to go beyond Seas.*” In the castle was [munitions list<sup>6</sup>], 4 Knights, 8 colonels, 6 Lieut.- Colonels, 6 Majors, 17 Captains, 17 Lieutenants, 21 Ensigns, 3 Quartermasters, 15 Officers of the Traine, 16 gunners, the whole number above 1000. 200 sick left behind, 200 women and children. Lord Digbie's [Digby] brother was one to blow up the Castle and themselves, if they could not get honourable terms. (which was grounded upon dissolving the first Treaty,)

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<sup>5</sup> (See later) “*Soldiers who laid down their Arms, halfe a mile from the castle.* Presumably *Arnwich-Downs* is the level ground adjacent to Arwenack manor, or the area now called ‘Grove Place’ in Falmouth.

<sup>6</sup> Including: *One great ship that bore the Queen formerly between France and England*, and, *7 great pieces of Ordnance in the ship.* [perhaps giving the reader a clue to identifying the vessel, or type of ship.]

**Summary:** Pendennis castle held out gallantly for 5 months, from mid-March to mid-August, 1646, and was the last fortress but one (Raglan, Monmouthshire) that surrendered to the parliament. When it was at last surrendered upon honourable terms, the fort was found to be almost devoid of provisions.

Hals says (p.130): “*The hunger-starved soldiers of **Pendenis** (sic), who came out thence, regaled too freely on Victuals and drink, brought themselves into incurable diseases, whereof many died.*”

On 25<sup>th</sup> August **1646**, in the House of commons, **Col. Richard Fortescue** was nominated and approved to be [the new] governor of the castle. (Commons Journals, vol.4, p.651) The house also resolved “That the sum of Threescore Pounds [£60] be bestowed on the three Messengers, that brought the News of the rendering of Pendennis Castle; to each of them £20 apiece. The 8<sup>th</sup> day of September [immediately following] was set apart as a day of Public thanksgiving, for the “great blessing of God upon the Forces of parliament, in the reducing the Castles and Garrisons or **Worcester, Wallingford, Ruthen, Ragland and Pendennis**. (Oliver pp. 60-62)

17<sup>th</sup> September, **1648**, the House of Commons *ordered* that the castle be given up [by Col Fortescue] to **Sir Hardres Waller** and further *ordered* that The Captain, Lieutenant, and soldiers be “indemnified in what they had formerly done.”

The chaplain of Pendennis castle, under Sir Hardres Waller, was Mr. Henry Flamank – who, in 1662 was ‘ejected’ from the church of England and from ‘the living of Lanivet’ . Some considerable time after his expulsion from *Lanivet*, he was called to be minister to a congregation at *Tavistock*, where he died in 1693. (Oliver p.63 qf. Journal of the Royal Institution of Cornwall for Oct., 1865, p.74)

1649: A great fight near Pendennis castle between the Lord Hopton<sup>7</sup> and Parliamentary forces, upon the landing of his men for the fetching in of provisions. (Oliver, p.64)

----- The colours of the Lord Hopton, are Yellow, with black bulets in the midst, and on the top thereof, this motto written in Characters of Gold, ***For Charles the Second.***”

1652: William Prynne<sup>8</sup> was a prisoner in the castle.

“*Since my imprisonment in Pendennis Castle, a **Turkish Man of Warr** at mid-day, in the view of all the garrison and my-selfe, came up to the mouth of the Harbor (sic), and very near the Block-house; took a great English Lighter (sic) of thirty tun, sunk the vessel in the place, and took away some 12 persons in it prisoners into **Sally** [Scicily?] or **Tunis**; after which she came close up the harbour two or three mornings together, till chased away from thence by a Man of Warre”*

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<sup>7</sup> Lord Hopton's "Cornish Army" was based on the five Cornish foot regiments of Sir Bevill Grenvile, Sir Nicholas Slanning, Colonel John Trevannion, Colonel William Godolphin and Warwick, Lord Mohun. [qf: Dr. Alan Wickes (Kernow Connection website)]

<sup>8</sup> While there, he penned a book (published in 1657) “Pendennis and all other Standing Forts, Dismantled.”, or “***Eight military Aphorisms, Demonstrating the Uselessnes, Unprofitableness, Hurtfulness, and Prodigall Expensiveness of all Standing English Forts and Garrisons, to the People of England.***” “

This does not speak much for the gunnery practice of Pendennis at that time. (Oliver, p.65)

1654-**1658**: Whether Sir Hardres Waller was deprived of or resigned the governorship of Pendennis castle [Oliver, in 1875] had not ascertained. The commissioners for nomination of commissioned officers had prepared a list of a governor and commission officers of Pendennis, which was reported to the House of Commons and read on 6<sup>th</sup> August, 1658. The list names Capt. **John Fox** as governor, and Robert Roberts as lieutenant. [Whether Fox was then nominated in the list, or whether he was already then governor, appears uncertain.](#) He is mentioned as governor of Pendennis in 1654[viz] “Jane, the daughter of John Fox, then Governor of Pendenis (sic), was born the 18<sup>th</sup> of February and baptized on 7<sup>th</sup> March 1754.” Not improbable he was lieutenant-governor in 1654, and appointed governor in accordance with the nomination, in 1658.<sup>9</sup> Robert Roberts was probably appointed lieutenant-governor in 1658.

1659: It appears Captain John Fox may have died between 7<sup>th</sup> January and 13<sup>th</sup> February, 1659 – when – the house of Commons resolved, “that Colonel *Anthony Rowse* be, and is hereby approved of to be, Governor of Pendennis Castle.” (Oliver, p.66. q.f. (Commons Journal, vol.7, p.842) He is not named by any of the Cornish historians in the list of governors. He probably retained the office until [the Restoration, in 1660.](#)

1660: Mr. J. T. Rutt says of Sir Hardres Waller: he appears to have been in great favour with the Cromwells, and was fully engaged as any of the High Court of Justice in the judgement of the King. Yet on his arraignment in 1660, as may be seen in “The Trials of the Regicides,” he prevailed to save a life, probably soon closed in prison, by [his] professions of penitence which have been little credited either by royalists or republicans.” (Oliver, p.65. q.f. Burton’s Diary (vol, 3, p.518)

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<sup>9</sup> Note: George Fox, in his Journal for **1655/56** states: *Then I desired the Captain to let the constables see his warrant or order, by which he was to carry us; which he did. His warrant was to conduct us safe to **Captain Fox, governor of Pendennis Castle**; and if the governor should not be at home, he was to convey us to Launceston jail.*