

to join with them. Thomas Harman, a Sudbourne husbandman, said he saw Spicer carried to Melton Gaol accompanied by 30 horsemen, with a drum beating, and John Shyming, the smith, agreed adding that he actually went with them to Melton.¹³

Another document found among the records in Star Chamber and copied in 1791 contains depositions in support of Willoughby's claims and dates from 1554. The court had appointed the same Sir William Drury and Clement Higham to investigate the matter a few days after the other investigation. The main deponent was Christopher Hill, parson of Ufford, another of Willoughby's manors, who said that Willoughby had kept a court baron and collected fines since 1527, following the death of Lady Mary Willoughby who held the manor of Orford in jointure.

The small manor of Sturmys was separate and its courts were held on behalf of Sir Anthony Wingfield. The windmill had been built around 1524 on ground owned by Willoughby. The parson said that shack was allowed in the fields but not the marshes, and poor folk used to mow and cut brakes (bracken) in Lady Mary's time. For some reason the parson made reference to the dispute about the Gull between Willoughby and William Forth, settled long before in 1548. The other deponents said virtually the same as each other, that for the previous eight or ten years Willoughby had appointed one burgess and the town the other. They were Thomas Spicer, John and Robert Cooke, the former being Spicer's brother-in-law, William Betell, John Johnson and John Bucbell (Buckle?)¹⁴. Sir William Drury and Clement High signed each page of both sets of depositions and certified them at the end.

There is another farcical story of a confrontation with Spicer. A fugitive named John Crane was pursued by the mercer John Watson, and the fugitive dropped a 'fardell trussed', which is a large bag or bundle of some sort. Pawling ordered that the other constable, John Cooke, should be present when the fardell was opened. An argument broke out between Pawling and Spicer over who should keep the contents and the latter drew his dagger and struck Pawling, drawing blood. There were ten witnesses who gave evidence.¹⁵

It appears that the Court of Star Chamber finally began to investigate all these matters and earlier ones, and this document, copied in 1791, set out

questions to be answered, starting some 15 years previously. It asked about the election of two burgesses, what happened when one died, who appointed constables and who punished offenders, who controlled the placing of stall boats in the Haven, the regulations appertaining to herrings brought to the town by 'foreigners', were boats allowed to fish in the 'Cooke Stoole dyche' and the Haven, did the burgesses 'enjoy' the windmill and could their cattle graze on certain fields, did the poor cut bracken on some fields and could cattle graze on verges? Did the burgesses freely use a shambles in the Market Place charged by the lord who held the Castle? How many highways were 'interrupted'? The Court also asked about the disputes between Pawling and Spicer, both the stocks incident and the fardell. Unfortunately we do not know what answers were given, but they were put in defence of Pawling and others against the charges of Lord Willoughby.¹⁶

Diarmaid MacCulloch summarised the events before and after the rising of 1549 in East Anglia. The burgesses claimed a royal charter from before the reign of King Edward II, whilst Lord Willoughby maintained Orford was his seigneurial borough. The burgesses saw the opportunity to harass their opponents, placing Spicer in the stocks for three days and then marching him off to Melton Gaol in which parish the rebels' camp was situated.

The rising ended without bloodshed in Suffolk, although the story was different in Norfolk where as many as 2,000 died at Dussingdale. Lord Willoughby was a formidable enemy to challenge. In 1549 he led 1,500 men from Lincolnshire to put down the rebels in King's Lynn and Walsingham before joining the Earl of Warwick confronting Kett's men near Norwich.¹⁷

Lord Willoughby was on the offensive again in October 1553 when he committed John Johnson, Walter Edy and William Betell to Marshallsea Prison for an attack on Spicer while he was collecting rents. The three were accused of removing Spicer's fardell, his blue coat, doublet and shirt, and a pair of fine linen forsleeves, along with a hatchet, two axes and a flail. These were valued at 40 shillings.¹⁸

It is not clear how much longer this bitter dispute continued, but Thomas Manning, who made his will in 1554, left the large sum of £25 (more than £7,000 in today's money) to the townsmen of Orford towards