

Gang of Villains in Castle Rising 1813

Letter from H Englestown (*Mayor of Rising*) to Rt. Hon Earl Cholmondely Cholmondely House London From Archives at Houghton Hall 20 Nov 2012

My Lord

The contents of your Lordship's last letter really surprised me, but from the information I received from Mr Herrington, it is obvious that it originated in consequence of a letter from Mr. Herrington to Mr Breat(?) relative to the proceeding at Castle Rising.

It therefore becomes necessary into a detail of such circumstances as have occurred since my letter on the subject. After the prisoner had been held in custody in Castle Rising some days – where we had no place to confine him but an alehouse Mr Bellamy thought it would be advisable to send him to Norwich Castle being the general county jail. He had every reason to think he would be accepted – the warrant of commitment was made out, the prisoners sent regularly accepted by the gaoler of the circumstances Mr Herrington was informed and signified his approbation.

The gaoler, after having taken charge of the prisoner was informed by the prisoner what had occurred previous to the commitment to the Castle and took the opinion of Mr Plumtre (?) the visiting magistrate of the Castle who advised him not to take custody of the prisoner. Mr Plumtre immediately wrote to me on the subject without saying positively that the prisoner was discharged – I answered him by return of post and requested that he would allow the prisoner to be detained till I could send for him. I observed that it might be attended with dangerous consequences. To let such a dangerous character again loose on the Borough without suffering any punishment for the offence committed I tend to confirm the opinion that whatever offences were committed in Castle Rising, the magistrates had no authority to take cognisance of them. I referred him to Mr Bellamy our recorder, who would give him fuller detail of the circumstances and the grounds on which we had made the commitment in consequence of which a trail of correspondence took place between them, every letter of which as it came to my knowledge was immediately forwarded to Mr Herrington. How I can have misunderstood your Lordship or in any way acted contrary to your express direction I really cannot judge. If there has been a deficiency on the point of etiquette on the part of Mr Bellamy to Mr Herrington, or if he has not been sufficiently communicative, it is impossible to account for.

I beg to add that the process has been conducted by Mr Bellamy in his judicial capacity as recorder of the Borough with an efficient authority without calling on me to sign a single document or to sanction any of the proceedings. No misunderstanding can possibly take place between me and the gaoling magistrates of the County as in no instance have I divulged a single sentence of what had been entrusted to me, excepting to Mr Herrington as directed.

Your Lordship will probably recollect that in my last I stated that a gang of villains infested this neighbourhood and that burglaries and other depredations were frequently committed; since which they have been still more so; I absolutely created such an alarm that I can venture

to assert that scarcely an individual in Castle Rising or its purlieu who had anything to lose, but have slept with loaded firearms in his bedroom for the last three weeks. A bow street officer has been sent and no less than 9 men with capital offences have been apprehended from the adjoining villages and committed to the Castle in the last 5 days.

Several other information have been given, but to the honour of Castle Rising be it said, none of the gang resides in any part of the purlieu, nor do I hear that a single suspicion attach to it. Mr Howard is expected in London in the course of next week.

I am, your Lordship

H Englestown.