

## **BUSINESS AND TREASON: THE BROUGHTON PLOTTERS,**

(The Providence<sup>1</sup> Island Company and Saybrook)

*Nicholas J. Allen*

*'My deare wife, I am verylye persuaded God will bring some heavey affliction upon this lande, and that speedlye ... if the Lord seeth it will be good for us, he will provide shelter and a hiding place for us and others.'*  
John Winthrop, Governor of Saybrook, 1635 (in a letter to his wife dated 1629).

### **Introduction**

Visitors to Broughton Castle, after viewing the rooms used by generations of the Fiennes family for living and socialising, make their way to, or if guided are shewn, the Council Chamber which is at the back and very top of the house. There they will very likely be told, or read in the guide book, that this room is where William Fiennes, eighth Lord Saye and Sele, his son Nathaniel and a group of like-minded men such as Lord Brooke, John Hampden, John Pym, Oliver St John, Lord Warwick and Sir Harry Vane planned their opposition to King Charles' government. The visitor will, very likely, be also told that they used a business venture in the Caribbean, namely the Providence Island Company, as a cover for these political meetings.

So why did a group of powerful peers, landed gentry, politicians and businessmen meet, over what seems to be many years, plotting some form of opposition to the King's government – an exceedingly dangerous pastime. The number of men involved and the many meeting places used must have created some major problems of security, and not necessarily stemming from just the participants. Their families and servants must all have been very discreet and loyal, for there is no record of any of the participants being caught at what would have been considered traitorous activities.

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<sup>1</sup> '... that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence.'  
*Acts 24 v.2.*