

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
Cambridge Antiquarian Society,

OCTOBER 1934—OCTOBER 1935



VOLUME XXXVI

Edited by W. P. BAKER, M.A.

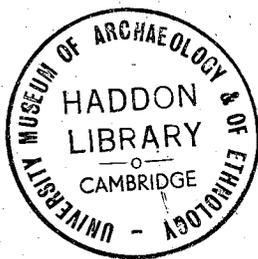
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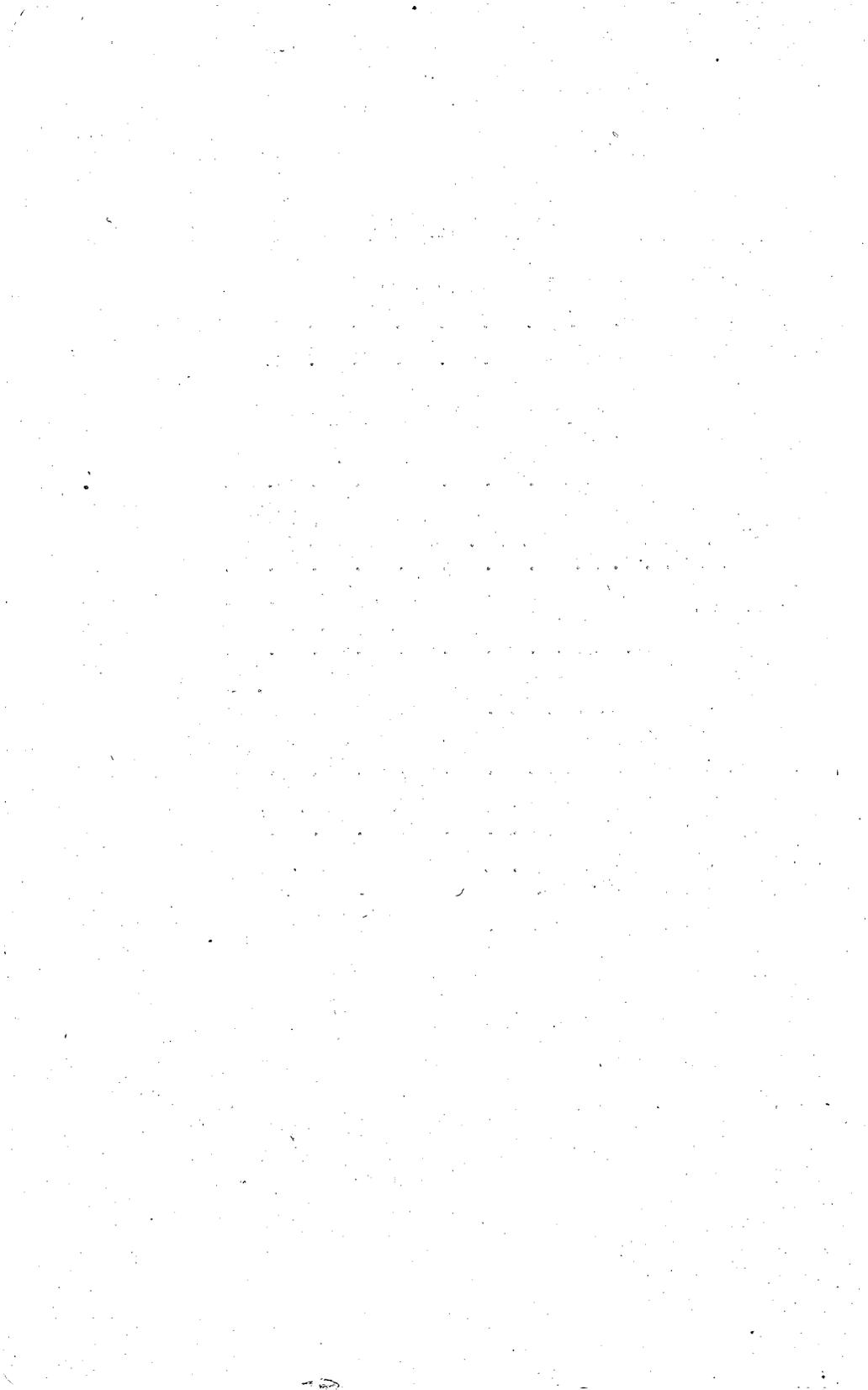
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THE SHERIFFS OF CAMBRIDGESHIRE
AND HUNTINGDONSHIRE IN THE
REIGN OF RICHARD II¹

By ANTHONY STEEL, M.A.

(Read 29 October, 1934)

It is some years now since Miss Cam read to this society her admirable paper on Cambridgeshire sheriffs in the thirteenth century.² This study of mine is far from challenging a comparison with, or attempting to continue, hers; all I propose to do is to use local evidence in an effort to throw light on certain charges affecting sheriffs brought against Richard II by his contemporaries. There will be no need for me to repeat much that Miss Cam has already said in general about the sheriff and his office, but perhaps I had better begin by saying something about the change in his position since Edward I's day.³

In the later fourteenth century he was still, in Miss Cam's words, an "essential cog or pin in a great machine", the machine of royal justice and administration. But by 1307 the tendency, which she noted, to regard him first and foremost as a fiscal agent has naturally grown stronger. By Richard II's time he has come to be more and more of a stereotyped bureaucrat with a castle full of clerks; his out-of-door functions are being steadily peeled away from him by the multiplication of commissions. Of these the commission of the peace is rapidly becoming the most important, though at this date it is still only one commission out of many, such as commissions of array, *oyer et terminer* and gaol delivery, not to mention those dealing with troublesome villeins in the age of

¹ I need hardly say that throughout this paper I owe to Dr W. M. Palmer of Linton the usual debt incurred by everyone who ventures into the history of medieval Cambridgeshire.

² *Proc. Camb. Antiq. Soc.* vol. xxv (1922-3), pp. 78 ff.

³ In this article Chancery enrolments are quoted thus: *Calendar of Patent Rolls, C.P.R.*; of *Close Rolls, C.C.R.*; of *Fine Rolls, C.F.R.*; of *Inquisitions Post Mortem* (Record Commission), *Cal. Inq. P.M.* Where a roman figure follows the lettering *sans phrase* it refers to the number of the volume in Richard II's reign, vol. I starting in every case with 1377.

the Peasants' Revolt, with bridges, roads and watercourses, with arrest and forfeiture, wines and victuals, cloths, questions of mortmain and, in general, for the purpose of making *ad hoc* enquiries into, and taking action about, almost every question under the sun. Just as nowadays a magistrate, while sheriff, cannot sit on the Bench, so in the fourteenth century the sheriff, while in office, was deliberately released from most, though not all, of these commissions. Moreover, the appointment since 1340 of county escheators had relieved him of an immense mass of itinerant business mainly connected with the feudal revenues of the crown, while the assessment, survey and collection of the new national taxes, the customs, the subsidies and the experimental poll-taxes, were none of them any business of his.

On the other hand, even in Richard's reign the sheriff, if his duties are more specialised, is still sufficiently hard-worked. He is still "clearly the chief regular official in the county"; he presides over the county court and is "responsible for collecting such part of the king's revenue as is not in the hands of special commissioners, and for seeing that all accounts are presented at the exchequer for audit".¹ If by this time his duty of supervising "all matters connected with the summoning of the feudal army" and the *posse comitatus*, sit lightly on him, he has, on the other hand, the increasingly important duty of returning knights of the shire to parliament and has even some say in the representation of boroughs in his bailiwick. Apart from this, he has not ceased to be the "local representative and executive officer of all the courts", or, in brief, to act as "distributing agent for all communications between authority at the centre and private individuals in the provinces".

All this implies, as I have already said, office work and yet more office work, sheaves of documents and several clerks. Some of these fourteenth-century documents survive, but unfortunately not for Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire. There are several *Particule Proficui* or Accounts of the Profits of a county in the Public Record Office and elsewhere; Plea

¹ The whole of this paragraph (and most of the next two) is based on Mills and Jenkinson, *Eng. Hist. Rev.* XLIII (Jan. 1928), pp. 21-32.

Rolls of various county courts are known, but are rather more rare; while at least one complete Roll of Writs Received (Beds. and Bucks., 1333-4) is in existence. This roll illustrates the immense amount of purely legal business in which the growth of the common-law courts had involved the sheriff. The writs enrolled cover most of the known processes of inquisition, attachment, summons and distraint, as well as of election: they provide for the impanelling of juries, and involve not only numerous civil pleas of account, debt, dower, rent, waste and all manner of cases connected with land, but also trespass, assault, robbery and other felonies, in which connection it is worth remembering that in the fourteenth century the sheriff was still responsible, as indeed he is to-day, for the safe custody of prisoners and was liable for their escape.

All these writs had not only to be copied but returned to the king's courts with endorsements showing that their commands had been carried out, and moreover a separate Plea Roll at least had to be kept for the court of each of two linked shires. Besides all this there were the hundred courts in each county and the continued existence in them, where not ousted by franchise, of the sheriff's six-monthly tourns. Documentary relations between the king and his sheriffs were reproduced to some extent between the sheriffs and the bailiffs of the hundreds; hence another "host of mandates" and returns and, probably, some kind of clerical organisation, even in the hundred court. As for the sheriff, he must have spent a great deal of his time in his office, surrounded by a considerable staff of clerks; most, if not all, of whom were probably permanent officials. It is true that then, as now, a sheriff had the right of appointing his own underlings and could even, with the king's leave, appoint a deputy sheriff, though in the fourteenth century this right was rarely exercised, and even when it had been it was seldom without a struggle that the exchequer would admit a deputy sheriff to account. But just because he could not escape from the terrible "accountability" which led some into prison, and pursued others or their executors beyond the grave, the average sheriff must have been thankful for the presence of the experienced head clerk, *the* sheriff's clerk, of his predecessor.

The sheriff himself probably had little if any direct experience of his office in the later fourteenth century, when the rule prescribing annual tenure and no reappointment within a three-year interval was being fairly regularly enforced and transference from shire to shire was rare. In Edward I's reign six out of twelve Cambridgeshire sheriffs, according to Miss Cam, had experience in other shires, while all through the thirteenth century annual tenure was the exception rather than the rule. In Richard II's shorter reign, on the other hand, there are no less than twenty Cambridgeshire sheriffs in all, and of these only three had experience in any other counties. All the more stress must be laid on the sheriff's clerk, yet I cannot find for certain that this official ever rose to be sheriff himself in Richard's reign, as happened at least twice in Cambridgeshire in the more fluid conditions of the thirteenth century.

Miss Cam asked four questions about the sheriffs in 1923, and I am going to ask three of them again to-day. "How were the sheriffs appointed? For how long did they hold office? What manner of men were they socially and politically?" I am not concerned with Miss Cam's fourth question—"By what machinery were they brought to book for their conduct?"—because there is little trace in Richard's time of that elaborate and perpetual misconduct of which sheriffs were habitually accused during the great crises of the thirteenth century: by the fourteenth they had, as we have seen, become humdrum local officials whom the great departments of state found it easy to keep in hand. The questions of appointment and duration of office, on the other hand, are still very much alive, and so is the question, which I will postpone for the moment, of the sheriffs' politics and social standing.

Nos. 13, 18, and 19 of the *gravamina* of 1399¹ state that Richard II had personally appointed his own creatures sheriffs instead of taking the advice of the justices and others of the council, as he was bound to do by the statute of 9 Edward II, that instead of limiting them to one year's office, followed by a three-year interval, he had kept them con-

¹ *Ann. Ric. II et Hen. IV* (Rolls Series), pp. 265, 267-8.

tinuously in office for two or three years, and finally that he had used them to influence illegitimately the return of knights of the shire.

These charges have been roughly checked by Tout¹ from the P.R.O. List of Sheriffs and the Patent Roll Calendar for the last three years of the reign, and there is reason to suppose that the first two accusations are substantially correct. Richard did in October 1397 appoint, no doubt arbitrarily, many subservient sheriffs of his own party; he did continue seventeen out of twenty-eight of them for a second year, and of these reappointments fifteen at least were abnormal. Two questions remain, viz. is there anything in the third charge, that such sheriffs were used to choose equally subservient knights of the shire and, if not, what was the real object of tampering with the sheriffs; secondly, had it ever been done earlier in this reign? It had been common enough, as Miss Cam has shown, during the thirteenth century.

To take the last question first, there are certainly other accusations in Richard's time besides those of 1399. Thus in the spring of 1388, no. 36 of the charges brought by the Appellants against Richard and his advisers states categorically that he had appointed certain evilly disposed persons sheriffs for the purpose of choosing sympathetic knights of the shire.² Again, in the autumn of 1389, when the king has recovered his power, the Monk of Westminster alleges that he and his private council chose all the sheriffs in England and made them swear to do their office well and faithfully, although that ought to be the business of the chancellor, treasurer, keeper of the privy seal, and barons of the exchequer.³ Finally the famous Haxey petition of February 1396 contains a clause complaining of the continuance of sheriffs *and escheators* in office for more than one year, and the king virtually admits the justice of this ancient charge in countering it with what Stubbs calls a "sensible plea [actually as old as 1325 or older]⁴ for administrative continuity". Putting them to-

¹ *Chapters in Med. Admin. History*, IV, 43-44.

² *Monk of Westminster* ("Malvern") in *Higden's Polychronicon* (Rolls Series), IX, 138-9.

³ *Ibid.* p. 217.

⁴ Cf. Cam, *loc. cit.* p. 87.

gether, we have here once again the three charges of arbitrary appointment, continuance in office, and abuse of function for political purposes, which we also get at the end of the reign.

But statements in chronicles and even in the rolls of parliament, when made *ex parte* in political crises, need record confirmation, and Tout at least has proved nothing prior to October 1397, nor in fact is there any evidence for his attribution of "subservience" to the outgoing sheriffs who presided over the return of knights to the parliament which met at Westminster on 17 September, before all but one of the new shrieval appointments had been made. An elaboration of Tout's methods may, however, be applied to Richard's reign before October 1397, and can be used to determine the political complexion of the sheriffs at any given date. Of the other questions, that of continuance in office can be solved by a fairly rapid glance at the P.R.O. List of Sheriffs. The remaining two are more difficult to answer, but if sheriffdoms should in fact be found not to have been "political" appointments before October 1397, these questions need not be raised, since why should either Richard or his enemies "arbitrarily appoint" sheriffs not particularly friendly to them, and what improper functions could either side expect such sheriffs to perform?

The question of continuance in office for more than one year acts as a kind of pointer; we should expect to find the practice common, if appointments were political. Actually, in marked contrast to the thirteenth century, long continuance in office is by now very rare: thus in the twenty-three "normal"¹ bailiwicks of England there are never more than five sheriffs who go on in any one year to a second continuous year of office, and that only happens once, viz. in 1385-6, whereas in 1397-8 there are fifteen. Possibly the authors of Haxey's petition were thinking as much of the escheators whom they mention in the same breath, for in their case continuous periods of office up to as much as four years running were not uncommon, while the same man was not infrequently

¹ For the explanation of this term see W. A. Morris, *The Medieval English Sheriff*, p. 178. The thirty-seven English counties of the day formed twenty-eight bailiwicks, five of which were "abnormal" for varying reasons.

escheator one year, sheriff the next, and then perhaps escheator again.¹ Anyhow, before 1397-8 there was evidently no ground for any serious charge of undue continuance in office, and it is probable that what complaints there were, e.g. Haxey's, were based less on political than administrative grounds. Miss Wood-Legh has shown this to be the case with sheriffs who sat illegally as knights of the shire in the parliaments of Edward III:² local inconvenience in administration caused by their absence, not national politics, led to complaints.

The pointer then points rather away from the likelihood of political sheriffs coming into existence before October 1397, but the question has to be attacked directly. It would be a formidable task, involving biographical research on an alarming scale, to deal with an average of nearly twenty-nine sheriffs in each of twenty-three normal bailiwicks over the whole period 1377-97. Tout, of course, covered the whole country, but he was dealing with only two years and was on this point working rather superficially. The alternative is to take one only of the normal bailiwicks and to follow its fortunes not through the entire reign, but from the autumn of 1383, the earliest year in which "political" appointments are at all likely to have occurred.³ Obvious considerations led me, as they formerly led Miss Cam, to choose Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire. If it can be shown by a fairly close examination of the shrieval personnel of these counties in and after 1383 that, prior to October 1397, there were probably no political appointments, this, taken in conjunction with the general rarity of reappointment over the whole of England, will create a strong presumption that what is certainly true of Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire *may* be true of every

¹ On at least two other occasions sheriffs are bracketed with escheators in parliamentary petitions against their continuance in office for more than one year, viz. in 1383 and 1384.

² *Eng. Hist. Rev.* XLVI (July 1931), pp. 372 ff.

³ The year 1382 was principally occupied with the aftermath of the Peasants' Revolt and with the young king's marriage. But from Michael de la Pole's appointment as Chancellor in March 1383, three months after Richard reached his sixteenth birthday, a specifically curialistic (though not yet royalist) party may be said to take gradual form.

normal bailiwick in the country. That in turn will suggest that here, as elsewhere, the *gravamina* of 1399 turned a recent and perhaps a purely administrative grievance into a serious political charge of long-standing and habitual malpractice on the part of the crown. Richard was far from guiltless, but his guilt may have been limited to the last two years of his reign, whereas Lancastrian propaganda certainly tried to burden him with a "misgovernment" in this as in other respects, of over fifteen years' duration.

For this special enquiry Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire seemed, as I have said, an obvious choice. Apart from local interest the two counties represent a good specimen bailiwick continuously united as one shrievalty from 1155 to the present day, except from 1636 to 1643: the union even survived the Sheriffs' Act of 1887. In Richard's reign these two counties are not subject to the disturbing influence of exceptionally important crown possessions; or of those of any large religious house or of any one great man. They are neither too close to nor very far from London and London's rival, Westminster, the "capital" and nerve centre, as far as there was one, of fourteenth-century England.¹ They were affected by the Peasants' Revolt it is true, but only in their own time and way,² while the fact that in spite of their small size they were not considered negligible is shown by Richard's sending a recruiting agent to the *valentiores et potentiores* of Cambridgeshire in 1387 (among other counties in East Anglia),³ while next year the Appellants held their one and only parliament actually in the town of Cambridge. I think these two counties may therefore be regarded as reasonably representative in opinion and both independent and important enough in position and resources to be worth "influencing", if any sheriff's bailiwick was to be influenced at all.

To begin with the first two questions: how were sheriffs appointed, and for how long did they hold office? They were normally appointed not earlier than October or later than November by the treasurer, barons of the exchequer and the

¹ Cf. Tout, "Beginnings of a modern capital", *Collected Works*, vol. III.

² W. M. Palmer, *Cambs. Vill. Docs.* no. II. ³ *Monk West.* p. 94.

justices, with or without the presence in addition of the chancellor¹ and the keeper of the privy seal. Royal influence over the appointments is difficult to gauge, except from the type of man appointed, as for example in 1397, but it would obviously depend on the king's personal relations in any given year with his chief ministers, especially the treasurer. As regards duration of office, the fourteenth-century rule provided that it should be for one year only, with a minimum interval of three years before reappointment, at any rate in the same shire, and in Richard's time this rule is (up to 1397-8) being fairly generally observed. Thus, taking his reign as a whole, from June 1377 to the end of September 1399 exactly twenty sheriffs were appointed in Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire, five men serving a second term in the same counties though never (except in 1397-8) at less than the statutory interval. One man held office for only a little over a month and apparently did not account.

Before dealing with the last fifteen of these twenty men individually I want to say something of the whole twenty as a group. Once again Miss Cam has shown us the sort of questions to ask. Which type will predominate, the country squire or the professional administrator? What lands do they hold? Where do they come from? What are their relations to the government? She has shown too that the country squire cannot always be distinguished from the administrator at first sight, but that it is generally easy to discover who were "new men" among the landholders, i.e. which of them had not inherited their lands but had received them as the reward of service.

In general we may say that in Cambridgeshire during Richard II's reign the exchequer ordinance of 1325 is still being observed. In that year bishop Stapleton, the reformer, laid down that sheriffs must be "sufficient persons, with good estates in land in the counties where they shall hold office", i.e. in Miss Cam's words "substantial country gentlemen", possessing local interests wide enough to counteract the tendency towards a centralised bureaucracy. Miss Cam in her paper counted five country squires taking their turn as sheriff

¹ W. A. Morris, *op. cit.* p. 78.

of Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire during the thirteenth century, and among them three who were actually ex-coroners freely elected in the county court and therefore in touch with local interest and (presumably) popular among their peers. These she calls "the forerunners of the Elizabethan J.P." I can find no ex-coroners for my period, but the same class of country squire is still there and accounts for fully 25 per cent. of my sheriffs, a minimum of five out of twenty. There are two or three I might add to this class, but I am not quite certain of them.

Then, still in Miss Cam's classification, we have the men of county family who go farther afield in the king's service: she counted five or six of these: I make only four or five. Lastly we have the professional administrators, and here there is an increase since the thirteenth century at the expense of the more exalted county families, for where Miss Cam could find only four civil servants I can find eight, though one of these, it is true, rose in the service of a magnate, John of Gaunt, not of the crown. Like Miss Cam again I can find only one, or at the most two, of these professionals who appear to be entirely without, or with very little, land: the others all develop rapidly, as "the reward of service", into country gentlemen of more or less importance, and their sons will have forgotten that they were ever anything else. It should be noted by the way that two out of the nine or ten in all whom I have classed as undoubted country gentlemen from the start were actually the sons of self-made men.

Such persons were, however, very rapidly assimilated into the society of squires and county families. Thus, on analysis of their activities during Richard's reign, there at once appears in this group of twenty men a kind of inner circle of no less than twelve names including all three types just mentioned. Their bearers are constantly associated, not only on innumerable commissions but as tax-assessors, surveyors and collectors and even as members of parliament. These men must all have known each other pretty well: the local government of the two shires was mainly entrusted to them and they habitually represented Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire at Westminster. Not only this, but in their own affairs, where no com-

pulsion is applied, they come together with equal frequency in (often mutual) charters, grants and quitclaims: they act voluntarily again and again as each other's feoffees and above all as witnesses: they are occasionally associated even in mainprise and recognisances. Four of them are Huntingdonshire men and of the remaining five or six two have Huntingdonshire interests, while only one resides in neither Huntingdonshire nor Cambridgeshire, and he is a man of great wealth who has important interests not only in these but in half a dozen other counties.

Outside this intimate inner group we have another of seven men whose contacts with each other and with the remaining sheriffs are much more intermittent: they include, besides an undistinguished younger brother of one of the inner group, two men of good, and one of almost baronial, standing in other counties, a Cambridgeshire man who only held shrieval office, probably as a substitute, for little more than a month, and two men who are the type *par excellence* of professional administrator. The last two seem in fact to be in a class by themselves: they occur with great frequency, outside their shrievalties, as escheators but as practically nothing else. They are insignificant as landowners, of no known ancestry, and one at least of them appears very definitely to be of a lower social standing than the rest.

Finally we have the one royalist intruder contributed by the king in 1397-8: his contacts with both the inner and outer groups just mentioned are virtually nil: he is the perfect carpet-bagger.¹ Henry IV, by the way, showed his wisdom in 1399 in selecting as his successor, not another carpet-bagger, but one of the inner group, who was not only a prominent Cambridgeshire man by adoption, but happened to have made his way originally in the service of the Lancastrians, and was therefore ideally suited from every point of view to be sheriff—an office which it is rather surprising to find he had not already held.

But it is time to pass from these general considerations to the individual sheriffs, beginning for the reasons given with the sheriff appointed in 1383.

¹ I owe this *mot juste* to Miss Cam.

Sir Philip Tilney, sheriff of Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire, 1383-4, and of Lincolnshire, 1386-7.

Tilney was a great man in Boston and head of an ancient Norfolk family which had settled there for many generations:¹ he was, in later life at least, a trusted agent, perhaps friend, of John of Gaunt.²

But he was practically a foreigner in Cambridgeshire—his only contact with the county being through the Norfolk Marshland,³ and possibly through Leverington,⁴ near Wisbech, and in the Waterbeach neighbourhood, where in 1392 he made a generous donation of lands to Denny Abbey.⁵ He was the only fenland sheriff of this reign: apart from that reason, if it is one, there seems to be no special reason for his appointment, and the rest of his rather active career is bound up with the history of Lincolnshire and of certain Lancastrian interests in Yorkshire. On royal commissions he seems to have specialised, as one might expect, on dykes and ditches—a subject on which he was called to advise more than once in Sussex⁶ as well as in the region of the Wash. But he also has his full share of judicial and military functions and four times represented Lincolnshire in parliament. This includes both the parliaments of 1388, in the second of which (the Cambridge parliament) he sat with John Bushy, then in the appellant service, which suggests that Tilney was, by sympathy, a baronialist though it should be noted that he was also the friend and executor of the well-known king's clerk, Richard Ravenser,⁷ who became archdeacon of Lincoln.

Tilney died in 1394⁸ and seems to have left descendants, some of whom are said to have built the manor-house at Whittlesford, Cambridgeshire.⁹ Members of the family cer-

¹ Pishey Thompson, *History of Boston*, p. 373.

² *C.P.R.* iv, 140, 220, 269-71. ³ *C.P.R.* III, 384.

⁴ Blomefield, *Collect. Cant.* p. 243; *Mon. Inscriptis. Camb.* p. 102 and pl. XIII.

⁵ *C.P.R.* v, 74, and *Cal. Inq. P.M.* p. 148.

⁶ *C.P.R.* iv, 516; v, 293.

⁷ *C.P.R.* III, 490; *C.C.R.* v, 86.

⁸ *C.P.R.* v, 406; *C.C.R.* v, 306.

⁹ *Mon. Inscriptis. Camb.* p. 244.

tainly held the manor there at a later date, for the name is common in Cambridgeshire in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.¹

Henry English, sheriff of Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire, 1380-1 and 1384-5. Also of Essex and Hertfordshire January-November 1389.

Unlike Tilney, English was apparently a man of humble beginnings, probably starting his career in the king's service or that of the earl of March. He ends it as one of the inner circle and a considerable landowner in eight Cambridgeshire villages, four neighbouring counties and the town of Cambridge. He is commemorated by a fine brass at Wood Ditton. He was twice a tax-collector, once escheator and four times knight of the shire—apart from these offices and his threesherivalties, he was used chiefly on various commissions of enquiry.

English is first heard of on such commissions in 1364 and 1367²—possibly as a king's yeoman or in some other subordinate position in the king's household (he is found acting with a royal serjeant-at-arms). He begins to acquire land in 1372³ and appears first as a justice of the peace and knight of the shire in 1373,⁴ in which year he is also appointed to take and arm mounted archers in the lordships and fees of the earl of March for service in Ireland.⁵ He takes no action, although then sheriff for the first time, during the Peasants' Revolt: on the contrary, chattels and livestock of his are stolen from his close at Wood Ditton.⁶ But he is naturally active in repression.⁷

Besides continually adding to his lands in Cambridgeshire⁸ and elsewhere, English in 1382 became steward of the lordship of Clare,⁹ in the king's hands on the death of the earl of March, owing to the minority of his heir. To this he added in October 1383 the keepership of the honour of Babraham,¹⁰ late of the duke of Brittany, and in February 1384 that of the

¹ Auth. Dr W. M. Palmer.

² *C.P.R.* 1364-7, pp. 48, 69.

³ *C.C.R.* 1374-7, p. 92; cf. *Cambs. Fines*, Rye, p. 127.

⁴ *C.P.R.* 1370-4, p. 305; *C.C.R.* 1369-74, p. 612.

⁵ *C.P.R.* 1370-4, p. 353.

⁶ Palmer, *Cambs. Vill. Docs.* II, 36.

⁷ *C.P.R.* II, 38, 80, 139, 246.

⁸ *Cambs. Fines*, Rye, p. 132.

⁹ *C.P.R.* II, 104.

¹⁰ *C.F.R.* II, 50.

alien priory of Swavesey,¹ the latter jointly with John Fordham, bishop of Durham. Within six years the unhappy prior was petitioning against his extortions,² it is not known with what result.

From April 1385 there is a strong connection, through the de Veres, between English and the stalwarts of the curialist party,³ and this connection extends to include the Pole family in 1386.⁴ In spite of this English seems wisely to have kept clear of the events of 1386-8, and it was not the king's party which appointed him emergency sheriff of Essex and Hertfordshire in January 1389. In July one Robert Brom made an unsuccessful attempt to assassinate him while holding this office:⁵ Brom was a noted local robber and cut-throat, though he received a full pardon for all his crimes three years later. Meanwhile, hard on his third shrievalty, English was made escheator, also for Hertfordshire and Essex, in December 1390.⁶ It was his last office, for, active to the end in acquiring lands,⁷ he died in 1393.⁸ The Inquisition Post Mortem shows that his heirs were minors,⁹ but at any rate he seems to have succeeded in founding a family.

English was evidently a hard-bitten, successful type of self-made man with energy enough to get on in the world and sense enough not to get involved in politics further than was personally profitable. An Adam English who was rector of Castle Camps in 1381¹⁰ does not seem to have been any relation of his, but the name was common in the west country too about this time and he may have been of gentlemanly origin.

John Hemingford, sheriff 1385-6.

Hemingford is important precisely on account of his obscurity and faintly baronial flavour, for this is the period of the curialist ascendancy, and if the appointment of the rather time-serving English in the previous year fits in with the view that the curialists were trying to pack the shrievalty, that of Hemingford lends absolutely no colour to the charge.

¹ *C.F.R.* II, 30; *C.P.R.* II, 397.

³ *C.P.R.* II, 557, 573.

⁵ *C.P.R.* V, 267.

⁷ *Cambs. Fines*, Rye, p. 138.

⁹ *Cal. Inq. P.M.* p. 174.

² *C.P.R.* II, 303.

⁴ *C.C.R.* II, 247.

⁶ *C.F.R.* II, 342.

⁸ *C.F.R.* II, 101, 119.

¹⁰ Palmer, *Cambs. Vill. Docs.* II, 25.

Hemingford certainly held land of the earl of Stafford at Great Gransden¹ and may have come from there: he seems to have no connection at all with Hemingford Grey or Abbots. On the other hand, he is clearly a hanger-on of two well-known Huntingdonshire families, viz. the Stukelys and the Moignes,² and ranks thereby as a member of the inner circle. With them he is one of the principal agents in Huntingdonshire for punishing the rebels of 1381.³ Apart from this he takes part in most of the usual activities of his class, except that he never sits in parliament and takes out the rather unusually high number (for a small man) of three licences to alienate lands in mortmain in favour of religious houses in Sawtry, Huntingdon and Eaton Socon.⁴ We may safely put him down as vaguely baronial in politics—his only connection with the crown being the wardenship of the royal forests of Weybridge and Sapley, Huntingdonshire,⁵ and that he obtained from the appellants in August 1388. He died some time between 1391 and 1396,⁶ leaving heirs whom I have not been able to identify.

Robert Parys, sheriff 1386–7 and 1390–1.

In Parys we have the English type again—a man of obscure origins ending up as a respectable and substantial squire and founder of a considerable Cambridgeshire family, this time at Hildersham. Like English, Parys was much employed on royal commissions; he was twice sheriff and no less than five times escheator, and has the same connections with the de Veres and curialists generally, yet he manages to hedge sufficiently to survive all political crises and to be accepted as one of the inner circle by the best county families.

He perhaps came from Chester—a Robert Parys witnesses a grant by the steward of Chester as early as 1348,⁷ while in Richard II's time yet another Robert Parys is chamberlain of North Wales.⁸ Again, the younger brother (Nicholas) of

¹ *Cal. Inq. P.M.* p. 251.

² *V.C.H. Beds.* III, 194; *C.C.R.* 1374–7, p. 230; *C.C.R.* I, 480–1.

³ *C.P.R.* II, 70–1, 74–6, 85, 138, 246; *C.C.R.* II, 74.

⁴ *C.P.R.* III, 313; IV, 92; V, 3.

⁵ *C.P.R.* III, 499, 502. Cf. *ibid.* IV, 331.

⁶ "Now deceased", June 1396, *C.P.R.* V, 718.

⁷ *Cal. Charter Rolls*, 1341–1417, p. 107.

⁸ Tout, *Chapters*, VI, 63.

the Cambridgeshire Robert Parys begins by holding a manor in royalist company in North Wales,¹ and Robert's son is killed in Wales in Henry IV's time.²

The future Cambridgeshire sheriff's first appearance in the county is as a royal keeper or lessee of the Bustler lands in Hildersham,³ Haddenham and Duxford⁴ in 1369-70: a year later he is holding a knight's fee in Hildersham of the dower of the de Vere widow Maud, countess of Oxford,⁵ mother of Richard's favourite. By 1381 Robert Parys is described as lord of the manor of Hildersham,⁶ and immediately after the Peasants' Revolt he begins to be active as a justice of the peace.⁷ He is also escheator for the first time in 1382-3,⁸ an office which he held again ten years later⁹ and yet once more after the revolution of 1399,¹⁰ each time for a double term. As sheriff he must have been present at Shrewsbury and Nottingham in 1387 when the sheriffs of England told Richard that they were unable to raise troops for him in their shires, while in 1388 he sat as knight of the shire for Cambridgeshire in the strongly baronial Cambridge parliament.¹¹ This certainly does not look as if his selection as sheriff by the royalist officials in the autumn of 1386 had really been made on political grounds: if so, he was a poor choice. But, on the other hand, I doubt if he was really pro-appellant, for from 1389 to 1393, when Richard is in power again, he is kept busy on various commissions, much as if nothing had happened.

Parys was sheriff again, at the usual interval of three years, in 1390-1. About this time he appears to have bought land in Chesterton¹² and to have been appointed justice of the peace for the *town* of Cambridge¹³—he is unique among these sheriffs in this respect—in 1392-3. From December 1393 he was also

¹ See below, p. 24.

² Stow MS. 777, Brit. Mus. (1410). (I owe this reference to Dr Palmer.)

³ Auth. Dr Palmer.

⁴ *C.F.R.* 1369-77, pp. 97, 101; *C.C.R.* 1369-74, p. 266.

⁵ *C.C.R.* 1369-74, p. 493.

⁶ Palmer, *Cambs. Vill. Docs.* II, 28.

⁷ *C.P.R.* II, 252.

⁸ *C.F.R.* I, 349.

⁹ *C.F.R.* III, 57.

¹⁰ *C.F.R.* 1399-1405, pp. 69, 74.

¹¹ *C.C.R.* III, 657.

¹² *Cambs. Fines*, Rye, p. 137.

¹³ *C.P.R.* v, 89.

apparently king's attorney and manager of the subsidy on cloths for sale in the counties of Cambridge, Huntingdon, Norfolk and Suffolk:¹ his duties, as detailed in the Fine Roll, sound particularly exacting and may account for the fact that we hear no more of him until after the revolution.

Henry IV, however, employed him fairly freely again, not only as escheator but also on commissions of array and of the peace to 1407.² His Inquisition Post Mortem³ in the following year shows that by 1408 he had lands at Abington and Little Linton as well as at Hildersham, and it was at Little Linton that his descendants in the fifteenth century enclosed the park and built the manor-house, part of which still survives as a farm-house to-day.

The career of Robert Parys speaks for itself: it is that of the successful trimmer, but it is hard to grudge him his success, and Peterhouse owes him an acre of brushwood presented in 1388.⁴

William de Papworth, sheriff 1371-2 and 1387-8.

Of an old, but not particularly well-to-do family, this sheriff was descended from Agnes de Papworth, who is mentioned on the Pipe Roll in 1160 and again in 1185, when she and her sister were living on the king's alms in Papworth. She is the St Agnes of the present village's name, as recorded in the Diocesan Calendar, but is suspected⁵ of having been a mistress of Henry II. The descent from her is clear to John de Papworth and his son William, who married (1) Elizabeth de Preston of Preston Plokenet, Somerset, and (2) Alice, family unknown. Through his first wife William Papworth held lands by the courtesy in Somerset;⁶ by his second he had a daughter, also called Alice, who married William Malory⁷ of Kirkby Malory in Leicestershire and so became a reputed ancestor of the author of the *Morte D'Arthur*. However, the first known

¹ *C.F.R.* III, 105.

² *C.P.R.* I (Hen. IV), 212; II, 287, 515; III, 490.

³ *Cal. Inq. P.M.* p. 322.

⁴ Auth. Dr Palmer.

⁵ By Dr Palmer, who is the authority for the whole of this passage.

⁶ *C.F.R.* 1356-68, p. 184; *C.C.R.* 1360-4, p. 224.

⁷ Auth. Dr Palmer. Cf. *C.P.R.* IV, 502-3.

MS. of that work, recently (1934) discovered in the Fellows' Library at Winchester, makes it probable that the real author came from Newbold Revel in Warwickshire,¹ which destroys part of Papworth's claim to remembrance.

In spite of the respectable antiquity of his family, which made him *ipso facto* one of the inner circle, I cannot find that William de Papworth owned any property outside his own village, except in Somerset and also at Teversham, Cambridgeshire.² One-third of a knight's fee at Papworth was held from William, brother and heir of Thomas earl of Stafford.³

Papworth is not a very interesting sheriff, being employed chiefly as a tax-collector and twice as an escheator in addition to his two terms as sheriff. He was important enough to serve as knight of the shire for Cambridgeshire in 1381, 1382 and 1386 and for Huntingdonshire in 1385,⁴ his activities on commissions, including that of the peace, being rather more evenly divided between the two counties. He was escheator for two years running in 1388-90.⁵

There is nothing at all to connect Papworth specially with the crown: in fact he seems to have been an entirely independent country gentleman who took no part at any time in politics, and this makes his second appointment as sheriff in the critical autumn of 1387 all the more significant for, whichever side was responsible for the appointments, in Papworth an entirely colourless neutral was appointed. His neutrality is confirmed by his continuance in precisely the same routine activities as before in 1388-90 and again after the revolution of 1399. The last mention I have of him is in 1408,⁶ when he made a fresh settlement of his estate: he probably died soon after this and was certainly dead well before 1416, when his widow⁷ followed him to the grave.

¹ *The Times*, 25 August 1934.

² *Camb. Fines*, Rye, p. 142.

³ *Cal. Inq. P.M.* p. 251.

⁴ *Return of Members of Parliament. Accts. and Papers*, LXII, Part I (1878).

⁵ *C.F.R.* II, 274.

⁶ *C.P.R.* III (Hen. IV), 452; *V.C.H. Hunts*, II, 381.

⁷ *C.F.R.* 1413-22, p. 143.

William Cheyne, sheriff 1388-9 and 1393-4.

The proper identification of this sheriff is very difficult, owing to the commonness of the name at the time: for example, he had a double even in Cambridgeshire who had lands at Longstanton.¹ But I am reasonably satisfied that he is a certain William Cheyne of Fen Ditton, Cambridgeshire, and Irthlingborough, Northamptonshire, whose granddaughter married into the Tilney family.² William Cheyne himself is one of the inner circle.

He is chiefly remarkable to begin with for his intense activity in suppressing the Peasants' Revolt, when he seems to have sat on almost every conceivable commission, local and general, in the county.³ He also plays an important part in the war scare of 1386⁴—he had evidently some reputation as a soldier—and was appointed sheriff by the Appellants in 1388. Actually there is no more than this isolated fact to connect him with the baronialists, and it is perhaps not worth much in the way of proving partisanship considering that the appointment was repeated by Richard in 1393. But before the end of his second term he is replaced as sheriff by Nicholas Parys⁵ (August 1394), and we hear no more of him before his death in 1403.⁶ Perhaps his health had broken down: if so, that may be the reason why he was never employed by Henry IV. All the same, one is left with the impression that unlike certain namesakes of his from the south coast he was a singularly lukewarm baronialist, if indeed he was ever one at all.

Sir Edmund de la Pole, sheriff 1389-90.

This is the richest and best known of these sheriffs and the only one to appear briefly, though not under his own name, in the *D.N.B.*⁷ Edmund was a younger son of the famous William de la Pole of Hull, and therefore younger brother of the still more famous Michael, first of the Pole earls of Suffolk, and uncle of the second earl.

¹ *Cal. Inq. P.M.* II, 174.

² G. Baker, *Hist. of Northants.*, II, 714.

³ *C.P.R.* II, 70-1, 73-6, 85, 139, 246; *C.C.R.* II, 75.

⁴ *C.C.R.* II, 261.

⁵ See below, p. 24.

⁶ G. Baker, *loc. cit.*

⁷ See *D.N.B.*, *William de la Pole*.

Born in 1337, he had been knighted by 1358.¹ He seems to have spent his boyhood, as might be expected, in Yorkshire,² but at the age of twenty-one was already married to Elizabeth de Handlo, an Oxfordshire heiress.³ Through her he claimed a half share—she had a sister, also married—in extensive properties in Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire and elsewhere in the south,⁴ and moreover after a struggle he succeeded in ousting his sister-in-law and her husband from John de Handlo's magnificent manor-house of Boarstall, near Thame, where he seems to have resided, when in England, from 1366 to 1376. There is still a fine turreted gatehouse, called Boarstall Tower, which is all that is left of the fortified mansion.⁵

Meanwhile Edmund de la Pole's life seems to have run mainly on military lines. He was out of England from 1364 to 1366 and again from 1367 to 1370,⁶ while two or three years later he seems to have been retained by John of Gaunt⁷ and may have taken part in the famous march of 1373. In 1376 he sat for Buckinghamshire in the Good Parliament,⁸ but migrated to Cambridgeshire the following winter.

This move may be connected with his second marriage, which must have taken place at least two or three years earlier, since it is a wife called Maud (family unknown) and Pole's son by her, Walter, who accompany him to Cambridgeshire.⁹ By Elizabeth he had only had daughters who on Pole's death duly inherit their mother's property at Boarstall and elsewhere, which their father had continued to hold during his lifetime by the courtesy of England.¹⁰

In Cambridgeshire the Poles settled in the manor of Pyrot's Sawston, on the site of the house where Commander Huddle-

¹ *C.C.R.* 1354-60, p. 494.

² *Ibid.* pp. 120, 187-8, 195, 530.

³ *Cal. Inq.* (Ed. III), x, 244.

⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 242-4; *C.C.R.* 1354-60, pp. 587-8, 592; *C.F.R.* 1356-68, pp. 185-6, 334; *C.C.R.* 1360-4, pp. 386-7; *ibid.* 1364-8, pp. 229-30; *C.P.R.* 1364-7, pp. 276-7. ⁵ *V.C.H. Bucks.*, II, 276; iv, 12 (illustration).

⁶ *C.P.R.* 1364-7, pp. 43, 214, 322, 417; *ibid.* 1367-70, p. 474.

⁷ *Gaunt's Register*, T.R.H.S. 3rd ser. xx. vol. I, 32.

⁸ *C.C.R.* 1374-7, p. 429.

⁹ *C.P.R.* 1367-70, p. 285; *ibid.* 1374-7, p. 360; *C.C.R.* 1374-7, p. 532.

¹⁰ *C.F.R.* 1413-22, p. 274 (*bis*); *Cal. Inq. P.M.* p. 43.

ston now lives, but they also acquired two manors in Trumington and lands at Babraham and Pampisford, to which before long were added more lands at Meldreth and five other places in the county.¹ In fact during the early part of Richard's reign nearly all Edmund's activities were less public-spirited than acquisitive, and indeed for the rest of his long life—he died as late as 1417 or later—he was constantly busy, usually in collaboration with his brother, or his nephew, in building up an enormous family estate in twelve counties, including house property in London: besides all this the family piled up keeperships of lands and alien priories and reversions of property belonging to a rich widow entering a religious house.²

After representing Buckinghamshire again in parliament in 1383³ and sitting on a very few commissions of minor importance, Pole at some time in 1384 became captain of Calais,⁴ a key position which he held for three years or more. It was perhaps obtained for him by Michael as a potential family refuge, but if this guess is correct Michael was deceived, for when the storm broke in the autumn of 1387, Edmund refused admission to his refugee brother.⁵ This apparent act of treachery proved actually to be in the best interests of the family, for the triumphant Appellants did not attack Edmund and even allowed him in November 1388 to become guardian of the young Michael and keeper of Wingfield, the *caput* of the discredited earldom, and of other Pole manors.⁶ Yet Edmund's carefully correct conduct had not forfeited the king's good will either, for it is in November 1389, when Richard is in control again, that he is appointed sheriff of Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire, and during the next few years he was able to recover for his nephew much forfeited Pole property.⁷

¹ Palmer, *Cambs. Vill. Docs.* II, 31; *C.C.R.* III, 483 and 504.

² *C.C.R.* I, 237; v, 221-2, 225, 371. But cf. *C.P.R.* and *C.C.R. passim*, especially after 1390.

³ *C.C.R.* II, 290.

⁴ *C.P.R.* II, 472. Cf. *C.C.R.* III, 306, 366.

⁵ *D.N.B. William de la Pole.*

⁶ *C.F.R.* II, 261; *C.P.R.* III, 544; IV, 209.

⁷ Cf. e.g. *C.P.R.* IV, 291, 381.

From 1390 he also begins to appear more frequently on commissions including, for the first time, commissions of the peace (for Cambridgeshire),¹ and he represents Cambridgeshire in parliament in 1395.² Some attempt may have been made to make use of him locally in the royalist *coup d'état* of 1397,³ but it did not come to much and actually Pole played little or no part in the troubled politics of the end of Richard's reign, but steered a skilful middle course with the same judgment he had already displayed ten years earlier. He was congenial to Henry IV, judging from the frequent use made of him on various important commissions by the new king,⁴ and this in spite of a second common-form exemption from such things which he extracted in May 1400⁵ (he had already had one in 1380) on the ground that he is now 63 years of age and "so languid that he cannot labour". Actually he was kept fairly busy up to 1404 and as a justice of the peace (only) for ten years longer. According to Kingsford in the *D.N.B.*⁶ his death took place in 1417, but I cannot find any evidence of this, while the Inquisition Post Mortem on his lands is dated⁷ 1419. He certainly passed the age of 80.

Edmund de la Pole's career is another remarkable example of the successful trimmer's, carried out in spite of royalist connections so strong as to be really dangerous: on the other hand, the early Lancastrian friendship, which Tout (correcting Stubbs) also notes *apropos* of his elder brother Michael,⁸ may have made things easier for him. Lastly, it is worth insisting once more that in spite of the apparent betrayal of 1387, Edmund's whole career shows a sense of family solidarity against all comers, carried to a higher power than usual but not altogether unique among these sheriffs.

¹ *C.P.R.* iv, 345.

² *C.C.R.* v, 418.

³ *C.P.R.* vi, 229, 231, 242-3; *C.F.R.* iii, 223; *C.C.R.* vi, 175, 228, 234.

⁴ *C.P.R.* i (Hen. IV), 212, 463, 552; ii, 128, 515; iii, 490; iv, 479; *C.F.R.* 1399-1405, p. 254.

⁵ *C.P.R.* i (Hen. IV), 280.

⁶ *Loc. cit.*

⁷ *C.F.R.* 1413-22, p. 274 (*bis*).

⁸ *Chapters*, iii, 402 n.

Nicholas de Stukely, sheriff 1391–2.

(1390–1 is occupied by Robert Parys's second term.)

Stukely was a quiet country gentleman from Great Stukely, Huntingdonshire, of good family¹ and one of the inner circle. He probably succeeded to his estates in 1378, married Blanche, daughter of Sir Andrew Luterell,² and died in the winter of 1393–4,³ when he in turn was succeeded by his brother John.⁴ The Stukelys held land at Madingley and Buckden⁵ and also houses in Cambridge which John Reve, chaplain, was threatening to burn down in 1393.⁶ Nicholas, like his father, was verderer of the royal forests of Weybridge and Sapley, Huntingdonshire,⁷ but clearly took no part in politics. He had no lord of importance other than the crown. The family of Stukely survived into the eighteenth century. There is a drawing of a fifteenth-century Stukely brass, now lost, in the *Memoirs* of the Rev. Wm. Stukely, who exhibited it to the Antiquarian Society in 1759.⁸ The matrix was found and replaced in Great Stukely church in 1910.⁹

John Knyvet, sheriff 1392–3.

One of the inner circle in virtue of his wide possessions, this son and heir of the well-known lay chancellor of Edward III¹⁰ and of Eleanor Basset of Weldon obtained in 1409 a half-share in the Basset inheritance¹¹ as well as the extensive lands in seven counties which in 1381 he inherited from his father.¹² In Cambridgeshire he had important interests in nine villages, including both Papworths, Fen Drayton, Conington, Eltisley and Swavesey.

The younger John does not seem to have inherited his father's ability. It is true he made a successful marriage with Joan, daughter and heiress of Sir John de Botetourt of

¹ *V.C.H. Hunts.*, II, 231.

² *C.C.R.* I, 48, 480.

³ *C.F.R.* III, 98 (alive October 1393), 107, 119 (dead, January 1394).

⁴ *V.C.H. loc. cit.*

⁵ *C.C.R.* I, 480.

⁶ *C.C.R.* v, 158.

⁷ *C.C.R.* III, 328; v, 197, 353, 449.

⁸ *Surtees Soc.* LXXVI, 222.

⁹ *V.C.H. loc. cit.*

¹⁰ See *D.N.B.* for the elder John Knyvet.

¹¹ *C.F.R.* 1405–1413, p. 142.

¹² *Cal. Inq. P.M.* p. 30.

Mendlesham, Suffolk,¹ but he soon got into serious trouble with the crown, I believe for non-payment of his relief, was arrested for contempt in 1383² and temporarily forfeited all lands, which were not restored until October 1388,³ perhaps as a result of the Appellants' rise to power. I cannot find, however, that Knyvet ever did anything for them in return.

Knyvet settled permanently at Mendlesham after his marriage and must be regarded primarily as a Suffolk man. He had been sheriff of Norfolk and Suffolk in 1391-2, the year immediately before he came on to Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire, which is unusual, but I can see no special significance in it. The rest of his life follows the usual course for one of his class: he sits in the Shrewsbury parliament of 1398,⁴ it is true, which might suggest Ricardianism, but on the other hand he does a good deal of tax-collecting,⁵ and some borrowing,⁶ in Suffolk, for Henry IV. He died in 1418⁷ after a career of strict neutrality and self-seeking of rather a clumsy kind. He had apparently no lord but the crown.

Nicholas Parys, sheriff 1394-5.

(1393-4 is taken up by Cheyne's second term.)

Nicholas was Robert Parys's younger brother, but was not even of the outer, much less of the inner, circle of Cambridgeshire sheriffs. He undoubtedly started life in the royalist service in North Wales, where he acquired a manor which he sold in 1385⁸ in order to settle in Cambridgeshire near Robert as a country gentleman on the model of his elder brother. Almost the first we hear of him there is his taking over the sheriffdom from Cheyne in August 1394. From later references it appears that he held land at Great and Little Linton, Duxford and Barham, partly of the bishop of Ely⁹ and also of the Bohun inheritance through Eleanor, duchess of Gloucester.¹⁰ We hear nothing of him between 1397 and 1404,

¹ *C.C.R.* 1374-7, pp. 509-11.

² *C.P.R.* II, 498.

³ *C.F.R.* II, 255.

⁴ *C.C.R.* VI, 303.

⁵ E.g. *C.F.R.* 1399-1405, pp. 148, 285, 292.

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 318.

⁷ *C.F.R.* 1413-22, p. 240.

⁸ *C.P.R.* II, 541; *C.C.R.* II, 626.

⁹ Crosby, *Abstracts of Bishop Fordham's Register*. Cf. *Cal. Inq. P.M.* p. 216.

¹⁰ *C.C.R.* VI, 183, 254.

but from that year onwards he is mentioned two or three times raising loans and collecting taxes¹ under Henry IV and V. In 1411 his lands at Linton and Duxford were worth £41 a year,² and he must have added considerably to his income from the farm of the alien priory of Linton, a half-share in which was committed to him in 1413.³ He apparently lived in Great Linton where he also died in October 1425,⁴ after what is evidently a career of strict neutrality in spite of his Ricardian origins. There is a brass in the church at Linton.

John de Lakenheath, sheriff 1395-6.

This sheriff is a "foreigner" in the county who has hardly any contact with the other Cambridgeshire sheriffs and does not appear to have had any lands in Cambridgeshire at all. He seems, however, to have been important in Suffolk, where he sat on numerous commissions,⁵ including two of gaol delivery, and was also a friend and partner of Sir Robert Knolles.⁶ In 1388-9 he was entrusted by the Appellants with the keeping of some of Michael de la Pole's property.⁷ Immediately after this he is active for the years 1389-91 as deputy of the constable of England in the court of chivalry,⁸ then of rapidly rising importance. We have four appeals against his sentences, but it does not look as if he was ever a strong party man. He is active in all from 1361 to his sheriffdom in 1395-6, when he probably died in office⁹ just before the end of his term, leaving a son and heir Edmund of full age. I am inclined to think that he was simply another neutral country gentleman.

William de Fulbourne, sheriff October-December 1396.

This can hardly be the well-known king's clerk and canon of St Paul's, although this elder William de Fulbourne was by profession a civil servant of high standing rather than a priest: he had been receiver-general of Joan, princess of Wales, and

¹ E.g. in *C.F.R.* 1399-1405, pp. 286, 291; *ibid.* 1405-13, p. 63.

² Palmer, *Cambs. Subsidies*. ³ *C.F.R.* 1413-22, p. 59.

⁴ *Mon. Inscriptis. Cambs.* pp. 231, 285.

⁵ Between 1361 and 1396. ⁶ *C.C.R.* 1369-74, pp. 201, 359.

⁷ *C.F.R.* II, 233, 246, 280.

⁸ *C.P.R.* IV, 51, 130, 412, 464; V, 71, 589-90. ⁹ *C.F.R.* III, 194.

became baron of the exchequer (1391),¹ treasurer of war, and recipient of numerous livings and prebends.² It is true that the appointment of a sheriff in 1396 had been an emergency one, probably necessitated by the sudden death of Lakenheath, and that the office was only held for six weeks. Even so it is very unlikely to have been held by a clerk at this late date in its history, while in any case this William de Fulbourne was probably dead by November 1393, when we have a ratification of another estate in a prebend formerly held by him at Holyhead.³

I am therefore inclined to think that the temporary or stop-gap sheriff is really the illegitimate son of the better-known William de Fulbourne. There are definite traces of such a person from 1390 in a certain William de Fulbourne "the younger", son of Alice Whitynge of Fulbourne: he receives a house and a fairly generous grant of lands that year,⁴ including a knight's fee held of the house of Gloucester.⁵ Apart from this he is, as one would expect, an extremely obscure character who never seems to have performed any other public service except that of collecting taxes (in 1404),⁶ acting as commissioner of dykes and ditches (in 1407)⁷ and raising a royal loan (1421).⁸ He was still holding his knight's fee in 1428 and is not known to have been dead before 1448,⁹ so he must have been a very young man in 1396. The magnificent brass at Fulbourne is that of his putative father.

John Herlyngton, sheriff December 1396-7.

This is another of the Huntingdonshire country gentlemen. He is definitely one of the inner circle, frequently justice of the peace¹⁰ and five times knight of the shire for Huntingdonshire between 1377 and 1395. He is first heard of in connection with Yaxley in and after 1372,¹¹ and he died in 1408. His

¹ Haines, *Monumental Brasses*; p. 33. Cf. Tout, *Chapters*, III, 332, 461.

² *C.P.R.*, *C.C.R.*, *C.F.R.* *passim*.

³ *C.P.R.* v, 345.

⁴ *C.C.R.* iv, 278.

⁵ *Cal. Inq. P.M.* p. 216; *C.C.R.* iv, 183, 254.

⁶ *C.F.R.* 1399-1405, p. 259.

⁷ *C.P.R.* III (Hen. IV), 303.

⁸ *P.R.O.* Receipt Roll (13 May 1421).

⁹ Auth. Dr Palmer.

¹⁰ *C.P.R.* 1372-1407, *passim*.

¹¹ *C.P.R.* 1370-4, p. 215; *ibid.* 1374-7, p. 419.

tombstone can be seen in the church at Orton Waterville, four miles west of Peterborough; the brief inscription on it is the sole authority for the date of his death.

Herlyngton held most of his land over the border in Northamptonshire,¹ but also had property in Abbotsley and Hardwick² and a share in some messuages in London and Westminster³ in which he is associated (1380) with certain king's clerks. On the other hand, he represented Huntingdonshire in the Cambridge parliament of 1388, and in 1397 was forced to lend Richard II 20 marks which were not repaid:⁴ he is also continuously employed in important capacities by Henry IV.⁵

It is therefore safe to say that his appointment as sheriff in place of the obviously "insufficient" Fulbourne was not a royalist job. The next appointment, on the other hand, clearly was so, though for the first time during this reign.

Andrew Newport, sheriff 1397-8 and 1398-9.

Newport apparently knows none of the other sheriffs, buys land in Cambridgeshire only four months before he is appointed, and is prominent in an unpopular branch of the royal service all his life. His appointment is clearly political.

"Of Essex", as his name implies, he appears from the first in intimate personal association with the well-known Ricardian Roger Walden,⁶ who rose to be Richard's treasurer during his last years and his partisan archbishop of Canterbury. It may even have been Newport who introduced Walden to the king. From 1386 to 1391 Newport is active as a royal serjeant-at-arms,⁷ passing the dangerous period 1387-8 with other noted royalists in Calais, where he owned a tenement and some cottages.⁸

In 1392 Newport received promotion to the rank of king's esquire,⁹ coupled with the valuable grant for life of the wardenship of the mint and keepership of the exchanges in the

¹ Cf. e.g. *C.C.R.* I, 461; IV, 534 etc.

² *C.C.R.* II, 96-7.

³ *C.P.R.* I, 524.

⁴ *P.R.O.* Receipt Roll (22 August 1397).

⁵ Cf. e.g. *C.P.R.* I (Hen. IV), 212, 552, 560; II, 128, 287, 517; III, 388, 492 (*bis*); *C.F.R.* 1399-1405, pp. 148, 234, 255.

⁶ *C.F.R.* II, 41.

⁷ *C.C.R.* V, 305; *C.P.R.* III, 170, 172, 259; IV, 58.

⁸ *C.C.R.* III, 623.

⁹ *C.P.R.* V, 199.

Tower of London.¹ This seems to have become a sinecure carrying leave to appoint a deputy for the technical office of king's money-changer and master and worker of the king's gold and silver moneys in the Tower and at Calais. It is stated in 1404 that the wages and profits of this post are not to exceed £40 *per annum*, with 6*d.* a day for the custody of the gold and silver coinages,² which gives some idea of what the office must have been worth. Yet it was by no means the only one of Newport's pickings: favours continued to be heaped on him in 1394-5 and 1396,³ while in 1397 he added to his other sinecure in the Tower the post of collector of the London wool-custom,⁴ again to be carried out by deputy and, if Tout's identification is correct,⁵ he even became an alderman of London at this time and represented the city in parliament.

It is not till 1397 that we get his first connection with Cambridgeshire when (again with Roger Walden and others) he takes out a licence to be enfeoffed, with Margaret his wife, of "Colvylesmanere", Fulbourne, of which he finally obtained possession in April or May 1398.⁶ Meanwhile in July 1397 he had taken part in the hearing of an appeal against a sentence in the court of chivalry⁷ and had become sheriff in November. He was reappointed in November 1398 and thus became the only sheriff of Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire in Richard's reign to hold office two years running: there is of course no doubt that he was one of the smaller cogs in Richard's new machine of despotism. However, his only traceable activity as such seems to be an entirely inoffensive restitution to the heirs of certain inextensive lands forfeited in 1388 and that can hardly be the reason why Richard's enemies took account of him at the revolution. The real reason may lie in his presumption, as a man of obviously humble birth, in having served on the commission of July 1397 which heard an appeal from the aristocratic court of chivalry. Anyhow he certainly collapsed like a pricked bubble after the revolution.

¹ *C.C.R.* v, 55, 381, 472; *C.F.R.* III, 136.

² *C.P.R.* II (Hen. IV), 345.

³ Cf. e.g. *C.C.R.* v, 305, 606, 645; *C.F.R.* III, 178.

⁴ *C.F.R.* III, 190; *C.C.R.* VI, 46. ⁵ *Chapters*, IV, 43.

⁶ *C.P.R.* VI, 185; *C.C.R.* VI, 296-7; and cf. *ibid.* p. 230.

⁷ *C.P.R.* VI, 165.

He seems to have lost his wardenship of the mint and all his other offices immediately, and his disappearance as a man of property is almost as sudden. He and his wife Margaret apparently sold "Colvylesmanere in Fulbourne and in Little Wilbraham" in 1400 or 1401,¹ and the last we hear of them is a chance reference in October 1402 to the fact that they had once been holders of the manor in the time of Richard II.² What makes the whole thing more remarkable is that, as Tout has emphasised, this kind of thing is rare after the revolution of 1399—even Newport's friend, Roger Walden, who was much more deeply committed, eventually fell no lower than the bishopric of London, while among humbler office-holders there is usually complete administrative continuity.

Thomas Haselden, sheriff 1399–1400.

Henry IV's choice in place of Andrew Newport fell on his father's "dear and well beloved esquire",³ Thomas Haselden, a tried Lancastrian, who though coming originally from Yorkshire, had for thirty years been a well-known figure in Cambridgeshire and a member of its inner circle.

Born in 1322 of unknown parentage⁴ Haselden is first heard of when he is already over forty and is just in process of acquiring a tenement with croft and garden in "le Northgate" at Wakefield.⁵ Little is known of his life before this, but he seems to have made his own way. His first big contract came a little later when from 1369 to 1376 he shared in a commitment of all manors, castles, lands and rents in Yorkshire belonging to the king's son Edmund, earl of Cambridge.⁶ During this time he also served with Gaunt in France and so commended himself to him that in 1372 he became controller of his household, constable of Liverpool castle, warden of various parks and forests and Gaunt's principal agent in Cambridgeshire.⁷ This last, however, was the result, not the cause, of his own connection with the county, which goes back to 1369 when he

¹ *Camb. Fines*, Rye, p. 141.

² *C.P.R.* II (Hen. IV), 170.

³ Tout, *Chapters*, III, 368.

⁴ Waters, *Chester of Chicheley*, p. 213.

⁵ *C.C.R.* 1364–8, p. 83.

⁶ *C.F.R.* 1369–77, p. 3; *C.P.R.* 1374–7, p. 398.

⁷ *Gaunt's Register*, T.R.H.S., 3rd ser. xx, vols. I and II, *passim*.

bought the Brescy manor at Steeple Morden,¹ where he had a licence to hear mass six years later.² By the end of Edward's reign he was well established in both Mordens and had begun a long series of appearances in various public capacities in Cambridgeshire.

His connection with Gaunt was, however, retained and he was on his way to meet Gaunt at Berwick with seventy men-at-arms and sixty lances when the Peasants' Revolt broke out behind him in the summer of 1381. It was probably this connection with the best-hated man in England which provoked the special fury of the rebels against Haselden's property in Cambridgeshire, with the result that it suffered more heavily than that of any other individual during the revolt, even the burgesses of Cambridge taking part in its destruction.³

Haselden naturally had powerful backing in obtaining ample compensation for all the damage done during the revolt, and he himself took part, like most of his class, in the punishment of the rebels.⁴ He was by this time over sixty, so that his age may account for his discharge from the office of tax-collector early in 1385 on the ground that he was "too infirm to travail in such collection without bodily peril".⁵ It may also be for reasons of health that for the next eight or nine years he virtually disappears from the records and then suddenly (from 1395) becomes very active again.⁶

Thus he sits in parliament for Cambridgeshire in that year, twice in 1397, and again in the meeting adjourned to Shrewsbury in January 1393.⁷ He is also frequently justice of the peace for Cambridgeshire at this time and is even used to carry

¹ *C.C.R.* 1369-74, p. 73.

² Palmer, *Cambs. Vill. Docs.* II, 20-1.

³ *Ibid.* pp. 28, 30, 33; *Rot. Parl.* III, 108, especially Guilden Morden.

⁴ Cooper, *Annals*, I, 22; *C.P.R.* II, 24, 76, 85, 139, 246.

⁵ *C.F.R.* II, 68; *C.C.R.* II, 538.

⁶ It is however possible that in these last few years we are dealing with a Thomas Haselden *the younger*, mentioned once in 1380, though that is not the view of R. E. C. Waters, who gives a pedigree of the family in his *Chester of Chicheley*, nor can I find any other trace in this period of a second Thomas Haselden. One other possibility is that the gap represents an absence with Gaunt on his Spanish expedition and later, also in Gaunt's service, in Aquitaine, but that in turn seems rather arduous for a man who, if it is the same man, reached the age of seventy in 1392.

⁷ *Return of Members of Parliament* (1878).

out political forfeitures for the king in October 1397¹—though since Richard and Gaunt were on friendly terms at that time this is not so surprising as at first sight appears. Haselden's next mention is his appointment as sheriff on 22 August 1399, by which date Richard was a prisoner in Henry's hands. All through 1400, 1401 and 1402, in spite of his presumably advanced age, Haselden is kept busy by the new king, two at least of these being military commissions,² while a third is a peculiar one enjoining him with Edmund de la Pole and others to stop loose talk in taverns and other "congregations" against the new dynasty.³ His only reward seems to have been the farm of the rich manor of Fenstanton⁴ and the custody of the park and warren of Great Chesterford,⁵ but he is described in the latter grant in 1401 as "king's esquire", which may mean that he also had a cash pension from the crown. By the end of 1402 he was certainly dead, since in that year his wife Joan received a grant of two hogsheads of wine from the king to console her in her widowhood.⁶ His son Richard (d. 1406) succeeded him⁷ and the family took root in Cambridgeshire and prospered. Part of its founder's second house (at Guilden Morden) still survives.

We have now answered, rather fully, the third of the three questions with which we started—"What manner of men were the sheriffs socially and politically?" It will at once be seen that as far as Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire are concerned there is little evidence for the charges brought against Richard in 1399, except in and after the autumn of 1397. Article 36 of the accusations made in 1388 similarly falls to the ground, while the appointment of that cautious knight, Edmund de la Pole, who had just refused to admit his exiled brother to Calais and had accepted favours from the Appellants, lends little colour to the Monk of Westminster's statement that Richard usurped and abused the appointment of sheriffs in the autumn of 1389. Perhaps this chronicler, who is apt to get muddled, but is normally friendly to

¹ *C.P.R.* VI, 308; *C.F.R.* III, 234-5. ² *C.P.R.* I (Hen. IV), 137-8, 354.

³ *Ibid.* p. 128. ⁴ *C.F.R.* 1399-1405, p. 17. ⁵ *C.P.R.* I (Hen. IV), 541.

⁶ Auth. Dr Palmer.

⁷ Waters, *loc. cit.*

Richard, is unconsciously reflecting a distorted version of the undoubted fact that Richard had merely resumed control of the government in that year, as he was entitled to do.

Yet there must be something in all these constantly repeated charges, biased and confused as they may be, and after all Richard certainly did intrude Newport and many other sheriffs in November 1397 and kept them in office for a second year. I can find no grounds for supposing that his real object was to influence the composition of the commons—there is, it is true, the condemned Arundel's famous cry in 1397, "the faithful commons are not here!"—yet Richard's last parliament was notoriously overawed by a display of force, which would hardly have been necessary if it had really been systematically packed, while at the time of its election only one clearly "subservient" sheriff in any county had as yet been appointed.¹ Again his other parliaments, with the exception of a few in the nineties concerning which the charge is not made, were never particularly friendly to him. I do not in fact believe that there was at any time much substance in the various cries of "packing" which are raised about this period, sometimes against Gaunt in his early days as well as Richard,² though they are natural enough concerning an age in which tempers ran high and the commons were obviously becoming more and more important.³ But that is not to say that there

¹ See P.R.O. *List of Sheriffs*. The sheriff I have in mind is Richard Mawardyn in Wiltshire.

² Cf. Col. Wedgwood in *Eng. Hist. Rev.* XLV, 623-5 and N. B. Lewis, *ibid.* XLVIII, 364.

³ See *Accts. and Papers*, LXII, Part I (1878), *Members of Parliament*.

A superficial examination of the list of knights of the shire returned for Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire in the period 1384-99 tends to confirm this impression. Starting with the Salisbury parliament of April 1384, which is the first parliament at all likely to have been tampered with (following the shrieval appointments late in 1383), there are fourteen parliaments in all to be accounted for. In these fourteen parliaments Cambridgeshire is represented by fifteen knights and Huntingdonshire by fourteen. Of these twenty-nine knights in all, the sheriffs whose careers are analysed above provide between them five for Cambridgeshire and five for Huntingdonshire, while the careers of at least two more in each county have in fact been investigated for purposes of this paper and may be immediately dismissed. This leaves fifteen names which call for further investigation but there is *prima facie* nothing suspicious about any of them.

were not other and sounder objections to the shrieval appointments or that Richard, in 1397 and 1398 at least, had other illegitimate objects in view. I believe that the objections were local ones to rotating the same men consecutively through the offices of sheriff and escheator, and in particular to the practice, common in all counties, of keeping the same man in office as escheator only for several years running,¹ all of which would tend to concentrate power over property in the localities for too long a period in the same hands.

As for Richard's object in manipulating the appointment of sheriffs on a wide scale at the end of his reign, I believe that it may have been not so much political as military, and perhaps financial, in intention, though like many of his schemes it turned out in the end to be only half-baked. The sheriffs had already failed him once when he was in need of men in the summer of 1387, and his return to power in the 'nineties is marked by the gradual building up of a nation-wide reserve in the livery of the white hart, coupled with the retaining of numerous knights and squires in the localities in return for grants and pensions.² This process is immensely accelerated in and after 1398, and to my mind it seems possible that the new sheriffs were meant to act in an emergency as the mobilising officers of the new forces in the shires, and perhaps were also intended to secure payment of the new financial exactions which the policy helped to render necessary. The scheme would probably have broken down on this question of finance in any case, for its expense was very great—moreover, it is doubtful if the manipulation of the sheriffdom could have been continued indefinitely—but its failure was rendered certain by Richard's rash withdrawal of too many of his more ardent supporters to Ireland in 1399, and by Henry's surprise attack when the machine for that reason was out of gear. Perhaps it had never really been in full working order: there was a half-hearted attempt to employ it against Henry, but it ludicrously failed. If this hypothesis is correct, Richard's enemies were right to attack him for his policy towards the sheriffs, and moreover it was wise of them to base their attack upon a

¹ See P.R.O. List of Escheators (in typescript), *passim*.

² Cf. e.g. Tout, *Chapters*, IV, 33 n.

popular catchword and upon old and common local grievances rather than on a danger so generalised and so new that it might not have been widely understood. But when all is said it remains only a hypothesis, which must await confirmation from other sources, notably from the results of similar investigations into the political and social background of late fourteenth-century sheriffs in other shires.

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