

SIR RICHARD VERNON OF HADDON,
SPEAKER IN THE PARLIAMENT OF
LEICESTER, 1426

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BY the end of the 14th century the family of Vernon had already been in possession of Haddon in the High Peak of Derbyshire for about two hundred years. Lead was mined on the estate, and income from this source, as well as from their other lands in the neighbourhood and elsewhere, probably explains the family's steady growth in prosperity. Their wealth is amply demonstrated by the early building developments at Haddon alone: when the Sir Richard Vernon who is the subject of this paper was born under Richard II, the area covered by Haddon Hall was as extensive as it is now; and it is doubtful whether he himself did much more than improve the chapel by adding a chancel, where in the east window he and his wife are commemorated. This was in 1427, the year after he acted as Speaker for the Commons in the fourth parliament of Henry VI which met, some fifty miles to the south, at Leicester.¹ Tenant and official of the Duchy of Lancaster (the private inheritance of the Lancastrian kings) in his own country of the Peak, and connected with some of the most influential of the titular nobility of the north midlands, Sir Richard Vernon was one of the most important of the lesser magnates of this region. His Speakership is likely to have confirmed the respect in which he was held there. He subsequently rose higher still in the royal service under Henry VI, but it is on account of his occupation of that office that he has a special claim to the attention of the local historian: he is the only member of parliament for Derbyshire ever to have been Speaker.

Richard Vernon was born in 1390. He was the son of Sir Richard Vernon and his wife Jane, daughter of Rhys ap Griffith of Wichnor. Wichnor, which came into Vernon's possession by this marriage, was a feudal member of the great Duchy of Lancaster honour of Tutbury. So were the manors of Nether Haddon (Derbyshire) and Harlaston (Staffs.) where the family resided, and also the manor of Appleby Parva (Leics.). The main concentration of the estates of the Vernons was in the valleys of the Derwent and its tributaries. These, besides Haddon itself, comprised the manors of Baslow, Bubnell, and Rowsley, together with lands in Curbar, One Ash Grange, Over Haddon, Bakewell, Alport and Stanton. In Staffordshire, besides Harlaston, lay their manors of Bridgeford, Pipe Ridware, and Draycott, along with lands in

¹ *Rotuli Parliamentorum*, IV, 296.

Edingale and Haselour. These last two estates were close to Harlaston and Appleby Parva, and also to another Vernon manor at Netherseal (Derbyshire) and some property at Seckington (Warwicks.). Just south of the borough of Leicester the family held the manor of Aylestone. The manors of Marple and Wibersley in Cheshire were also in their possession, and here the Vernons occupied the office of forester of the royal forest of Macclesfield. Far to the north, in Westmorland, lay their manors of Meaburn and Newby. Far to the south, in Buckinghamshire, were Adstock and Pitchcott. Pitchcott had been in Vernon possession from no later than the early 13th century, and here Sir Richard (the Speaker) was a tenant of the Earl of Stafford. Certainly by the end of his life he also held the manors of Stackpole Elidor, Bosheston, and Rudbaxton in Pembrokeshire, and of Pendine and Cantrewyn in Carmarthenshire. Whether these lordships in south-west Wales came by inheritance, marriage, or purchase by the Speaker himself, is not known.

Sir Richard, the Speaker's father (not to be confused with the Sir Richard Vernon of Shipbrook, Cheshire, who was executed in 1403 after the battle of Shrewsbury), had enjoyed a small annuity of £5 granted him by Richard II in 1397, had been one of a commission appointed in 1398 to array Cheshire archers for royal service in Ireland, and had himself accompanied the king there in the expedition of May 1399. He died in 1401, Richard his heir being then only ten years old. The latter's marriage and the wardship of such of his lands as were held of the Duchy of Lancaster were granted to Roger Leche of Chatsworth, who paid 200 marks for this privilege to the Receiver-General of the Duchy. Leche was also given custody of the Vernon estates in Cheshire by additional grants of October 1408 and March 1409. By this time young Vernon's guardianship was well-established in a career that was soon to lead him to distinguished office under the Crown. He was already Steward of the Household of Henry of Monmouth, Prince of Wales, who came to the throne in 1413. In his first regnal year Henry V made Roger Leche both Treasurer of his Household and Chief Steward of the Duchy of Lancaster estates north of the Trent, subsequently, in April 1416, appointing him Treasurer of the Exchequer and, a month later, Chamberlain of the Duchy of Lancaster. And Leche held these last two offices until his death at the end of that year. Precisely what effect his guardianship had on young Vernon's early career is not known, but very likely it contained advantages. The custody had come to an end, however, late in 1411, when Vernon proved his coming of age and sued out livery of his inheritance.

Following the death of his great-uncle, Sir Fulk de Pembridge, in 1409, Richard Vernon also came into possession of estates in Tong (Salop), Sheriff Hales, and Kibbleston (Staffs.). The Staffordshire lands which had come to Pembridge by virtue of his first marriage with Margaret, the heiress of William Trussell, were later to give rise to keen litigation between Richard Vernon and Margaret's heir-general, Sir William Trussell.² In the November

² Belvoir Castle Archives, MSS. 4027, 5922-3, 7629; *Feudal Aids*, VI, 592-4; *Victoria County History of Buckinghamshire*, IV, 90; *Papal Letters* X, 16; *CPR*, 1396-99, 524; *DKR*, XXXVI, 499; *HMC, Rutland MSS.*, IV, 28; *William Salt Arch. Soc., Parliamentary History of Staffs.*, I, 191; J. P. Earwaker, *E. Cheshire*, II, 50-1; *Accounts Various*, PRO, D.L.28/4/2.

of 1410 a royal licence under the Great Seal was granted to Sir Fulk's widow enabling her to acquire the advowson of the parish church of Tong from the abbey of Shrewsbury and to found a college of five secular priests, one of whom was to be warden. Pembridge himself seems to have been intimately connected with Henry IV's half-brother, Thomas Beaufort, sometime Earl of Dorset and Duke of Exeter, and the latter was included in the charter of foundation among those for whose good estate prayers were to be said by the chaplains of the college. Beaufort, himself then Chancellor of England, had been warden of the castle and town of Ludlow since 1402, an office which may have provided opportunity for contact between him and Pembridge. By 14 June 1414, when another royal licence was granted, this time for the annexation of the alien priory of Lapley to the college, Thomas Beaufort's brother Henry, Bishop of Winchester, had been added to the list of those for whom prayers were said at Tong. Meanwhile, by the deed of 1410, the patronage of the collegiate church of Tong had been conveyed to Richard Vernon and his wife. She was *Benedicta*, daughter of Sir John de Ludlow of Stokesay and Hodnet (Salop). Richard's sister Isabel was married to a member of the same family.³

No further direct notice of Vernon himself occurs before 1 July 1416, when the royal Chancery gave him "letters of protection" as retained by Henry V for military service in France. He actually went overseas but, in view of his appointment as sheriff of Staffordshire at the end of the following November, did not perhaps stay abroad for long. He held the office of sheriff for the usual term of a year (until November 1417). Less than a month later he was made a justice of the peace in the same county, a position in which he served until February 1422. In May 1418 (by which date he had been knighted), and again in March 1419, he was a commissioner of array in Staffordshire.⁴ Early in October 1419 he was for the first time elected to parliament as knight of the shire (county M.P.), being returned for Staffordshire. His fellow-knight was Sir Thomas Gresley who, on the same day as the county court was held at Stafford, conducted the Derbyshire elections, being at the time sheriff in that county and Nottinghamshire. On 15 November, two days after the Commons had made their grant of supplies, Vernon was associated with Sir Thomas Erpingham and others, who included Sir John Cokayne (knight of the shire for Derbyshire) and John Mynors, Esquire (parliamentary burgess for Newcastle-under-Lyme), in going bail in Chancery under pain of £20 for the behaviour of Dame Eleanor Dagworth, a Norfolk widow. Eleven days later he was made a commissioner for the raising of a Crown loan in Staffordshire with others who included Sir Thomas Gresley and Hugh Erdeswyk (knight of the shire for Derbyshire during the recent session). Two months were allowed the commissioners in which to negotiate the loan on the security of the third of the subsidy of a tenth and fifteenth leviable at Martinmas 1420. In June 1420 Vernon shared with Sir William Coggeshall and Richard Baynard, two Essex notables, in raising a loan to

³ Dugdale, *Monasticon*, VI (part III), 1402 *et seq.*

⁴ *CCR*, 1409-13, 407; *DKR*, XLIV, 581; *PRO*, *Lists and Indexes*, IX, *List of Sheriffs*, 127; *CPR*, 1416-22, 459, 198, 212.

the Crown of £52. 10s., for which they received tallies of assignment at the Lower Exchequer in the following month.⁵

At the elections in both Staffordshire and Derbyshire to the parliament of May 1421 Sir Richard Vernon was the first to attest the indenture of return, but his own next election was not until the end of October 1422 when he was returned for Derbyshire, with Sir John Cokayne of Ashbourne, to the first parliament of Henry VI's reign. Both knights were included in a commission appointed during the session to inquire into breaches of the statutes governing the netting of salmon and lampreys in the Trent. In the following summer, on 7 July 1423, Vernon was for the first time put on the commission of the peace in Derbyshire. (Apart from a gap between 1432 and 1437, he was to be a justice there until his death in 1451.) On 30 September 1423 he was again first to attest the indenture certifying the election of the Derbyshire parliamentary knights. One of them, Henry Bothe of Finderne, was Vernon's mainpignor (or surety) when, during the first session of this parliament, he was granted on 14 November 1423, with the assent and advice of the royal Council, the custody at farm of the Neville manor of Ashford-in-Bakewell, where he himself already had lands.⁶ It was on 3 March 1424 that Vernon was appointed, *quamdiu placuerit*, steward of the Duchy of Lancaster lordship, and also constable of the castle, of the High Peak. This appointment was to be renewed in his favour (during good behaviour) on 10 August 1437 and then, on 5 April 1438, was given to him and his son Fulk for life. The Vernons, after some trouble in their administration, were, however, superseded by Henry, Earl of Warwick, in October 1444. At the time of the original grant of these offices, Sir Richard was also made master forester of the High Peak, and, although he was soon (by June 1425) replaced in this position, he later recovered it and was still holding it in 1445. These various duchy offices in his own locality were together worth £31. 11s. 8d. in annual fees. In the meantime, on 6 November 1424, Sir Richard had been appointed sheriff of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire.⁷ Less than a month after his surrender of the joint bailiwick, he was elected on 13 February 1426 as knight of the shire to the critical parliament which had been summoned to meet at Leicester only five days later.

The previous autumn had witnessed a climax in the dispute between Bishop Beaufort, the then Chancellor, and Henry VI's uncle, Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, the Protector, both members of the royal family of Lancaster, which almost led to armed conflict between their supporters. A peace, which owed much to the intervention of Gloucester's elder brother, the Duke of Bedford, was still being negotiated when the significantly nicknamed "parliament of battes" met on 18 February at Leicester, following meetings of the Council at St. Albans on 29 January and at Northampton on 13 February. At these meetings attempts had been made to induce Gloucester to meet the Chancellor in the Council, but without success. As its members had feared,

⁵ CCR, 1419-22, 65; CPR, 1416-22, 251; CFR, 1413-22, 315-7; Issue Roll of the Exchequer, PRO. E403/645, mem. 11.

⁶ PRO, C219/12/5; CPR, 1422-20, 35, 561; PRO, C219/13/2; CFR, 1422-30, 56; R. Somerville, *History of the Duchy of Lancaster*, I, 551-2.

⁷ *List of Sheriffs*, 103.

the deadlock affected the normal conduct of the business of the parliamentary session which Beaufort (acting as Chancellor) opened in the great hall of Leicester castle. The Commons were assigned *quaedam bassa camera* for their deliberations, whilst the two committees of triers of petitions were respectively allocated the chapter-house and north chapel in the collegiate church of Our Lady founded by John of Gaunt. The sentimental associations of the place of assembly possibly reacted in the Chancellor's favour, although the honour of Leicester and its tenantry were not a part of those Duchy of Lancaster estates falling under the administration of Henry V's feoffees, of whom Beaufort was the most influential. The Commons were authorized as usual to proceed to the immediate election of a Speaker, but it was not until after ten days that they presented Sir Richard Vernon; only on 28 February was he accepted and able to make the customary Speaker's "protestation". In the meantime, the Commons had signalled their embarrassment at the disharmony among the Lords by the mouth of Roger Hunt, M.P. for Huntingdonshire. The royal charter collegiating Tong church in 1410 and the additional grant of 1414 point to connections between the Beauforts and the Vernon family which may have made Sir Richard acceptable as Speaker to the Chancellor. Be that as it may, Beaufort was worsted during the session and on 13 March, the day after a formal reconciliation was arranged between him and the Duke of Gloucester, he resigned the Great Seal. A week later parliament was adjourned to meet on 29 April. The second session lasted till 1 June when, through Speaker Vernon, the Commons declared before Bedford and the other Lords that with their assent they had granted a subsidy on wool-exports, payable by both aliens and denizens, for two years as from 12 November 1429, and tunnage and poundage, payable by aliens, for the same period; these last subsidies, payable by native merchants, were granted for merely a year, as from 12 November 1426. The grant had apparently not been reached without difficulty: *diverse oppiniones* had been expressed in the Commons as to the grant of tunnage and poundage in the previous parliament of 1425, but the Lords, after taking judicial advice, had declared that the levy must be paid. The grant of 1425 had itself been made only after *moche altercacyon bytwyne the lordys and the comyns* and with the provisos that alien merchants should be put to host (made to live in licensed lodgings) and required to sell their merchandise within forty days of its being imported, and that when English exports, on which tunnage and poundage had been already paid, were lost at sea, the merchants involved should be allowed to export an equivalent amount without further payment of the subsidy. In spite of the Lords' opposition, Vernon, in declaring the Commons' vote, was now in 1426 bound to announce that certain conditions were attached to the present grant, namely, that it should be spent solely on military defence and that there should be a remission of the subsidy on lost merchandise.⁸ There can be little doubt that Beaufort had been at a disadvantage in the Lower House from the start, in view of the fact that its mercantile elements had associated him as Chancellor with the failure to fulfil the conditions under which the previous grant of 1425 had been made.

⁸ *Rotuli Parliamentorum* IV. 296 *et seq.*, 302.

It is interesting to note that during the Leicester parliament a petition had been preferred by the grandson and heir of the late Earl of Westmorland asking the Council to grant him, towards his keep as a royal ward, some £60 a year from the fee-farm of Newcastle-on-Tyne and £42 from the issues of the Neville manor of Ashford-in-the-Peak. It was asked that this second payment be made by the hands of the then Speaker, who had enjoyed the lease of it since the autumn of 1423. A royal letter patent was issued granting the substance of the petition on 16 March, four days before the adjournment of the first session.

Sir Richard Vernon's next election to parliament was not until the summer of 1433. The seven years' interval was anything but a period of inactive retirement. In March 1427 Vernon was appointed to serve on a commission of array in Derbyshire and in the following November was made sheriff of Staffordshire. It was during this year that he and his wife had seen to the provision of a new east window for the chapel of their Derbyshire home at Haddon.⁹ His tenure of the shrievalty in Staffordshire terminated in November 1428. Since the beginning of the reign a justice of the peace in Derbyshire, Vernon was in March 1430 appointed to the same office in Staffordshire as well and served on this commission until 1432.¹⁰ About this time he had close relations with Humphrey, Earl of Stafford, who in April 1430 made him, along with Thomas Arblaster, Esquire (M.P. for Staffordshire in 1426, 1432, 1433, and 1435) and John Harpour (M.P. for Stafford 1419-29, and for Staffordshire in 1431), his feoffee in the lordship of Tonbridge and four other manors in Kent. Less than two months before this transaction, Sir Richard had been appointed to serve on a royal loan-raising commission in Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire. He served on another commission of this sort a year later, at the end of March 1431. On 12 April 1431 he was appointed one of a committee charged with the assessment in Derbyshire of the tax, voted in the previous parliament, on knights' fees and landed income. At the end of the same month Vernon was appointed to be a royal justice in South Wales along with Sir Edmund Stradlyng, chamberlain and receiver of South Wales, Sir John Skidmore, constable of Carmarthen and steward of the commotes in the shire, and two lawyers who were to be of the *quorum*. The commission was issued provisionally, during the absence in France of James Lord Audley, chief justice in South Wales, and in view of Audley's close connections with Staffordshire, it is possible that Vernon was acting as his deputy. To the next parliament, which met in May 1432, William Lee of Aston, one of the *quorum* in the South Wales judicial commission and a feoffee of Lord Audley's estates in Staffordshire, was returned for that county along with one of Vernon's co-feoffees in the Stafford manors in Kent, Thomas Arblaster. Vernon's eldest son, Richard Vernon, Esquire, was elected to the parliament in the shire-court held at Derby on 20 March 1432, Sir Richard being the first to attest the indenture of return.¹¹

Sir Richard himself was returned for Derbyshire to the next parliament,

⁹ CPR, 1422-29, 334, 405; *List of Sheriffs*, 127; *D.A.J.*, XIV (1892), 117.

¹⁰ CPR, 1429-36, 624.

¹¹ CCR, 1429-35, 357; CPR, 1429-36, 50, 126, 136, 116; PRO, C219/14/3.

which met at Westminster in July 1433, along with his fellow-knight in the first parliament of the reign, Sir John Cokayne. Early in the following year and after parliament's dissolution, the two men were associated in drawing up a list of notables in the shire considered by them important enough to take the oath, against the abuse of maintenance, sworn during the last session by both Lords and Commons alike. A list of 329 names was sent into Chancery, and on 1 May 1434, by royal letters patent, the sheriff was ordered to publish it in the next county court, so that the oath might be taken before the commissioners appointed; these were the diocesan, Bishop Heyworth of Coventry and Lichfield, Lord Grey of Codnor, together with Vernon and Cokayne.¹²

Sir Richard Vernon's election to parliament in 1433 was his last return as a knight of the shire. The remaining eighteen years of his life are, however, richer in recorded incident than is the first half of his career. His local influence in the shires where lay the bulk of his estates is attested by a closely crowded succession of royal commissions. He was involved in no less than five royal loan-raising commissions between 1436 and 1442, the first in Staffordshire, the rest in Derbyshire. (Regarding the Crown loan of 1436, in aid of an expedition to northern France led by the Duke of York, he was himself served with a royal writ of Privy Seal asking for a contributory loan of as much as 100 marks.) Until his death Vernon continuously served the office of the justice of the peace in Derbyshire. In November 1439 he was a member of a commission appointed to deliver Stafford gaol. He was associated, moreover, with several commissions caused by various eruptions of local disorder. In November 1436, for example, he was included with the Bishop of Lichfield, the Earls of Warwick and Stafford, Lord Audley, and three royal justices, in a commission of oyer and terminer set up to investigate a complaint of the Dean and Chapter of Lichfield, that assaults on certain of the cathedral clergy and attempts to break into the cathedral close had been made by the townspeople of Lichfield.¹³

Sir Richard Vernon himself was not free from charges of highhanded action likely to create unrest and disorder. To about the year 1440 must be assigned a series of petitions, either to the council of the Duchy of Lancaster or to the Earl of Suffolk, then chief steward of the duchy north of Trent, demanding redress for injuries done by Sir Richard in his capacity as duchy steward of the High Peak and farmer of the forest of Campana. The alleged offences included distraints for rent on pastures held at farm (under the receiver of Tutbury) by Sir Thomas Stanley, then Controller of the King's Household, and Sir Edmund Trafford, and also illegal imprisonments and amercedments contravening the rights of agistment held by foresters of the ward of Campana. (Vernon had been occupying the duchy bailiwick of the Peak since 1424, after 1438 in partnership with his son Fulk.)¹⁴ In July 1441 separate royal letters close were sent to Lord Ferrers of Groby, Sir Richard Vernon, William Newport, and the Stanleys of Elford, ordering them, on their allegiance and

¹² *CCR*, 1429-35, 271; *CPR*, 1429-36, 410.

¹³ *CPR*, 1429-36, 529, 527; 1436-41, 249, 505, 536, 370, 84; *PPC*, IV, 323.

¹⁴ *HMC*, 12th Report, part IV, Rutland MSS., I, 1; *Accounts Various*, PRO, D.L.28/5/2.

on pain of forfeiture, to cease from causing riots and unlawful assemblies in Staffordshire and the neighbouring counties. In November 1443 Sir Richard and his sons, Fulk and John, were required to bind themselves in Chancery by recognizances totalling £280 that John would appear at Westminster on 25 January following. Although John did not in fact appear, the amounts thus forfeited were pardoned by letters patent of 26 May 1444. Between Trinity term 1442 and this date Sir Richard himself had been engaged in a law-suit in the Court of Common Pleas with Sir William Trussell touching the manors of Shotsbrook and Eton Hastings in Berkshire, which Vernon claimed as heir of Sir Fulk of Pembridge. In Easter term 1443 a judgment was given for Trussell who was to recover seisin and 120 marks damages. On 4 June following Vernon sued out a writ of error, and the case was transferred to be heard in the Court of King's Bench. Probably the writ of Privy Seal served on Sir Richard at Haddon on 20 June by one of the criers of the Court of Common Pleas was in connection with this process.¹⁵

In this middle period of the reign of Henry VI, Sir Richard Vernon seems to have attached himself to the Lancastrian court party, more particularly to the clique in which Suffolk was pre-eminent. In the spring of 1443 his son Fulk was in sufficient favour at court to be entrusted with the purchase and cartage of lead, almost certainly from Derbyshire mines, to be used in the building of the new royal college at Eton. About this time, Fulk was also appointed for life as the Duchy of Lancaster steward of the lands of the honour of Tutbury in Derbyshire and Staffordshire. Sir Richard's own influence seems to have increased in the course of the reign. His appointment on 17 May 1445 as treasurer of Calais and in September 1446 as joint-warden of the Calais mint, he probably owed to Humphrey, Earl of Stafford and recently created Duke of Buckingham, whose feoffee he had been since 1430, and who was captain of Calais and royal lieutenant in the marches there. It will be remembered that the duke was Vernon's feudal overlord of his Buckinghamshire manor of Pitchcott. To the same connection may have been due his appointment in December 1439 to be steward of the Duke of Norfolk's estates in Derbyshire and his probable four years' term of office, ending in November 1448, as knight-constable in the Constable and Marshal's Court, the Court of Chivalry. (The Duke of Norfolk was married to Buckingham's stepsister, Eleanor Bouchier.) Already, on 6 April 1448, a royal Privy Seal warrant had authorized the Lower Exchequer to pay him 200 marks in ready money on the grounds that, "to his great hurt", he had no fee or reward for this office, with the result that this sum was paid to him in Michaelmas term following. The King had been informed by Vernon in a petition (so the warrant ran) that "he hath kept oure Connestable Court as knyght Connestable by the space of three yere and more for diverse greet matiers concernyng the wele of our persone as of this oure Reume of Englande" including the dispute between the Prior of Kilmainan (Thomas FitzGerald) and the Earl of Ormond, and how he had also had men harnessed and arrayed to keep Smithfield (in London), for battles joined between parties to be deter-

¹⁵ *CCR*, 1435-41, 422; *CPR*, 1441-46, 268; *William Salt Arch. Soc.*, n.s., III, 161; *PPC*, V, 295.

mined there, to the number of sixty men-at-arms and more, all at his own cost.¹⁶

Meanwhile, at the end of 1440, Sir Richard had figured as one of the feoffees of Ralph Lord Cromwell, who was then Treasurer of England, in the Nottinghamshire manors of Gunholston and Widmerpole, an assize of novel disseisin being brought against them at that time by Sir Henry Pierpoint. And in March 1445 he had shared a grant of a royal wardship with the Chamberlain of the Duchy of Lancaster, Sir Edmund Hungerford, Walter Lord Hungerford's second son.

Sir Richard Vernon's tenure of the treasurership of Calais lasted from May 1445 to May 1451, that is, until soon after the Duke of Buckingham resigned his captaincy of Calais to Edmund Beaufort, Duke of Somerset. Vernon seems only intermittently to have given his personal attention to the administrative work involved in the post, although in the summer following his appointment he served *ex officio* on certain royal commissions, in the autumn of 1449 was granted royal "letters of protection" during his absence at Calais, and in the following January sat on a commission of oyer and terminer in a case involving a merchant stapler's failure to recover payment of £525 for wool sold to merchants of Milan and Como.¹⁷

The chief benefit Sir Richard Vernon derived from his Calais office seems to have been the ready access it gave him to royal "letters of protection" which were useful in holding up the legal proceedings taken against him when, between June 1448 and his death in 1451, the Trussell *v* Vernon litigation over the Pembridge estates came to be renewed. In an assize of novel disseisin taken at Tutbury in September 1448 relating to estates in Kibbleston, Acton, and Hales (Staffs.), the jury had found for Vernon and awarded him damages of £2,080 against Sir William Trussell. In Easter term 1450 the latter appealed against the verdict on a writ of error, returnable in the Court of King's Bench, alleging that the jurors in the Tutbury assize had at Lichfield accepted £5 for food and 13s. 4d. in money (besides other gifts). Two Staffordshire lawyers were also attached to answer for fabrication of deeds. On 6 August following, Vernon, *vi et armis*, ejected Trussell's lessees in the manor of Kibbleston. These were no less than the Shropshire lawyer, William Burley, who had been Speaker for the Commons in 1437 and 1445, and his son-in-law, the historically famous common lawyer, Thomas Littleton, then Recorder of Coventry, who procured a writ of attachment returnable in the Court of Common Pleas in Hilary term 1451.¹⁸ Meanwhile, on 25 October, Vernon had procured royal "letters of protection" for a year as staying in Picardy on the King's service in his capacity as treasurer of Calais. On 11 February 1451, however, these were revoked on the grounds that the sheriffs of London had certified that he was still staying in their bailiwick. Thus instrumental in causing much local unrest on the confines

¹⁶ *CPR*, 1441-46, 162; *DKR*, XLVIII, 365, 371; *HMC, Rutland MSS.*, IV, 20; F. Devon, *Issues of the Exchequer*, 463; *Privy Seal Warrants for Issue*, PRO, E404/64/158; *Exchequer, Issue Roll*, PRO, E403/773, mem. 6.

¹⁷ Thoroton, *Notts.* (ed. Throsby), III, 51; *CPR* 1441-46, 326; 1446-52, 460; *DKR*, XLVIII, 365, 388.

¹⁸ *DKR*, XLVIII, 366, 381; *CPR*, 1446-52, 309; *William Salt Arch. Soc.*, n.s., III, 188 *et seq.*, 200.

of Staffordshire and Shropshire, where the disputed Pembridge estates lay, Sir Richard was himself employed during the course of this litigation on royal commissions appointed in March and July 1449 to arrest certain members of the Gresley family of Drakelow (Derbys.) for offences against the abbot of Burton-on-Trent.

In the meantime, before all the litigation over the Pembridge estates had come to a head, on 6 June 1448, by the King's special grace, Vernon had secured a charter conferring upon himself and his heirs and the collegiate establishment at Tong (Salop) certain rights making the lordship of Tong a franchise: they were granted rights of waif and stray and treasure trove there, the forfeitures of the goods and chattels of felons, the return of writs to the exclusion of the sheriff, escheator and coroner, and the right to appoint justices of the peace and justices of labourers so long as they did not attempt to determine felonies without royal licence.

Sir Richard Vernon did not long survive his resignation of the treasurer-ship of Calais in May 1451. It was only a month later that his son John was granted the offices in South Wales which Sir Richard himself had been granted for life by royal letters patent in June 1450, namely, the shrievalty of Pembroke, the constableness of the castles of Pembroke and Tenby, the master-forestership of Coydrath, and the stewardship of certain appurtenant lordships. Sir Richard was still alive early in August. He had certainly died, however, by 10 September 1451, for it was then that writs of *diem clausit extremum* issued from the Chancery ordering inquiries to be made by the appropriate escheators regarding his lands in Staffordshire, Leicestershire, Derbyshire, Shropshire, Herefordshire, Buckinghamshire and Westmorland. He was buried in the collegiate church of Tong where his effigy in Derbyshire alabaster represents him as a knight in plate-armour wearing round his neck the SS collar of the Lancastrian livery. His wife, Benedicta, had died in the spring of 1444.¹⁹

If, during the last eighteen years of his life, Sir Richard Vernon did not again serve in parliament, the numerous elections of members of his family suggest that he had firmly established its local power and prestige. His eldest son, Richard, was returned for Derbyshire in 1432. Another son, Fulk, was elected in 1439. His second surviving son, William, who after the younger Richard's death became his father's heir, sat in parliament in 1442, 1449-50, and 1450-1 for Derbyshire, in 1455-6 for Staffordshire, and again for Derbyshire in 1467, the year of his death. This William held his father's office of treasurer of Calais and was the last to hold for life the position of Constable of England. He seems to have remained Lancastrian in political sympathies, and his son, Henry Vernon, the Speaker's grandson and son-in-law to the Earl of Shrewsbury, eventually became governor and treasurer to the elder son of Henry VII, Prince Arthur, and, when the latter was created Prince of Wales in 1489, was made a Knight of the Bath.²⁰ Sir Richard Vernon's daughter, called Benedicta after her mother, had been married in 1442 to

¹⁹ CPR, 1446-52, 411, 285-6, 337, 463; CChR, VI, 100-1; Trans. Shropshire A. & N.H.S., V, 329; CFR, 1437-45, 276; 1445-54, 171.

²⁰ D.A.J., XXII (1900), 11.

Thomas Charlton of Edmonton (Middlesex), who was then an esquire in Henry VI's household, although later on he became a Yorkist. Like his father-in-law, Charlton was also Speaker for the Commons, being their second Speaker in the parliament of 1453-4.

FOOTNOTES

The following abbreviations have been used in the footnotes:

- CCR — *Calendar of Close Rolls*
- CChR — *Calendar of Charter Rolls*
- CFR — *Calendar of Fine Rolls*
- CPR — *Calendar of Patent Rolls*
- DKR — *Reports of the Deputy-Keeper of the Public Records*
- HMC — *Historical Manuscripts Commission*
- PPC — *Proceedings and Ordinances of the Privy Council*, ed. N. H. Nicolas.
- PRO — Public Record Office