



BOROUGH, CHRISTOPHER

BOROUGH, Christopher (*fl.* 1579-1587), English merchant, traveler and linguist, who traveled to Russia as an interpreter for the sixth voyage of the Muscovy (Russian) Company to establish trade with Russia and Persia. He was the son of Stephen Borough (1525-1584), a mariner and expert navigator in the European Arctic seas.

The merchants, including the four principal factors Arthur Edwards, William Turnbull, Matthew Talboys and Peter Garrard, left Gravesend, England, on the 19 June 1579 and arrived in St. Nicholas, Russia, on 22 July. From there they traveled along the Dvina and Sukhona rivers to Vologda, and thence overland to Yaroslavl on the Volga. From there they traveled by ship to [Astrakhan](#). They arrived on the 16 October, and stayed there for the duration of winter. In the spring, after hearing that the Persian army had re-taken Šervān (Shirvan), but not [Darband](#), from the Turkish army, they decided to continue with their journey. Leaving Arthur Edwards and half of their goods behind in Astrakhan, they set sail on 1 May 1580 on an English-built ship towards the Caspian Sea. They experienced great difficulty in sailing their ship in the shallow waters and were forced to unload some of their goods and send them by land. They eventually landed at the port of Bildigh on 27 May, a day's journey on foot from Baku. Here they learned that the town of Shemakha (Šemaḳi) had been destroyed and that the Turkish army still controlled some major cities. Given these circumstances, they decided to trade with the Turkish Pasha of Baku, who received them favorably and arranged for their travel to Darband, but retained Peter Garrard, a Persian interpreter, and Borough, who had injured



his leg and could not manage the hazardous journey by road. They were well treated at a village about ten miles from the sea (Morgan and Coote, I, p. xlii; II, p. 455).

Edwards, Turnbull, and Talboys stayed in Darband till 3 October, trading with Persian and Turkish merchants. They then returned to Baku, picking up some stragglers on the way, including two Spaniards who had escaped from captivity in Tunis. They arrived in Astrakhan on 4 December, and wintered there. On 9 April 1581, most of the company along with their merchandise set sail on the Volga towards Yaroslavl, leaving three of their factors behind to sell what was left. Arthur Edwards had died during the previous year.

Borough is thought to have stayed on in Russia, dealing with the company's affairs, but is known to have returned to England by March 1586. An account of their voyage is preserved in a letter that Christopher Borough wrote to his uncle, William Borough (Morgan and Coote, I, p. xl). His report of 1587 on the Muscovy Company suggests that he might have returned to Russia again in order to investigate the wrongdoings of the company (McConnell, p. 665).

Borough's nautical training prompted him to record the latitudes of various regions during their journey. This record is considered the first to have been written by a European with regard to those parts of Russia and Central Asia. His linguistic expertise led him to bring back two manuscripts which are both now at the Bodleian Library, Oxford (Pennington, p. 681). One is an orthodox catechism (Ms. Seld. super. III), and the other is a 16th century copy (probably made by Borough himself) of the pseudo-Aristotelian *Secretum Secretorum* (*Secret of Secrets*) and *the Life of Aristotle* (MS Laud misc. 45); it is signed twice by Borough. In Astrakhan he had lodged and traveled with some Persian merchants. His writings show a good understanding of various Russian languages as well as Armenian and possibly some Persian (Pennington, p. 682). There is no record of the later part of his life.



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