

# THE BATTLE OF *Landguard*



1667 did not get off to the best start for England. In the previous few years England had faced The Great Plague, The Great Fire of London and was facing a third year of warfare against the Dutch. Despite this, the people of Suffolk managed to get on with their day to day lives.

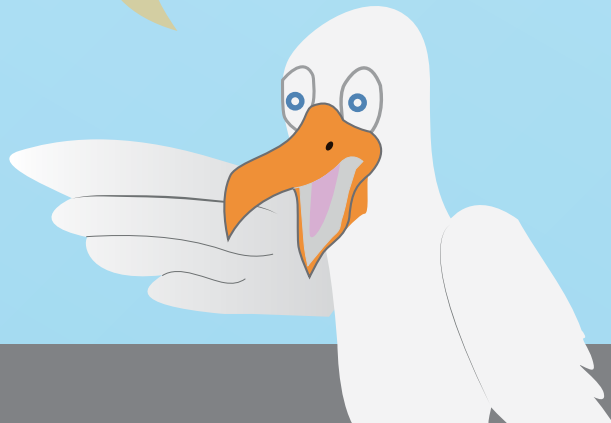
In 1667 England was less powerful than it would become. It was just a small island on the edge of Europe. No European country thought that it would see the English and later the British, rule the waves and build the ultimate maritime and colonial power, at the centre of global trade - The British Empire!

In the 1600s it was the Dutch who were the top naval power in Europe

instead, with large colonies in Africa and Asia. They wanted to stop England taking over as the most important trading empire in the world and this led to several wars between the English and the Dutch. The Dutch couldn't reverse the victories the English had during the First Anglo-Dutch War (1652-1654). But the Dutch would do everything in their power to prevent the English dominating trade on the North Sea in the 1660s.

That meant WAR!!! The Second Anglo Dutch War took place between 1665 and 1667 and was a race to form big trading empires. The English had declared war but by 1667 were losing following a surprise attack on the English Navy at Chatham.

The English, French and Dutch were the main powers forming overseas trading empires in the 1600s. They all wished to trade the expensive goods of the New World such as furs from North America and spices from India. Trade lay behind empire building and would push the English and Dutch towards a third war with each other again in the 1670s.



After the Dutch had attacked the English ships in the Medway, it was very likely the Dutch would come and attack the ships and shipyards in Harwich, another important port of England. Located opposite across the estuary was Landguard Fort which defended Harwich and would face the Dutch in July 1667.



The man in charge of all the soldiers and militia in Suffolk was the Earl of Suffolk. He knew he had to prepare to face the troops the Dutch would land to attack Harwich, but he didn't know where that would be. So he had hundreds of his militia, marching and riding up and down the Suffolk coast, waiting to see where the Dutch would land. At the all-important Landguard Fort, troops were based to defend it and unlike the militia they were veteran soldiers who had fought in many battles during the war on-board ship.

They were the perfect men to protect Harwich at Landguard Fort. They were known as the Lord High Admirals Regiment (Duke of York and Albany's Maritime Regiment of Foot) later to become part of the Royal Marines. These men were led by Captain Nathaniel Darrell, who was described as a man *"well of great fidelity to his king, as his bravery against the enemy"*. It was these men which would face the Dutch attack on 3rd of July 1667.

A cartoon illustration of Captain Nathaniel Darrell. He is a man with a large nose, wearing a black hat with a red band, a yellow tunic with a white ruffled collar, and a red sash. He is holding a sword. The background shows a coastal scene with a fort and the sea.

CAPTAIN DARRELL

At sea following his successful attack on the English ships on the Medway at Chatham, the Dutch Admiral De Ruyter, was organising his ships and his troops to attack Harwich and Landguard. His fleet numbered around 51+ ships and about 12,000 men. He had even sailed past Harwich trying to distract the troops to follow him. This was a piece of luck as many militia followed him up the coast. At first, he didn't want to distract them away but as the wind forced him north, he decided to try and fool the English. The following day he was sailing back towards

Landguard, and he could get there faster than the militia could on the land.

At 4am a few days previously De Ruyter had gathered his officers and planned his attack on the fort. He would land 1474 soldiers and sailors and assault the fort on the 2nd of July supported by Dutch naval ships bombarding the fort. They would capture the fort so they could then attack Harwich. The aim was to put more pressure on the English to sign a peace treaty already in discussion following the raid on the Medway.

A cartoon illustration of Admiral De Ruyter. He is a man with long dark hair and a large mustache, wearing a grey tunic with a white ruffled collar and a yellow sash. He is looking towards the left. The background shows a fleet of Dutch ships on the sea.

ADMIRAL DE RUYTER

The English sank ships in the mouth of the river to stop Dutch ships from entering and reaching Harwich.

The result of the battle was due to a variety of reasons on each side, including the effects of the weather, the understanding of the Suffolk coast and knowledge of what lay beneath the waves of the sea.



During the attack a brave little English galliot got close to the shore firing on the Dutch and turned the pebbles and shingle of the beach into deadly pieces of shrapnel, by firing directly into the shingle.

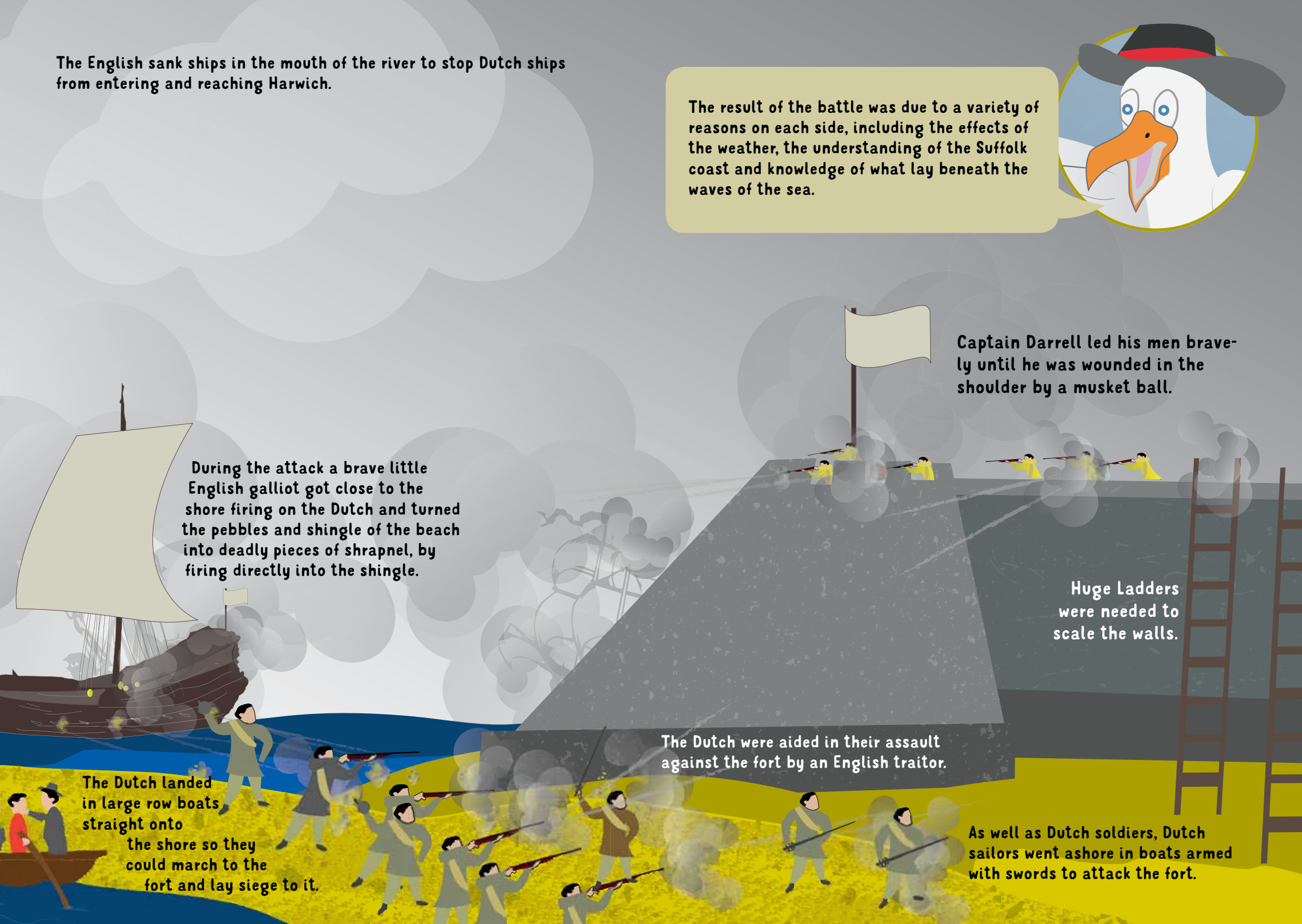
Captain Darrell led his men bravely until he was wounded in the shoulder by a musket ball.

Huge Ladders were needed to scale the walls.

The Dutch were aided in their assault against the fort by an English traitor.

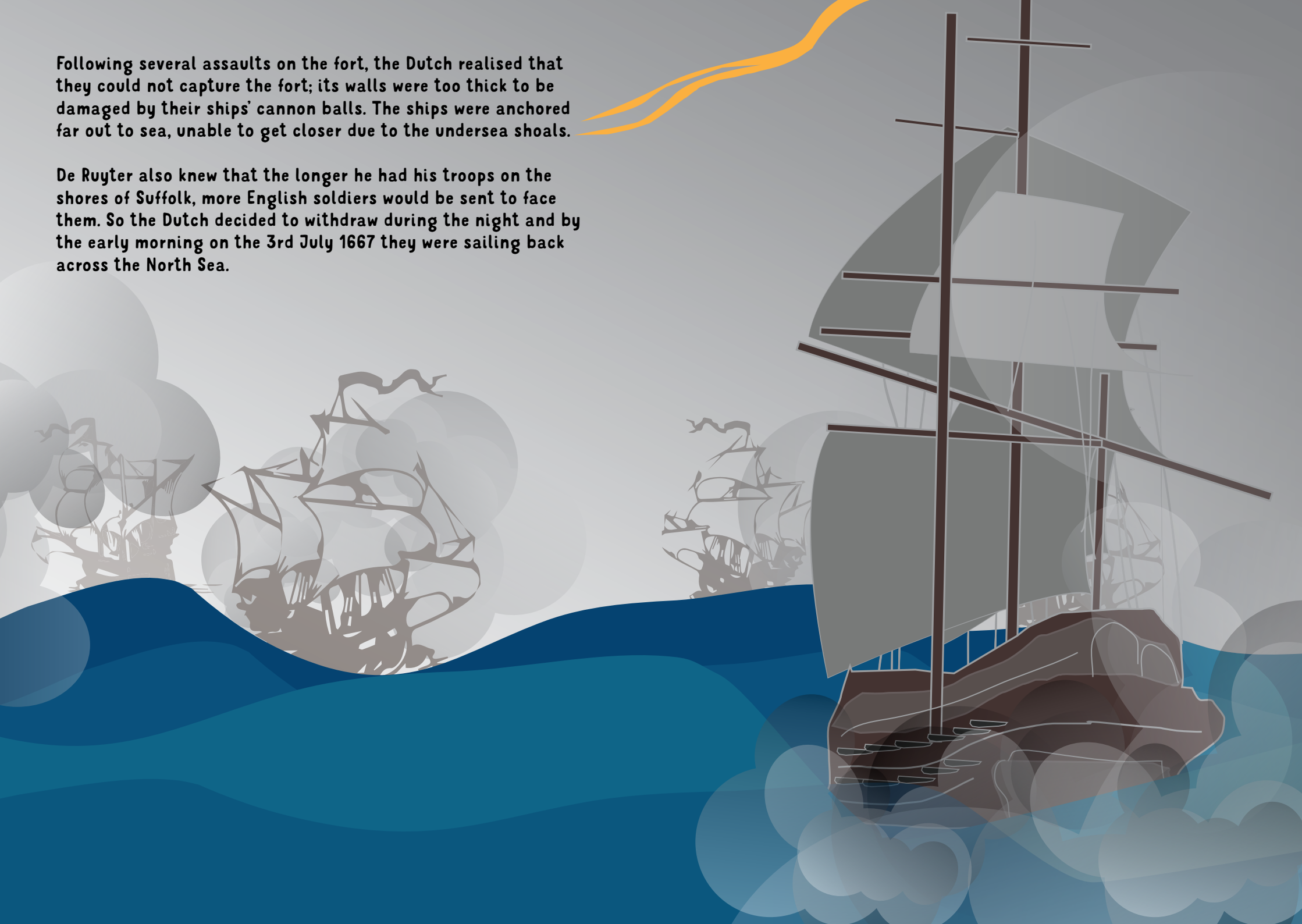
The Dutch landed in large row boats straight onto the shore so they could march to the fort and lay siege to it.

As well as Dutch soldiers, Dutch sailors went ashore in boats armed with swords to attack the fort.



Following several assaults on the fort, the Dutch realised that they could not capture the fort; its walls were too thick to be damaged by their ships' cannon balls. The ships were anchored far out to sea, unable to get closer due to the undersea shoals.

De Ruyter also knew that the longer he had his troops on the shores of Suffolk, more English soldiers would be sent to face them. So the Dutch decided to withdraw during the night and by the early morning on the 3rd July 1667 they were sailing back across the North Sea.



# Publication of Peace

The Dutch had failed to raid Harwich and continue their victories along the East Coast. They had been stopped from causing more damage to the English as a result of the battle at Landguard Fort.

July 1667

The peace treaty was signed on 31st July 1667 and following it the English could breathe a sigh of relief. The Dutch controlled the North Sea following the victory and it was damaging to the English but they were allowed to keep islands in the Caribbean which would become important parts of its future empire. They also gained New Amsterdam which would become the future city of New York in America.

As a famous historian once said 'The Second Anglo Dutch War was a defeat for England but by no means was it the serious setback to her maritime and colonial ambitions which it seemed it might become early in 1667'. The English didn't win but they certainly didn't lose a lot from the war. England would continue to explore the world and expand its trade networks throughout the next 100 years and beyond. This small battle was just another chapter in the origin of the British Empire and like many parts of its story it has strong links to Suffolk.



England



Dutch Republic

## Glossary

### ASSAULT

A military attack on an enemy position.

### COLONIES

A country or area under control of another country and occupied and ruled by that country.

### ESTUARY

The mouth of a river.

### EMPIRE

A group of colonies ruled over by another country usually a territory of greater extent than that of the nation that is in control.

### FIDELITY

Staying loyal and trustworthy.

### GALLIOT

A single-masted small fast boat.

### MARITIME

Something that is connected with the sea, especially in relation to seaborne trade or naval matters.

### MEDWAY

A river in South East England, flowing through Kent and the Medway towns (Rochester, Chatham, and Gillingham) to the mouth of the Thames. Length: 70 miles.

### MILITIA

A military force that is raised from the local people when required in an emergency.

### NAVAL

Belonging to, relating to, or involving a country's navy

### NEW WORLD

A name for the Americas, during the time of the early exploration and settlement of European colonies in the Americas.

### PEACE TREATY

A peace treaty is usually an agreement between hostile countries which formally ends a state of war between them.

### RAID

A rapid surprise attack on an enemy.

### ROYAL MARINES

A British armed service (part of the Royal Navy), trained for service at sea, or on land under specific circumstances.

### SHOAL

A sandbank under the water, which is exposed above the surface of the water at low tide, and dangerous to ships when submerged underwater.

### TRADE NETWORKS

A network that connects people, places and countries that interact through buying, selling, or exchanging goods with each other.



## **Landguard Fort**

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Written by Andrew Parker  
Designed and Illustrated by Matt Finch