

ISLE OF WIGHT

Committee at Derby House

to Colonel Robert Hammond (1621–1654), Governor of the Isle of Wight

Thursday, 20 January 1647/1648 [OS]

There is now a committee settled at Derby House who are under an oath of secrecy, to whom therefore you may safely communicate any intelligence. For the better concealing of what you shall write we shall send you a cipher by the next messenger, this being to give you notice that we have certain intelligence that there are plottings and contrivances in hand to convey away the King, and that Sir John Berkley¹ and Mr. Ashburnham² are, or lately were, at Netley Castle,³ whither the King's party makes continual resort unto them about some such purpose. We are also informed that the King has constant intelligence given him of all things, which he receives by the hands of a woman, who brings it to him when she brings his clean linen; of which we thought fit to give you this information, not doubting but you will take the best care that may be to improve this notice to the advantage of the public.

Tuesday, 25 January 1647/1648 [OS]

We have received your letter from Carisbrooke of the 23rd instant. And as to the want of fortification of the castle, the House has taken order for one thousand pounds to be charged upon the Committee for the Army, which we have accordingly done, and desired them to send it you forthwith. And we withal send you the copy of the order of the House for your direction for the disbursement and disposing thereof. And whereas you say you do believe the King has intelligence, but know not where to lay it, in our last we gave you particular notice that it was by the woman that brings him his clean linen, which we again recommend to your care, and also that you use your utmost diligence for the security of the King's person. We shall take a view of the powers you have already for that purpose and, if we find any defect, we shall move the House for a supply.

Monday, 31 January 1647/1648 [OS]

We have received your letter of the 28th instant, wherein you desire to have the approbation of this Committee concerning the four gentlemen⁴ by you appointed to watch in their courses at the King's chamber door. We think it fit that in this business you should make your application to the Houses, from whom, we doubt not, you will receive orders in that particular. For the money appointed for the fortification of the castle, it was to be furnished by the Committee of the Army by the appointment of this Committee, which accordingly they presently did and desired them to send thither with all speed. And of this information has been given to the gentleman you mention, who solicits your business, which is all that can be done at this Committee for it.

Monday, 7 February 1647/1648 [OS]

Having received some intelligence from a very good hand, which we have formerly found true, we thought it necessary to give you notice of it and recommend the business to your especial care that the King's escape is designed. The manner thus: by one Napier and a servant of David Murray, whom we take to be the King's tailor. The King is to be drawn up out of his bedchamber into the room over it, the ceiling whereof is to be broke for that purpose, and then conveyed from one room to another till he be past all the rooms where any guard are at any doors or windows.

Saturday, 13 March 1647/1648 [OS]

We have received information that there are now some designs in agitation concerning the King's escape, who is to be carried into France, and that there are two of those that now attend the King upon whom they rely for

¹ Sir John Berkley (1602–1678), a principal mover in the King's flight (10 November 1647) from Hampton Court to the Isle of Wight

² John Ashburnham (1603–1671), a principal mover in the King's flight (10 November 1647) from Hampton Court to the Isle of Wight

³ A military (not residential) castle located in southern Hampshire

⁴ Thomas Herbert, Mildmay, Captain Titus, and Preston

effecting this escape. Who they are we cannot discover, nor yet what grounds they have to expect their service in it. Yet we thought fit to give you this advertisement that you might the more carefully watch against it.

Tuesday, 16 March 1647/1648 [OS]

We have received your letter of the 12th instant with the note enclosed. And as to the five hundred men you desire to draw over, upon occasion, out of the next forces, the General has given order therein to Colonel Ewer. And for matter of money, there is a warrant signed for £600 by the Committee of the Army to be paid unto you. We have likewise spoken with some of the Committee of the Revenue, and they have signed a warrant for £1000, to be paid upon the order of £30 a day, and by the discourse we have had it is conceived there will be means for the entertainment of two hundred men. For it is conceived £10 a day will furnish the charge of the King's table. And the pay for 200 men with their officers in two companies comes to about £9 more. And 30s a day being allowed for your own table, there will remain £9 10s per diem for extraordinary occasions, which is conceived may be sufficient for that purpose. But if there be a mistake in the compute, we desire you to give information of it to those to whom it most properly belongs.

As to the allowance you desire to be given to the four gentlemen your letter speaks of, although it be not the business of this Committee, yet, if you shall send the names of those gentlemen and what it is you desire for them, we shall represent it to those whom it concerns. For the victualling of that Castle and Sandown Fort, we shall make a report thereof to the Houses.

Thursday, 15 April 1647/1648 [OS]

There is a new design to take away the King. Firebrace, Titus, and Burrowes are in it. Burrowes is either gone into Sussex or about to go, to lie ready there at a place appointed. The other two are either gone or on their way. They are to have a boat of four oars to bring off the King. The King has a bodkin with which he will raise the lead in which the iron bar of the window stands to put in the *Aqua Fortis* to eat out the iron. Then being got out, he will from the Bowling Alley cast himself over the works, and so make his escape. Another design they have to fire the Castle by firing a great heap of charcoal that lies near the King's lodgings, and upon that tumult he to make his escape. I desire you to take special notice of it, for the King is extremely desirous to be abroad, hoping to be able to make such use of the present discontents as to restore his affairs forthwith. The Committee not sitting, some of their members came in and commanded that thus much should be signified unto you.

Wednesday, 21 April 1647/1648 [OS]

By a letter under the King's hand he writes that, although Firebrace and Titus be discovered, yet D- is fast to him and will do the deed. This D- is one Dowcett, or such a name. There came 15 or 16 letters lately from the King and those there of his party, 4 or 5 whereof were read by an honest man. The *Aqua Fortis* was spilt by the way by accident, but yesterday about 4 o'clock, a fat plain man carried to the King a hacker, which is an instrument made here on purpose to make the King's two knives, which he has by him, cut as saws. The time assigned is May Day at night for the King's escape, but it may be sooner, if opportunity serves. He intends to go first to a gentleman's house at Lewes, in Sussex, who is thought to be a Parliament man. The man that brings this hacker and dispatches will go to Newport and on Saturday morning, or about that time, Dowcett, Harrington, or some confidee, will go out and meet the man and bring in all to the King. Therefore, if some occasion be taken to search them as they return, all will appear.

Thursday, 22 April 1647/1648 [OS]

Yesterday you had advice that there was a fat plain man employed to carry the King an hacker, that he would go to Newport on Saturday morning, that there Dowcett or Harrington, or some other, would meet him and bring all to the King.

We have now from the same hand that the same fat plain man comes no further than Portsmouth, and from thence sends over his business by some fisherman, or some other such person, which will be received from him by some of the persons above-mentioned.

The King is to write back diverse letters, which will be brought to this man at Portsmouth, to be brought hither, and thence sent into Scotland. If therefore you cannot intercept those letters in the Isle of Wight, if you can send a faithful man, confident and discreet, to Portsmouth, who may be there on Sunday night and diligently observe and enquire for such a man, who has also a horse under him worth £30 or £40 (the colour we know not) and continue there till Thursday, he will certainly find such a man coming out of town with all the King's letters, whom he is to apprehend. And you are to send up the said letters hither with all security.

We are further informed that there is a porter who uses to carry up coals for the King's chamber presently after dinner and supper, who is to carry the King a disguise, which the King is to put on, and also the porter's frock, and to lock the porter into his chamber and come down himself whilst the servants are at supper, and so to pass away.

Tuesday, 4 May ¹⁶⁴⁷/₁₆₄₈ [OS]

There is an intention to get the King away tomorrow at night or Thursday morning, for Sunday a ship is fallen down from hence to Queensborough, whereabouts she rides, to waft him into Holland. Mrs. Whorwood⁵ is aboard the ship, a tall, well-fashioned and well-languaged gentlewoman, with a round visage, and pockholes in her face. She stays to wait upon the King.

A merchant is gone from this town last night, or this morning early, to acquaint the King that all things are ready. Four horses lie in or near Portsmouth to carry the King by or near Arundel, and from thence to Queensborough. A Parliament man, or one that was one, who lives near Arundel is to be the King's guide. The man is supposed be Sir Edward Alford.⁶ The merchant that is come down to the King to Portsmouth is a lean, spare young man. The place by which the King is to escape is a low room through a window, or a window that is but slightly made up. He has one or two about him that are false. Have a special care of the King's bowling, lest he be suffered to escape under colour of bowling, which is the next plot. If this be prevented, they will then have a ladder set up to the wall against the bowling alley and horses and a boat ready, and try that way.

The party that gives this intelligence saw lately a letter of the King's own hand wherein he extremely bemoans his condition and resolves to attempt all means to free himself from it. The messenger who last came was so hard put to it by our intelligence, and your vigilance, that he was forced to leave his sword and pistols behind him, and durst not bring his letters to town; but one Doctor Frazier met him about Windsor and took the letters of him.

Letters Between Col. Robert Hammond, Governor of the Isle of Wight, and the Committee of Lords and Commons at Derby House...
(London: Robert Horsfield, 1764):26–51.

⁵ Jane Whorwood (1612–1684), spy and smuggler in service to Charles I

⁶ Sir Edward Alford