

Ralph Brooke
A discoverie of certaine errorrs . . . in the
much commended Britannia . . .
[London]
[1599]

A
DISCOVERIE
OF CERTAINE
ERROVRS PVBLI=
SHED IN PRINT IN
the much commended
Britannia. 1594.

Very preiudiciall to the discentes and
successions of the auncient Nobilitie
of this Realme.

By Yorke Herault.

*Quam quisque norit artem, in
hac se exerceat.*

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TO MAISTER CAMDEN.

Where as You expect thanks at the
handes of her Maiesties Heraults, for en=
termedling so *sparingly* and *gently* with
that, which appertaineth to their profes=
sion. Contrarie to your expectation, and
answerable to your deserts, my selfe (be=
ing the most vnable) haue vndertaken
to answeere your vnkinde speeches: as also your vntrue, and
erronious writing touching matters of our profession and
science, published in your *Britannia*. In deede you dealt
but *sparingly*, and after a sort *gently* (as you say) in the hand=
ling of our misteries at the first: but in your fourth and last
Edition (though your Preface spake as it did, *sparingly still*)
yet your Booke hath swelled with large additions of He=
rauldrie: in which you haue (by your patience) been too
busie, and venterous; except your proceedinges, in those
poyntes, had been more firmly grounded vpon experience.
And I doubt not, but the growth and encrease of your Booke
hath sprung from some of those Heraults labours, which
you so much holde in scorne. Nay, it can not be denyed,
but since the death of Glouer, late Somerset Herault. 1588.
you haue gleaned not onely handfuls, but whole sheaues,
out of his industrious collections, being reserued in the Li=
brarie of that Honorable Lord Treasurer deceased, and by
that meanes incommoned to your vse, and free recourse.
I would his Gloues might haue fitted your handes in such
sort, as you might haue smoothly carried them away: his
Notes (I meane) I wish you had neither misunderstood,

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nor misreported; as contrariwise you haue, in such palpa=
ble maner, that (me thinks) euer hereafter you should distrust
your selfe in the search of such mysticall poyntes, without
the aduice of an Herault better experimented then your
selfe. I prognosticate alreadie, . . .

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... and then,

by attainture fell vnto the crowne. As in my booke, entituled *the Nobilitie of England*, which I meane shortly (God willing) to publish, you may see at large.

Tunbridge. *Richard Earle of Clare, builded the Castle of Tunbridge, having had the said Tunbridge in exchange for Brionie in Normandie: for his grandfather Godfrey, base sonne of William the second, Duke of Normandie, was Earle of Aniou & Brionie. Pa. 243.*

This discent of Godfrey Earle of Aniou, and Brionie, is forreine, and bredde beyond the Seas in Normandie, from whence you haue had little intelligence: & therefore not so much to be condemned, for mistaking the right father of the saide Godfrey, making him the sonne of William the second duke of Normandy, when as he was sonne to Richard the first Duke of Normandie. Which fault (notwithstanding) I woulde wish you to amende in your next edition: and also to take away from this Richard (his grandchilde) the title of Earle, vntill such time as you haue a better commission for making of Earles. And for your warrant to doe this, you shall haue both the booke of Domesday, and diuerse charters of William the Conqueror, wherein the said Richard was a witnesse by the name onely of Richard Fitz-Gilbert, without any other title of honour.

Leeds castle. *The Creuecueurs, (so named de crepito-corde) builded the Castell of Leedes: of which familie, the first was Robert, who had issue Daniell, that was father to Robert, who had issue Hamon, which married the daughter and heire of the Baron of*

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Folkestone, and by her had issue Hamon, the father of Robert, who wanting issue, gaue his patrimonie to King Edwarde the first. Pag. 244.

Folkestone. *The familie of Abrinces were Barons of Folkestone: from whom, by marriage, the same went to Hamon de Creuecueur, and by his daughter to Iohn of Sandwich: whose grandchilde by his sonne Iohn, (named Iulian) carried that title to Iohn Sea-graue. Pag. 259.*

To reconcile your contradictions, in these two titles of Leedes Castle, and Folkestone, I thinke it a verie harde matter: for in the first you say, *That Hamon Creuecueur (who married the daughter and heire of the Baron of Folkestone (had issue Hamon, that succeeded him: which Hamon had issue Robert, who dying without issue, gaue his patrimonie to king Edwarde the first.* And after, in the title of Folkestone you affirme the contrarie: saying, *That the same Hamon had issue a daughter that carried Folkestone, by her marriage, to Iohn of Sandwich.* By which thus still ouermuch busying your selfe in matters passing your skill, it maketh you so forgetfull, that oftentimes you are faine to vtter matters incoherent, and much contradictorie. Wherefore vnderstande, that Hamon Creuecueur, (who you say married the daughter and heire of the Baron of Folkestone) had issue Hamon, who succeeded his father: and he had issue Robert, (which died without issue) and foure daughters: Eleonor married to Bertram Criell, Agnes to Iohn of Sandwich, Isolde to Nicholas Lenham, and Isabell to Henrie Hawt. Of which foure daughters you haue left out the first, and two last, naming but onely the second, married to Iohn of Sandwich: who was not the daughter of the first Hamon (as you affirme) but of the second, whom you

haue casseered out of this discent. And whereas, in the title of Leedes castle, you say, that the last Robert Creuecueur, dying without issue, gaue his patrimonie to K. Edward the first. Be=

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fore I answer thereunto, I first demaund of you, how may that be? When your selfe, in the title of Folkstone, haue set downe the said Roberts sister to carie Folkestone by her marriage to Iohn of Sandwich: which was a part of the said Roberts patri= mony. And for direct prooffe, that the said Robert did not giue his patrimony to king Edward the first (as you haue said:) it appeareth by an inquisition taken after the death of the saide Robert, in the thirtieth yeare of King Edward the first, that his foresaide foure sisters were his heires, and that Eleonore the eldest had for her part of her brothers inheritance, the Man= nor of Estwell in Kent, and Agnes the second sister had Folkestone: the other two had other landes that descended to the said Robert from his auncestors, which I take to be his patrimonie.

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An inforced
Conclusion.

When as I had collected readie for the Presse, so many of your defectes and errors, (published in your so highly commended *Britannia*) as might well haue satisfied the worlde, that I vndertooke not this worke in vaine, nor yet without good cause me moouing thereunto. Then was I stayed in the printing thereof, by the disturbance and indirect dealing of your friendes the Stationers, (who heretofore haue made no small gaine of your foure former Impressions) and thereby constraigned abruptly heere to make an ende, suppressing a great part of my first pretended purpose: yet before I doe ende, I thinke it my duetie, heere to put the Nobilitie in minde, that your Booke now going in hand, may be both seene, and alowed, before it goe to the Presse, by such as haue both skill, and authoritie so to doe: (I meane the Earle Marshall) and not to passe as be= fore it hath done, to the preiudice of so many honou= rable Families. . . .

<I doubt whether anyone will want to read this book. It was not completed, not properly published; some copies got into circulation, but they lack the printer's name. They also lack a date; but it is clear from internal evidence that the book was going through the press in 1598–9. (Lord Burghley was already dead: he died in August 1598. By that time, Camden had been parachuted into the Heralds' office as Clarenceux king of arms; it is a deliberate discourtesy on Brooke's part, therefore, to refer to him as 'Maister Camden', rather than as 'Maister Clarenceux.')

Brooke did have a point. It is true that there are many errors in Camden's book, as well as some feeble jokes at the heralds' expense. It is also true, no doubt, that Camden was a difficult man to argue with, unused to being contradicted. (He was, after all, a schoolmaster by profession.) But that would not excuse the style of Brooke's critique, even if the substance of it were sound; and Brooke, as a matter of fact, is often wrong – sometimes more so than Camden.

– C.F. March 2011.>