

SIEGE OF GOODRICH CASTLE

Colonel John Birch (1615–1691)

to Sir Henry Lingen (1612–1662), governor of Goodrich Castle

2 o'clock, 13 June 1646

Before this, I question not but you expected what I have now sent unto you, which I did the rather forbear, being informed of your strong confidence of a speedy relief, and no less in your own ability to prevent such near approaches as are and may be made upon you (being willing you should try the utmost of both), though instead of the former I must let you know that Oxford is to be delivered up the 19th instant. In the meantime, I have been studious of your welfare, which to advance I find no visible way left but that you submit unto the pleasure of the high court of Parliament, in whose name and for whose use I demand of you the possession of this Castle of Goodrich. Which if you shall assent unto, you may command my utmost service in anything which may tend to the public good, your honour, and future welfare.

And for those gentlemen now under your protection, if they shall put themselves under mine, I shall not deceive them of that civility which they may expect, and shall thankfully acknowledge the goodness of Almighty God in sparing a further effusion of blood, it being my desire hereby to declare unto you my especial care to prevent. Which, if you shall occasion by your refusal (that being at another time honourable which now will not appear to be the part of a soldier, whose prudence is required as well as resolution) but that you shall persist to a further enraging of those under my command so that you make me incapable of doing that which, it may be, you may think (and not without ground, were it not the eleventh hour) to have at last, and that blood and utter ruin follow, I hereby desire to be excused if I prosecute my present business in such a way as will be grievous unto him who rather desires to approve himself your real friend.

PS—That you may perceive my willingness to give you full satisfaction in any scruple that you may make hereunto, if you desire it, myself, with two gentlemen more, will give you the meeting with the like number where you please. Or if you desire no such satisfaction, I shall desire your answer in writing within twenty-four hours, which length of time I am willing to give you because to me it looks like a business of great concernment, to yourself especially, because you bind my hands from any more lines passing in this business.

Sir Henry Lingen (1612–1662), governor of Goodrich Castle

to Colonel John Birch (1615–1691)

14 June 1646

I received yesterday a summons from you, wherein you demand of me this castle to be delivered into your hands for the use of the Parliament. The King placed me in it, by his commission, to keep it for him and to his use and, until I shall receive an immediate order or command from him to the contrary, I shall do it to the uttermost of my power; otherwise I conceive I should not discharge the part of a soldier and an honest man, which I hope to carry with me to my grave. As for the information you had of my strong confidence of a speedy relief, truly it was a thing I neither desired nor expected in so short a time, yet happily may have it before my necessity will require it. As for the delivering up of Oxford (if it be so), the fortune of another man's command shall not be a leading case for my loyalty and the trust reposed in me, and this I will assure you is the resolution of your loving friend.

Colonel John Birch (1615–1691)

to Sir Henry Lingen (1612–1662), governor of Goodrich Castle

4 o'clock, 14 June 1646

I have received your resolution by your drummer, which far better contents those under my command than

myself, who really desired your welfare.

Colonel John Birch (1615–1691)

31 July 1646

No time has been neglected by me in the prosecution of this service, but as the ground would admit I have carried on my approaches, batteries, and mines. And after I had very much torn the castle with my mortar piece, that no whole room was left in it (that not doing the work), I resolved to go on with the mines and battery (where I could not mine), both of which went on so successfully that in a few hours I intended to enter by storm, and to that end drew my horse and foot together. Which the enemy perceiving, rather than they would run the hazard, took down their colours and put up white (without which I denied them any treaty). Their desires were honourable terms, which I thought not fit to grant, neither to give them anything beyond mercy for their lives, their persons to be wholly at my disposal, upon which terms I have this day received possession of this castle. And when the Parliament shall please to command Sir Henry Lingen to wait upon them, I shall carefully bring him up to attend their pleasure. In the meantime I desire that the Parliament will be pleased to signify their pleasure concerning the demolishing or keeping this castle, the condition of which, and of all other passages here, this bearer, Major Blackmore, will give a perfect account, who has been very active and helpful in this service, together with the condition of the horse and foot under my command. How much they have been discouraged by those who with earnestness seek their own ends, notwithstanding all which, no duty has been omitted, nor any means left un-attempted which might forward the public service.

John Webb, *Memorials of the Civil War Between King Charles I and the Parliament of England as it Affected Herefordshire and the Adjacent Counties* (London: Longman, Green, and Company, 1879), II:414–417.