

ART. X.—*Two medieval Westmorland Speakers. Pt. i.*:—
Sir James de Pickering. By J. S. ROSKELL, M.A.,
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IT was in 1265 that elected representatives of shires and towns were first summoned together to attend a general parliament. But it was not until about the beginning of Edward III's reign (in 1327) that their presence in parliaments came to be regarded as essential. Roughly half a century later still (in 1376), the Commons, as they had now long been called, began the practice of electing a spokesman or speaker from among their own number and for the duration of a parliament, to represent them when they had matters to declare to the King and Lords. In the medieval period the Commons invariably elected their Speaker from among the county representatives, the knights of the shire (as they were called), who in this period, mainly for social reasons, carried most weight in the lower house of parliament.

The origins of the Speaker's office present a number of problems. What influences are likely to have been brought to bear upon his election? When, and to what extent, did he become the agent of the King in the Commons as well as their representative vis-à-vis him and the Lords? These two are perhaps the most important. In the absence of any Commons' Journals in the medieval period to help us with such questions, to investigate the careers and public character of individual Speakers is surely to follow an obvious way of approach.

An inquiry into the lives of Sir James de Pickering of Killington, Speaker at Gloucester in 1378, when knight of the shire for Westmorland, and in 1383 at Westminster, when knight of the shire for Yorkshire, and of Sir Richard

Redman or Redmayne of Levens and Harewood, Speaker in 1415, when knight of the shire for Yorkshire, does not by itself take us far towards a solution of these problems. But it has its value. Pickering's Speakerships fell in a time of weak royal authority, when Richard II was in his minority. It was also a period of disillusionment with a stale and discredited policy of war against France, of uncertainty and friction among men of wealth and ambition doubtless made nervous by unrest in countryside and town (attested by the Peasants' Revolt of 1381), of heavy taxation, and therefore of a constant and testy dissatisfaction on the part of the Commons in parliament. It is of some significance that Pickering was not a royal retainer when he was Speaker, although he became one later in Richard II's reign.

Redmayne's Speakership occurred in a very different situation. Henry V was an experienced and authoritarian monarch, and the parliament of 1415 met immediately after his victory at Agincourt offered the prospect of a successful military *détente* in France on a larger scale, which itself guaranteed national unity and a greater measure of genuine parliamentary understanding and compliance than had been achieved for over half a century. In such circumstances the Commons were ready to choose as Speaker one acceptable on personal grounds to the ruler, and certainly in Redmayne they found such a one. A former, close supporter of Richard II, he had lost nothing by the latter's deposition and the accession of Henry IV in 1399: since then he had ever been an actively faithful retainer of the Lancastrian dynasty. He was, moreover, attached to Henry V's younger brother, John, duke of Bedford, who held the parliament of 1415 as Guardian of the Kingdom (*Custos Anglie*) in the King's absence overseas; and he was a kinsman by marriage of Lord FitzHugh, then Henry V's Chamberlain.

There is no doubt of the importance of the local and even regional standing of both Pickering and Redmayne.

Each had his connexions with a number of peers who had considerable influence in the north of England. Pickering had close relations as retainer with Sir William de Windsor of Grayrigg (husband of Edward III's mistress, Alice Perrers), who was in and out of office as Edward III's Lieutenant of Ireland in the last decade of his reign. He was also connected with the Cliffords and, if more obscurely and tenuously, with John of Gaunt, duke of Lancaster, the eldest of Edward III's sons to survive him, and probably also with Richard Lord Scrope of Bolton, Steward of the Royal Household in 1377/8 and Chancellor of England in 1378/80. Redmayne enjoyed the benefit of family ties with the baronial houses of FitzHugh and Greystoke, and he himself profitably married a Yorkshire peer's daughter, a young widow who soon became one of her brother's two co-heiresses, adding to Redmayne's own modest Westmorland properties valuable estates in the West Riding.

Both Pickering and Redmayne were important notables in Yorkshire as well as in the north-west, and each eventually seems to have moved the centre of his interests over to the eastern and richer side of the Pennines. There is some indication of this tendency in their promotion to local offices of royal appointment. Pickering was acting sheriff of Westmorland (under the Cliffords, the hereditary sheriffs) for all but four of the last twelve years of Edward III's reign, but under Richard II he was three times escheator and three times sheriff of Yorkshire. His activity as parliamentary representative suggests the same sort of shift of influence: knight of the shire for Westmorland in 1362 and 1365, for Cumberland in 1368, and again for Westmorland in 1377 (October), 1378, 1379, and 1382 (October), his last five elections to parliament were for Yorkshire, in 1383 (February), 1384 (November), 1388 (September), 1390 (November), and 1397 (September).¹

¹ *The Official Return of Members of Parliament*, vol. I, 171, 176, 179, 198, 201, 203, 213, 216, 224, 236, 240, 257.

The fact that Redmayne sat in parliament for Yorkshire alone — he was shire-knight in 1406, 1414 (November), 1415, 1420, and 1421 (December)² — and that he was twice sheriff and once escheator in Yorkshire, would make it appear that he had switched the centre of his activities to his wife's county. But his interests west of the Pennines clearly still remained powerful: he was entitled to a royal annuity charged on the Crown revenues from Cumberland, and he was sheriff of this county five times in all, for the last time as late as 1412.

Sir James de Pickering has a special interest to the local historian of Westmorland. He is the only parliamentary representative for the county ever to have been Speaker. Incidentally he was the first knight of the shire for Yorkshire to hold the office, Sir Richard Redmayne being the second.

A knight by the time of his first election to parliament, Sir James de Pickering was probably the son of the Thomas de Pickering who, in 1336, was confirmed by royal licence in possession of the manor of Killington, a parcel of a moiety of the barony of Kendal, originally granted to Thomas's father (William) by Peter de Brus in 1259 as a twentieth of a knight's fee. (The family arms were probably derived from those of De Brus.) Killington, some seven miles up the valley of the Lune from (but still in the parish of) Kirkby Lonsdale in south-east Westmorland, was in easy reach of Kendal, where apparently Sir James had a town-house. (He is at any rate occasionally referred to as being "of Kendal".) The family also had holdings at Firbank (near Killington), Millehope, Siggiswick, and at Heversham in the narrow strip of coastal plain that lies between Lancaster and Kendal.³ At Killington and Millehope, from the time of

² *Ibid.*, 270, 285, 286, 296, 301.

³ *CPR*, 1334-3, 280; *N. & B.* i 261; AA3 iii 272; CW2 xxx 91. I have not been able to discover any connexion between the Pickeringings of Killington and Ellerton and the family of the same name who were tenants of the Barons Roos in the North Riding of Yorkshire at Oswaldkirk and Ampleforth (*CFR*, 1347-56, 161; *VCH, Yorkshire, North Riding*, i 549). Of this

Edward II, the family enjoyed rights of warren by royal charter. Sir James also had (or came to have) estates in the West Riding of Yorkshire, in the Humber basin in the vicinity of Selby: at Thorganby and also at Aughton in Spalding Moor, rents from some of which latter (to the amount of one mark a year) he conveyed in 1385 to the nearby Gilbertine priory of Ellerton, for the maintenance of one of their canons who was to be his chantry-priest at a parochial altar in the priory church.⁴ Evidently Pickering had a place at Ellerton, too.

It is possible that the James de Pickering who was among those who entered the free chases of John de Mowbray at Kirby Malzeard and Burton-in-Lonsdale and hunted down some of his deer and committed assaults there, so that Mowbray complained and secured the appointment on 20 October 1354 of a special royal commission of *oyer and terminer* to deal with these trespasses, was James de Pickering of Killington; chief among the marauders were a group of knights from south Westmorland.⁵

These included Sir John de Haryngton of Farleton, a near neighbour of Pickering's and a knight of the shire for Lancashire in 1343, 1352, and 1357, who died in August 1359. After the death of Sir John's eldest son (Robert) in January 1361, and following the death of the overlord, Henry, duke of Lancaster, in March 1361, Pickering (by this time himself a knight) came into possession, evidently by right to wardship, of certain of his estates. These comprised tenements in Burton-in-Kendal and nearby Bolton, and at Farleton and Whittington in the Lonsdale hundred of Lancashire, together with a fourth part of the bailiwick of the serjeanty of the Lancashire hundred of Leylandshire, all held of the

family was Sir Richard Pickering, knight of the shire for Yorkshire in 1429, sheriff in 1431-2, J.P. in the North Riding in 1432-3, who died in 1441.

⁴ *CPR*, 1381-5, 179; *ibid.*, 1385-9, 7.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 1354-8, 130.

duchy of Lancaster. When Robert died the next heir was his brother, Sir Thomas de Haryngton, who himself died overseas in the following August (1361), another younger brother, Nicholas, then succeeding as heir.

The Haryngton lands held of the duchy of Lancaster were granted on 30 December 1361 to Pickering to hold in wardship together with the marriage of Nicholas, who was still some five years under age. And on 7 November 1362, for 100 marks (to be paid in the following year) a royal grant secured to Pickering the custody of other of the Haryngton lands in Winmarleigh (near Lancaster), then held of the king as of the manor of Wyresdale. When this particular grant was made, Pickering was himself at Westminster sitting in the autumn parliament for the first time as knight of the shire; his fellow-knight, John de Preston of Kendal, was one of his two sureties in the royal Chancery. The Winmarleigh estate was granted to Pickering expressly as lately held by Sir Thomas de Haryngton who, it appeared, had never actually been seised, the last tenant being the father, Sir John. Pickering, unable to exercise his right of wardship there, later drew attention to his difficulty, and to the fact that he was getting nothing for his 100 marks, and on 4 November 1364 he sued out a writ of *certiorari* from the royal Chancery to the escheator in Lancashire. His statement was verified at an inquest held at Preston (Lancs.) on 16 November, and on 26 November the grant of two years before was renewed with the necessary corrections. The recognisance, entered into by Pickering on 14 November 1362 and by which he undertook to pay £200 to the executors of Duke Henry of Lancaster, was doubtless in respect of the wardship of those Haryngton estates lately held of the duke.

Apart from his difficulties at Winmarleigh, it would appear that Pickering had run into other trouble over his Haryngton wardship. In July 1360, probably at Pickering's instigation, a servant of his had abducted Sir Thomas

de Haryngton's wife at Sedbergh in Lonsdale, taken her to Bubwith near Selby, and been subsequently indicted of the felony and outlawed. On 9 January 1364 the servant received a royal pardon, following good service in Ireland with Sir William de Windsor and at the latter's request.⁶

This is the first suggestion of that connexion between Sir James de Pickering and Sir William de Windsor which was to be the most important single attachment of the Speaker's career. Holding the manors of Heversham and Grayrigg, Windsor was Pickering's near neighbour. During the Lieutenancy in Ireland of Edward III's second son, Lionel, duke of Clarence, which began in 1361, Windsor held a command there, and it is probable that even before January 1364 Pickering was himself a member of Windsor's retinue in Ireland. If that was the case, his service there was clearly not continuous. After sitting in the Westminster parliament of January 1365, again as knight of the shire for Westmorland, in the autumn of that year he was appointed under-sheriff of Westmorland under Roger Lord Clifford, who held the shrievalty in fee. He held this office for two years, until October 1367. Only a year went by and then (after serving as knight of the shire for Cumberland in the parliament of May 1368) he was reappointed on 25 October 1368. Three days before this, a royal licence was issued (for £5, paid by Pickering) enabling Lord Clifford to grant him for life an annuity of 10 marks charged on the rents of his manor of Langton-in-Bongate (Westmorland) which was held in chief. Pickering held the under-shrievalty of Westmorland until October 1369.⁷ His year of office saw Sir William de Windsor, after the duke of

⁶ *DKR* xxxii 342; *Cal. of Inqs. postmortem* xi 204-205, 449; *CFR*, 1356-68, 234; *CPR*, 1364-7, 50; *ibid.*, 1361-4, 439. For Sir William de Windsor, see *D.N.B.* xxi 648-650; G. F. Duckett, *Duchetiana*, 285-290.

⁷ *P.R.O.*, *Lists and Indexes*, vol. IX, *List of Sheriffs* 150. On 12 February 1367 Pickering in the meantime was appointed to serve on a royal commission of *oyer and terminer* following a complaint by Sir Hugh de Lowther of a breach of his close and park at Wythop Hall in Cumberland (*CPR*, 1364-7, 427). *CPR*, 1367-70, 160.

Clarence's death, himself appointed as King's Lieutenant in Ireland.⁸

The English government, having determined upon a policy of renewal of war against the Irish septs, undertook to furnish the new Lieutenant with £20,000 in instalments, and Windsor crossed in June 1369. On 20 December 1368 commissions had been issued for the furnishing of archers to go in his retinue from Westmorland, Lancashire, Yorkshire, and Nottinghamshire. With Windsor himself, Windsor's nephew, John, and others, Sir James de Pickering was appointed a member of the commission for Westmorland. And on 1 April 1369 Pickering sued out royal "letters of protection" for one year as a member of Windsor's company. His former ward, Sir Nicholas de Haryngton, did the same; the heir of Lord Clifford had done so over a month before.

Pickering in all probability actually crossed to Ireland with the Lieutenant, for he was with him there as a member of his council by 10 July 1369. It is likely that he was away from England more or less continuously for the best part of the next two years. On 24 February 1370 his royal "letters of protection" were renewed for another year, and on 28 March 1370 the sheriff of Westmorland was ordered (in a letter close issued by the Chancery) to allow him a respite until the following Michaelmas regarding the payment at the Exchequer of a fine of £20, imposed by the Treasurer and Barons because he had not appeared to render his account as under-sheriff at the end of his term of office. Pickering was stated in the writ to be on royal service in Ireland.⁹

We know all of what we do know of Pickering's activities in Ireland from the series of charges against Sir William de Windsor's first administration (which ended with his recall in the spring of 1372), preferred in an Irish parliament which met in January 1373 (when Sir

⁸ For Windsor's Lieutenancies in Ireland, see H. G. Richardson and G. O. Sayles, *The Irish Parliament in the Middle Ages*, especially pp. 80-85.

⁹ *CPR*, 1367-70, 185, 238, 385; *CCR*, 1369-74, 178.

Robert Ashton was sent out from England as Justiciar of Ireland to investigate grievances there), and from some immediately subsequent inquiries. Carrying on the war to reduce the clans bordering on the Dublin pale, Windsor had found himself unable to keep his military expenses within bounds and had adopted the natural policy of putting the screw on the Irish themselves when he had run through his English allowances.

We need only to inspect those of the charges in which Sir James de Pickering was mentioned to appreciate the import of the whole schedule, which comprised no fewer than 87 articles of offence. Pickering was alleged to have been among those who counselled the Lieutenant to compel the civic authorities in Dublin on 10 July 1369 to maintain a force of 24 men for three weeks at their own cost; to have assisted in counselling Windsor in the Dublin parliament of 30 July 1369 to impose certain customs on foodstuffs and 6d. poundage on all exports, against the will of the Commons and merchants; to have advised the imposition on the commons of Meath of a tallage of half a mark on every ploughland, without the assent of the county, on 10 December 1369; to have taken a bribe of 10 marks for a charter exempting from knighthood, this when holding pleas at Trim on 18 March 1370; to have been party, three days later at Dublin, to a decision resulting in the unjust arrest of a chamberlain of the Irish Exchequer, who was then imprisoned in Dublin castle until his death, although he had paid 100 marks of the fine of 500 marks, at which he was assessed, and given 10 marks and a silver bowl to Pickering.

Further charges against him were that on 20 May 1370, after the knights for the town of Drogheda attending parliament at Dublin had refused to grant a subsidy and the Lieutenant, after summoning the mayor, steward, and bailiffs with 12 burgesses, had compelled these men to pay £40, they also paid £2 to Pickering for his assistance; that, only a fortnight earlier, when four Drogheda mer-

chants bought the cargo of two Breton salt-ships, Pickering seized the ships and the salt, which was later sold to the Lieutenant's use (a manoeuvre that was repeated a year later); and that in January 1371, during the Kilkenny parliament, he was in agreement with the counsel which Windsor followed when he coerced the two knights for Meath into granting a tax of 6d. poundage as part of a levy of £3,000. Pickering's importance in this short Irish period of his career was not simply that of an intimate member of the Lieutenant's household and no more. A charge that on 23 May 1370 he received a bribe of 10 marks, prior to the Lieutenant's granting a charter of pardon to a clerk convicted of a murder, described him as then being "Chief Justice of the pleas following the Lieutenant and the principal person of the Lieutenant's *secretum consilium*". This is the only evidence of a direct kind suggesting that Pickering was a lawyer; holding this office, it is almost inconceivable that he was not.¹⁰

In the summer (of 1372) before these charges were made, Windsor was recalled to England, but he returned to Ireland in April 1374 after his reappointment as Lieutenant in September 1373. He made little headway in face of all the opposition that his first Lieutenancy had aroused. The attack on his administration, developed during his absence in England, was not suspended after his return; it was, in fact, encouraged by Sir Nicholas Dagworth's mission in the autumn of 1375 and once more came to a head in February 1376, when Windsor and other Irish officials were summoned to England. At the same time, so also were summoned representatives of the Irish commons, elected as for a parliament, to come before the English Council on 16 February 1376, two days after the date originally fixed for the meeting of the English parliament. Windsor crossed in June and on 24 July was superseded as Lieutenant of Ireland by the Earl of Ormond. The Irish business was by this time very

¹⁰ M. V. Clarke, *Fourteenth Century Studies*, 186, 206, 220-229.

much intricated with the circumstances behind the general attack that had been launched against the Court party during the "Good Parliament" of this year. The reformers in parliament included in their programme a virulent attack on Edward III's mistress, Alice Perrers, whom by this time (but only recently) Windsor had married. The revival of the Court party, with the duke of Lancaster at its head, saved Alice Perrers, who had been banished from Court and subjected to forfeiture. It also saved her new husband: by her influence a new commission to Sir Nicholas Dagworth, to take back to Ireland the original schedule of charges against Windsor for further action there, was revoked in November 1376, and another commission to Dagworth and others was suppressed on 4 December. But Windsor never returned to Ireland. With these later developments regarding Ireland, Sir James de Pickering had nothing to do, so far as can be ascertained. He had not, in fact, been involved in Windsor's second administration in Ireland of 1374/6, although he retained his connexion with Windsor throughout, until the latter's death in 1384, for after this he acted as his executor.

It is just possible that Pickering was back in England at the time of his appointment on 28 March 1371 to serve on the royal commission authorized by the Council to assess each of the parishes of Westmorland, to the subsidy of £50,000 voted (in the recent parliament) on the basis of an average contribution of 22s. 3d. from each parish in the kingdom. This original assessment, when the number of parishes was found to have been miscalculated, was raised to 116 shillings per parish in a Great Council, which met at Winchester on 8 June 1371 mainly to remedy the error. Fresh commissions to assess and collect were then re-issued, Pickering being again appointed for Westmorland, which contributed least of all the counties.¹¹ On 10 (or 17) October following,

¹¹ *CFR*, 1369-77, 112, 127.

Pickering entered upon what proved to be a five years continuous occupation of the under-shrievalty of Westmorland; not until October 1376 was he displaced.¹² At the very time of his appointment he was granted at the Exchequer (for £40) the marriage of a royal ward, the son and heir of the Christopher de Moresby who had been a knight of the shire for Cumberland in 1360, 1363, and 1366; Roger Lord Clifford was his only surety. While still under-sheriff of Westmorland, he was appointed to the commission of the peace in Cumberland by patent of 20 January 1373 and eight days later in Westmorland itself. He did not, however, act as J.P. in Cumberland. On 12 June 1376 he was a member of a special royal commission of oyer and terminer following a complaint by Sir John de Derwentwater, the neighbouring sheriff of Cumberland, of assaults on him and his men for refusal to release a prisoner in the gaol of Carlisle castle who had been indicted of felony at the sheriff's tourn in the city.¹³

Pickering may very well have been up at Westminster at this time, when the "Good Parliament" was still in session. In all probability the roll of charges, framed in Ireland against Windsor and himself and others three years before, was being considered by the Council newly appointed in the parliament. Certainly at this time, he and Derwentwater, together with the Lords Scrope of Masham and Bolton, stood bail for Sir Hugh de Dacre who was held in the Tower on suspicion of having murdered his elder brother, Randolph, in his bed at Halton (Lancs.) in August 1375; released from the Tower on 2 July 1376, Sir Hugh was remanded until required to appear to stand trial before the Lords in parliament, or elsewhere if the King pleased.¹⁴ In October, following

¹² *List of Sheriffs, loc. cit.* On 25 May 1375 he was ordered as sheriff to make certain arrests (*CPR, 1374-7, 150*).

¹³ *CPR, 1370-4, 139, 244, 304; ibid., 1374-7, 325.*

¹⁴ *CCR, 1374-7, 433* (Randolf de Dacre, personally summoned to parliament from 1362 to his death, was a priest, and sentence of the greater excommunication was pronounced against his murderers by the Bishop of

the "Good Parliament", Pickering relinquished his office as under-sheriff of Westmorland. But there seems to have been no particular significance in this. The Court party, with which his friend, Windsor, was now closely involved as the husband of the declining king's mistress, had already recovered from the storm of the recent parliament. And on 6 November 1376 Pickering found himself for the first time appointed as a J.P. in the West Riding of Yorkshire. A week or so after Richard II's accession he was made a commissioner of array in the West Riding (on 1 July 1377, when there was an invasion scare) and, later, a commissioner (by letter close of 30 August 1377) to seize certain lands in Yorkshire and Westmorland forfeited by Edward III's son-in-law, Enguerrand de Coucy, earl of Bedford, when this French nobleman renounced all his English honours, preferring his allegiance to the French Crown. Representing Westmorland once more in the first parliament of the new reign, Pickering was reappointed during the session (on 6 November 1377) to the West Riding commission of the peace.¹⁵

To the second parliament of Richard II's reign, which met at Gloucester on 20 October 1378 and sat for four weeks until 16 November, Pickering was re-elected knight of the shire for Westmorland. During the somewhat disturbed session he acted as the Commons' elected Speaker. John of Gaunt's recent military failure in Brittany, the need to get financial relief once more from parliament so soon after the grant of a double subsidy less than a year before, the scandal of the recent breach of sanctuary in the abbey at Westminster (with which rumour was associating the duke himself), the very fact of parliament's being summoned to meet for the first time for forty years away from Westminster (perhaps because of a renewal of the bitterness of the previous

Carlisle; Hugh granted livery of his inheritance on 10 July 1376, was thenceforward summoned to parliament as Lord Dacre until his death in December 1383).

¹⁵ *CPR*, 1374-7, 314; *ibid.*, 1377-81, 39, 47; *CCR*, 1377-83, 11.

year between Lancaster and Bishop Courtenay of London and the prospect of a recurrence of trouble with the Londoners), made the situation one of considerable difficulty for the administration of the day.

The Commons refused to make a grant of direct taxation, although Lord Scrope of Bolton, who passed during the session from the Stewardship of the royal Household to the office of Chancellor of England, did his best to secure one by tactfully handling the Commons when they insisted on a view of the accounts of the previous subsidy. The session was also marked by a certain irritation between Lords and Commons: when the latter asked for the now usual liaison-committee of lords to confer with them, the Upper House objected but eventually gave in on this point.

It is possible that the Commons' Speaker was himself much interested in the important proposals that were made during the session for the relief of local disorder. To some time in 1378 is to be attributed an undated petition which Pickering addressed to the King's Council. It stated that on 5 December last past when he was acting at Westminster as one of the knights of the shire for Westmorland — 5 December 1377 was actually the last day of Richard II's first parliament — Sir Thomas de Roos of Kendal and his four sons with 300 armed men laid two ambushes for Pickering's men and tenants on the highway at Helsington (a village to the south of Kendal) and assaulted them, killing a servant and another man of his and wounding six others. It may be that Pickering preferred the petition during the Gloucester parliament, but it is more than likely that he submitted it much earlier in the year. In fact, it may very well be that a royal commission, appointed by patent on 7 April 1378 to make inquiry in Westmorland about unlawful assemblies meeting there for the purpose of killing Pickering and his men and tenantry, was the official reaction to his petition. The same day saw the issue of a patent

setting up a commission for the same purpose in Yorkshire. To membership of the Westmorland commission were appointed Lord Clifford and Pickering's own former ward, Sir Nicholas de Haryngton, who had been knight of the shire for Lancashire in the parliament of October 1377.¹⁶

Not long after the parliament of his first Speakership, Pickering was appointed to serve in Westmorland on one of a number of commissions of array (by patent of 18 February 1379). Only the northern shires were so affected, and the motive for the commission was clearly need for defence against the Scots. For a second time Pickering was re-elected knight of the shire for Westmorland in the spring parliament which sat at Westminster from 25 April to 27 May 1379, his third parliament running. It is not improbable that he was re-elected Speaker in this parliament (from which no Speaker's name has come down to us), but this is no more than a conjecture. The session had not long been over when, on 14 June, he and an old servant of his (John of York, perhaps the brother of his servant, Thomas of York, killed in the *fraças* at Helsington) were granted for the next three years pontage on merchandise carried from the priory of Hornby to the bridge over the Lune at Tebay in aid of repairs to another local bridge at Strangerwath. On 8 August he was made a member of the Westmorland commission charged with the re-assessment in the county of the graduated poll-tax voted in the last parliament. Three months later, on 5 November 1379, he was appointed to the office of royal escheator in Yorkshire, a post he was to hold until February 1381.¹⁷ He

¹⁶ Ancient Petitions, P.R.O., S.C. 8, file 67, no. 3308. The date of the ambushes at Helsington is given in the petition as the Saturday before St. Nicholas. In 1377 this day fell on 5 December. The only other autumn parliaments attended by Pickering as knight for Westmorland were those of October 1362 and November 1382, of which the former ended in November, the latter in October. The incident, it seems, could only have occurred in 1377 (*CPR*, 1377-81, 204).

¹⁷ *CPR*, 1377-81, 359, 354; *CFR*, 1377-83, 164; P.R.O., *List of Escheators*, 187.

was dropped from the West Riding commission of the peace in May 1380, but there now began for him a period of much greater official activity, so far as local royal administration was concerned, in Yorkshire, a fact which had a considerable bearing on his later parliamentary career.

Pickering was not to be again elected as knight of the shire to any of the next four parliaments, not, in fact, until the autumn of 1382. In the meantime, on 20 March 1380 he was appointed to a commission of array in the West Riding; on 5 December in the same year to a commission of inquiry into the circumstances behind a petition (preferred at the Northampton parliament) against the ejection of the mayor of York and the irregular and tumultuous election of a successor; and two days later to a commission to control the assessment of the recently voted triple poll-tax in Westmorland.¹⁸ It was this poll-tax which "triggered off" the Peasants' Revolt of the following year. It is unlikely that the rising affected Pickering in any direct way although, in Yorkshire, Scarborough and Beverley were centres of disturbance. When the revolt broke out in May 1381 he had already relinquished his office of escheator. In what way he was connected with John of Gaunt at this time of savage popular hostility to the duke is not known; but it is of some significance that, after the rising was spent but before he was able to return from taking refuge in Scotland, the duke wrote from Edinburgh on 25 June to his local receiver in Lancashire instructing him to send all his available cash and as much as he could raise by loan to Carlisle, where it was to be handed over to Sir James de Pickering and presumably taken, either personally or by an agent of Pickering's, to the duke himself.¹⁹

¹⁸ *CPR, 1377-81*, 472 (on 6 August 1380 Pickering was a mainpernor for a King's clerk, Thomas de Broughton, when granted the custody of a small estate in Ribblesdale forfeited for felony, *CFR, 1377-83*, 213), 580; *CFR, 1377-83*, 230.

¹⁹ Royal Historical Society, Camden Third Series, vol. LVI, *John of Gaunt's Register, 1379-83*, ed. E. C. Lodge and R. Somerville, i 184.

Pickering served on no royal commissions in 1381 after the expiry of his escheatorship, but on 8 March 1382 he was appointed to a commission in Westmorland of a type issued for the whole country, to keep the peace, arrest rebels, suppress sedition, call out the *posse comitatus* if need be, and act with judicial powers of oyer and terminer. This commission and Pickering's membership of it were renewed on 21 December following. He was still, as he was to remain, a J.P. in Westmorland. This was after his service in the parliament of October 1382 when he sat for the sixth and last time for Westmorland, a session which saw the failure of Lancaster's first bid for parliament's financial support for his proposed crusade in Spain. Pickering had seemingly used his visit to the south to petition the king for a grant which, in fact, passed the great seal a week after the parliament was dissolved: on 1 November 1382, allegedly in consideration of his long but unrewarded services in Scotland and elsewhere in Edward III's reign, he was allowed the custody of some lands at Thorganby (near Selby), which were then in the king's hand because acquired by the overlord in fee simple without royal licence; farmed at 30s. a year, they were assigned to Pickering rent-free. The grant was warranted by the privy seal, but the original petition is endorsed to the effect that Richard II, after granting the petition, on 1 November himself delivered the bill by his own hands to the Chancellor ordering him to have a patent drawn up in due form.²⁰ Five days later, on 6 November 1382, Pickering was appointed once more escheator in Yorkshire, on 20 December was reappointed J.P. in Westmorland, and on 3 February 1383 was made a commissioner for preserving salmon in the main rivers of Cumberland, Westmorland, and Northumberland.²¹

²⁰ CPR, 1381-5, 140, 245, 179; Ancient Petitions, P.R.O., S.C. 8, file 252, no. 12565.

²¹ *List of Escheators, loc. cit.*; CPR, 1381-5, 253-254, 256 (in February 1390 he had to procure a surcease of distress to which he was then being

Early in his year of office as escheator in Yorkshire, Pickering was for the first time elected as knight of the shire for that county, and in the short parliament which sat from 23 February to 10 March he acted for a second time as Speaker for the Commons. Again, as in 1378, the session was very troubled, this time because the knights of the shire carried the day against the Upper House and secured the adoption of the policy of a crusade in Flanders rather than in Spain, where John of Gaunt's own ambitions were involved. One of the Commons' arguments, that the truce with Scotland was due to expire and that this made it inadvisable for Lancaster and his brothers to be out of the kingdom, may very well have appealed to Pickering, as a north countryman himself.

Little is recorded of any official activity on Pickering's part for the next two years. His Yorkshire escheatorship came to an end early in November 1383. The autumn parliament of October 1383 and the Salisbury session of the spring of 1384 went their way without Pickering being again elected as knight of the shire, but to the November-December parliament of 1384 he was once more returned for Yorkshire.

About this time he was extremely busy over the very complicated affairs of his old colleague, Sir William de Windsor, who in 1381 had become a member of the Upper House of parliament. Sir William had died at Heversham on 15 September 1383. Sir James de Pickering, along with Sir William de Melton, Sir Walter de Strickland (who was elected for Westmorland to the next parliament of November 1383 along with Windsor's nephew, Robert), and Windsor's nephew and heir, John de Windsor, was appointed on the day of Sir William's death as executor of his nuncupative will. Probate was granted at York on 19 September 1383, letters of administration being issued to Melton and Pickering by

subjected by the Exchequer, on the ground that the commission to preserve these rivers never came into his hands and that he had not meddled in the business [*CCR*, 1380-92 153].

the archbishop's vicar-general; at London in the prerogative court of Canterbury on 12 October. Pickering was one of the witnesses to two deeds, dated 24 October and 1 November respectively, conveying to the heir practically all the estates of Sir William de Windsor in England, the second of the two being a quitclaim of Egremont castle and lordship (Cumberland).

In Hilary term 1385 Pickering and his fellow-executors were embroiled at the Exchequer over the accounts of Sir William de Windsor, which, difficult though in themselves they must have been to unravel, were further tangled by the forfeiture to which his wife, Alice Perrers, had been subjected by her condemnation in the Good Parliament and its confirmation by Richard II's first parliament. Dame Alice petitioned in the November parliament of 1384 against the awards of 1376 and 1377, and they were now quashed, but only as regards the future. All grants of her enfeoffed estates already made were to stand, including those to her late husband who had disposed of them in ways far from her liking, and she subsequently engaged in law-suits with his nephew and heir, John. Some considerable relaxation of the forfeiture had been obtained when Windsor undertook to serve at his own costs in Thomas of Woodstock's expedition to Brittany in 1380. There were also to be taken into account the debts due to Windsor from the Crown, dating from the days of his Irish administration and from the time of his appointment as keeper of the town and castle of Cherbourg in Normandy in October 1379.

On 8 May 1385, the executors, principally John de Windsor, were pardoned all claims against the late Sir William's lands, excepting accounts proved of record in the Lower Exchequer regarding advances made to him there at various times and in his various capacities; this pardon was backed up on 19 May by a letter under the great seal to the Upper Exchequer, itself warranted by a royal signet letter, to allow the pardon to take effect,

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and by a further writ of surcease, issued on 22 June, ordering John de Windsor's account to be received. On 7 March Pickering himself had taken out a pardon, warranted by the signet, for all felonies, trespasses, extortions and other offences in England and abroad (presumably in Ireland), of any consequent outlawries, and of debts due from him to the Crown. He was still not clear of the encumbrances of the administration of Windsor's concerns as late as 12 October 1387, when he secured "letters of protection" for a year enabling him to go to Ireland in his capacity as Windsor's executor; he did not, however, go, and the letters were revoked on 26 November 1388.²²

For a few years after 1384 Pickering was not to be elected to parliament, and between his sitting in November 1384 and his next return for Yorkshire to the Cambridge parliament of September 1388 very little can be learned of what he was doing apart from his pre-occupations with the Windsor executorship. In 1386, however, he was certainly much involved in the dispute between Richard Lord Scrope of Bolton and Sir Robert Grosvenor, arising out of the former's eventually successful plea in the Court of the Constable and Marshal against the latter's usurpation (during the Scottish expedition of 1385) of his exclusive right to bear the arms of "azure with a bend d'or". In February 1386 royal authority was given for the appointment of commissioners, nominated by the parties, to examine witnesses and receive evidence, and on 26 May following names were tendered to the Constable, the Duke of Gloucester, at Westminster.

Pickering was among the nine lords and forty knights nominated by Scrope on 28 May, and on 10 August he was appointed by the Constable, under seal of his office, as a commissioner to take depositions and produce them in sealed certificates on 21 January 1387. The connexion

²² G. F. Duckett, *Duchetiana*, 285-290; *CCR*, 1381-5, 580; 548; *ibid.*, 1385-9, 84; *CPR*, 1381-5, 566, 537, 561; *ibid.*, 1385-9, 356, 410.

with Lord Scrope conceivably might have disposed Pickering to the baronial, anti-royalist viewpoint in the October 1386 parliament. This session of parliament saw the impeachment of the Duke of Suffolk, the ex-Chancellor, and the setting up of the parliamentary commission whose appointment Richard II, as he was soon to show, regarded as an act of treason. Scrope was a member of this commission. But Pickering was not a knight of the shire on that occasion. In fact, on 1 October 1386, when the parliament first met, he and his colleague in the business of the plea of arms, the abbot of St. Mary of York, were holding sessions at Nottingham for the taking of attestations in favour of Lord Scrope, first in the parish church of St. Mary and then in the frater of the Franciscan priory there, and on the following day, when they first met in the conventual church, Scrope himself was present, being presumably on his way up to the parliament. In the afternoon of the same day and on 3 and 4 October Pickering held further sessions in the Franciscan priory church at Leicester and then sent on his enrolment of the proceedings under seal to the Constable. Whether he himself moved up to Westminster, where the preparations for the case went on throughout the parliamentary session, is not known.²³

Of Pickering's activities during the troubled years of 1387 and 1388, nothing is known beyond the little that has already been told. But after the violent storm of the "Merciless Parliament" had blown up and subsided he was again elected for Yorkshire to the parliament which met at Cambridge from 10 September to 17 October 1388. This was at a time when the Lords Appellant were in the saddle, Lord Scrope being then one of those members of the parliamentary commission who were continually attending upon and controlling the King.

In the spring of 1389 Richard II recovered some of the political initiative that had been lost in the débâcles

²³ N. H. Nicolas, *The Scrope and Grosvenor Controversy*, i 49, 148-156.

of the previous two and a half years, and Westminster became again a more comfortable place for those whom the King favoured and upon whom he relied. Personal kingship was once more a force to be reckoned with, all the stronger and the more seasoned for what had recently transpired. The Westminster Abbey Chronicle, written at the heart of things, credits Richard with such a recovery of authority as enabled him in the autumn of 1389 to appoint the next batch of sheriffs of his own personal motion "cum consilio suo privato", and to extract from them a special oath of fidelity to himself. Whether or not Pickering needed to trim his sails to new winds, it is just not possible to say, but the next ten years were years of greater employment for him in local royal administrative work than the last decade had been.

On 15 November 1389 he was appointed sheriff of Yorkshire for the first time, his first appointment as a sheriff by direct royal authority. He held the post until 7 November 1390, in the course of his year of office (on 24 February 1390) being granted by royal patent (issued by privy seal warrant) an annuity for life of 40 marks charged on the revenues of his present bailiwick; described as "king's knight", he was retained to serve the king in time of war with a company of twenty men-at-arms and a hundred archers. To the second of the two parliaments summoned during Pickering's year of office as sheriff he was himself returned, almost certainly a case (by no means unique in this period) of a sheriff allowing himself to be elected against the tenor of the writ of summons. The parliament met on 12 November and came to an end on 3 December 1390. On 12 December, within little more than a month of his relinquishing the shrievalty of Yorkshire, Pickering was appointed escheator in the selfsame county. Twelve days later still, he was confirmed in his office as J.P. in Westmorland. His year of office as escheator ended on 28 December 1391.²⁴

²⁴ *List of Sheriffs*, 162; *List of Escheators*, 187. It is possible, but I think

Although he was not re-elected as shire-knight, it is probable that Pickering was up at Westminster when the next parliament, that of 3 November—2 December 1391, was in session, being perhaps concerned *inter alia* with the audit of his escheator's accounts in the Exchequer. However that may be, on 27 November 1391 he was granted in the Exchequer — Sir Peter Tilliol, then knight of the shire for Cumberland, was one of his mainpernors — the wardship and marriage of the son and heir of the late Sir Christopher Moresby who had been shire-knight in the last previous parliament for Westmorland. The wardship comprised estates in Cumberland, Westmorland, and Yorkshire. For their custody Pickering was to render the "extent"; for the marriage, what should be agreed between him and the Council. By a later arrangement — the letters patent were drawn up by the new Chancellor, Archbishop Arundel, at York on 24 October 1392 — Pickering undertook to pay £16 a year for the wardship, £40 down for the marriage; Ralph Lord Grey-stoke was one of his two sureties on this occasion. His continued connexion at this time with Lord Scrope of Bolton is suggested by his appointment in the meantime, on 4 February 1392, as a commissioner of inquiry into the abduction of the heir of a tenant of the honour of Richmond whose marriage Richard II's Queen had granted to Scrope.²⁵ Whether in this period Pickering was also still in touch with the Duke of Lancaster is not known, although on 28 August 1393 he attested a grant of a rent of 20 marks made by a great Lancastrian retainer, Sir Walter Urswick, to a kinsman, Sir Robert

unlikely (in view of Sir James's appointment as escheator during the parliament), that the "James de Pickering" elected to this parliament was the esquire of that name granted an annuity of £10, charged on the Yorkshire royal revenues in November 1401. *CPR*, 1388-92, 200, 346, 437. (A commission of inquiry, on which Pickering served as escheator, into the local forfeitures of John de Lokton, the serjeant-at-law implicated in the famous declaration of the judges at Nottingham in August 1387; in the previous year when sheriff, Pickering had served on an inquiry into a petition, for certain estates probably involved in the forfeiture, submitted by Lokton's stepdaughter and ward, who had married his son, *ibid.*, 273).

²⁵ *CFR*, 1391-9, 21, 60; *CCR*, 1392-6, 26; *CPR*, 1391-6, 82.

Urswick, who was another important supporter of the duke.²⁶

To none of the five parliaments that sat between the winter of 1390 and the spring of 1397 was Sir James de Pickering elected, but during this time he was sheriff of Yorkshire once more in the year November 1393/4. By then he may well have been in the neighbourhood of seventy years of age and his appointments to serve on royal commissions had now become few and far between. On 4 August 1397 he was, however, put on a commission of oyer and terminer following a complaint, made by the abbot of St. Mary of York, of trespasses on his various properties. During the first session of the parliament of 1397/8, in which Pickering served (for Yorkshire) for the last time as knight of the shire, this commission of oyer and terminer was renewed (on 25 September).²⁷

This parliament, which was to prove Richard II's last, in its two short sessions, from 17 to 30 September 1397 at Westminster and from 28 to 31 January 1398 at Shrewsbury, saw the King triumph over his enemies of ten years before. In considering Pickering's likely attitude to these fresh and sinister developments, it is just as well to bear in mind his position as a retainer of the King since 1390, and the fact that during the parliamentary recess (on 3 November 1397) he was appointed as sheriff of Yorkshire for the third time within the last eight years, despite his having procured on 5 April 1396 a patent of exemption for life from the office as well as from being put on assizes, juries, commissions to collect parliamentary tenths and fifteenths, and from being made escheator or coroner, against his will. On 12 November 1397 he was also made once more a J.P. in the West Riding of Yorkshire.

At the end of June 1398 he was put on a commission to

²⁶ *Yorkshire Archaeological and Topographical Journal* xvii 103. (For the Urswicks, see Chetham Society, vol. 96, n.s., J.S. Roskell, *Knights of the Shire for the County Palatine of Lancaster, 1377-1460.*)

²⁷ *List of Sheriffs*, 162; *CPR, 1390-9*, 241, 243; *ibid.*, 236.

make certain arrests in Westmorland, and on 22 January 1399 a servant of his was given a royal pardon for having caused the death of a weaver early in June 1394 (when Pickering had previously been sheriff of Yorkshire).²⁸ Beyond that nothing further is known of Sir James. It is even very doubtful whether by this latter date (January 1399) he was still alive. It is Sir John Depeden who appears in the *adventus* of the *Memoranda Rolls* of the Exchequer as sheriff of Yorkshire in Richard II's last year, not Pickering.²⁹ Almost certainly, Pickering did not live to see the revolution of 1399, when Richard II was deposed in favour of Henry IV. But the date of his death, because he held no lands in chief of the King, is not known. It is fairly safe to assume that the Thomas de Pickering who died in 1406, while in office as escheator of Yorkshire and holding the manor of Killington, was his son and heir.³⁰

²⁸ *List of Sheriffs, loc. cit.*; *CPR, 1391-6*, 691; *ibid.*, 1396-9, 236, 434, 479.

²⁹ K.R. *Memoranda Roll*, P.R.O. E 159/175; the *List of Sheriffs*, in stating that he held office until Richard II's deposition, is clearly at fault.

³⁰ *List of Escheators*, 187; *CFR, 1405-13*, 57; G. F. Duckett, *Duchetiana*, 161. It was Thomas Pickering's son and heir, the Speaker's grandson, John, who married Eleanor, daughter of Sir Richard Haryngton, and who died in 1420, and not the Speaker's father, as C. L. Kingsford states in the short biography of the Speaker in *D.N.B.* xv 1129. Cf. Surtees Society, vol. 144 (*Visitations of the North*), 131; *CPR 1416-22*, 298; J. C. Wedgwood, *History of Parliament, Biographies*, 682. The Pickering pedigree in Nicolson & Burn, *Westmorland and Cumberland* (i 261) is completely at sea. Whoever the Speaker married, it was certainly not (as his first wife) Mary, daughter of Sir Robert Lowther, or (as his second) Margaret, daughter and heiress of Sir John Norwood. The Sir James de Pickering of Killington who married Mary Lowther (*ibid.*, 429-431) was probably the Speaker's great-grandson, the same who was knight of the shire for Yorkshire in 1447, November 1449, and 1455, and who, attainted in 1459, was killed, fighting on the Yorkist side, at Wakefield in 1460. C. L. Kingsford (in *D.N.B., loc. cit.*) follows N. & B. into error as to the Speaker's marriages.