



For two centuries, a set of hanging tapestries depicting scenes from Britain's 1588 battles with Spain's great Armada were displayed in Westminster's House of Lords.

They were a reliable source of information about the details of the sea battles and were crafted by Hendrick (Cornelisz) Vroom (a Dutchman, from Haarlem, who lived circa 1563-1640).

In 1739, an engraver by the name of John Pine wanted to make copies of the tapestries. Some people thought that was a foolish idea. Why make engravings (for print) of tapestries which were prominently displayed in London?

Pine responded that if anything ever happened to those tapestries it would be good to have a record of them.

Pine was right to be concerned. When a disastrous fire consumed the Palace of Westminster, in 1834, the House of Lords and all the tapestries were destroyed.

What was the source material for the tapestries? We [learn the details](#) from the Library of Congress:

*A remarkable original source for the history of the Armada is a set of engravings (issued about 1590), made by Augustine Ryther after drawings by Robert Adams. They depict successive stages of the action.*

*Michael Lewis, in his work "The Spanish Armada," 1960, says of them, "The best contemporary evidence (of the Armada's sailing order) comes from the set of charts drawn by the artist Adams and engraved in 1590. They show the Armada in the form of a quarter moon, its convex curve pointing up-Channel, its horns trailing west."*

*Professor Garrett Mattingly remarks that "his (Adams') eleven charts are unusually accurate for the period during which the English and Spanish fleets were in contact." (The Armada, 1959, p. xiv).*

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*The drawings by Robert Adams were also the source for the designs of a magnificent set of tapestries which were made for Lord Howard of Effingham, Lord High Admiral of England, and commander of the English naval forces against the Armada.*

*In 1616 the tapestries were sold by Howard to King James I, and for the next two centuries they hung in the House of Lords; they were lost in the Westminster Palace fire of 1834.*

*In 1739, a series of engravings by John Pine was issued depicting the tapestries. They are of equal importance with the Armada engravings as a historical source, as we may be sure that the designs had been examined and approved by Howard. (From "The Invincible" Armada, 1588, by Hans P. Kraus, online at the Library of Congress.)*

This image depicts one of Pine's engravings. It shows England's coastline from Lands End to Start Point as the Armada approaches in late July, 1588.

The engraving is included in *The Tapestry Hangings of the House of Lords Representing the Several Engagements between the English and Spanish Fleets in the Ever Memorable Year MDLXXXVIII*.

Click on the image for a substantially better, very-detailed view.

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John Pine, Engraver. Created/published, 1739.

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