

SETTLEMENT OF BERMUDA

Lewis Hughes

*In 1609, a Virginia Company ship, bound for Jamestown and under the command of Sir George Somers, wrecked on the uninhabited Bermuda coast, where the crew and passengers lived for ten months. In addition to (probably) inspiring Shakespeare's *Tempest*, the wreck induced some of the Jamestown settlers to re-locate to Bermuda, founding the town of Saint George (the oldest continually-inhabited English settlement in the New World). The Virginia Company investors formed a new company, the Somers Isles Company, specifically to colonize Bermuda.*

In the spring of 1612, the Somers Isles Company appointed Lewis Hughes, a Welsh Puritan, as the colony's minister. By July 1612, Hughes had arrived in Bermuda and wrote the following letter, which the Company published as a pamphlet to encourage colonization.

21 December 1614

The eleventh of July 1612, Master Richard Moore, now Deputy-Governor, arrived safely, and with him about 50 souls—men, women, and children—to inhabit these islands, and since that time (by the mercy of God) diverse other ships out of England have arrived safely with good supplies. Therefore, let not the report that has gone of these islands discourage any of the people of England from coming hither.

Neither let the fear of foreign invasion discourage any. For, as I am persuaded and have heard mariners that have travelled far say, the like islands are not to be found in the world where men may dwell so safe from foreign invasion, because God has so compassed them about with fearful rocks that ships are not able to come near but in two channels that lead into two goodly and large harbours: the one at a place called Saint George's Head, the other at a place called Saint David's Point.

The channels are so narrow and curious that ships must come in very leisurely, one after another, so as the forts on both sides the channels may sink them with ease, by the help of God. As it has pleased God (for the safety of those islands) in their first creation to environ them about with fearful rocks, so now in their first plantation it has pleased His holy majesty to put into the heart of Mr. Moore, now Deputy-Governor, to fortify them within so as, in the judgment of man, they are invincible.

At the Saint George's Head he has built three forts and planted them with great pieces, and men to defend them. And at Saint David's Point he has built two forts and planted them with great pieces and men to defend them. He has also built diverse other forts to keep long-boats from landing and to clear the harbours if ships should come in. If long-boats should venture to land there, they will be but as men cast away, because ships cannot come near to rescue or help any way. Therefore, let not the fear of foreign invasion keep any from coming hither.

There is great hope that (by the blessing of God) men may in time live very comfortably here and grow rich, if they will provide seeds of indigo, etc., and plants of currants, figs, raisins, mulberry trees for the silk-worms, and vines, that they may have wine for their own drinking. I say for their own drinking, because wine, considering the leakage, trouble, and charge, will be one of the least commodities these hands will afford.

For the present, tobacco is the best commodity, and for victuals, if men have boats, nets, lines, hooks, and striking irons, they may have good fish at all times, as rock-fish, angel-fish, hog-fish, amber-fish, cuttle-fish, pilot-fish, hedgehog-fish, cunny-fish, old wines, stingrays, snappers, groupers, cavallies, morays, mullets, mackerel, pilcher, bream, lobster, turtles, sharks, etc. Also here are eels in freshwater ponds. Rivers here are none, but ponds and wells of very good and wholesome water, and a water descending from a hill, which flows and ebbs with the sea, and yet drinks always sweet, like milk.

Here is also plenty of sea fowl. At one time of the year, as about the middle of October, birds which we call cahouze and pimlicos come in. The calhouze continue 'til the beginning of June in great abundance. They are

bigger bodied than a pigeon and of a very firm and good flesh. They are taken with ease. If one does but sit down in a dark night and make a noise, there will more come to him than he shall be able to kill. Some have told me that they have taken twelve or fourteen dozen in an hour. When the cahouze's time is out, other birds called noddies and sandy birds come in, and continue till the latter end of August.

Here is no kind of beasts but hogs and cats, and they but in one or two places which are thought to come at first by means of ship-wreck. The hogs were manic, but are now brought to a small number. The calves and lambs that we brought out of England did prosper exceedingly till the hunters met with them. The cocks and hens we brought with us do prosper and increase much, and are a great comfort unto us.

And now that we have found out the right seasons of the year to set come, we are like (by the blessing of God) to have plenty of this country's wheat, which is very good, large, and fair, and more hearty and strong than our English wheat.

Young children do thrive and grow up exceeding well. The climate is so temperate and agreeable to our English constitutions. The air is very wholesome and not subject to such contagious infections as it is in England.

The longest day in the year is fourteen hours and the shortest ten from sun to sun. When it is noon in England, it is about eight of the clock in the morning with us. The seasons of the year are two—a hot season that begins about the middle of May and continues to the middle of August, all the rest of the year is a continual spring. The heat of summer is not so extreme but it may be well endured. Fresh gales of wind we have every day. The greatest annoyance are flies, for two-and-a-half months they are almost as busy in England. Long and drizzling rain is seldom seen, but great showers with great drops very often. Thunder and lightning do no such hurt here as in England. Snow, hail, frost, thick and foggy mists we have none. The night is lighter and more comfortable here than in England.

The birds make a noise almost all night, but not with such pleasant tunes as the larks and other birds do in England. Here is no bird that sings in the day but the sparrow, the robin-redbreast, and the robin-williams.

The earth is very fertile, and so mellow and gentle, as it needs neither plowing nor digging, so that after the wood is taken off, the grass and weeds be burnt and destroyed, and the common business of fortifying be once ended, men shall live here in much ease, without such moiling and toiling as in England. The greatest labour will be in worming and pruning of some plants, which children may do as well, and better, than men.

I wish that all they that hereafter shall come hither out of England would consider with themselves that these lands were never inhabited till now, and that therefore they must of necessity labour hard at first and be contented to endure hardness and some want of many necessaries.

In time (by the grace of God) the storehouse shall be furnished with all necessaries for such as have money, and they that have not shall be trusted. But now in regard that the greatest part of the people that be here came very rashly and carelessly, not considering whither they went nor what they might in time have need of, and think that all that can be brought into the store as yet will be taken up by them. And therefore I advise such as are to come to bring (everyone that is able) a barrel or two of biscuits for his own eating 'till he has cleared his ground and has wheat of his own. Also let them bring oil, vinegar, aqua-vita, barrel butter, pots, kettles, frying-pans, trivets, bowls, trays, tankards or pots to drink in, pails to fetch water in, and little barrels or jars to keep it in for their drink. The water is very good and wholesome, such as many do delight in.

Also let them bring tongs, fire shovels, bellows, tinder-boxes, brimstone, flint-stones and steels, spits, dripping-pans, candlesticks, lamps, locks, spades, shovels, pickaxes, hatchets, whetstones, saws, hammers, piercers, pincers, and nails of all sorts—so many as will serve to build a house with—and leather to mend their shoes, and sparrow-bills, or nails to drive into them, else the rocks will bare them out quickly. Also let them bring bedding; flock beds are better than feather-beds. And for apparel for the summer, let them bring canvas or stuffs; blue linen and good buckram the women do wish for.

Also let them not forget to bring castle soap, pins, points, laces, needles, thread, thimbles, sheers, and scissors. Also let them bring strong fishing lines of 12 or 14 fathoms long, and some small of whip cords and strong hooks, the biggest and as diverse as they can, and some small hooks for bream.

And above all things have a care to leave their sins behind them and to come hither, as it were, into a new world. And for the comfort of their souls let them bring Bibles and other good books. And pack up all their small stuff in barrels; the barrels will afterwards serve them for many good uses.

Idle persons and such as are given to filching do live here in great misery. So also do all whorish women in great disgrace, which makes them weep and sigh with tears to wish themselves in England again. And for their comfort, to cool them a little, they are now and then towed at a boats tail up and down the harbour. So were a couple served together, a man and a woman that came in the ship that came in, and so have diverse others. Also, all such as are profaners of the Sabbath and come to the service of God but when they list, I see that God finds them out and denies them His blessing.

All they that have grace to serve God are sure to prosper and live comfortably, because God has said "Behold my servants shall eat, etc." Isaiah 65:13–14, Psalm 33:18–19; Psalm 34:10, Psalm 37:34. The God of Peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, etc. Hebrews 13:20–21.

Lewis Hughes, *A Letter Sent in to England from the Summer Islands* (London: Welby, 1615) [modernized]