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**THE PILGRIM FATHERS IN THE EAST MIDLANDS,  
THEIR EXILE IN HOLLAND AND THEIR JOURNEY TO  
AMERICA**

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## Who were the Pilgrim Fathers?

The Pilgrim Fathers were a small group of Protestants who left England on board the Mayflower in order to found the Plymouth Colony in America. The group had become increasingly disillusioned with the pace of reform of the Established Church of England and sought to re-create what they believed had been the simple life of the earliest Christians, a plainer form of worship centred on the study of the Bible. That this small group should be given such an important place in American consciousness is surprising. Perhaps their appeal lies in their courage in surviving against almost insuperable odds in their early years in the New World. Yet, until the 19<sup>th</sup> Century they were virtually unknown outside the town of Plymouth, Massachusetts, where the original congregation had set up its home. Their very name "Pilgrim Fathers" only came into common usage in the 1840s; the Pilgrims had no name for themselves as a group and for generations they were known to their descendants merely as the "Forefathers".<sup>1</sup>

The dramatic story of the Pilgrim Fathers has been traced to the East Midlands where the counties of Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire and Yorkshire meet, close to the small market town of Bawtry and the nearby villages of Scrooby and Austerfield. Important figures in Mayflower story were identified in the research of Joseph Hunter, an English archivist in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> From his position as deputy keeper of the Public Record Office, Hunter was able to trawl through the archives and identified the villages around Bawtry, Yorkshire, as the centre of an important group of Separatists. His task was not easy, for this was a clandestine movement engaging in illegal activities, and therefore having to hide away from both church and secular authorities in order to survive. Hunter admits to proceeding in the spirit of an 'antiquary', gathering up small fragments of information from wherever he could find them.

## The religious inheritance of the Pilgrim Fathers

The Pilgrim Fathers lived in turbulent times when the Reformation challenged traditional beliefs which had been held for centuries.<sup>3</sup> With Henry V111's break with Rome, Papal authority in England was rejected and Henry assumed the position of 'Supreme Head' of the newly formed Church of England. Some changes to doctrine and ritual in the short reign of Edward V1 led to the introduction of Protestant features which were then abandoned under the temporary reconciliation with Rome in the reign of Mary. Elizabeth, on her accession in 1558, dealt with the religious question by offering a compromise, a 'via media'.

## Changing hearts and minds

Queen Elizabeth (see Figure 1 below), in promulgating the 'Elizabethan Settlement' declared that she was not seeking "windows into men's souls" but would be satisfied if her subjects showed outward conformity to the rules and regulations of the Church of England.<sup>4</sup> Christopher Hill reminds us of the important role of the Church

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<sup>1</sup> G. Willison, *Saints and Strangers*. Heinemann. London. 1966.

<sup>2</sup> J. Hunter, *Collections concerning the church or congregation of Protestant Separatists formed at Scrooby in north Nottinghamshire in the time of King James 1: the founders of New Plymouth*. London. 1854.

<sup>3</sup> A.G. Dickens, *The English Reformation*. Batsford. London. 1964; E. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400 -1580*. Yale Univ. Press. 2005; D. MacCulloch, *A History of Christianity*. Allen Lane. 2009.

<sup>4</sup> P. McGrath, *Papists and Puritans under Elizabeth 1*. Blandford Press, London. 1967. p 25.

in the everyday life of citizens.<sup>5</sup> In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the Church had a monopoly of thought

control and opinion forming through its control of education and ability to censor books. Until 1641, the publication of home news was prohibited; privately circulated newspapers were available to the rich but beyond the means of the poor. For the illiterate or semi-illiterate population in their village churches, sermons from the pulpit were their main source of political information and ideas. By the end of Elizabeth's reign, the Church of England was for the majority of people the only form of religion of which they had first-hand experience. As long as they conformed outwardly and did not openly speak against its teachings, they were left alone. There seems to have been comparatively little heresy-hunting as far as the ordinary people were concerned. The majority of citizens, looking for a quiet life, did not find the official religion too demanding or too repressive. A minority of the population, however, comprising the highly vociferous Puritans, became increasingly unhappy with what they saw as an 'unreformed' Church.



*Figure 1 - Queen Elizabeth*

### **The Puritan challenge**

In the seventeenth century, Puritanism was essentially and primarily a religious movement.<sup>6</sup> Puritans held a wide range of views on theological beliefs and religious practices; some wanted only minor changes in church services, others wanted to fundamentally alter the ecclesiastical establishment. Most wanted to stay within the Church of England; they hoped to eventually reform it and, in the meantime, they offered active or passive resistance to Church authorities trying to impose uniformity of doctrine and worship.<sup>7</sup> A much smaller group of nonconformists were the "Separatists" who shared many of the ideas of the Puritans but wanted to sweep away the whole fabric of the Church and establish their own small, self-governing, independent congregations.

### **The early Separatists**

Separatist groups were regarded by the Elizabethan government as dangerous subversives and rigorously pursued through a well-organised network of spies and informers.<sup>8</sup> To survive at all meant that the Separatists had to operate in great secrecy. An early recorded example was on the 19<sup>th</sup> June 1567, when over 100 people meeting in the Plumbers' Hall were arrested by the sheriffs of the City of London.<sup>9</sup> The group claimed to be celebrating a wedding but were in fact coming together to hear sermons and celebrate their own form of worship. The leaders were arrested and brought to trial before the Lord Mayor of London and Edmund Grindal, Bishop of London, and questioned as to their beliefs. At the trial, Grindal discovered that there had been previous meetings in private houses, in fields and in ships and that something like a thousand people had been

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<sup>5</sup> C. Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down*. Pelican Books. London. 1974.

<sup>6</sup> S.E Morison, *The Oxford History of the American People*. Oxford University Press. New York. 1965. p 61

<sup>7</sup> D. MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe's House Divided 1490-1700*. Penguin Books. London. 2003; P. Collinson, *Godly People: Essays in English Puritanism*. London. 1984.

<sup>8</sup> K. Hylson-Smith, *The Churches in England from Elizabeth 1 to Elizabeth 11*. Vol 1 1558-1688. SCM Press. London. 1996.

<sup>9</sup> E. Routley, *English Religious Dissent*. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge. 1960. p.48.

connected with this movement in London at one time or another. Grindal did not take them seriously, since in his view they consisted of more women than men and they were “citizens of the lowest order, together with four or five ministers remarkable neither for their judgment or learning”.<sup>10</sup>

Other secret groups were to be found in Southwark and London. A group led by Richard Fitz, for example, was eventually discovered by the authorities and imprisoned in the notorious Bridewell prison.<sup>11</sup> Fitz and scores of other separatists died of ‘jail-fever’, languishing in the foetid atmosphere of dismal dungeons with no prospect of release until death put an end to their suffering. Another important figure was Francis Johnson, a Fellow at Christ’s College, Cambridge, who set up a Separatist group in London and was to spend several years in prison before escaping into exile in The Netherlands.

### **The Southwark martyrs**

In the 1580s, two important Separatist writers and activists, Henry Barrow and John Greenwood, spent about six years in the Clink prison in Southwark.<sup>12</sup> They produced an enormous quantity of statements of their beliefs, writing on paper which had been brought in secretly by friends and the written documents then smuggled out and taken to The Netherlands for printing. It was an amazing exercise of enterprise and provides a record of the prisoners at their trials for sedition (so-called ‘conferences’) with the ecclesiastical authorities. These conferences saw entrenched attitudes on both sides. Barrow and Greenwood were resolute, unmoveable, uncompromising and often disrespectful. The accusers included Dr Lancelot Andrewes, then vicar of St Giles and later Bishop of Winchester. Andrewes remarked to Barrow: “For close imprisonment you are most happy. The solitary and contemplative life I hold the most blessed life; it is the life I would choose”. This seems strangely unfeeling and opens up the question of how much Andrewes was aware of conditions within prisons and the extent to which Barrow was suffering from his imprisonment.<sup>13</sup> The formal trial began on the 11<sup>th</sup> March, 1593, when Barrow and Greenwood admitted their responsibility for certain printed pamphlets. They were accused of being revolutionists and traitors, bent on destroying the Monarchy and the Church and were convicted and hanged at Tyburn on 6<sup>th</sup> April, 1593. Another Separatist, John Penry was also found guilty of sedition and on the 29<sup>th</sup> May, hanged at St Thomas-a-Watering, a public place of execution on the outskirts of Southwark.

### **Religious dissent in Bawtry and neighbouring villages**

However, various individuals, scattered in villages in North Nottinghamshire, West Riding of Yorkshire, and Lincolnshire, close to the market town of Bawtry, were to become central figures in the Pilgrim Fathers’ story. These dissenters were identified in the research of Joseph Hunter, an English archivist in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>14</sup> The Pilgrims were not major figures in England at that time so that public records of their activities were relatively sparse. In Hunter’s findings, they were not of the “very obscure, but men of some education,

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<sup>10</sup> H. Porter (ed) *Puritanism in Tudor England*. pp 80-94.

<sup>11</sup> R. Tudor Jones, *Congregationalism in England*. 1962.

<sup>12</sup> C. Silvester Horne, *A Popular History of the Free Churches*. James Clark. London. 1905. pp 52ff

<sup>13</sup> A. MacKenna, *Congregational Martyrs and Exiles: The Story of the English Separatists*. 1893 pp 62ff: a lengthy extract of the court proceedings is detailed.

<sup>14</sup> J. Hunter, 1854. Hunter’s research forms the basis for our understanding of the early years of the “Pilgrim Fathers”.

of some energy, and even of some position on the social scale.”<sup>15</sup> These included **William Brewster** of Scrooby, Nottinghamshire, who returned home in the 1580s from the University of Cambridge, having absorbed the ideas of Thomas Cartwright and other Puritan radicals in the colleges. Within a ten-mile radius of Scrooby, Brewster was in contact with a number of active and articulate nonconformist clergymen. These included **Richard Clyfton** who was dismissed in 1604 as rector of nearby All Saints’ Church at Babworth, Nottinghamshire, for his outspoken views; **John Robinson**, who returned to his birthplace of Sturton, Nottinghamshire, at about the same time, after a period of involvement with radical Puritan groups in Cambridge, London, and Norwich; and **John Smyth**, also from Sturton, who was to organise a Separatist group in Gainsborough, Lincolnshire.<sup>16</sup> To these important figures should be added the youthful **William Bradford**, from nearby Austerfield, Yorkshire, who became the second Governor of the Plymouth Colony in New England, and importantly provided a detailed journal of the early life of the Pilgrim Fathers.<sup>17</sup>

### **John Smyth and the Gainsborough Separatists**

The Separatist group at Gainsborough, Lincolnshire, was formed under the leadership of a controversial figure, John Smyth. Bradford describes Smyth as “an eminent man in his time and a good preacher... but his inconstancy and unstable judgment, and being so suddenly carried away with things, did soon overthrow him”.<sup>18</sup> Born at Sturton (later re-named Sturton-le-Steeple), Nottinghamshire, some six miles from Scrooby, he studied under Francis Johnson at Christ’s College, Cambridge, and became a Fellow in 1594. As a Fellow, he was not allowed to marry and so he left the College in 1598 to do so. He and his wife would have three children. He took up the post of City Preacher/ Lecturer at Lincoln in 1600, with an annual salary of £40 (eight times his pay as a Fellow at Cambridge), together with the rent for his house and the right to graze his cows on the communal heath. As well as being a Preacher, Smyth had been ordained into the Anglican Church. At Lincoln he preached every Wednesday within the City limits. Smyth was to fall foul of city politics; the city had been divided into factions, where one small group of wealthy tradesmen, Puritan by inclination, squabbled with a group of publicans wanting to see the expansion of alehouses and the brewing of beer. Smyth took the side of the Puritans, but when they lost control of the Council, Smyth was reported to the bishop as a nonconformist and lost both his job and his license to preach in 1603.

Smyth went to Gainsborough, Lincolnshire, where he practised medicine (without a license) and joined the local Puritans. The powerful and eloquent nature of Smyth’s preaching drew supporters from villages in Nottinghamshire, including William Brewster, Richard Jackson and George Morton of Scrooby, William Bradford of Austerfield, John Robinson from Sturton as well as numerous ‘small farmers and labouring people’ who travelled from Nottinghamshire. The actual meeting place of the Gainsborough separatists is a matter of conjecture. It is known that Smyth initially established a firm friendship with the Hickman family who owned Gainsborough Hall (see Figure 2 below), and some meetings of the nonconformists are thought to have taken place there. However, William Hickman would later fall out with local Puritans and it is believed that he then refused to allow the Hall to be used as a meeting place.

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<sup>15</sup> J. Hunter, pp2-3

<sup>16</sup> Sturton in the 18<sup>th</sup> century came to be called Sturton-le-Steeple, the name it bears today

<sup>17</sup> W. Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation 1620-1647*. An accessible version of the book in modern English has been edited by Samuel. E. Morison. Alfred A. Knopf. 2015.

<sup>18</sup> Governor Bradford’s Dialogue. Reprinted in A. Young. *Chronicles of the Pilgrim Fathers*. Boston, Mass. 1974. p 450



*Figure 2 - Gainsborough Hall today*

Smyth was a man of some intellectual standing; he wrote seven books between 1603 and 1613 and exercised a considerable influence over John Robinson and other clergymen in the area. Hunter suggests that Smyth had "... a violence of temper and possibly a disposition to take an unfavourable view of the conduct of everybody about him, he was a trouble to everyone, and perhaps in the highest measure to himself."<sup>19</sup> In 1606, he was reported to the bishop for having preached without a license and convicted by an ecclesiastical court of being "contumacious".<sup>20</sup> He was barred from working as a physician without a license and lost his livelihood. By this time, he had buried one son and baptized at Lincoln an infant daughter. He called her Mara, the word in the Hebrew Bible for "bitterness". Smyth and his group at Gainsborough moved into exile in Holland, probably in 1606-7 and joined the so-called 'Ancient Brethren' in Amsterdam, a group of English exiles from London, led by Francis Johnson and Henry Ainsworth, both former Cambridge Fellows.

### **The Scrooby Separatists**

With the departure of the Gainsborough group to Holland, the focus for Separatist worship in the area continued at Scrooby Manor, the home of William Brewster. (See Figure 3 below.)



*Figure 3 - Scrooby Manor (previously known as Scrooby Palace) - the home of William Brewster*

Scrooby is about a mile and a half from the small market town of Bawtry and is situated on the River Ryton, a tributary of the River Idle which flows into the River Trent. Scrooby was also on the old "Great North Road", something of a misnomer because at that time it was little more than unfenced track, muddy in winter, often almost impassable, and difficult to negotiate without a guide. Although Elizabeth 1 had ordered the clearing of undergrowth and brushwood for a hundred feet on both sides of main roads, highway robbery and murder were everyday occurrences. The Archbishop of York was granted property in Scrooby in the tenth

<sup>19</sup> Hunter, pp 33-4

<sup>20</sup> Contumacious – a person who is wilfully disobedient to authority

century and built a Palace which was used by him as a place of residence when he visited the southern part of his Metropolitan See. The Archbishop had similar properties at York, Bishopthorpe, Ripon, Beverley, Cawood, Shireburn, Otley, and Southwell. These residences were used for leisure as well as ecclesiastical purposes; Scrooby in particular was a favourite centre for the pleasures of hunting, being convenient for both Hatfield Chase, near Doncaster, and Sherwood Forest in Nottinghamshire. The palaces were only partially furnished; whatever was necessary to make the Archbishop's stay as comfortable as possible was carried on wagons and pack horses from residence to residence.

### **The importance of William Brewster**

Harold Kirk-Smith suggests that: "Without Brewster, it is difficult to imagine that there could ever have been a separatist Church at Scrooby and an emigration to Holland and America".<sup>21</sup> Brewster emerges as a most important figure in the history of the movement in this area. Like so many of the Puritan reformers, Brewster received an education at Cambridge University. Significantly, he entered Peterhouse, Cambridge, in December 1580, at the same time as John Penry, the separatist martyr who was hanged in 1593. As the college was small, with only about a hundred students, their mutual interests may well have brought them together. Moreover, John Greenwood and Henry Barrow (who later led the Separatist movement in Southwark), were resident at Cambridge at this time. Brewster was later to take Barrow's book, *'A Brief Discoverie of the False Church'*, with him to the New World.

How long Brewster stayed in Cambridge is uncertain and he did not take his degree, though that was not unusual for the time. He entered the service of Sir William Davison in 1583, one of Elizabeth's chief ministers at court. William Brewster's position in Davison's service is uncertain; he was too young and without diplomatic or secretarial experience and it seems likely that he acted as a kind of general factotum. Brewster accompanied Davison on diplomatic missions to The Netherlands, where he visited a number of towns and cities - an experience which was to be very useful when he later went with the Scrooby Separatist group to that country. He spent some time in Leiden where Davison's staff were accommodated in a house near to the Pieterskerk (St Peter's Church). Twenty-two years later he was to bring his Scrooby group to this place.

### **The execution of Mary Queen of Scots**

Davison was drawn into the controversy over the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots. Mary had become the centre of Roman Catholic disaffection with Elizabeth. A number of plots were hatched, usually supported by the Pope and King Philip 11 of Spain, to replace Elizabeth with Mary. Elizabeth was under pressure from her advisers to place Mary on trial, but steadfastly refused to do so before the Babington Plot in 1580 to assassinate the Queen revealed Mary's unmistakable complicity. Babington and his fellow conspirators were found guilty and hanged at Tyburn. Mary was put on trial at Fotheringhay Castle, Northamptonshire, in 1586, and found guilty. What happened next is not entirely clear and different versions of the events have emerged. A modern analysis by John Guy offers insight into the web of deceit and duplicity surrounding the circumstances which led to the eventual execution of Mary.<sup>22</sup> Initially, Elizabeth refused to countenance the idea of executing a monarch and, despite intense pressure from her chief adviser William Cecil (Lord Burghley), held off signing a death warrant. Burghley deploying what might be termed 'false news', fostered a rumour

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<sup>21</sup> H. Kirk-Smith, *William Brewster: The Father of New England: His Life and Times 1567-1644*. Richard Kay. Boston, Lincolnshire. 1992.p 64

<sup>22</sup> John Guy, *Elizabeth: The Forgotten Years*. Penguin Books. London. 2016. pp 81ff

that Spanish troops had landed in Wales, and briefed the Queen accordingly. He and Walsingham then called on the newly appointed French ambassador, Guillaume de l' Aubespine, Baron de Chateauneuf, at his house in Bishopsgate Street, and effectively blackmailed him into conspiring with them to 'discover' a fresh assassination plot which was, in reality, two years old and had amounted to very little. Elizabeth sent for Davison and asked him to bring a copy of Mary's death warrant which Burghley had drafted some weeks earlier. Elizabeth signed the warrant and ordered Davison not to let the document out of his possession or to show it to anyone before he had had it sealed by the Lord Chancellor. She next instructed Davison to order Walsingham to write a letter in his own name to Mary's custodian, Amyas Paulet, demanding that he do away with his prisoner. Paulet was to act as a private citizen and do what the Queen wanted in secret so as to hide the matter from public opprobrium. Paulet refused, calling the plan 'dishonourable and dangerous', rightly foreseeing that Elizabeth would soon be looking for scapegoats. Soon after visiting Walsingham, Davison made what he later realized was a catastrophic mistake. Although Elizabeth had ordered him not to allow the signed death warrant out of his possession or show it to anyone, he let Burghley and Leicester see it. They ordered him to have it sealed immediately. The next morning, however, Elizabeth sent Davison a message; if the warrant had not yet been sealed, he should delay the process. Davison hurried to the Privy Chamber to warn her that it had already been sealed. Elizabeth muttered something barely audible about his 'unseemly haste' and then (according to Davison) said that she wished to be 'no more troubled with the matter'. Davison, now unsure as to what to do with the warrant, handed it to Burghley, who quickly ordered the warrant to be carried out.

Elizabeth denied having ordered the death sentence, blamed the Privy Council and especially Davison, who was held personally responsible for the speed with which the death sentence had been carried out. Davison was fined heavily and imprisoned in the Tower "during the Queen's pleasure". Davison's health broke down but William Brewster remained at his master's side, visiting him and helping him through his difficult period in prison. Davison was eventually released in 1589. The fall of Davison from high office would undoubtedly have had an impact on Brewster, probably occasioning much uneasiness and uncertainty as it put a stop to Brewster's advancement in his chosen career. How much he knew of the circumstances behind Davison's dismissal is impossible to say. Again, how much his perception of the role of the monarch in church and state matters was affected by these events, can only be a matter of speculation. It seems likely that he would not be left as a fervent admirer of the Queen.

### **Queen's Postmaster and Bailiff to the Archbishop of York**

William Brewster left Davison's service and returned to Scrooby, eventually taking over from his father (William Brewster senior) two important positions; he was Master of the Queen's Posts responsible for the safe passage of the royal messengers in his area and he was also Bailiff to the Archbishop of York tasked with collecting rents on the Archbishop's estate and looking after the Archbishop's Palace in Scrooby. As Postmaster, Brewster was responsible for the safety and prompt dispatch of the Queen's post from Scrooby to Tuxford in the south and to Doncaster to the north. His duties were to provide three good post horses for the Queen's messengers, who were not allowed to hire them from anyone else. The position of postmaster was much coveted and provided Brewster with an important source of income. His other position as Bailiff to the Archbishop of York gave him the task of collecting rents from tenant farmers on the Archbishop's estates. Importantly, he resided in the Palace and was responsible for its maintenance and general level of comfort when the Archbishop visited.



## Scrooby Palace

The Palace was constructed mainly of timber and consequently needed constant attention. It was a substantial building of 40 rooms; a flight of stone steps led to the great baronial hall on the first floor where the archbishops held court in princely fashion on their comparatively rare visits to this poor and distant part of their diocese. Other facilities included a chapel and the usual range of service buildings for so important a building – a brewhouse, a bakehouse, a forge, stables, kennels, dovecote – all within a moated area. However, successive Archbishops had failed to undertake the necessary maintenance work with the result that by the 1550s many of the buildings had fallen into a state of disrepair. Archbishop Heath in 1555 ordered that the buildings in the worst condition should be pulled down. Accordingly, the gate house, the hall, the great chamber to the north of the outer court and a number of other buildings were dismantled. However, the Palace remained a substantial property with the Archbishop reserving accommodation for himself and his retinue.

Over the centuries, royal visitors were not unknown; Margaret Tudor, daughter of Henry V11, stayed there on her way to marriage with the King of Scotland in June 1503. Henry V111 stayed there for one night during his northern progress in 1541. Wolsey also stayed there for several months after his fall from office as Lord Chancellor, when he failed to persuade the Pope to annul the marriage between Henry and Katherine of Aragon. Wolsey was dismissed from office and his estates confiscated; he was eventually summoned back to London to face trial but died on the journey.

## The early life of William Bradford

William Brewster was undoubtedly a key figure amongst the East Midlands separatists. By about 1606, he was allowing Scrooby Palace to become a meeting place, so making the long round trips to Gainsborough unnecessary. This had been a difficult journey, especially in winter, and the congregation was growing in numbers, which included a young teenager, William Bradford. Joseph Hunter was able to research Bradford's family background using the well-preserved Austerfield church registers.<sup>23</sup> Bradford was born in 1589 to a family of farmers, tenants of the Crown in the royal manor of Austerfield. (See Figure 4.)

When William was less than a year old, his father died, and two years later his mother married an Austerfield man called Robert Briggs. When his mother Alice died in 1597, William was cared for by John Hanson, his grandfather on his mother's side. When in turn Hanson died in 1602, the twelve-year old boy went to live



*Figure 4 - Austerfield Manor, the birthplace of William Bradford*

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<sup>23</sup> Hunter, pp 69-75

with his uncles Robert and Thomas Bradford. We have no knowledge of the emotional impact, if any, of these bereavements on William.

According to his biographer, Cotton Mather, after an illness at the age of twelve, William Bradford began to read the scriptures.<sup>24</sup> He undoubtedly also received instruction and guidance from William Brewster and **Richard Clyfton**, who had developed their nonconformist beliefs at Cambridge University. Clyfton had been appointed as rector of All Saints' Church, Babworth, Nottinghamshire. Bradford was later to write of Clyfton as "... a grave and reverend preacher, who by his fervour and diligence has done much good, and under God had been the means of conversion of many".<sup>25</sup> Clyfton became noted for his clarity of style; he would explain the gospel message in easy language so that his parishioners, many of whom were illiterate, were able to understand his teachings. His services became well-known and he began to attract numbers from neighbouring villages, including William Brewster, his wife Mary and son Jonathan, who rode or walked from Scrooby. They were joined by William Bradford, who was a young boy at the time. Clyfton and his family were later given accommodation by William Brewster at Scrooby Manor, and he became pastor to the secret group.

Another important nonconformist in the area was **John Robinson**, who had been a Scholar and Fellow at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. He was born c.1576 at Sturton, Nottinghamshire. In 1592, he was admitted as a 'sizar' at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. Sizar were a numerically large group of students; they were promising boys with little family money who were permitted to enter the university if they could pay their way by doing chores for richer students. Within four years, he had achieved the rank of Scholar, which gave him an allowance and free quarters in the college. In 1598, he became one of eleven Fellows at the college, remaining there for seven years. By itself, a Fellowship did not count for much financially; Fellows had their own rooms, food and drink, but their pay was small and if they wished to marry, they had to resign. Robinson resigned his Fellowship in February 1604 and married Bridget White, also formerly of Sturton. The White family had moved to Beauvale, Nottinghamshire, where they had acquired property formerly owned by the Carthusian Priory, which had been dissolved in 1540. Robinson left Cambridge and was appointed deputy minister at St Andrew's Church, Norwich. The parish was strongly Puritan and Robinson seems to have fitted in well. Matters were to change with the Royal proclamation requiring clergymen to conform to the new Book of Canons (1604). Robinson refused and was suspended from his ministry. He returned with his family to his native Sturton, Nottinghamshire, whilst contemplating his future. It is thought that he held private religious meetings, attended by members of his wife's family, including John Carver who had married Katherine White, Bridget's sister. The Carvers were later to travel on the Mayflower to the New World, where John became the first Governor.

### **Survival of the nonconformists in the East Midlands**

For most of Elizabeth's reign, nonconformists in the East Midlands could function without undue interference from religious or secular authorities. Ronald Marchant has looked at the records of church courts and discovered little persecution of Puritans and Separatists.<sup>26</sup> Nonconformity was shielded in the 1570s and 1580s by a succession of Archbishops of York, notably Edmund Grindal and Edwin Sandys, who were themselves

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<sup>24</sup> Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana: The Great works of Christ in America: The Ecclesiastical History of New England* (1702). Reprinted by Silas Andrus & Son. Hartford Conn. 1853. Vol. 1 pp 108-114. Mather was a descendent of Bradford and his information seems to have come from the writings of Bradford himself, now lost.

<sup>25</sup> Bradford, pp 9-10

<sup>26</sup> R. Marchant, *The Puritans and the Church Courts in the Diocese of York, 1500-1640*. London. 1960.

Puritans. (See Figure 5.) John Louth, Archdeacon of Nottingham, took little interest in rooting out dissenters in the area around Bawtry and Scrooby, unless Catholics were involved. In 1587, he carried out an enquiry into fifty parishes in Nottinghamshire; nearly half asserted, “Omnia bene” (all is well). He probed no further though some of those parishes had Puritan ministers known to have flouted the rules of worship.

There were some changes in the East Midlands in the 1590s when rules against nonconformity were tightened. The new Archbishop of York, John Piers, and the Archdeacon of Nottingham, John King, tried to establish a greater degree of conformity with national policy by ordering nonconformist ministers to be “presented” or required to attend Church Courts and account for their behaviour. Even then the penalties meted out were mild. Proceedings were also taken out against the churchwardens, for example in Clayworth and Headon in 1590, because they had not presented deficiencies (nonconformist behaviour) to the archbishop’s Visitor. The churchwardens admitted their guilt, were rebuked and required to pay costs. In the same year, the Visitations by the Archdeacon succeeded in unearthing various nonconforming clergymen. The majority of these conformed after their first appearance in Church Courts. But there were a few young Puritan clergymen who resisted all attempts to make them conform. These were Brian Barton, Rector of South Collingham; Thomas Toller, vicar of Hayton until 1598 and who then became vicar of Sheffield; Robert Southworth successively curate and vicar of Headon; Richard Clyfton, rector of Babworth who was later to be deprived of this office; and Thomas Hancock, sometime curate of Scrooby. They were to appear on a number of occasions before the Church Courts where the officials eventually seemed to have wearied of the struggle to make them conform and after 1596 most of them were only infrequently presented. Richard Clyfton was brought before a Church Court in 1593 accused of failing to wear the surplice and failing to use the sign of the cross at baptisms. He admitted both offences and was let off with a mild rebuke. Robert Southworth was frequently before the Courts (1593, 1595, 1601 and 1602) for nonconformity and was simply dismissed with an admonition which he did not obey. Toller, who eventually conformed and remained in the Church of England, was a perpetual source of trouble until he left the archdeaconry and moved to Sheffield.

William Brewster also benefited from the same lenient policy. In 1598, he was reported to the Archdeacon’s Court for the offence of “sermon gadding”, the Puritan practice of forsaking their local parish church to hear a better preacher elsewhere. He was also accused, with others, of “publicly repeating” sermons, a practice frowned upon by senior clergymen. In the Court, Brewster provided a skillful answer to the charges: “... as touching the repeating of sermons, he with others do note the sermons delivered by the preacher and in the afternoon they that have noted do confer with one another what they have noted and otherwise they have no repetition, and to the rest of the presentment he sayeth that the two towns of Bawtry and Scrooby do maintain one preacher between them who preaches one Sunday at the one town, and at the other town on



Figure 5 - Edwin Sandys, Archbishop of York 1576-1588

the next Sunday by a continual course, so that if their preacher preach at Bawtry he with the other (sic) of the parish go thither to hear him, and otherwise he doth not absent himself from his parish church on the Sabbath day.”<sup>27</sup>

Divisions between Brewster’s group and the rest of the Scrooby parishioners soon appeared and became increasingly apparent. The Puritan curate at Scrooby was Thomas Hancock, who brought an action against one of his parishioners, William Throope, for defamation. Among the alleged slanders was a statement by Throope that one of his horses could preach as well as the curate. Judgement was given against Throope, and his relations with the Puritans became decidedly cold. Throope was one of the churchwardens who presented William Brewster in 1598. The curate of Scrooby, Thomas Hancock, was presented on a number of occasions; in 1591, he was presented for not wearing the surplice and, as he admitted that the chapel possessed one, he was ordered to wear it. On the 17 November, he was excommunicated for refusing to obey the order and this quickly secured his compliance (15 December). In 1592, Hancock was presented by the churchwardens of Scrooby for conducting a marriage ceremony between Robert Southworth (then curate of Headon) to Jane Wasteness, without banns or licence in the Scrooby church. Southworth and his wife were eventually found guilty and declared to be excommunicated, though were later pardoned. Hancock later became vicar of Elkesley and succeeded Southworth at Headon when the latter was deprived of his office.

#### **Accession of James 1 in 1603: new pressures to conform**

Initially, James showed a willingness to listen to the Puritans and was fairly well disposed towards them. Outwardly, James was a Calvinist, a firm believer in predestination, as were most of his Scottish subjects. On his journey to London from Scotland in 1603, he was presented with the so-called Millenary Petition, reportedly signed by a thousand clergymen. This was a cautious document which made only relatively moderate demands for reform. No doubt the Puritans were well aware that James relished theological discussion and the need at the outset of his reign to define the direction which the Church of England should be moving. They were delighted when James announced his intention of calling a conference of bishops and Puritan representatives, under his chairmanship, at which the points raised in the Millenary Petition would be examined.

#### **The Hampton Court Conference, January 1604**

James had intended to hold the Conference in November 1603, but an outbreak of plague forced him to postpone it until after Christmas. The more radical Puritans began to agitate for further reforms even before the Conference met. At the suggestion of the Puritan delegates, a new translation of the Bible was authorised, leading to the King James Version, seven years later. This literary masterpiece was to colour the thought and speech of the English-speaking world for more than three centuries. However, the hope of reforming the Church from within was now dead. A rigid pattern had been set which James might well have thought that was in effect a ‘settlement’ of religion along the lines of the religious settlements of his royal predecessors. In fact, when Parliament met in March 1604, many of its Puritan members continued to demand further reforms much to James’ annoyance. This occasioned his proclamation in July 1604 warning against ‘the troublesome spirits of some persons who never receive contentment in civil or ecclesiastical matters’. In September 1604, James gave his support to new ecclesiastical canons passed by the church authorities.

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<sup>27</sup> R. Marchant, p 13

## The 1604 Canons

James appointed Richard Bancroft as Archbishop of Canterbury in 1604 and supported Bancroft's campaign to enforce uniformity of worship. To the dismay of the reformers, the new canons upheld many of the current orthodox doctrines and liturgies of the Church; the use of the Book of Common Prayer; full and unreserved acceptance of the Thirty-nine Articles; suppression of all private religious meetings, and obligatory communion in the Anglican Church at least three times a year. Bancroft ordered that all beneficed clergy who refused to conform to the 1604 Canons should be expelled from their livings. Within a year, more than 300 clergymen were deprived of their office for their reluctance or flat refusal to obey these decrees.

## Pursuit of dissenting clergy

The 1604 Canons marked a determination on the part of the ecclesiastical authorities to clamp down on dissent. In Nottinghamshire and Yorkshire, four Puritan clerics, Richard Clyfton of Babworth, Henry Gray of Bawtry, Robert Southworth of Headon and Richard Bernard of Worksop, refused to conform and were deprived of their pastoral duties and removed from their livings. Clyfton and his family were generously received by Brewster into his home at Scrooby Palace where Clyfton became the pastor of the separatist group. In March 1607, Clyfton was summoned as the 'pretend minister or curate of Bawtry', but he did not respond and was excommunicated. He preached in early 1608 at Sutton-cum-Lound (James Brewster's church) before emigrating with the Scrooby group to Amsterdam.



Figure 6 - Tobias Matthew, Archbishop of York from 1606-1628

In 1606, Archbishop Hutton died and was succeeded by Tobias Matthew, famous for his courtesy and preaching ability and his lack of interest in church administration. (See Figure 6.) He came to Bawtry and preached a lengthy sermon warning of the dangers of nonconformity. Matthew, under pressure from the higher secular and ecclesiastical authorities to curb separatist activity, offered the separatists three alternatives - subscription to the rule of the church, imprisonment or voluntary exile. By seventeenth century standards, these choices could be seen as a model of reasonable government. Only a generation ago, in the 1580s and 1590s, separatists in London and Southwark had been hanged for holding nonconformist views. The Scrooby group knew that they would probably not face the death penalty but might be confined for long periods in unhealthy prisons. The group would almost certainly be split up.

The 1604 Canons and the consequent ejections of the clergy gave Puritans of all shades of opinion much food for thought.<sup>28</sup> In 1606, a Conference was held in the home of a Puritan supporter, Isabel Wray, wife of Sir William Bowes of Coventry. To the Conference came many of the local Puritans such as John Dod and Arthur

<sup>28</sup> A. Nicolson, *When God Spoke English: The Making of the King James Bible*. Harper Press. London. 2004. p 177

Hildersham, together with Richard Bernard, John Smyth and Thomas Helwys from Gainsborough and North Nottinghamshire. The main aim of the meeting was to try to determine a common policy to meet the new situation. John Smyth led an extreme section of those present, arguing that as the Church of England had finally refused reformation according to biblical requirements, it was no longer a true Church and that all Christians must separate themselves from her. Bernard seemed to have agreed with Smyth but it was clear that an overwhelming majority rejected this view. Smyth returned to his group in Gainsborough and would soon emigrate to Amsterdam, in 1606 or 1607. But the Separatists remained a small minority having failed to convince the main body of Puritans. After the Conference, they spent considerable time and effort travelling the country seeking whatever lay support they could muster to redress the lack of clerical support. They created scattered groups of supporters, some of whom would later emigrate with their leaders.

### **Pursuit of lay people**

In the years 1605 and 1606, the nonconformists were gradually building up their groups of supporters. Little notice was taken of these activities by the Church Courts and the Separatists seem to have been granted the use of Church pulpits until 1607 to proclaim their message. But some of their followers were cited before the Church Courts for relatively minor infringements of the law. In June 1605, a leading figure John Denman and his wife, of East Retford, admitted before the Court to being absent from their parish church in order to hear John Robinson, preach a Whitsunday sermon at Sturton. Nine other persons from East Retford, Clarbrough and Ordsall also admitted to being at the same sermon. They were each fined twelve pence, the legal fine for absence from Church for one Sunday. All the fines were paid.<sup>29</sup> Robinson's Whitsunday service had been widely advertised so as to attract interest throughout the area, but with the disadvantage that church officials were also aware of what was happening.

In an effort to prevent the Separatists from preaching in Anglican churches, the authorities began to clamp down on churchwardens as well as clergy. The churchwardens of Basford, Stourton, Elkesley, Greasley, Sutton-in-Ashfield, South Leverton and Treswell, were presented at the Archdeacon's Court for allowing Separatist preachers to use their pulpits. All the cases were dismissed with the churchwardens receiving admonitions. The occurrence of this kind of court case at this time, and at no other time in the Court's history, shows that from the beginning of 1607 until after the separatists had gone into exile abroad, an attempt had been made to deprive them of the pulpits of the Established Church. Yet early in 1608, Robinson was still being allowed to preach, demonstrating that the Church Court's writ was not universally obeyed.<sup>30</sup> Perhaps even more significantly, the Separatists had a measure of support from among the clergy and lay people who were nevertheless not prepared to follow them into exile.

In the course of pursuing the laity, one or two significant figures were brought before the Church Courts in the period 1604-1608. Gervase Neville was a landowner of some standing in Nottinghamshire, with land and property in Ragnell, Dunham, and South Leverton. He lived at Scrooby and was probably a member of the Separatist group there. He was brought before the Ecclesiastical Court at York, on 10 November, 1607, on the charge of being "...one of the sect of Barrowists or Brownists, holding and maintaining erroneous opinions, and doctrine repugnant to the Holy Scriptures and Word of God..." His conviction resulted in a term of imprisonment of 4 to 6 months at York Castle. Neville would know that if he did not conform in the three

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<sup>29</sup> D. Marcombe, *English Small -Town Life: Retford 1520-1642*. Notts C. C. Nottingham. 1993

<sup>30</sup> W.H. Burgess, *John Robinson: Pastor of the Pilgrim Fathers*. Williams & Northgate. London. 1920. p 72.

months after conviction, he would have to leave the country.<sup>31</sup> On his release from York Castle, he must have made his way almost at once to The Netherlands and attached himself to the Gainsborough group led by John Smyth, Hugh Bromhead and Thomas Helwys.

William Brewster resigned his office as Postmaster at Scrooby on 30 September 1607, probably clearing the way for a move into exile. Two months later, on 1 December 1607, Brewster and Richard Jackson, also of Scrooby, were summoned to appear before the Court of High Commission on the grounds that they were 'Barrowist' or disobedient in matters of religion. They did not appear and the commissioners imposed a fine of £20 each in their absence. Sometime during the next fortnight, the 'pursuivant' charged with finding the culprits went to Scrooby but certified to the Court that he could neither find them nor learn where they were. They must have covered their tracks well for if there had been any gossip about where they had gone, Throope and his cronies would have been only too pleased to pass it on.<sup>32</sup>

### **Why the Scrooby group decided to flee into exile**

The decision of the Scrooby Separatists to flee into exile is central to the Pilgrim Fathers' story. William Bradford refers to the mockery by people ("by the profane multitude") and oppression by the Church authorities as factors in the decision to flee. He wrote of the difficulties and strains faced by the Scrooby group at this time "...the poor people were so vexed with apparitors and pursuivants and the commissary courts, as truly their affliction was not small."<sup>33</sup> Apparitors and Pursuivants were officers of Church of England whose duty was to enforce uniformity. Bradford goes on to suggest that the Scrooby group bore their problems for a number of years but that: "They could not continue in any peaceable condition but were hunted and persecuted on every side, so as their former afflictions were but as flea-bitings of those which now came upon them. For some were taken and clapped up in prison, others had their houses beset and watched night and day, and hardly escaped their hands; and the most were fain to flee and leave their houses and habitations, and the means of their livelihoods".<sup>34</sup>

Bradford was about seventeen years old when the group decided to emigrate to the Continent so he was old enough to have some knowledge of what had happened. But he did not begin to write his account until twenty-two years later when earlier events were taking a form less of history than of legend. Nathaniel Morton (Bradford's secretary in the New World) endorses Bradford's statement, with some amendments of his own, suggesting that the Separatists "... could not peacefully enjoy their own liberty in their native country, without offence to others that were differently minded, they took up thoughts of removing themselves and their families to The Netherlands, which accordingly they endeavoured to accomplish, but met with great hinderance."<sup>35</sup> Other historians have suggested that Bradford may have exaggerated the position. As he was writing many years later, the events might have become telescoped in his mind and painted the picture bleaker than it really was. Bradford claimed that he personally knew about sixty people who had been imprisoned for their religious views, though he provided no evidence in support of this assertion. Bradford and Brewster would have known of conditions in prison, the physical mutilations and hangings in Bury St

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<sup>31</sup> W.H. Burgess, pp 75-6

<sup>32</sup> R. Merchant, p 161

<sup>33</sup> W. Bradford p 8..

<sup>34</sup> W. Bradford, p 10

<sup>35</sup> N. Morton, *New England's Memorial*. 6<sup>th</sup> Edition 1855. p 10.



Edmunds, London and elsewhere. The Scrooby group were not under imminent danger of long prison sentences. Religious nonconformists were no longer being burnt at the stake and it was highly unlikely that they would face death by hanging unless, like the Southwark Separatists, they were found guilty of sedition. However, the Church authorities were beginning to clamp down on dissent and the Scrooby group could not practice their beliefs openly.

Ultimately, it may be impossible to disentangle the motives of the nonconformists in pursuing life outside the Established Church and eventually to seek exile abroad. Certainly, a range of ambitions for self-improvement could be discerned and these were a mixture of religious, economic and political factors, perhaps overlapping and influencing each other. Robert Browne believed it was the duty of Separatists to create a more perfect form of society, disciplined and fraternal, like the early Christian groups recorded in the New Testament. He thought that the Separatists should begin the process immediately and not wait for secular authorities to decide the way forward. How could a person be 'godly' if they lived in a place that was obviously not? How could a person belong to the Established Church whilst it continued to engage in superstitious practices? Bradford identifies how the group arrived at their final decision "... seeing themselves thus molested, and that there was no hope of continuance there, by joint consent they resolved to go to the Low Countries, where they heard that there was freedom of religion; as also how sundry from London and other parts of the land had been exiled and persecuted for the same cause, and were gone thither, and lived at Amsterdam... so after they had continued together about a year, and kept their meetings every Sabbath in one place or other, exercising the worship of God amongst themselves, notwithstanding all the diligence and malice of their adversaries, they seeing they could no longer continue in that condition, they resolved to get over into Holland as they could".<sup>36</sup> It is not without significance that Brewster's daughter, born about this time, was christened Fear. He also had had time to reflect on the fate of his friend from his Cambridge days, John Penry, who had been hanged at Southwark some years before.

### **Concern to stay together as a group**

Like other Separatist groups, the Scrooby congregation were seeking to re-create what they believed had been the simple life of the early Christians and despaired of the Church of England ever returning to that authentic spiritual state.<sup>37</sup> They wanted to limit membership to those who formally professed the doctrines of reformed Christianity, lived blameless lives and submitted to the congregation's discipline. They shared much with the larger Puritan reform movement within the Church of England but wanted to go further and claim that their own small, independent congregation was the correct model of Christian organization. In seeking exile, the group made every effort to stay together. They formed a tightly knit group but were strong minded; they were not "pale plaster saints, hollow and bloodless ... Far from being humble and soft-spoken, they were quick in their own defense, fond of controversy, and sharp of tongue, engaging in many high-pitched quarrel with friends and foes alike, even among themselves".<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> W. Bradford, p 10

<sup>37</sup> B. Bailyn, *The Barbarous Years: The Peopling of North America*. Alfred Knopf. New York. 2013. p 322.

<sup>38</sup> G. Willison, p 7



## Thoughts about exile

The decision of the Scrooby Separatists to flee into exile in the autumn of 1607 cannot have been an easy one. Bradford records the dilemmas they faced: “But to go to a country they knew not but by hearsay, where they must learn a new language and get their livings they knew not how, it be a dear place and subject to the miseries of war, it was by many thought an adventure almost desperate; a case intolerable and a misery worse than death. Especially seeing they were not acquainted with trades nor traffic (by which that country doth subsist) but had only been used to a plain country life and the innocent trade of husbandry. But these things did not dismay them, though they did sometimes trouble them.”<sup>39</sup>

It meant leaving their homes and property, their friends and neighbours to go to a new country (The Netherlands) recently ravaged by war, whose language they could not speak and where they could well face poverty and deprivation while learning new trades. They may have sought advice from Francis Johnson’s group from Southwark who had fled a decade ago and were now known as the ‘Ancient Brethren’ living in Amsterdam. They would also be aware that John Smyth had successfully led his Gainsborough group into exile just a few months previously.

An important obstacle remained; it was illegal for people to leave the country, to carry money out of the country, or to export goods without written authority. Bradford explains the difficulty they faced: “for though they could not stay, yet were they not suffered to go; but the ports and havens were shut against them, so as they were fain to seek secret means of conveyance, and to bribe and fee the mariners, and give extraordinary rates for their passage.”<sup>40</sup> Morison comments that in England, as in other European nations at that time, a licence was required to go abroad and that such licences were commonly refused to Roman Catholics and nonconformists.

## First attempt to escape

Knowing that permission would be refused, they had to undertake the journey in secret, with a considerable number of women and children. Moreover, their preparations required the selling of their houses and goods to pay for the journey — not an easy task in a small village where neighbours would be aware of changes taking place. However, few of them had lands or houses to dispose of as many were tenants of the Archbishop of York.

There cannot have been more than fifty or sixty of them and arrangements were made in October 1607 for a ship to take them from Fishtoft, a secluded haven near Boston in Lincolnshire, to The Netherlands. They undertook the journey of about 60 miles to Fishtoft in small boats down the Rivers Ryton and Idle from Scrooby, past St Nicholas Church, Bawtry, and onwards to the River Trent and to Gainsborough. Their subsequent journey is uncertain. They may have continued by boat to Torksey, and then via the Fosse Dyke to Lincoln and down the River Witham to Boston. Alternatively, they may have walked overland to Boston, Lincolnshire.

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<sup>39</sup> W. Bradford, p 11

<sup>40</sup> W. Bradford, p 11



*Figure 7 - The Guildhall, Boston*

But in Boston, as Bradford relates, the captain of the ship had betrayed them: “When he had them and their goods aboard, he betrayed them, having beforehand plotted with the searchers and other officers so to do; who took them, and put them in open boats, and there rifled and ransacked them, searching them to their shirts for money, yea even the women further than became modest; and then carried them back to the town, and then made them a spectacle and wonder to the multitude, which came flocking on all sides to behold them.”<sup>41</sup>

They were presented to the magistrates who treated them as kindly as possible for Puritanism was strong in Boston. Indeed, a second wave of colonists including many from Lincolnshire would eventually leave for Massachusetts in the 1630s. The magistrates had no alternative but to apprehend the fugitives while they sent to London for instructions as to how to deal with them. It is thought that the leaders were put in cells in the Guildhall, the rest either in the town gaol or in local houses. (See Figure 7 and Figure 8.)

After about a month, the entire party except seven leaders was released and sent back to Scrooby. The seven leaders, including Brewster, Clyfton and Robinson, were put in the town’s gaol to await trial at the assizes in Lincoln. The record of the trial has been lost but eventually they were released on bail. Most of the group returned to Scrooby, but they had given up their houses and were dependent on the goodwill and charity of neighbours. For some of the group, the experience was so harrowing that they never emigrated to Holland. William Brewster and



*Figure 8 - The Guildhall Cells*

Richard Jackson, were freed on bail to answer charges at the collegiate court at Southwell, Nottinghamshire. Neither man appeared and they were fined £20 and an order made for their re-trial.

### **Second attempt to escape**

Undeterred by the first failure, most of the Separatists were ready by the following spring of 1608 to make another attempt to escape. This time a Dutch sea captain agreed to take them on board his vessel soon after he put out from the port of Hull. They were to embark from Killingholme Creek on the Lincolnshire side of the

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<sup>41</sup> W. Bradford, p 12

Humber (now the site of the Immingham Dock). Just why they decided to go this way we do not know. Presumably they would want to avoid Boston. William Hickman's sister-in-law lived at Killingholme Manor House, so possibly she had suggested that this isolated place would be suitable. The escape plan involved the women and children making their way in boats from Scrooby down the River Ryton to Bawtry and from there down the River Idle and the River Trent to the meeting place on the Lincolnshire side of the Humber estuary. The men were to walk overland to Killingholme Creek. The small boats bringing the women and children arrived a day early and sought protection from the rough seas and biting wind by mooring in the mud flats of Killingholme Creek. Early the next morning, the ship arrived and began to embark some of the men. The women were stuck in the mud of the creek and were forced to await the tide to release them. Only a small boat load of the men was scarcely aboard the ship when a large group of 'catchpoles' and searchers, some armed, some on horseback were seen on the shoreline bearing down on them. Without hesitation, the Dutch captain set sail for Amsterdam, leaving behind the rest of the men and all the women and children and their possessions.

William Bradford was aboard the ship and relates how they "...endured a fearful storm at sea, being fourteen days or more before they arrived at their port, in seven days whereof they neither saw sun, moon or stars and were driven near the coast of Norway".<sup>42</sup> The men had nothing with them other than the clothes they were wearing. Those left behind on the shore were taken by the catchpoles from one magistrate to another for no one knew how to deal with them. Having disposed of their homes and chattels, it would not be easy for them to return to north Nottinghamshire. It appears that, with rising public concern for their plight, the authorities connived at their departure for Holland. Brewster and Robinson had stayed behind to secure passage for those wanting to go into exile and were the last to join the Scrooby group in Amsterdam. Eventually, one way or other all arrived safely in Amsterdam by the end of 1608.

### **Exile in The Netherlands**

Amsterdam must have provided a culture-shock to the Scrooby refugees; larger and far more cosmopolitan than London, it was one of Europe's greatest cities, the centre of many flourishing handicraft industries, a bustling seaport with a widespread maritime trade.<sup>43</sup> Bradford describes their first impression of the Low Countries:

"...they saw many goodly and fortified cities, strongly walled and guarded with troops of armed men. Also, they heard a strange and uncouth language and beheld the different manners and customs of the people, with their strange fashions and attires; all so far differing from that of their plain country villages (wherein they were bred and had so long lived) as it seemed they were come into a new world...For although they saw fair and beautiful cities, flowing with abundance of wealth and riches, yet it was not long before they saw the grim and grisly face of poverty coming upon them like an armed man, with whom they must buckle and encounter..".<sup>44</sup>

Importantly, following the introduction of the Reformed religion in 1573 into the Low Countries, religious freedom allowed all sects to operate and the country was open to fugitives from persecution. The Scrooby exiles would have no fear of neighbours reporting to authorities on their religious activities, but they needed

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<sup>42</sup> W. Bradford, p 13

<sup>43</sup> G. Willison, p 59

<sup>44</sup> W. Bradford, p 16. The "grim and grisly face of poverty" etc is a quote from Proverbs xxiv. 34.

to find employment as quickly as possible and this tended to be in the least skilled and worst paid jobs in the textile, metal, leather and other trades.

The Scrooby group which gathered in Amsterdam was small, probably only a handful. There they were welcomed by two other exiled English communities who had arrived some years previously. They would inevitably be attracted to their friends from Gainsborough under John Smyth, perhaps seventy or eighty strong, and at first seemed to have worshipped with them. But Pastor John Smyth had begun to formulate newer doctrines, including a rejection of infant baptism in favour of adult baptism. Smyth was also drawn to the ideas of a Mennonite Dutch group known as the Waterlanders who practised beliefs which could be traced back to the Anabaptists of the early 16<sup>th</sup> Century. Smyth died in 1612 and the group split up, some returning with Thomas Helwys to England where it is thought that they were imprisoned. Helwys died in 1616.

The other group of English Separatists in Amsterdam, referring to themselves as the 'Ancient Brethren', was a much larger congregation of some 300 persons, mainly from Southwark and London, and led by Francis Johnson. The group had long been beset by controversy and quarrels, mostly between Francis Johnson and his brother, George. When in London, Francis had married a wealthy widow, Thomasine Boys, whose fondness for fashionable clothing had shocked the wives of the group of shipwrights, joiners and shoemakers. George Johnson brought the matter to debate by the group as a matter of discipline. Francis excommunicated his brother and the group began to fall apart. There were also disputes with John Smyth's group over a range of theological and church governance matters.

John Robinson believed that he would be better able to hold the Scrooby group together if they moved away from the disruptive influences of the contending groups in Amsterdam. Richard Clyfton, however, decided to remain in Amsterdam in an effort to reconcile the squabbling groups. His wife Ann died in Amsterdam, on the 3rd September 1613, and was buried in the South Church. Richard died in Amsterdam, 20 May 1616, and was also buried in the South Church.

## **Leiden**

In 1609, the Scrooby group petitioned the nearby City of Leiden for permission to settle there. They moved to Leiden "... a fair and beautiful city and of a sweet situation but made more famous by the university wherewith it is adorned, in which of late had been so many learned men... they fell to such trades and employment as they best could, valuing peace and spiritual comfort above any other riches whatsoever. And at length they came to raise a competent and comfortable living, but with hard and continual labour".<sup>45</sup>

Leiden had lost 5,000 people in a plague only five years earlier so the city authorities were happy to accept the influx of migrant workers. John Robinson became the group's pastor, with William Brewster as ruling elder, and the congregation steadily grew to number several hundred. By 1611, they were able to purchase a property called "Groene Poort" (Green Gate) near Pieterskerk (St Peter's Church). (See Figure 9 below.)

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<sup>45</sup> W. Bradford, p 17. A. Young notes that the university was established a year after a memorable siege of the city. The Prince of Orange, wishing to reward the citizens for their constancy and valour gave them the choice of two privileges – either exemption from taxes or a university; they chose the latter. Op cit. p 35 fn. 2



Figure 9 - Pieterskerk, Leiden

The house provided a home for the Robinson family and a meeting room for the congregation. Over the next few years some 21 small apartments were built in the rear garden for the less affluent members of the congregation. Most families were able to find manual work in the textile, printing and brewing trades; the work was inevitably hard manual labour. They worked as semi-skilled and unskilled workers in many trades, from sunrise to sunset for wages, which, at best, barely provided subsistence and often touched starvation levels. Added to all of this was the insanitary squalor of areas of the city leading to the prevalence of disease. William Brewster lived in an alley called Stincksteeg ('stink alley') where human sewage and industrial waste collected and failed to flow freely out of the area. William Bradford hired himself out to a French silk weaver, until he reached the age of twenty-one when he sold his inherited land in England and used the money to set up his own business weaving fustian, a mixture of linen and wool.

The Leiden congregation continued to grow; new recruits included Samuel Fuller, leader of the group which had left the Ancient Brethren, and George and Thomas Morton from Harworth, Nottinghamshire, just a few miles from Scrooby. Other important

figures included Thomas Brewer, described as "a gentleman of a good house, both of land and living" who helped to finance a number of activities including a publishing house in Leiden, and Robert Cushman, a wool merchant from Kent, who had been excommunicated in 1603 for refusing to attend recognised church services and had left England to join the Ancient Brethren before then joining the Leiden group.

### Thoughts about emigrating elsewhere

As they reached the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their flight from England, the exiles were beginning to question their future in Leiden. William Bradford highlights the difficulties facing the group. The congregation was aging and some had considerable difficulty undertaking the hard, manual labour, particularly in the textile industry. Some, having spent their savings, gave up and returned to England. It was feared that others might follow and that the congregation would become unsustainable. The group was failing to increase in size as the unemployment situation was making it increasingly unattractive for others to come from England. They were worried about the impact of hard labour on their children. Moreover, though the English Separatists could practice their religion as they saw fit, they became particularly distressed that the Dutch did not observe Sunday as strictly as they themselves did. Once their religious obligations had been discharged, the Dutch celebrated Sunday as a day of festival and rejoicing, especially for children. English children were being drawn into the pastimes of the Dutch and were breaking away from the stricter upbringing imposed by their parents. There was fear that the English children were losing their language and nationality.

The congregation was also acutely aware that the international situation in Europe was about to become troublesome if not dangerous; the twelve years' truce between Holland and Spain was coming to an end and fighting could once again break out. Neighbouring German states were becoming restive; the Thirty Years' War was about to disrupt the peace of Europe. Every reason therefore to go elsewhere.

## The idea of going to America

America was not the obvious choice for a group of religious refugees; it was 3,000 miles from Europe – a hazardous journey in tiny wooden sailing ships across the stormy Atlantic Ocean. However, English governments had become seriously interested in establishing colonies there.<sup>46</sup> Sir Walter Raleigh privately funded expeditions and had set up a settlement at Roanoke Island, off the coast of what is now North Carolina. The American Indians were initially friendly towards the newcomers. However, when a silver cup went missing, and an Indian village was burned in reprisal by the colonialists, attitudes changed. In 1587, a colony of probably 100 settlers, including 25 women and children was left there to build an agricultural settlement. The colony might have survived if it could have been supported from England but it was the wrong time to look for help. Spain was preparing armadas to invade England and no English ships could be spared to be sent to a tiny colony in the New World. The Armada was defeated in 1588 but it was two years before ships came back to find an empty settlement and the word CROATOAN carved on a doorpost. No one knows for sure what happened to the Roanoke settlers.<sup>47</sup>

By the end of the sixteenth century, there was a growing appreciation of the need for a newer approach to colonization. A number of wealthy individuals (forming themselves into groups known as Merchant Adventurers) began to finance voyages of exploration and settlement to the New World. From 1606 onwards, the Virginia Company of London dispatched a succession of ships carrying many hundreds of settlers to create the Jamestown colony. It struggled to survive. There was the initial failure of the colonists to understand the local environment; they had settled on a swamp and many succumbed to malaria. Also, the colonists seemed keener on searching for gold and other treasures rather than cultivating crops and husbanding animals, leaving them depending for food on the local Indians and relief ships. By 1609, the local Potomac Indians decided that the English had overstayed their welcome, cut off food supplies and began attacking outlying plantations, leaving the settlers dependent on relief ships.

### **“to those vast unpeopled countries of America”**

How much the Leiden group knew of the difficult conditions in the American colonies is a matter of conjecture. Certainly, they had the opportunity to read the narratives of explorers and travellers to the New World, particularly as these were often printed in Holland and were readily available. Richard Hakluyt in his ‘Principal Navigations, Voyage, and Discoveries of the English Nation’ (1600) promoted Virginia as a land of unique opportunity, ‘more like the Garden of Eden’.<sup>48</sup> The promotional literature provided information that the climate was healthy; principal European crops – wheat, barley, rye and oats could be grown there, together with two new crops – potatoes and maize (Indian corn). Even the voyage of about six weeks across the Atlantic was not now seen as an insurmountable obstacle. But, America was not for the faint-hearted. Bradford recognised the continued danger of “the savage people, who are cruel, barbarous and most treacherous... not being content only to kill and take way life, but to delight to torment men in a most bloody manner... and the very hearing of these things could not but move the very bowels of men to grate within them and make the

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<sup>46</sup> Studies of European interest in establishing Colonies in America may be found in S.E. Morison, *The European Discovery of America: The Northern Voyages* (1971); R. Middleton, *Colonial History: A History. 1607-1760* (1992); J. Evans, *Emigrants: Why the English sailed to the New World* (2017); D. Childs, *Invading America: The English Assault on the New World 1497-1630*. Seaforth Publishing. Barnsley, South Yorkshire. 2012.

<sup>47</sup> S. Sarson. *British America 1500-1800*. Hodder Arnold. London. 2005. p 16. Croatoan is believed to be the name of an island nearby.

<sup>48</sup> Quoted in H. Brogan, *Longman History of the United States of America*. Longman. London. 1985. p 12.

weak to quake and tremble”.<sup>49</sup> Fearful of the dangers involved, many of the Leiden congregation wanted to drop the project. But others, including most of the leaders wished to continue with a preference to settle in Virginia, a large land mass on the north-east coast of the New World.

### The Virginia Company of London and Sir Edwin Sandys

Virginia was not an ideal choice for the Leiden group, for the territory had been colonized by persons belonging to the Church of England. Orders and instructions for the government of the colony issued by King James specifically required that “the word and service of God should be preached and used according to the rites and doctrines of the Church of England.” Most of the English settlers in Virginia were ‘establishment supporters’; they were generally members of the Church of England, royalist by inclination, and were there to make money and set up a new colony. Bradford highlighted the dilemma they faced for “... if they lived among the English which were there planted, or as near them as to be under their government, they should be in as great danger to be troubled and persecuted for the cause of religion as if they lived in England; and it might be worse. And if they lived too far off, they should neither have succour nor defence from them...But at length the conclusion was to live as a distinct body by themselves under the general Government of Virginia; and by their friends to sue to His Majesty that he would be pleased to grant them freedom of religion”.<sup>50</sup>



**Figure 10 - A promotional tract published by the Virginia Company in 1609**

The Virginia Company of London, whose third charter of 1612 extended its northern boundary to include Manhattan and most of Long Island, was struggling to make a profit. A considerable turnaround in the fortunes of the Company came with the appointment of Sir Edwin Sandys as company treasurer in 1618. He began the practice of granting large tracts of land, up to 80,000 acres, to groups of individuals who would undertake to people and cultivate them. Such grants, known in Virginia as “Hundreds” or “Particular Plantations”, carried special privileges, such as the right to self-government, administer justice, fishing rights and permission to trade with the Indians. Some 44 such grants were made before 1624 and a number of these plantations within the Colony were actually established. (See Figure 10.)

The Leiden exiles decided to make an approach to the Virginia Company in London; their means of access was through the Sandys family, which had a long connection with the Brewsters in Scrooby. In 1575, not long after he had appointed William Brewster Sr. as bailiff at Scrooby manor, Archbishop Grindal of York, became Archbishop of Canterbury, and was succeeded as Archbishop of York by Edwin Sandys. Archbishop Sandys was to go on to distribute large blocks of church property to each of his six sons under long-term, favourable leases; one son Samuel was given the lease of Scrooby manor and so had been William Brewster’s landlord, and another son, Sir Edwin was a leading member and from 1619 Treasurer of the Virginia Company and a Puritan sympathizer.

<sup>49</sup> W. Bradford, p 26

<sup>50</sup> W. Bradford, p 29



The Leiden group selected Deacon John Carver and Deacon Robert Cushman in the summer of 1617 to begin negotiations with the Virginia Company. John Carver, originally a merchant from Doncaster, was married to John Robinson's sister-in-law, Katherine White of Sturton. Robert Cushman had been excommunicated in 1603 for refusing to attend recognised church services and had left England in 1608 to join the Ancient Brethren, eventually leaving them to join the Leiden group. Carver and Cushman were dispatched to London with an immediate task, to convince the Company that they were a reasonable people. They took with them a carefully-worded document, drawn up by Robinson and Brewster which set out the religious principles on which the proposed community would work.

### The "Seven Articles"

In their "Seven Articles" (see Figure 11), the Leiden Separatists sought to minimize their differences with the Established Church. In summary, they acknowledged all the Thirty-Nine Articles of faith of the Church of England; wished to keep spiritual communion with the Church of England and "will practice on our parts all lawful things"; acknowledged obedience to the King unless he commands them "against God's word"; offered a somewhat qualified admission of the legality of bishops; admitted that no synod or other body can have ecclesiastical authority except by the King's authority; and finally asserted that they would give "unto all superiors due honour."<sup>51</sup>

It was a disingenuous set of clauses in which they stressed the civil authority of the King and of the bishops but were more ambivalent about their religious authority. The Leiden group knew that in order to obtain a patent or charter, they needed to bridge over their differences with the Established Church. This was not a frank statement of the Leiden group's position; they doubtless thought that once in America they could do as they pleased.

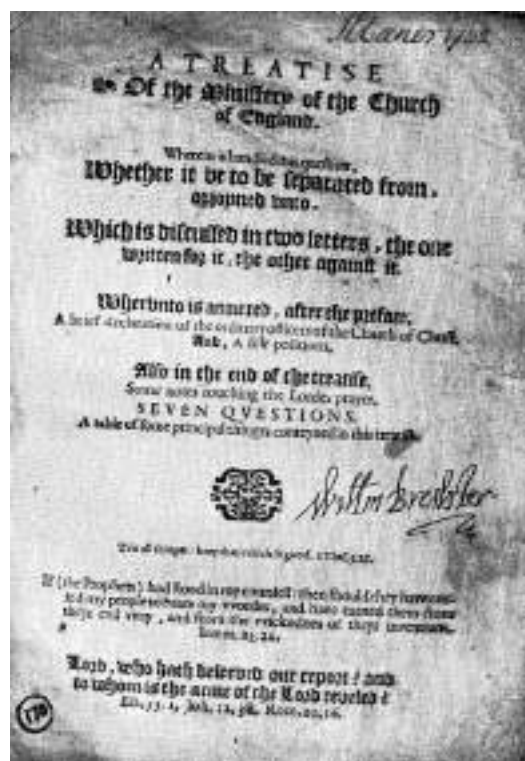


Figure 11 - The Separatists' "Seven Articles", signed by William Brewster

### Negotiations with King James

The "Seven Articles" document was passed to the Privy Council, which frankly voiced its suspicions and demanded clarification on a number of points. There followed a period of protracted negotiations. Sandys was able to secure the support of Sir Robert Naunton, then Secretary of State to sound the King about granting permission to the would-be colonists. Winslow praised the role played by Naunton in convincing the King that the Leiden group were harmless.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>51</sup> W. Bradford p 31

<sup>52</sup> E. Winslow, Hypocrisy Unmasked. Reprinted in A. Young, pp 382-3





Figure 12 - King James

James (see Figure 12) and his advisers recognised the importance of establishing colonies in America if England was to challenge Spanish control of the Atlantic Ocean. The King let it be known through his advisers that he would not issue a document bearing the Great Seal, giving his formal authority to the proposal, but he would connive at their going and not molest them. He was interested in extending his colonies abroad and inquiring as to how they proposed to live, he was told they would depend mainly on fishing. He is reported to have said: "So God have my soul ...'tis an honest trade. It was the Apostles' own calling".<sup>53</sup> James promised not to hinder the enterprise but advised them to talk to the Archbishop of Canterbury, George Abbot, and some of the bishops. The Leiden group decided against this course of action, fearing dangerous complications. All in all, the negotiators had not accomplished much, and the majority of the congregation now wanted to drop the project.

### Discouraging news of the disastrous voyage of the Blackwell group

During the difficult period of waiting for permission to settle in America, there was further discouraging news when a party of the Ancient Brethren, decided to go to Virginia in the New World. After many quarrels and squabbles, a group led by Francis Johnson had split from the Ancient Brethren and moved to Emden in 1613. Upon the pastor's death the following year, leadership passed to the Elder Francis Blackwell. However, sinking deeper and deeper into poverty, the group decided to go to Virginia and in August, 1618, chartered a ship at Gravesend and loaded it with 180 people, "packed together like herrings".<sup>54</sup>

The exact composition of Blackwell's group is not clear – some were doubtless his spiritual supporters, the rest the usual collection of more or less disreputable people with varying degrees of urgency for wanting to leave the country. They sailed in the autumn of 1618, soon running into heavy storms which drove them far off course. The ship was badly provisioned and lacked fresh water; 130 of the passengers died of dysentery and other infections. When they reached Jamestown, only 50 had survived and these soon scattered. Meantime, Brewster decided on a direct approach to Sir Edwin Sandys (1561-1629) assistant to the treasurer of the Virginia Company. Sandys, as the son of a former Archbishop of York and owner of Scrooby Manor, would have been aware that the house had been used as a meeting place for a Separatist group some years before. As a Member of Parliament, he had urged that Separatists should be subject to the full force of the law, yet he was to come to a view that the Leiden exiles should be allowed to settle in Virginia. Sandys wrote an encouraging letter to Robinson and Brewster, expressing satisfaction with their stated views. By 1619, he

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<sup>53</sup> E. Winslow, *Hypocrisy Unmasked* in A. Young, pp 282-3

<sup>54</sup> G. Willison, pp 109-110

had become Treasurer of the Virginia Company and was in a much stronger position to influence the course of events. At this point, Brewster himself went with Cushman to lead the negotiations.

Unfortunately, a book called *'The Perth Assembly'* produced by the Pilgrim Press in Leiden early in 1619 caused a major setback to the negotiations. The book, written by David Calderwood, offered an account of the controversial stand against the Established Church by Scottish Presbyterians. The book had been sent to Brewster in Leiden for printing and copies smuggled back to Scotland in wine vats. The copies were discovered by the authorities; William Brewster went into hiding while Calderwood managed to escape to Holland.

King James was furious and ordered his ambassador in The Netherlands to demand the extradition of the printers back to England and the destruction of the press. Brewster's colleague and sponsor of the printing press, Thomas Brewer, agreed to go to England voluntarily with a guarantee of a safe return. He was allowed to return to The Netherlands but the authorities reneged on an agreement to pay Brewer's costs for the return journey. One can judge the extent of the offence given by the book for, when Brewer moved back to England in 1626, he was thrown into prison and spent fourteen years there until freed by the Long Parliament in 1640.

Whilst Brewster was in hiding, Cushman was left to carry on negotiations with the Virginia Company of London. It was proving difficult to do business with the Company; it was torn by internal dissensions, its treasury was empty, and the Company was vainly trying to avoid the bankruptcy which overtook it and ended its operations five years later. Eventually, Cushman's efforts were rewarded, and on the 19 June 1619, the Leiden group were granted a patent by the Virginia Company. They had been advised not to take out the patent in their own name; instead it was made out in the name of John Wincop, one of three clergymen brothers who lived in the household of Thomas Fiennes – Clinton, 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Lincoln. The Earl had died on the 15<sup>th</sup> January, but his daughters Lady Susan Humphrey and Lady Arabella Johnson were interested in New England, as was their steward Thomas Dudley. In 1629, all three were to go to New England as part of the "Great Puritan Migration", organised by the Massachusetts Bay Company. Wincop had originally planned to go with the Leiden group; it seems likely his name was set on the patent to give it respectability.

As matters turned out, the Leiden group was not able to make use of the patent as the Virginia Company was virtually insolvent and in no position to provide the cost of shipping a group of settlers to the New World. At this point the Leiden congregation was approached by the Dutch owned New Netherland Company with a very generous offer to provide them with free transport to New Amsterdam, at the mouth of the Hudson River. The Dutch would provide shipping and cattle and the Leiden congregation would be free to practice their religion as they wished. As settlement under the English flag seemed blocked, they reluctantly opened negotiations with the Dutch.

These negotiations were interrupted by **Thomas Weston**, a merchant from London, who arrived at Leiden to hold lengthy discussions with the Leiden congregation. Weston, a London ironmonger who was also illegally selling cloth in Holland, was a man of enterprise, eager to reap quick profits from the New World, and not very scrupulous as to the means. The Leiden group was taken in by his brisk confidence and businesslike air which brought a new vigour to the negotiations which had been dragging on for more than two years. His agent in Amsterdam, Edward Pickering, was married to a member of the Leiden congregation, and no doubt had kept Weston informed of their plans to try to emigrate.

Weston convinced the Leiden group of the disadvantages of settling in an area under Dutch control, of the complete inability of the Virginia Company to help them financially and assured them that he and his associates in London would find the ships and provide the money for them to settle in America. Robinson and his congregation were deceived by this plausible and unscrupulous rogue. Weston's group – some 70 London merchants and craftsmen, some more, some less sympathetic to the Pilgrim's religious views – raised a joint stock of approximately £7,000 in a partnership arrangement with the emigrants.<sup>55</sup> Weston's proposal was accepted and articles of agreement drawn up. To the modern eye, Weston seems to have been little more than a "loan shark".

### Articles of Agreement with the Merchant Adventurers

The compact between the Merchant Adventurers and the Leiden group was a seven-year agreement usual at that time. The Adventurers obtained a charter of a grant of up to 80,000 acres of land with fishing rights, permission to trade with the American Indians, and considerable latitude in self-government and law making. The precise location of each plantation was never specified in its charter; the settlement leaders were supposed to report in person at Jamestown and select a particular plantation from the land available. Weston proposed a joint stock company with two kinds of shareholders, merchant adventurers who would invest money and the planters who would settle the land. Shares were in units of £10, each planter over the age of 16 would be given one share but could also invest, and all profits would remain with the Company for seven years. At the end of that time the planters could keep the houses they had built, their goods, and the land they had cultivated for themselves; the rest including profits from trading and fishing was to be divided proportionately among the shareholders.

However, at the eleventh hour, the Adventurers introduced important changes in the agreement which introduced much harsher conditions on the would-be colonists. Under the original agreement with the Company, the planters would be allowed to work two days a week on their own houses and gardens. However, under pressure from Weston, Cushman and Carver on behalf of the Leiden group were forced to surrender this clause so that every day's labour was to contribute to the common pool and at the end of the seven years, houses, land and goods should be equally divided between settlers and merchants. This made the scheme more attractive to investors, but the Pilgrims were strongly opposed believing that the terms were more fitting for bond-slaves than honest men. The Separatists were in a difficult position; it was impossible for them to borrow sufficient money in order to complete their purchase of supplies. In June, they had about £350 less than they needed, a very substantial shortfall reducing their resources for the voyage to America. (In the summer of that year, one-pound sterling bought either 40lbs of butter, or 60 candles, or a dozen geese, or more than 100 gallons of beer.) Four of the leaders at Leiden, William Bradford, Samuel Fuller, Edward Winslow and Isaac Allerton wrote to Carver and Cushman in May 1620, protesting against these new conditions. The new contract, they argued, was an insult, fitter for "thieves and bondslaves than honest men".<sup>56</sup> Cushman was roundly berated for accepting these drastic changes but argued that there had been no time to write to Leiden for approval. He said that he had informed his colleague, John Carver, who had seen and approved the changes. Carver denied this, saying that he had been at Southampton buying supplies and knew nothing about it. Anyway, Cushman argued, it was too late to do anything about it. They had already

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<sup>55</sup> W. Bradford, p 37. Morison (fn. 2) suggests that the costs of the Mayflower's voyage, including ship hire, victuals, etc. can hardly have exceeded £1,500.

<sup>56</sup> G. Willison, pp 115ff.

invested too much to turn back and that he and Weston already had a ship in mind for the voyage, the Mayflower, which had just discharged a cargo of French wine in London.

The new terms created considerable anger and discontent within the Leiden group. Some withdrew from the enterprise and other recruits would have to be found if the proposed plantation was to be viable in terms of manpower. Anxious to protect their investment, the Merchant Adventurers solved the problem by signing up colonists in London, recruiting them at large without any regard to their religious beliefs. So long as a man was willing to work and strive to turn a profit for them, it was of no concern to the Adventurers how he prayed. In fact, as some of them later complained, praying might seriously interfere with more important business.

### Departure from The Netherlands

The Leiden congregation now began to make its final preparations. On July 21, 1620, the Leiden group set out for Delft Haven, about 25 miles to the south. They had already bought the Speedwell, a sixty-ton vessel which would take them to the agreed meeting place at Southampton and then accompany the Mayflower on its outward voyage. It was intended that Speedwell would remain in the New World for fishing and trading.<sup>57</sup> The Speedwell was less than the average size of the fishing boats which regularly travelled to the Grand Banks of Newfoundland. It seems a frail vessel to try to cross the Atlantic Ocean but explorers such as Frobisher and Sir Francis Drake had used even smaller vessels in their fleets. Drake, on his circumnavigating the world voyage in 1577, had five vessels, the largest was 100 tons and the smallest 15 tons.<sup>58</sup> The final question was who should undertake the move, and who should stay behind and follow later. Most of the congregation could not arrange their affairs quickly enough to join the shipment or had decided against the move; nor could the Speedwell, at a mere 60 tons, accommodate a large group. Only about one-sixth of the Leiden congregation was to leave, less than 50 persons and almost half were children. The pastor, John Robinson, would remain behind with the majority, while the ruling elder, William Brewster, still hiding in England, hoped to join the departing group at Southampton. Some families were divided; Mary Brewster, brought along her two youngest sons, boys of six and eight, Wrestling (with the Devil) and Love (of God presumably) and left three of her children behind, Fear and Patience in the care of Jonathan, now a man of twenty-seven. The Bradfords, William and Dorothy, left their five-year-old son John, presumably with the Robinsons, and at least eight



Figure 13 - "Leaving Delfthaven"

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<sup>57</sup> W. Bradford, p 47

<sup>58</sup> A. Young, p 86 fn. 1

of the men departed from their wives with the expectation of one day being reunited. (See Figure 13 above.)

### **“they knew they were pilgrims”**

Bradford’s comment on leaving Leiden is of interest: “so they left the goodly and pleasant city which had been their resting place near twelve years; but they knew they were pilgrims, and looked not much on those things, but lift up their eyes to the heavens, their dearest country, and quieted their spirits.”<sup>59</sup> It was on the basis of Bradford’s passage, first printed in 1669, that the Mayflower company eventually came to be called the Pilgrim Fathers. For many years, subsequent generations in New England had referred to their ancestors as First Comers or Forefathers, but a memorial service in New Plymouth in 1793, made use of this expression of Governor Bradford and spoke of them as Pilgrims. The title crept into common usage. Robert Cushman offers a similar passage in a comment appended to *Mourt’s Relation*: “But now we are all in all places strangers and pilgrims, travellers and sojourners, most properly, having no dwelling but in this earthen tabernacle: our dwelling is but a wandering, and our abiding but as a fleeting, and in a word our home is nowhere but in the heavens.”<sup>60</sup>

The Pilgrims and their household goods were loaded onto canal boats for the 25-mile journey to Delfshaven, near Rotterdam where the *Speedwell* was moored. With a fair wind, they hoisted sail on the 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1620, making an uneventful run to Southampton, arriving four days later. It had been agreed that they would rendezvous at the West Quay, Southampton; there they met up with the rest of the passengers and crew of the *Mayflower* which had sailed from its home port of Rotherhithe under its captain and part-owner, Christopher Jones.

### **Which *Mayflower*?**

The name “*Mayflower*” was a common one for ships in the late Tudor and early Stuart periods, and historians have had some difficulty in tracing information about the original vessel. Nowhere in Bradford’s writings is the name of the ship which brought the Pilgrims to America mentioned. However, there is considerable historical research which identifies the *Mayflower*, a ship based at Rotherhithe on the Thames estuary. Captain Christopher Jones had moved there in 1609 for the greater opportunities offered for trading and became a quarter owner of the *Mayflower* as well as her master. The ship sailed regularly to La Rochelle and Bordeaux, carrying cloth, hose and rabbit skins, and bringing back wine and brandy. As a result, the *Mayflower* was regarded as a ‘sweet’ ship; spillage from the wine casks doing much to neutralize the smells and disease from the bilge. This may explain why the *Mayflower* got all but one of her passengers across the Atlantic alive, despite the late season and the tempestuous voyage.

William Bradford provides little information about the dimensions and capacity of the *Mayflower* other than that the tonnage was “nine score” (about 180 tons). There are no known pictures or plans of her, but R.C. Anderson, a marine archaeologist, in the 1920s, undertook research on merchant ships of the Tudor period which enabled a scale model of a ship of the ‘*Mayflower*’ type to be built. The model is in Pilgrim Hall, Plymouth. Further research by William Baker enabled a replica ship, the *Mayflower 11*, to be built at Upham’s

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<sup>59</sup> W. Bradford, p 47

<sup>60</sup> R. Cushman, *Reasons and considerations touching the lawfulness of removing out of England into parts of America*. Reprinted in A. Young, p 241. *Mourt’s Relation* is a short pamphlet written by Bradford and Winslow extolling the virtues of life in America.

Yard in Brixham, London, in the 1950s.<sup>61</sup> The replica sailed across the Atlantic several times and is now on permanent exhibition in New Plymouth.<sup>62</sup> (See Figure 14.)



*Figure 14 - Mayflower II at New Plymouth*

The ship replica is 90 ft. in length with 26 ft. beam and 11 ft. depth of hold; her sails were fore and main courses, fore and main top sails, spritsail on the bowsprit (these five being square), and a lateen mizzen. The sails were made of heavy flax canvas, so finely woven that they were reputed to be as strong as chain mail. They were hand-sewn with flax twine and the holes through which their ropes were slotted were bound with leather to prevent fraying. The Mayflower is described as a 'staunch, chunky, slow-sailing vessel, square-rigged, double-decked, broad abeam, with high upper structure at the stern'.

### **Conditions on the Mayflower**

Most of the provisions and equipment of the passengers were beneath them in the hold. The passengers lived in the between, or 'tween decks' – a damp, airless space about 75 feet long and less than 5 feet in height. (See Figure 15 below.)

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<sup>61</sup> W. Baker, *The Mayflower and Other Colonial Vessels*. 1983.

<sup>62</sup> W. Charlton, *The Voyage of the Mayflower 11*. Cassell & Company. London. 1957.





*Figure 15 - A cut-away representation of a 17th century merchant ship; the Mayflower would have been very similar. Most of the hold was taken up with stores; the passengers and crew lived in the deck spaces above.*

It had been made even more claustrophobic by the attempts of passengers to provide themselves with some privacy. A series of thin-walled cabins had been built, creating a rabbit warren of rooms into which the passengers were crowded with most of their possessions; chests of clothing, casks of food, chairs pillows, rugs and the omni-present chamber pots. It has been calculated that the maximum possible space for each person was slightly less than the size of a modern single bed. A person had to sleep, eat and store personal possessions within this area. The upper deck leaked in bad weather and she was very over-crowded, having perhaps 30 people more aboard than she should have. The ship was heavily laden with furniture, pots and pans and provisions; there were some livestock - pigs, goats and chickens, two dogs but no cattle. (See Figure 16.)



*Figure 16 - A representation of the Mayflower's interior*

She had 12 cannons mounted by gun ports; 4 "sakers" (medium sized guns) and 8 "minions" (smaller guns). The ship carried 3 boats: the master's skiff which held 5-6 people, the long boat, holding 20; these were tied in place on the deck and used to keep rabbits and poultry in during the voyage; and the shallop, perhaps 30 feet in length (or about 1/3 the length of the Mayflower), and large enough to hold 32 people or 18 men with

weapons, food and supplies for several days. To enable it to be stored below deck, it was cut down and partially dismantled. The shallop was to prove invaluable in the task of exploring the coastline of the New World.

The Mayflower had an experienced crew of about 30 men, though some historians have put the figure as high as 50. Serving as pilot was John Clark, aged forty-five, who had delivered some cattle to Jamestown the previous year. Robert Coppin was the second mate, who claimed to have been to New England on a previous occasion. Another important position was that of the cooper, held by 21-year-old John Alden, who was responsible for maintaining the barrels for wine, beer, water and other provisions. Alden's task was to keep the barrels tight and prevent air getting in to spoil the contents. Maintaining the condition of the beer was extremely important to the health of the passengers as the condition of stored water could become problematic, and ultimately undrinkable. Alden was given the option of deciding whether he would stay in the New World or return to England. He ultimately decided to stay.

### **Southampton**

There were good reasons for the Speedwell and the Mayflower to meet at Southampton. Not only did it save the Speedwell the extra distance to travel up the Thames estuary and back, but Southampton was a quiet provincial port where there were fewer officials to ask awkward questions. For eleven days or so, the vessels were at anchor near the West Quay taking on supplies.<sup>63</sup> Carver had ordered £700 worth of supplies in the town and it was a hectic time getting these on board. Weston appeared with a final version of the agreement for the pilgrims to sign which they refused to do. Weston for his part refused to advance the pilgrims any more funds though there was nearly £100 owing in the town. To pay off their debts, the pilgrims had to sell £60 worth of their supplies which left them perilously short.

### **The Speedwell needs urgent repairs**

The passengers were divided into two parties, 30 for the Speedwell and 90 for the Mayflower. On the 5<sup>th</sup> August, 1620, the two vessels left Southampton and sailed out into the English Channel. (See Figure 17 below.)

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<sup>63</sup> The quay no longer exists as such but has been obscured by modern buildings





*Figure 17 "Embarkation of the Pilgrims" by Robert Walter Weir*

There were already concerns about the trim of the *Speedwell*. Indications suggest that she was over-masted for her size and carrying a tremendous press of sail. Captain Reynolds of the *Speedwell* found his vessel was leaking dangerously and was forced to put into Dartmouth for more urgent repairs. The Pilgrims spent a week there while the repairs were carried out. They again set sail and had not gone far when Reynolds pulled into Plymouth for urgent repairs. After nearly two weeks in dock, the *Speedwell* was repaired and both ships set sail again on the 23<sup>rd</sup> August. When they had travelled some distance (Bradford's estimate is of about 300 miles), Reynolds complained that the ship was taking in so much water that the pumps could scarcely cope and that the ship was likely to sink. It was decided that the ship was taking in water through general weakness and the decision was taken on the 25<sup>th</sup> August for both ships to return to Plymouth. There was some suspicion in the minds of the Pilgrims that they had been duped by Reynolds and his crew who had no intention to honour the contract and stay in the New World for a year. Bradford refers to "the cunning and deceit of the master and his company...and now fancying dislike and fearing want of victuals, they plotted this stratagem to free themselves; as afterwards was known and by some of them confessed."<sup>64</sup> The *Speedwell* returned to London where it was given a general overhaul and subsequently undertook many successful voyages.

### **"Saints" and "Strangers": The passengers on the *Mayflower***

It took days to transfer stores and passengers from the *Speedwell* to the *Mayflower*, though about twenty passengers remained behind in England having decided not to risk the uncertainties of the voyage. These included Robert Cushman who had received fierce criticism for agreeing to Weston's humiliating terms and

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<sup>64</sup> W. Bradford, p 54.

Edward Southworth who was to die in 1623; his widow became Bradford's second wife.<sup>65</sup> John Carver was elected governor.

Bradford uses the term "saints" and "strangers" in reference to the composition of the passengers on the Mayflower. He uses "saint" as a kind of shorthand to mean a church follower sharing a set of religious beliefs, rather than perhaps the more familiar reference to one who has been canonized by the Roman Catholic Church as worthy of entry into Heaven. The other group were "strangers", largely from London and the counties of Essex and Norfolk, and mostly recruited by the Merchant Adventurers without any reference to their religious beliefs. Today they might be termed "economic migrants", seeking to improve their quality of life. Appendix 1 provides details of all the passengers on the Mayflower.

George Willison has undertaken a detailed analysis of the religious persuasion and social background of the Mayflower passengers.<sup>66</sup> Of the 105 passengers, 41 might be regarded as 'pilgrims' by persuasion, and members of the Leiden congregation. These consisted of 17 men, 10 women and 14 children. Those who were from the Scrooby congregation were William and Mary Brewster and two of their youngest children, John Carver and his wife Katherine (White), William White (Katherine's brother) and William Bradford. Given the frantic nature of the preparations for the voyage, most of the Leiden group could not sort out their financial affairs in time and chose to remain behind with John Robinson. Perhaps less one-sixth of the whole group headed for New England.

The "strangers" included 40 planters or settlers recruited by the London merchants, 5 hired hands recruited to stay for one year, and 18 family servants and young cousins. Among the many children aboard – some 34 in all – 7 were vagabonds who had been snatched up from London streets and pressed into servitude. Some of the hired workers and adult indentured servants were respectable, others, in Bradford's eyes, profane, obscene, and arrogant. "One of the profanest families", Bradford was later to record, were the Billingtons, originally from Lincolnshire. The father, John, was in trouble from the start and would later be the first person in New Plymouth to be hanged for murder. His son Francis, aged eight, almost blew up the Mayflower when he fired a gun into a barrel of gunpowder in the main cabin. John's wife, Eleanor, would later be sentenced to time in the stocks and a whipping for slander. Another "stranger", Stephen Hopkins, had once lived in Virginia having survived the shipwreck of the *Seaventure* in Bermuda in 1609, where he had barely escaped hanging for defying the governor's authority. Hopkins was to be of great help to the Pilgrims in their early relations with local American Indians but would later be in constant conflict with the authorities – at one point charged with assault, another time with allowing excessive drinking on his premises, and still another occasion with contempt of court. Two of Hopkins's servants, Edward Doty and Edward Leister, were so angry with each other that they ended up in a duel with swords and daggers on board the Mayflower, for which they were condemned to be tied up neck and heels. Leister would ultimately escape to Virginia, while Doty would spend much of his 35 years in the colony defending himself from charges of assault, slander and theft. There were three pregnant women; Elizabeth Hopkins, Susanna White, and Mary Allerton. Elizabeth would give birth to a son, appropriately named Oceanus, during the voyage. Susanna and Mary were well on with their pregnancies. Though the Pilgrims were harassed at times by the strangers aboard and were always apprehensive of their contaminating influence, they had supporters among them too. Three of the strangers – Myles Standish, John Alden, and Priscilla Mullins – achieved posthumous fame in Longfellow's poem, 'The Courtship of Myles

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<sup>65</sup> Cushman was to travel to America in 1621 and died in 1625

<sup>66</sup> G. Willison, pp 121ff

Standish', a pleasant but probably apocryphal story. The poem has John Alden, the ship's cooper, proposing marriage to Priscilla on behalf of Captain Standish, who was apparently too shy or nervous to ask himself. Priscilla apparently said "Why don't you speak for yourself, John?" John Alden and Priscilla and their ten children eventually moved from New Plymouth to the nearby settlement of Duxbury. Alden went on to hold a number of important governmental positions in the colony. For his part, Myles Standish, who had joined the group in Leiden, became the Pilgrims' military leader in the New World, but was never of their church.

The indentured servants were brought along to do the heavy work; fell trees, build houses, tend crops, gather the harvest and do whatever their masters ordered. During the period of their indenture of seven years, they were fed, clothed, and housed by their masters, but received no wages, being virtually slaves, and were frequently bought, sold and hired out as such. Among the servants were four poor children by the name of More, poor orphans of London, who were living with Thomas Weston when they were dragged off to be transported to the colonies. This kind of action was encouraged by the Lord Mayor and the Bishop of London and was seen as a favoured way of relieving population pressure in the poorer areas of the city.

Among the leading figures among the passengers was the 53 years old William Brewster, organiser of the Scrooby conventicle and the Leiden congregation, who continued as the ruling elder. Brewster's assistant in the Leiden printing trade was the 25- year- old Edward Winslow, son of a salt merchant of Droitwich, Worcestershire. (See Figure 18.) Winslow would go on to have a distinguished role in the government of New Plymouth, before returning to England and providing the leadership of Cromwell's conquest of Jamaica.



Other important figures included Isaac Allerton who was an ambitious entrepreneur and one of the planners of the migration to America. After the death of his first wife, he married Brewster's daughter, Fear, and quickly assumed a dominant role in the colony's trade and external affairs. John Carver, born in Doncaster, 10 miles from Scrooby, moved to London where he became a prosperous merchant and then to Leiden where he joined the Leiden separatists. By 1610, related by marriage and creed to John Robinson, he was a deacon of the church. He became the colony's first governor but died within the first year of the landing. Last but not least among the leading passengers, William Bradford was aged 30 when the Mayflower sailed, and to some extent in the shadows of his seniors.

*Figure 18 - Edward Winslow, by the school of Robert Walker*

## The voyage of the *Mayflower*

There were two routes which navigators at that time saw as sensible to sail across the Atlantic. One was to follow the route of Christopher Columbus by using the trade winds, heading south to the Azores and then west. The other was to avoid the Gulf Stream by heading north first towards Greenland and then letting the Arctic current take the ship westwards. The northern route was that taken by Bartholomew Gosnold and other early explorers and was well known to European fishing fleets travelling to the Grand Banks. Captain Christopher Jones would almost certainly be familiar with accounts of this route – the route he chose to take. The *Mayflower* set sail on the 6<sup>th</sup> September 1620 having lost seven precious weeks since leaving Rotherhithe. The account of the actual voyage occupies less than 700 words of Bradford's journal, yet it took nine and a half weeks – 67 days, two thirds of it through storms. Bradford gives few details on board other than to record that at times the wind was so fierce and the seas so high that the ship could carry no sail at all. Captain Jones was forced to "lie ahull" – to furl his sails and surrender his ship to the elements. From the beginning many passengers were seasick. Conditions were very cramped below decks, badly ventilated, and provisions were limited. Gratings on the deck allowed some light and fresh air to the passenger quarters, but also allowed a good deal of water to penetrate, soaking clothing and bedding. One of the crew, a 'very profane young man', as Bradford called him, was constantly taunting the Pilgrims, saying that he hoped to bury most of them before the voyage was over and enjoy their possessions. Within a few weeks, the young crewman sickened and died, as Bradford records: "But it pleased God before they came half seas over to smite this young man with a grievous disease, of which he died in a desperate manner, and so was himself the first that was thrown overboard". Bradford does not say what the illness was but it was probably not infectious as only two deaths occurred on the voyage. The second death occurred near the end of the voyage – that of William Butten, of Worksop, Nottinghamshire, who was a servant of Deacon Samuel Fuller.<sup>67</sup> One passenger, John Howland, went on deck and was washed overboard, but managed to catch hold of a topsail halyard trailing in the water. He was seen and several men rushed to the side and began to haul on the rope. As the *Mayflower* righted herself, they pulled him up; one reached over with a boathook and he was tugged aboard and his life saved. Howland, a servant of John Carver, was 27 at the time and survived to become an important figure in the colony. He and his wife would raise 10 children who would in turn produce an astonishing 88 grandchildren.

In another incident recorded by Bradford, the main beam supporting the deck cracked and buckled, but there was a great iron screw, brought onboard by one of the passengers, which was used to raise and support the beam in place whilst a new support post was put in place. Some historians have suggested that the iron screw was part of a printing press. However, modern researchers have argued that it was a device "to draw heavy timber to a considerable height" and assist in the construction of houses in the colony. Bradford says nothing about the quality or quantity of the food supplies, which are likely to have deteriorated quite badly during the course of the voyage. The allocation of the food would have been carefully measured though there is nothing in Bradford's journal about this. Accounts from other contemporary records suggest that there were three meat days and four fish days a week on board. The quantities usually quoted are two-thirds of a codfish a day for four men, two three-pound pieces of salt beef or pork, the meat representing a week's supply for 4 men. A pound of biscuit, a gallon of drink each day, with a quarter of a pound of butter and half a pound of cheese, were allocated to each person, and three pints of peas between eight people.

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<sup>67</sup> A memorial plaque dedicated to his memory is to be found at what was originally thought to be his birthplace, Austerfield, South Yorkshire. Records of birth suggest that Worksop, Nottinghamshire, was more likely to have been his birthplace.

Captain Jones had a cross-staff, a calibrated three-foot stick with a sliding vane which enabled him to calculate his latitude, or north-south position, to within a few miles. But he had no reliable way of calculating his longitude, or east-west position. This meant that after all the bad weather they had encountered, he was unsure as to how far they were from land. He knew that the Mayflower was well to the north of her intended destination; by continuing west on the present latitude he would be aware, from the maps of previous explorers such as Gosnold and John Smith, that he would arrive at Cape Cod. On Thursday, the 9<sup>th</sup> November, 1620, they saw land.

### **“They were not where they wanted to be”**

They had sighted the hills of Cape Cod and the Mayflower passengers were, according to Bradford, “not a little joyful”.<sup>68</sup> They had arrived in New England, rather than Virginia. The Pilgrims were some 200 miles to the north of their intended destination and they were beyond the limits of their patent. In the final weeks before their departure, Thomas Weston and some of the other Adventurers had begun to consider moving the plantation to a more northerly site in New England – which was a new name for what are now the states of Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont. As Cape Cod’s name indicates, this region was renowned for the large schools of cod that frequented these shores. Every spring, hundreds of fishing vessels from England, France, Holland, and other European countries came to the waters of New England, particularly to the northeast off modern Maine. A colony established at Cape Cod would be well placed to take advantage of this profitable fishing industry. However, when the Mayflower left England, it had not been possible to secure a patent for this region. If they were to settle where they had legally been granted land, they must sail south “to find some place about Hudson’s River for their habitation”.

The Pilgrims held a conference among themselves (and with Captain Jones) and it was decided to sail south towards the Hudson River, their intended destination. However, sailing close to the shore for about half a day, they suddenly found themselves “amongst dangerous shoals and roaring breakers, and they were so far entangled therewith as they conceived themselves in great danger”. They had arrived at Pollack Rip, in the midst of what has been called “one of the meanest stretches of shoal water on the American coast”.<sup>69</sup> Without charts to navigate through unknown waters the ship was soon in difficulties and faced problems in extricating itself from the shoals with daylight fading fast. Moreover, with the wind changing direction and building from the south, the Mayflower was soon to the northwest of Pollack Rip. Captain Jones decided that he needed to return to Cape Cod because of the dangers involved in navigating the shoals. The following day he sailed the Mayflower north along the eastern shore of the Cape and on the morning of November 11<sup>th</sup>, the ship rounded Race Point and dropped anchor in a large bay, now called Provincetown Harbour. Some of the Pilgrims went ashore and fell on their knees to give thanks to God. (See Figure 19 below.)

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<sup>68</sup> W. Bradford, pp 59-60.

<sup>69</sup> N. Philbrick, *Mayflower: A Voyage to War*. 2006. p 38.



Figure 19 - "The Landing of the Pilgrims" by Charles Lucy

Some historians have suggested that New England was actually their destination from the beginning. There is some evidence that the Pilgrims themselves had discussed New England as a possible destination and that Thomas Weston, their principal financier, was in favour of it. The Adventurers apparently showed neither surprise nor anger when they were later informed that the Pilgrims had settled in New England. Nor did the Pilgrims ever offer an explanation to the financiers. Both sides seem to have agreed that the less said about it the better – to avoid possible complications with the King, the Privy Council, and the Virginia Company from whom they held a patent. Moreover, the Pilgrims had taken with them fishing tackle to catch the abundant fish in the seas around the shores and, above all, they recognised that New England was not yet settled by Englishmen and therefore the Anglican Church would not be present. The Pilgrims would be free to practice their own version of religion.

**“a hideous and desolate wilderness, full of wild beasts and wild men”<sup>70</sup>**

Small parties of well-armed men were sent ashore to fetch firewood, see what the land was like, and what inhabitants they could meet with. They found wind-blown sand hills, much like the downs (dunes) in The Netherlands, but much better; excellent black earth, a spit's depth (depth of a spade), and wooded areas with oaks, ash, walnut, juniper, sassafras, pines and birch, all for the most part open and without undergrowth. The sassafras tree is mentioned on a number of occasions by Bradford. Great medicinal virtues were ascribed to the bark and roots of the tree and ship-loads of it had been exported to Europe by Gosnold and others. The settlers also found areas where the land had been cleared and crops such as maize (Indian corn) had been planted.

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<sup>70</sup> W. Bradford, p 62.



There was some urgency behind the task of finding a suitable settlement. Captain Jones was anxious to return to England and now urged the settlers to explore the coasts and discover a safe harbour and place to build their settlement. Some of the crew were even suggesting that if they did not discover a place quickly in which to settle, they would dump the pilgrims and their possessions on the shore and leave them. One of their earliest tasks was to re-assemble the shallop which had been partially dismantled for the voyage and carried below decks. It had been used as living quarters for some of the passengers and had been considerably damaged. It took the carpenter sixteen or seventeen days to undertake the necessary repairs. This delayed the task of carrying out exploration at any great distance from the Mayflower because of the difficulty of transporting sufficient provisions. However, small well-armed scouting parties, each individual carrying a matchlock musket, sword and a corslet (a light form of body armour that included a metal breastplate), under the direction of Myles Standish, were able to spend several weeks exploring the coastline. They saw groups of "savages" who kept their distance and mostly fled into the woods if the Pilgrims tried to approach. A pitched battle with the local Nauset Indians could have been disastrous for the Pilgrims. Bradford provides a narrative of an early encounter:

"But presently, all on the sudden, they heard a great and strange cry... and one of their company being abroad came running in and cried, 'Men, Indians! Indians!' And withal, their arrows came flying amongst them. Their men ran with all speed to recover their arms, as by the good providence of God they did...The cry of the Indians was dreadful, especially when they saw their men run out of the rendezvous toward the shallop to recover their arms, the Indians wheeling about upon them. But some running out with coats of mail on, and cutlasses in their hands, they soon got their arms and let fly amongst them and quickly stopped their violence."<sup>71</sup>

The Pilgrims gave chase to the retreating Indians and fired off a few more shots before the Indians vanished into the woods. The brief skirmish had led to no loss of life or serious injury to either side. The Pilgrims found eighteen arrows around their barricade, some lodged in the coats they had left hanging inside. The arrows, some tipped with brass, others with eagle claws were eventually sent back to England as souvenirs of the militant New World. Returning to the shallop, the party then knelt down and gave thanks for their deliverance and named the place the First Encounter.

### **Evidence of the plague**

On one of their trips ashore, they found signs of a deserted native settlement with a good area of cleared ground and signs of graves. The Pilgrims found many graves, suggesting that some appalling catastrophe had befallen the natives. They were later to discover that large numbers of the native population had been wiped out by some kind of plague about two years before they landed in this particular area otherwise they might well have faced substantial opposition. The cause of the plague is unknown. It was probably introduced by the English; at least they seemed immune to it, while it was most prevalent in regions frequented by English explorers and traders. Modern authorities such as Alden T. Vaughan are reluctant to diagnose the disease for the scraps of historical evidence that have survived are vague and contradictory; but there is a general agreement that it was not yellow fever, smallpox, jaundice, or typhoid fever. It may have been measles,

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<sup>71</sup> W. Bradford, pp 69-70

bubonic plague, or perhaps a combination of diseases.<sup>72</sup> Whatever the nature of the plague, it had had a devastating impact on the American Indians in the New England area.

The survivors had sometimes been too few in number to bury the dead. Vaughan suggests that a third, perhaps more, of the Indians between Narragansett Bay and the Penobscot River lost their lives, and that this might be a conservative estimate. The calamitous depopulation of the region not only opened the coast for European settlement but upset the intertribal balance of power as well. The Pilgrims would later be made aware of American Indian politics and be drawn into the shifting alliances between various tribes. But for the moment it was enough for the Pilgrims to believe that “divine providence made way for the quiet peaceable settlement of the English in those nations.”

### **Seed for the future**

The task of exploration went on for several weeks. In one area, they found “much plain ground, about fifty acres, fit for the plough, and some signs where the Indians had formerly planted their corn.”<sup>73</sup> The Pilgrims soon recognised the importance of Indian corn (maize); it was found everywhere in North America and ranked almost as important as rice and wheat in providing food for man and animals. The colonists also discovered a number of Indian baskets, filled with corn, and buried in the ground. “The basket was round and narrow at the top. It held about three or four bushels, which was as much as two of us could lift up from the ground and was very handsomely and cunningly made.”<sup>74</sup>

Nearby, they found beans of different colours and a ship’s copper kettle. They filled the kettle with corn to serve as seed for the following season and carried it back to the Mayflower at the risk of jeopardizing the friendship of the natives. They intended to pay for it and eventually did so, some six months later but in the meantime, their actions undoubtedly added to the prevailing hostility of the Nausets, the local tribe.

### **“the best they could find”**

The Pilgrims were looking for a combination of physical resources. As Bunker suggests: “To sustain a colony, the Pilgrims needed timber, game, fresh running water, a flat expanse of earth for corn, shoals of fish and a harbour – and if they could find them a wide river leading inland and native people willing to sell skins”.<sup>75</sup> Some of these elements were to be found, but the Pilgrims were facing considerable difficulty finding the right combination. They continued their search, with advice from the Mayflower pilot, Robert Coppin, who claimed to have sailed along the coast on a previous voyage.

They eventually arrived in the midst of a storm at a small inlet which Coppin mistakenly identified as a safe haven, and eventually landed with some difficulty after the shallop was nearly wrecked in the storm. The exploration party of 16 men landed on Saturday, 9<sup>th</sup> December on an island inside the bay, which they later called Clark’s Island. On Sunday they rested to observe the Sabbath. On Monday, 11<sup>th</sup> December, 1620, they landed at a place they would later call Plymouth, with a depth of water in the harbour adequate for their boat.

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<sup>72</sup> A.T. Vaughan, *New England Frontier*. Little, Brown & Co. Boston, Mass. 1965. pp 21-22

<sup>73</sup> W. Bradford & E. Winslow. *Mourt’s Relation*. A Journal of the Pilgrims at Plymouth. Reprinted in A. Young, pp 130-1. *Mourt’s Relation* was a Propaganda piece sent to supporters in England extolling the virtues of life in the New World in the hope of attracting more settlers to the territory.

<sup>74</sup> *Mourt’s Relation*. Reprinted in A. Young, p 133

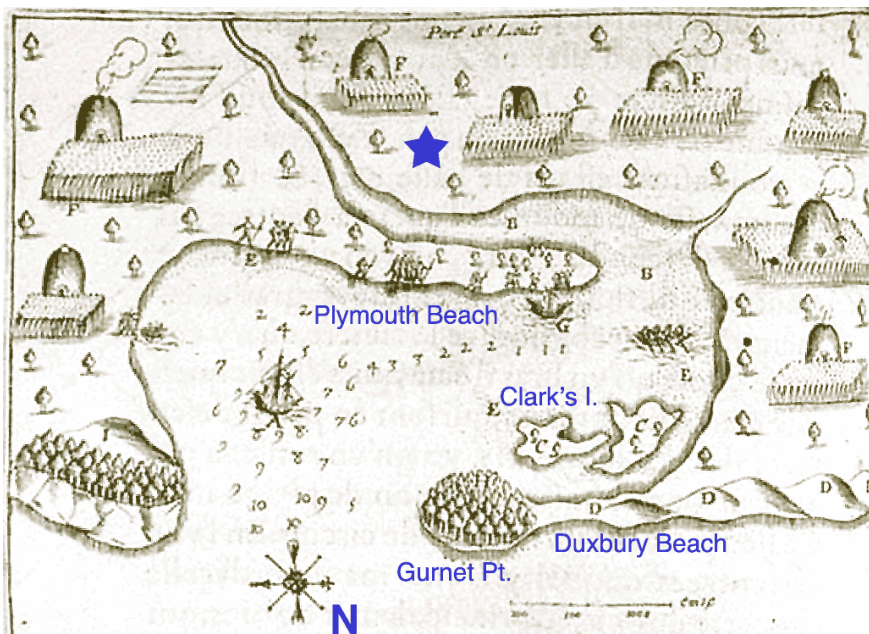
<sup>75</sup> N. Bunker, *Making Haste from Babylon: The Mayflower Pilgrims and their World*. Bodley Head. London. 2010. p 144



Bradford's is the only contemporary account of the landing and it is clear that it took place from the shallop, not the Mayflower which was still then moored in Provincetown harbour. The story of the Pilgrims stepping ashore on to a large boulder, later called the 'Plymouth Rock', seems to have developed in later years. In the days that followed, the Pilgrims marched into the interior where they found "divers cornfields and little running brooks". They did not find a navigable river to take them further into the interior but four or five small running brooks of very sweet water. "The land for the crust of the earth is, a spit's depth, excellent black mould and fat in places... two or three great oaks but not very thick, pines, walnuts, beech, ash, birch, hazel...and vines everywhere, cherry trees, plum trees, and many others which we know not...Here is sand, gravel and excellent clay, no better in the world, excellent for pots, and will wash like soap, and great store of stone... and the best water that we ever drunk." They found parts of the land had been cleared, but they saw no Indians. The place was far from ideal but "it was the best they could find, and the season and their present necessity made them glad to accept of it."<sup>76</sup> They had already spent a month looking for a place to settle and time was pressing to establish a settlement before the worst of the winter. Many members of the party lived on the Mayflower for several months after arriving at New England, until April 1621 when sufficient dwellings had been built and the Mayflower departed to England.

## New Plymouth

It was clear that they had not come to an earthly paradise.<sup>77</sup> The biggest advantage of the area was that it had already been cleared by the American Indians. And yet nowhere could they find evidence of any recent native settlements. But the site at Plymouth (see Figure 20) had a number of advantages; it had a convenient harbour for boats though not for ships, land had been cleared and was suitable for cultivation; a brook on the south side of the harbour provided clear drinking water; Cape Cod was likely to be a place for good fishing and whale hunting for oil, and the place was likely to be healthy, and secure. There were other advantages: they could scarcely have been better supplied for fish and the forests had plenty of game.



Above all, the whole position was easily defensible; a hill, 165 feet high, commanded the land all around and was suitable for a gun platform for their ordnance. This must have seemed an essential priority given the attack by American Indians at First Encounter Beach. They were fortunate to have the leadership of Captain Myles Standish, a professional soldier, who had joined the group at Leiden. He was given responsibility for the defence of the settlement and there seems little doubt that the

Figure 20 - Plymouth Harbour mapped by Samuel Champlain in 1605. The place-names in blue are modern. The star represents the Pilgrims' settlement.

<sup>76</sup> W. Bradford, p 72

<sup>77</sup> F.J. Bremer, *The Puritan Experiment: New England Society from Bradford to Edwards*. St James Press. London 1976.

Pilgrims would have been in a sorry plight without him. By January, a 'Common House' (see Figure 21) had been built in which goods could be stored and they could shelter and sleep. It was twenty feet square, made of hewn planks and the cracks filled with mortar. In January, fire destroyed the thatched roof of the storehouse and with it some of the supplies. The settlers were grateful that the persons asleep in the building had escaped with their lives.



*Figure 21 - The Common House*

### **“the Indians came skulking about them”**

All this time, Bradford relates, “the Indians came skulking about them, and would sometimes show themselves aloof off, but when any approached near them, they would run away; and once they stole away their tools where they had been at work and were gone to dinner.”<sup>78</sup> However, the settlers were extremely fortunate when an American Indian called Samoset walked into their settlement on 16 March 1621 and addressed them in broken English. Bradford described him as: “a tall, straight man, the hair of his head black, long behind, only short before, none on his face at all. He asked some beer, but we gave him strong water, and biscuit, and cheese, and pudding, and a piece of mallard; all of which he liked well, and he had been acquainted with such amongst the English”.<sup>79</sup> Samoset informed them that the land on which they had settled belonged to the Wampanoag tribe and that in 1617 a plague had wiped out nearly all that tribe. He himself was a chief of the Abnaki tribe from further up the coast of Maine. A few days later, he reappeared bringing with him three Indians and Squanto (or Tisquantum) the only surviving member of the former Indian settlement at Patuxet, which they had renamed New Plymouth. Squanto had been captured by Captain Thomas Hunt along with nineteen others and sold as a slave at Malaga in Spain and was therefore absent when the plague struck. He had escaped and spent some time in England in the employment of John Slany, a merchant of the Newfoundland Company. Bradford says that Squanto returned to the New World in a ship under Captain Dermer in 1618 and jumped ship and made his way to the site of Plymouth.

The appearance of Samoset and Squanto marked the beginning of a relationship between New Plymouth and the Wampanoag which remained predominantly cordial until the 1670s.<sup>80</sup> Within a few days of Samoset’s arrival, the tools which had been stolen some time ago, were returned and both sides began to think of trading agreements. Discussions with Samoset and Squanto revealed their bitter recollections of the activities of John Smith, Thomas Hunt and other English explorers. Bradford was told of the experiences of the Pocanocket tribe, living to the west of the Plymouth Plantation, who bore an inveterate hatred of Englishmen. The tribe sought revenge against an English skipper who had massacred a trading party of native people with a barrage of shot from his “murderers”, small shipboard guns carried for use at point-blank range. Bradford recounts the experiences of Thomas Dermer, who was employed by Sir Ferdinando Gorges on a voyage of discovery in 1619. In June 1620, some of Dermer’s crew were killed by the inhabitants of the Isle of Capawack (Martha’s Vineyard) and the rest had had to flee south to Jamestown. It was not surprising, then, that there was hatred

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<sup>78</sup> W. Bradford, p 79

<sup>79</sup> Mourt’s Relation, in A. Young. p 183.

<sup>80</sup> A. Vaughan, p 70.

and suspicion on part of the American Indians about the Europeans and a general distrust of the Indians on the part of the colonists.

### Treaty with Massasoit

Later in March 1621, Samoset and Squanto re-appeared with their great sachem or chief called Massasoit (see Figure 22) and all his warriors, who came from a place called Sowams, about 40 miles away. We have a vivid description of Massasoit as “a very lusty man, in his best years, an able body, grave of countenance, and spare of speech. In his attire, little or nothing differing from the rest of his followers, only in a great chain of white bone beads about his neck, and at it, behind his neck, hangs a little bag of tobacco, which he drank, and gave

to us to drink; his face was painted a sad [deep] red like murry [mulberry], and oiled both head and face, that he looked greasily.



Figure 22 - Massasoit, Great Sachem of the Wampanoag

All his followers likewise were in their faces, in part or in whole, painted, some black, some red, some yellow, and some white, some with crosses... some had skins on them and some naked; all strong, tall men in appearance.”<sup>81</sup>

Massasoit was chief of the Wampanoag tribe who were looking to form new alliances because of the dangers they faced from enemies to the west, the Narragansett of Rhode Island. Long negotiations followed between Edward Winslow and Massasoit with Squanto acting as interpreter. Bradford described the meeting, the exchange of presents and the speeches interpreted by Squanto. The Pilgrims conducted Massasoit “to a house then in building, where we placed a green rug and three or four cushions. Then instantly came our governor [Carver], with drum and trumpet after him, and some musketeers. After salutations, our governor kissing his hand, the king kissed him; and so, they sat

down. The governor called for some strong water, and drunk to him; and he drunk a great draught, that made him sweat all the while after. He called for a little fresh meat, which the king did eat willingly, and did give his followers.”

The peace treaty, eventually signed on 22 March was a remarkable document, extremely encouraging to the new colony, yet eminently fair to the Wampanoag tribe. The main points were that no Indian should harm a settler, that if any did so the offender should be sent to the colony to be punished, that anything stolen from either side should be sent back or replaced, that each would help the other if attacked, that Massasoit would let his neighbouring tribes know about the treaty, and that any of his men visiting the settlement should approach unarmed.

In the short term, the agreement evidently marked a turning point since the military threat from Massasoit fell away. Bunker suggests that this is as much as we can honestly say: the peace held but how and why did it do so? Even Bradford writing more than two decades later, offered no explanation. The reality, perhaps, was that the English had accepted a territorial boundary, whether they understood it or not.<sup>82</sup> Though the settlers had established good trading relations with Massasoit, there were still potential difficulties with other tribes.

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<sup>81</sup> Mourt’s Relation in A. Young. p 194

<sup>82</sup> N. Bunker, p 296

The settlers continued building their defensive works with a palisade around the town. They would also build a fort on the highest hill in the area, afterwards called Fort Hill. Over the years, the building would also be used as a court of justice, a town hall and as a place of worship.

After signing the treaty, Massasoit returned to his territory called Sowams, about 40 miles from Plymouth, but Squanto remained with the settlers and was to prove very important in a number of ways; he provided information about neighbouring tribes, advice on where to fish, and how to plant and fertilize maize the American way, in small mounds mingled with nitrogen-fixing beans and squash, manured with fish. The traditional Indian way was for three herring to be placed spoke-wise, with their heads toward the centre, and for weeks the fields were guarded day and night to keep off the wolves. Without Squanto and his skills, the Pilgrims would almost certainly have perished or been forced to flee the colony, for they would have had no crops. They also sowed some English grain with little success "... by reason partly of the badness of the seed, and lateness of the season, or some other defect not then discerned." They eventually finished planting in May 1621.

John Carver, the first Governor, died in April, 1621, and his wife died some six weeks later. Soon afterwards, William Bradford was chosen Governor of Plymouth in his place and Isaac Allerton chosen as his assistant. Bradford was to be re-elected as Governor every year for most of his life, apart from a number of short intervals when he asked to be removed from the burdens of office.

### **Complex relations with the Indians**

In July, they sent Edward Winslow and Stephen Hopkins to Massasoit with gifts of a coat and a copper chain, ostensibly to strengthen the peace and friendship between them. Moreover, there was a pressing need to end the frequent delegations of hungry braves who had been descending on Plymouth since the treaty and consuming the Pilgrims' scant rations. Massasoit or any envoys from him would be welcome, but to keep every Indian in the area from claiming to be a "special friend" of Massasoit, the governor proposed to provide a copper chain which the chief could give to his messengers as identification. Winslow and Hopkins were also to use the opportunity of the visit to assess the nature of Massasoit's land and the strength of his forces. Squanto went with them as a guide and interpreter and they found that Massasoit's tribe had been decimated by some kind of disease. They also brought back word that the Narragansetts who lived the other side of the great bay "...were a strong people and many in number, living compact together, and had not been at all touched with this wasting plague."

Winslow and Hopkins were treated with kindness and generosity as they travelled through the Wampanoag territory. But they found it increasingly difficult to adjust to the Indian way of life; the tedious Indian speeches, the "barbarous singing" with which the Indians lulled themselves to sleep, the honour of sharing a plank bed with the chief, his wife, and two braves, the lice and fleas indoors and the mosquitoes outdoors meant that they could hardly sleep all the time they were there. The diplomats spared themselves from further agony by pleading the necessity to return home for the Sabbath.

The only remaining Indians who remained hostile to the Pilgrims were the Nausets of Cape Cod, where they had first landed. A relatively trivial event was to occur which brought about peaceful relations with the Nausets. Late in July, a Plymouth youth wandered into the woods, lost his way, and eventually found his way to the Indian village of Manomet, and from there he was taken to the Nauset tribe. Governor Bradford received news of the boy's whereabouts from Massasoit and dispatched a rescue party. They were brought to their sachem called Iyanough, "a man not exceeding twenty-six years of age, but very personable, gentle,

courteous, and fair conditioned, indeed not like a savage, save for his attire". The Pilgrims were able to retrieve the lost youth and concluded peace terms with the Cape Cod tribe. Reimbursement for the stolen corn was arranged and the last obstacle to peace with the local neighbouring tribes removed.

### "The starving time"

The onslaught by the neighbouring Indians never came, but the settlers were to die of disease in large numbers throughout that first winter. In those early weeks the Pilgrims struggled to survive. Most of them probably continued to live aboard the *Mayflower* as Captain Jones decided to winter in Plymouth Bay. Weakened by scurvy and chilled by the dampness and cold of winter, the colonists sickened and died. One of the earliest deaths was in December, soon after the *Mayflower* had found shelter in Provincetown harbour, when William Bradford's wife, Dorothy, fell overboard and was drowned. Some historians have suggested that she might have committed suicide; certainly, separated from her family, and exhausted by the long journey, and facing a rather bleak future, she might have found life quite unsupportable. Bradford makes a simple note of the fact of her death and never mentions her name again. There was undoubtedly some reason for this as Bradford was not a hard-hearted or callous man. If Dorothy had jumped overboard the prevailing view at the time was that suicide was a heinous offence against the laws of God.

Bradford writes in his journal of the difficulties the settlers faced at this "sad and lamentable" time: "... in two or three months' time half their company died, especially in January and February, being the depth of winter, and wanting houses and other comforts; being infected with the scurvy and other diseases which this long voyage and their inaccommodate condition had brought upon them. So, as there died sometimes two or three of a day in the foresaid time, that of the 100 and odd persons, scarce fifty remained."<sup>83</sup>

Bradford kept a meticulous record of the mortality among the Pilgrims:

In December	6
In January	8
In February	17
In March	13
Total	44

Four complete families ceased to exist. The women in particular suffered; thirteen died and only five remained alive, and of those five only three of their husbands survived. Out of twenty- nine single men and servants, only nine survived. The children had a better survival rate – only three dying out of twenty. Almost half the sailors also died. The dead were buried secretly at night in unmarked graves to conceal from the Indians their rapidly decreasing numbers in case they decided to attack them in their weakened condition.

Before the end of the first year in the colony, six more died, bringing the total number of deaths to 50 and leaving the total number of survivors also at 50.<sup>84</sup> John Carver, who had been elected as Governor, died mid-April. His wife Katherine, of the White family of Sturton le Steeple, did not survive him long, dying five or six

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<sup>83</sup> W. Bradford, p. 77. Morison (fn. 5) suggests that many of the deaths took place on board the *Mayflower*, since there was not enough shelter ashore for all.

<sup>84</sup> Mourt's Relation, in A. Young p. 198



weeks later. William Bradford, now a man of thirty-two, was elected as Governor and was to continue in post for the next 30 years, with only the occasional break. Issac Allerton, a London tailor, was appointed as Deputy Governor and was to travel back and forth to England as the Colony's trading representative for ten years until he was found to have been fleeing the group and was driven into exile.

Family groups had been destroyed – Christopher Martin, his wife and both servants had died; John Carver and his wife and three of their six servants; Mrs. Winslow and two of their servants. Among those who lost both parents were Priscilla Mullins; William and Mary Brewster took her into their home. She was later immortalized by Longfellow in his poem *'The Courtship of Miles Standish'*, the story of how she rejected Standish and eventually married John Alden, a future governor of New Plymouth. Longfellow claimed descent from both Brewster and Alden.

### **Return of the *Mayflower* to England**

The *Mayflower* sailed for England on 5 April 1621. She carried no passengers and nearly half the crew had failed to survive, weakened by a poor diet and cold weather conditions. Jones had done what he could to help the Pilgrims in that first bleak winter; he had allowed them to stay on board the ship while buildings were set up ashore to receive them and their possessions. In spite of the difficulties they had endured, none of the Pilgrims returned to England in the *Mayflower*. She carried no cargo either, for the Pilgrims had not yet cut enough timber for their own use let alone to export, had not got their fishing going, and had not collected enough furs worth taking. The ship made a good, fast run and arrived back in England on the 6 May 1621, a voyage of 31 days. Captain Jones was to die within a year and was buried at Rotherhithe, Surrey, on 5 March, 1622.

### **New Plymouth survives**

The Pilgrims would have a difficult first five years before, in Bradford's words, they first tasted "the sweetness of the country". Their achievements in the first decade of their settlement were remarkable. "Despite the obstacles posed by the lack of a charter, disagreements with their English backers, dissent within, and challenges from without, they had succeeded in establishing a colony that was politically and economically stable."



*Figure 23 - A modern re-creation of the Pilgrims' settlement at Plymouth*

In some respects, they were lucky compared to the problems the Virginia settlers had faced. The winter had been relatively mild for this part of the country and they hadn't faced the extremes of climate of Virginia. The American Indians, having been decimated by plague, were less dangerous than those of Virginia. The Pilgrims had also been able to negotiate a peace treaty with Massasoit and his Wampanoag tribe which secured their immediate survival. Perhaps they were made of sterner stuff than the Virginians.



## The 'Great Puritan Migration' and its impact on the Pilgrim Fathers

On Easter Monday 1629, a fleet of eight ships sailed from Cowes on the Isle of Wight carrying over 900 people to settle in the Massachusetts Bay area and found Boston and a number of other townships.<sup>85</sup> This was an extraordinary event, organised by John Winthrop who sold his estate at Groton in Suffolk for £5,000 and used it to finance the project. During the 1630s, some 21,000 Englishmen moved to New England for a variety of personal reasons. Some were Puritans who had a definite mission - to establish a harmonious community that would be a 'beacon to all nations'. Winthrop aimed to create a religious commonwealth of mostly modestly wealthy and respectable families who paid £20 to £30 for the voyage. Some were economic migrants from eastern counties who were unemployed following the near-collapse of the clothing industry. The migration was well prepared and determined to draw lessons from previous attempts at colonizations.

Initially, New Plymouth's livestock and grain were in great demand from its larger neighbour; each year more colonialists arrived to expand Boston and its nearby coastal settlements. The Massachusetts Bay settlements would soon dwarf the Plymouth colony. Meantime, William Brewster and other members of the original Plymouth community were moving out to more fertile lands in nearby Duxbury and elsewhere. And so Plymouth disappeared as a functioning community. But that is another story!!



*Figure 24 - Pilgrim Fathers Memorial at Fishtoft, Boston*

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<sup>85</sup> C. Bridenbaugh, *Vexed and Troubled Englishmen: The Beginnings of the American People*. OUP. London. 1967; G.D. Langdon, *Pilgrim Colony: A History of New Plymouth 1620 -1691*. Yale Univ. Press. New Haven. 1966.

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## APPENDIX 1

### PASSENGERS ON THE MAYFLOWER

Those names marked with an \* were members of the Leiden congregation.

**Alden, John** (c.1599-1687)

Cooper of Harwich, Essex. Hired at Southampton to care for the casks of meat, beer and water. In America, he courted and married Priscilla Mullins by displacing his rival Myles Standish in 1622, an event described in Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's epic poem *'The Courtship of Myles Standish'*. Ten children. Died at Duxbury, Massachusetts 12 September 1687.

**\*Allerton, Isaac** (c.1586-1659)

A tailor from London and probably one of the Ancient Brethren in Amsterdam. Married his first wife Mary Morris from Newbury, Berkshire, in 1611 at Leiden. Three children – Bartholomew, Remember and Mary. Prominent leader of the early colony. Married second wife, Fear Brewster, in 1626. She died in 1634. He was Assistant Governor of Plymouth 1621-1631. Dismissed from the colony in disgrace in 1633 for financial irregularities. Married 3<sup>rd</sup> wife Joanna Swinnerton in 1644. Became a prosperous merchant, making a fortune in the Virginia and West Indies trade. Died insolvent.

**\*Allerton, Mary (Morris) wife of Isaac**

Died 7 March 1621 on board the Mayflower several days after being delivered of a still-born child.

**\*Allerton, Bartholomew, son** (c.1612)

Born at Leiden. Returned to England, married and had children there and was living in 1650.

**\*Allerton, Mary, daughter** (c.1617 – 1699)

Born at Leiden. Died Plymouth, MA, 28 November 1699. Married Thomas Cushman (no relation to Robert Cushman) at Plymouth, about 1636. Last survivor of the Mayflower Pilgrims

**\*Allerton, Remember, daughter** (c.1615)

Married about May, 1635, Moses Maverick. Died before 1652.

**Allerton, John**

Seaman. Not thought to be related to Isaac Allerton. Hired as a sailor to return to Leiden and guide future settlers to the colony. Died at Plymouth, between 11 January and 10 April, 1621.

**Billington, John** (c1590 – 1630)

From London. Married Eleanor of London. Two sons – John and Francis. First settler to be hanged for murder in Plymouth.

**Billington, Eleanor, wife**

Died after 12 March 1643. Married second husband Gregory Armstrong in September 1638.

**Billington, John, son** (c.1604)

Got lost in woods near Plymouth and rescued by Indians. Died Plymouth between 22 May 1627 and September 1630.

**Billington, Francis, son** (c.1606)

Almost blew up the Mayflower during the voyage by lighting squibs near gun powder kegs. Married Christian (Penn) Eaton, widow of Francis Eaton, at Plymouth, July 1634. Died in Yarmouth, 1650.

**\*Bradford, William (1589/90 – 1657)**

Born in Austerfield, Yorkshire. Orphaned in childhood and virtually adopted by William Brewster. Travelled into exile with the Scrooby separatists to Amsterdam and later to Leiden where he became a textile worker. At Leiden in 1613, married Dorothy May of Wisbeach, Cambridgeshire, daughter of Henry May, elder of the Ancient Brethren church. One son, John. Dorothy drowned at Cape Cod Bay. Second marriage to Alice (Carpenter) Southworth, widow of Edward Southworth. Three children, William, Mercy, Joseph. William Bradford became the second Governor of New Plymouth and remained as Governor for most of his life. Important also as the historian of the early years of the colony.

**\*Bradford, Dorothy (May) wife (c.1597 -1620)**

Dorothy died in Cape Cod Bay after “falling” from the *Mayflower* while the ship was at anchor.

**\*Brewster, William (c.1566 – 1643)**

Born probably in Scrooby, Nottinghamshire. Organised the Scrooby separatists in the early 1600s and went with the group to Amsterdam and Leiden. Became ‘ruling elder’ of the congregation in New Plymouth. Married at Scrooby in 1591, Mary, perhaps the daughter of Thomas Wentworth, Brewster Sr’s predecessor at Scrooby Manor. Five children including Love, Wrestling and Fear.

**\*Brewster, Mary, wife**

Died at Plymouth 17 April, 1627.

**\*Brewster, Love, son**

Born about 1607-11. Married Sarah Collier at New Plymouth 15 May 1634. Died at Duxbury, MA. 1650-1. Four children.

**\*Brewster, Wrestling, son**

Died, unmarried, between 1627 and 1651.

**\*Brewster, Fear, daughter.**

Married Isaac Allerton in 1626. Two children. Fear died in 1634.

**Britteridge, Richard**

Born in London. First settler to die in New Plymouth soon after the landing in December 1620.

**Browne, Peter (c.1600 – 1633)**

Born Great Burstead, Essex. Twice married, five children. Died at New Plymouth in 1633.

**Butten, William**

Born in 1598 and servant to Samuel Fuller. Generally thought to have been born in Austerfield but more recent research suggests he was probably born at Worksop, Nottinghamshire. Died as the Mayflower was approaching the coast of America.

**Carter, Robert**

Servant of William Mullins. Died in the first winter.

**\*Carver, John (c. 1566-1621)**

Merchant of Doncaster, South Yorkshire. Married Katherine White of Sturton le Steeple, elder sister of Bridget White, John Robinson’s wife. First recorded as being connected with the separatists at Leiden in 1616.

Prominent on behalf of the Leiden group in negotiations with the Merchant Adventurers. First Governor of the Plymouth Colony. Died of sun-stroke while toiling in the fields in 1621.

**\*Carver, Katherine (Leggett) (White) wife**

Born 1580. Died at New Plymouth about five or six weeks after her husband. No known surviving children.

**\*Chilton, James (c.1563 – 1620)**

A tailor from Canterbury, Kent. Married to Susanna. Died on the Mayflower at Cape Cod Harbour in December, 1620.

**\*Chilton, Susanna (maiden name unknown). wife**

Died early in 1621.

**\*Chilton, Mary, daughter (1607 – 1679)**

Baptised at St Peter's Church, Sandwich, Kent. Married at New Plymouth by June 1627. Died at Boston May 1679.

**Clarke, Richard**

Died soon after the Mayflower arrived in America.

**\*Cooke, Francis (1583 – 1663)**

Place of birth disputed – Blyth, Nottinghamshire or more recent research suggests Essex. Was a woolcomber in Leiden. Married in Leiden 1603 to Hester Mahieu (did not travel on the Mayflower). One son. Died in New Plymouth.

**\*Cooke, John, son (1607 – 1695)**

Born Leiden. Married at Plymouth, 28 March 1634. Died at Dartmouth, 23 November 1695.

**Cooper, Humility**

Born about 1619 and was no more than about a year old when she sailed on the *Mayflower*. Was looked after by the Tilley family as a "cousin". Returned to England and died there, unmarried.

**\*Crackstone, John**

Born Colchester, Essex. Lost in the woods in the early months of the new colony. Died of exposure and frostbite. Married by about 1600. Wife unknown.

**\*Crackstone, John, son**

Came with his father in 1620. Lost in the woods in the new colony and died of exposure and frostbite early in 1627.

**Doty, Edward (c. 1600 -1655)**

Servant in the household of Stephen Hopkins. Died at Plymouth 23 August 1655.

**Eaton, Francis (c.1595 – 1633)**

A carpenter and shipwright of Bristol. Married Sarah. One son. Died in New Plymouth in 1633.

**Eaton, Sarah, wife.**

Died soon after arrival in America.

**Eaton, Samuel, son**

Born in 1619. Came as an infant. Married twice.

**Ellis,**

Seaman. Hired for one year. Returned to England on the *Fortune*

**English, Thomas**

Seaman. Hired to take charge of the Pilgrim's shallop. Died during the winter of 1621.

**\*Fletcher, Moses** (c.1565 – 1621)

Blacksmith from Sandwich, Kent. Married Sarah Dingby at Leiden in 1613. Died during the first winter in Plymouth.

**Fuller, Edward** (1575 -1621)

Born Redenhall, Norfolk, son of Robert Fuller. Possibly Deacon Samuel Fuller's brother but apparently not of the Leiden congregation. Married Ann. Died in 1621. One son.

**Fuller, Ann, wife**

Died during the first winter.

**Fuller, Samuel, son** (c.1608)

Married Jane Lothrop, daughter of Rev John Lothrop in April 1635.

**\*Fuller, Samuel (Deacon and Physician to the Pilgrims)** (1580 -1633)

Born Redenhall, Norfolk, son of Robert Fuller. Married (1) Alice Glascock, died before 1613 in Leiden; (2) Alice Carpenter, died in Leiden 1615; (3) Bridget Lee married 1617 [she later came over on the *Anne*]

**Gardiner, Richard**

Seaman. Born Harwich, Essex and related by marriage to Captain Jones. Died in 1621.

**\*Goodman, John** (c.1595 -1621)

Traced only to Leiden. Linen weaver. Brought the only dogs on the ship. Died in the general sickness in 1621.

**Holbeck, William**

Born at Norwich. Servant to William White. Died soon after the landing.

**Hooke, John**

Servant boy to Isaac Allerton. Died early in 1621.

**Hopkins, Stephen** (c.1585 – 1644)

Born Wotton under Edge, Gloucestershire. Tanner and merchant. Married twice. Four children. Had previously been to New England.

**Hopkins, Elizabeth (Fisher) wife.**

Died at Plymouth in the early 1638/9.

**Hopkins, Giles son by first marriage**

Baptised 30 January 1607/8, Hursley, Hampshire. Died at Eastham, MA. 1688/9

**Hopkins, Constance, daughter by first marriage**

Baptised 11 May 1606, Hursley, Hampshire. Married Nicholas Snow in Plymouth by 1627. Had twelve children.

**Hopkins, Damaris, daughter**

Born about 1618. Died probably before the birth of her sister in about 1628 of the same name.



**Hopkins, Oceanus, son**

Born aboard the Mayflower between 16<sup>th</sup> September and 11 November 1620. Died young.

**Howland, John (c.1692/3 – 1672/3)**

Born Fenstanton, nr. Huntingdon. Servant of John Carver. Swept overboard during the passage but managed to grab hold of a trailing rope and was rescued. Became an Assistant Governor and successful businessman. Married Elizabeth Tilley and had ten children.

**Langmore, John**

Servant to Christopher Martin. Died during the first winter.

**Latham, William**

Servant boy to John Carver. Stayed in Plymouth for 20 years and went back to England. From there he went to the Bahamas where he died of starvation in 1645.

**Leister, Edward**

Born 1600. Servant to Stephen Hopkins. After his liberty he went to Virginia and there died.

**Margesson, Edmund**

Died soon after the arrival in America.

**Martin, Christopher**

Born Great Burstead (Billericay), Essex. Merchant and named by the Merchant Adventurers to represent their interests. Acted as Purser. Died in Plymouth during the first winter.

**Martin, Mary (Prower) wife.**

Died during the first winter.

**\*Minter, Desire**

Born c.1605. Member of the Leiden congregation. Servant to John Carver. Returned to England c.1625 and died there.

**More, Ellen**

One of four children of Samuel and Catherine More who divorced and placed them in the care of John Carver and Robert Cushman. Ellen placed with the family of Edward Winslow. Died early in 1621.

**More, Jasper**

Child put to the family of John Carver. Died on the Mayflower in Cape Cod Harbour.

**More, Richard**

Child placed in the Household of William Brewster and the only survivor of the More family. Married with four children. Died in Salem between March 1693/4 and April 1696.

**More, Mary**

Orphan. Died in the first winter.

**Mullins, William (c.1568 – 1621)**

Shoemaker of Dorking, Surrey. Married by 1593. Four children. Died in the first winter.

**Mullins, Alice, wife**

Died early 1621

**Mullins, Priscilla daughter**

Married John Alden by about 1623. Immortalised in Henry Longfellow's epic poem 'The courtship of Myles Standish'. Had 10 children.

**Mullins, Joseph son (c.1596 – 1621)**

Died in the first winter in Plymouth.

**\*Priest, Degory (c.1579 – 1621)**

Hat maker from London. Married Sarah Vincent (the widow of John Vincent) at Leiden 4 November 1611. She was sister to Isaac Allerton and came on a later ship with two children. Died in the first winter

**Prower, Solomon**

Servant of Christopher Martin. Died during the first winter.

**Rigsdale, John**

Born in London. Died during the first winter.

**Rigsdale, Alice, wife**

Died during the first winter.

**\*Rogers, Thomas (c.1572 – 1621)**

Lived in London in the parish of St Bartholomew. Died in the first winter. His son Joseph, was the only one of his children to survive.

**Rogers, Joseph, son**

Born 23 January 1602/3. Died Eastham, MA in 1677/8.

**Samson, Henry**

Cousin of Edward Tilley. Baptised 15 January 1603/4, Henlow Bedfordshire. Died Duxbury, MA, between 24 December 1684 and 5 March 1684/5.

**Soule, George**

Servant in the household of Edward Winslow. Died at Duxbury between 20 September 1677 and 22 January 1679/80. Married Mary Buckett at Plymouth before 1627 when she is included in the division of cattle. Had eight children.

**Standish, Myles (c. 1584 – 1656)**

Probably from Chorley, Lancashire. Organised the Pilgrim army in Plymouth. Alone of the Pilgrim leaders never to join the church. Married (1) Rose who came on the Mayflower; (2) Barbara (maiden name unknown) [ came to America on the *Anne*]

**Standish, Rose, wife**

Died early in 1621.

**Story, Elias**

Servant to Edward Winslow. Died soon after arrival.

**Thompson, Edward**

Servant to William White. Died soon after arrival.

**\*Tilley, Edward**

Baptised Henlow, Bedfordshire 27 May 1588. Cloth maker of London. Married Anne. Died in 1621.

**Tilley, Anne, wife**

Died soon after arrival.

**Tilley, John**

Brother to Edward. Baptised Henlow, Bedfordshire 19 December 1571. Married Joan Rogers 1596

**Tilley, Joan (Hurst) wife**

Died soon after arrival.

**Tilley, Elizabeth daughter**

Baptised Henlow, Bedfordshire 30 August 1607. Married John Howland in 1623. Ten children. Died in Plymouth 1687

**Tinker, Thomas**

Thurne, Norfolk. Citizen in Leiden 1617. Married with one son. Died in 1621.

**Tinker, Mrs Thomas, wife**

Died in the first sickness

**Tinker, son**

Died in the first sickness.

**Trevor, William**

Seaman. Hired to stay for one year. Died in the first winter.

**Turner, John**

Merchant from London. Married at Whitechapel. Citizen in Leiden in 1610. Wife did not go to America. Two sons died. Died in the first sickness.

**Turner, son**

Died in the first sickness

**Turner, son**

Died in the first sickness

**Warren, Richard (c.1580 – 1628)**

Merchant from London. Married Elizabeth about 1609. He came alone, wife and five daughters followed. He died in Plymouth 1628. She died Plymouth October 1673.

**\*White, William (c.1592 – 1621)**

Wealthy separatist. Married Susanna Fuller, sister of Deacon Fuller in Leiden in 1612. Two sons: Resolved and Peregrine. Died 1621.

**\*White, Susanna (Fuller), wife**

Soon after the death of William White married Edward Winslow in 1621 and died in Marshfield in 1680.

**\*White, Resolved, son of William**

Born about 1615. Married with five children. Died at Salem in 1680.

**\*White, Peregrine, son of William**

Born on the *Mayflower* in November 1620. Died in Marshfield 1704.

**Wilder, Roger**

Boy servant of John Carver. Died in 1621.

**Williams, Thomas**

Born in Yarmouth, Norfolk. Died in the general sickness in 1621.

**\*Winslow, Edward (1595 – 1655)**

Baptised Droitwich, Worcestershire 20 October 1595. Married (1) Elizabeth Barker at Leiden, 1618. Elizabeth died in Plymouth 1621; (2) Married Susanna White (Fuller), widow of William White in 1621. Important leader in the Colony.

**\*Winslow, Elizabeth, wife**

Died at Plymouth 24 March 1621.

**Winslow, Gilbert**

Brother to Edward. Baptised in Droitwich 29 October 1600. Returned to England in 1646 and died there.