

**U DP141**

**Contract for the building  
of a powder tower  
by Sir William Pritchard**

**post 1672**

**Biographical Background:**

**Sir William Pritchard** (or Prichard) was born circa 1632 and was a merchant taylor and politician. In 1672 he was appointed Sheriff of London and knighted later the same year before being elected Lord Mayor in 1682. By 1687, he had lost favour at court and was displaced, alongside other aldermen, for opposing efforts by the king for liberty of conscience. It seems he was shortly restored to favour but refused to act as intermediary mayor in 1688. In other political endeavours, he was elected as Member of Parliament for the City of London three times, in May 1685, March 1690 and finally in August 1702.

He married Sarah Coke of Kingsthorp and they had three sons and a daughter. Pritchard died in London on 20 February 1705 but was buried in Great Lynford, Buckinghamshire where he had bought the manor in 1683. Pritchard had founded an almshouse and school buildings in Great Lynford and his widow continued his benefaction.

It is believed that the contract relates to proposed works at **Tilbury Fort**. Tilbury Fort is situated on the north bank of the River Thames, in Essex and was designed as part of a series of defences to protect London from attack from the sea. The first building at Tilbury was the blockhouse, built in 1539 during the reign of Henry VIII. Defences were later reinforced with earthworks and a palisade when England was threatened by the Spanish Armada. During the Civil War it was held by Parliament but was never besieged by the Royalists even though it suffered neglect.

Later work was carried out on the fort under Charles II in the 1670s-1680s and resulted in the pentagon design seen today. Two powder magazines were also completed in 1716. In 1746 the fort hosted a large number of prisoners captured after the Battle of Culloden. Further work to improve the defences was carried out in the nineteenth century under Captain Charles Gordon, whilst the Henry VIII blockhouse was demolished c. 1867. The only military action seen by the fort was during the First World War, when anti-aircraft guns managed to shoot down a Zeppelin. Finally decommissioned in 1950, the fort eventually came under the care of the English Heritage.

**Custodial history:**

Purchased from Miss E. Bocking of Norwich with U DP136-141 between 17 Nov 1949-2 Oct 1951

**Description:**

This small collection contains a contract for the erection of a powder tower and work on other buildings at Tilbury (possibly Tilbury Fort) by Sir William Pritchard.

**Extent:** 1 item

**Related material:**

Other repositories:

Great Linford: Sir William Pritchard's Educational Foundation [The National Archives, ref. ED 49/325]

**Access conditions:**

Access will be granted to any accredited reader

U DP141/1	Contract for the erection of a powder tower and work on other buildings at Tilbury, possibly Tilbury Fort The contract was made with Sir William Pritchard (1632-1705) who described himself as 'merchant taylor' and was mayor of London. The document is undated but is probably from after 1672 when Pritchard was made Sheriff of London. The contract also mentions agreements regarding work on the triangle pallisades, the Great Gates, the blockhouse and the parapet. 1 item	post 1672
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