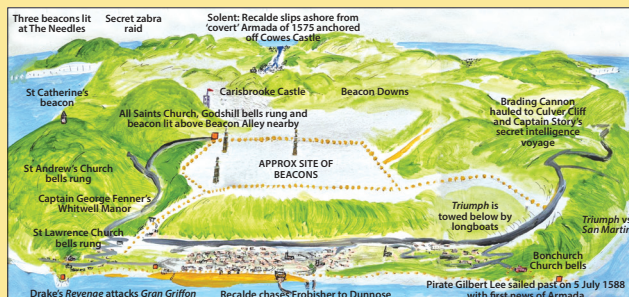




- Governor of the Isle of Wight, Sir George Carey, supplied another of his ships 'Cure's Ship' (a play on his name) which was used as one of the eight Fire Ships adopted by Drake to scatter the Armada off Calais.
- Carey was secretly involved in Raleigh's first colony at Roanoke in America in 1585 to import sassafras for its supposed medical qualities.
- Of the Spanish off Dunnose, Recalde had slipped ashore at Cowes from the earlier intelligence-gathering 'Covert' Spanish Armada of 44 ships that visited south coast harbours in 1575 feigning bad Channel weather and in 1580 charted the coast around the Irish Dingle Peninsula when establishing a Papal fort and harbour at Smerwick Bay. Recalde's brilliant seamanship enabled him to shepherd a number of crippled vessels through the jagged Irish coast back to Spain only to die just a few days after.
- Fortifications manned against the Spanish Armada included Yarmouth Castle designed by Giambelli, creator of 'hell-burner' fire ships that destroyed Farnese's fortifications across the Sheldt at Antwerp in 1585 – inspiring Drake to deploy fire-ships off St John's Roads Calais in 1588 causing the Armada to chop anchors and sail at the mercy of the 'great storm'.
- Lee's 'Rat o' Wight' sailing with Effingham's squadron to Dunnose subsequently chased the Armada to Newcastle, 'Rat' eventually joining Drake's captured 'Rosario' at Chatham as a dry dock exhibit in 1589.



Map of the Isle of Wight in 1600 by William White showing Beacon locations



Further reading

Go to *The Isle of Wight Armada Coast, 1588* by David Baldwin
MVO RVM available at The Longshoreman's Museum,
Ventnor Esplanade PO38 1JT
and Medina Bookshop, Cowes PO31 7RR



Acknowledgements

Ventnor Town Council, South Wight Chronicle
and Abby Wilkinson



THE ARMADA COAST 1588



Beacon Trail



In 1588 the Spanish Armada were spied sailing off our South Coast. With this Heritage Trail you will see the locations of the Beacons that alerted the Realm and view the scenes of extraordinary sea battles



Vischer's 1588 engraving of the Spanish Armada at the Battle of Dunnose with four Beacons aligned, from left to right: St Boniface Down; Nansen Hill, Shanklin Down above the Chine and Mersley Down Beacon above Haseley Manor





"ARMADA COAST 1588" comprises two Heritage Trails along Ventnor's Coast and Downs that acknowledge the arrival of the Spanish Armada on the 25th July 1588 off its coastline from St Lawrence to Bonchurch, culminating in the great battle off Dunnose.

That night at 8 o'clock, George Carey, Governor, wrote from Carisbrooke Castle to the Earl of Sussex:

"This morning began a great fight betwixt both fleets, south of this island 6 leagues, which continued from five of the clock until ten, with so great expense of powder and bullet, that during the said time the shot continued so thick together that it might rather have been judged a skirmish with small shot on land than a fight with great shot on sea."

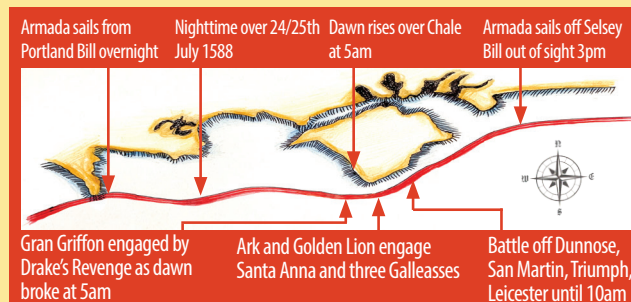
By six leagues (18 miles) Carey meant the length of the engagement amounting to 18 miles from start to finish (ie. from Chale at 5am to Dunnose at 10am to South of Selsey Bill and out of sight by 3pm). Another English account noted the proximity:

"Upon Thursday 25th, over against Dunnose, part of the Isle of Wight, the Lord Admiral, espying Captain

Captain George Fenner of Whitwell Manor, fought off Dunnose



Frobisher... with a few other ships to be in a sharp fight with the enemy, and fearing they should be distressed, did, with five of his best ships, bear up towards the admiral of the Spanish fleet, and so, breaking into the heart of them, began a very sharp fight, being within two or here score one of the another, until they had cleared Captain Frobisher



and made them give place" (from a 'Declaration of the Proceeding of the Two Fleets'.

Spanish accounts from those serving aboard the Armada record close actions off the Isle of Wight not to be found in English logs, such as Drake's attack on the 'Gran Griffon', while the '1588 Astor' charts, saved for the Realm at the National Museum of the Royal Navy in 2021, confirm this positioning.

- Beacons lit from the Needles eastwards along the coastal Downs above Niton, St Lawrence and Bonchurch as ships of the Armada emerged from early dawn following the skirmish off Portland Bill the previous evening.
- Church bells in the coastal villages of Chale, Niton, St Lawrence and Bonchurch were rung to alert the local militia and community

- Church 'Gun House' cannons were hauled to the clifftops to deter potential landings, including Brading's to Culver Cliff.

- Off Niton and St Lawrence Francis Drake captaining 'Revenge' encircled the Gran Griffon, firing 70 shots into her whilst passing three times along her sides and stern but failed to take or sink her. Gran Griffon, with Araucana Chickens (South American descendants from the ship that carried these bartered chickens but which mutinied back to Spain from Magellan's voyage in 1520), was eventually wrecked on Fair Isle with all crew, and chickens, making it ashore there. Direct descendants of these Araucana chickens are still bred in Shetland, called 'Galleon Chickens'.
- Frobisher captaining the 'Triumph' took station leeward of the Armada off Luccombe Bay and fought, aided by longboat oarsmen, to keep the Armada from potentially occupying Shanklin or Sandown Bay and coming ashore.
- Four ships from the River Medina were engaged for service with the English Navy, in addition to the 'Rat o'Wight' captained by Gilbert Lea on Walsingham's espionage duties.
- The Earl of Sussex commissioned a nighttime covert intelligence-gathering voyage towards Spain from Brading Haven under Captain Story.

Almirante Juan Martinez de Recalde, Mayor of Bilbao, fought off Dunnose

