

On Aug. 11, 1758, Nicholas Wingfield and Adams Hyde, of Hastings, masters of two privateer cutters, piratically boarded the Danish ship " Der Reisende Jacob," on board of which was the Marquis Pignatelli, Ambassador Extraordinary from his Catholic Majesty to the Court of Denmark ; assaulting Jurgan Muller, the master of the vessel, and stealing twenty casks of butter. The Lords of the Admiralty offered a reward of £500. Nicholas Wingfield and Adams Hyde, with four others, having been betrayed by some of their accomplices, were arrested; and on Jan. 15, 1759, were brought under a strong guard of soldiers, and lodged in the Marshalsea.

They were tried at the Admiralty sessions, March 9,1759, when Nicholas Wingfield and Adams Hyde were found guilty; and on the 28th of the same month, were hung at Execution Dock. The four others were acquitted. The punishment did not operate as a sufficient warning to the Hastings men.

For seven years a gang known as Huxley's crew, most of whom lived at Hastings, boarded and robbed several ships coming up the Channel; and in particular, in 1768, they boarded a Dutch homeward-bound hoy, called "The Three Sisters," Peter Bootes commander, about two leagues from Beachy Head, and chopped the master down the back with an axe.

In November, 1768, the Government sent a detachment of two hundred of the Inniskilling Dragoons to Hastings, to arrest the men, who had been betrayed by their bragging to one another how the Dutchman wriggled when they had cut him on the backbone ; and a man-of-war and cutter lay off Hastings to receive the men. The soldiers had strict orders not to allow their mission to be known ; but, the day after their arrival, the Mayor (who was supposed to have aided in the evidence) was assaulted in the town, because he would not tell what the soldiers came for ; the soldiers were thereupon called out, and several arrests made of parties, who were conveyed to the Marshalsea.

At the Admiralty sessions holden on Oct. 30,1769, Thomas Phillips, elder and younger, William and George Phillips, Mark Chatfield, Robert Webb, Thomas and Samuel Ailsbury, James and Richard Hyde, William Geary alias Justice alias George Wood, Thomas Knight, and William Wenham, were indicted for the piracy of " The Three Sisters." and capitally convicted ; and of these Thomas Ailsbury, William Geary, William Wenham, and Richard Hyde, were hung at Execution Dock, Nov. 27.

So great was the panic occasioned by these arrests, that a shopkeeper, reported to be worth £10,000, absconded on information of having bought goods of the smugglers.