

SIR JOHN WOOD OF MOLESEY SPEAKER IN THE PARLIAMENT OF 1483

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VERY many of the Speakers for the Commons in the parliaments of the fifteenth century were men who had some influence at Court as members of the King's Household or belonged to some branch of the central administrative services of the Crown. Sir John Wood of Molesey, who was Speaker in the last parliament of Edward IV (1483), was one of this latter type. His long career in the Exchequer under both Lancastrians and Yorkists, to the headship of which main financial department of the Crown he was to rise in the year of his Speakership, is of some general interest. He had been knight of the shire for Sussex in 1449-50, for Surrey in 1460-1, for Sussex once more in 1472-5, and for Surrey again in 1478. It is very probable that he was representing Surrey when he was Speaker, although we cannot be sure because the electoral returns to this parliament from both Surrey and Sussex have been lost.¹ If in fact he was knight of the shire for Surrey in

¹ *The Official Return of Members of Parliament*, i. 343, 355, 362, 365, XXV. The identification of the John Wood who was Speaker in Edward IV's last parliament is a nice problem, for he had a number of contemporaries of the same name. He himself had a younger brother John, from whom he is frequently but by no means invariably differentiated by being called "John Wood senior," the younger brother being sometimes designated as "John Wood junior." The latter, a bencher of Lincoln's Inn, had houses in London, Midhurst and Chichester, and it was probably he who represented Midhurst in the parliament of 1467-8. John junior was escheator of Surrey and Sussex in 1460-1. He was also in the service of Bishop John Arundell of Chichester (1458-77) and perhaps attached to him as a friend, for he chose for his own tomb a place alongside the bishop's tomb in the cathedral, and on the bishop's death he was given custody of the temporalities of the see. (*The Genealogist*, N.S. vol. XXXVI, p. 57; *Notes and Queries*, 12th series, vol. 8, p. 206; vol. 11, p. 408; *Ancient Deeds*, I B1518-9; *C.F.R.*, 1471-85, 143.) There were also a John Wody senior and a John Wody junior, both of Ifield in Sussex, and both alive in 1478. (*C.P.R.*, 1477-85, 114.) In deciding what data relate to these men and to John Wood grocer and merchant stapler of Calais (*ibid.*, 1461-7, 487), to John Wood of Keele (Staffs.), and to John Wood, collector of customs at Bristol (1469-70), there is no great difficulty. The most serious problem is that of separating information about the careers of the Speaker and his namesake John Wood esquire, master of the King's ordnance in 1463-70 and 1471-7, keeper of the royal mints at London and Canterbury in 1468-85, probably the same who had been victualler of Calais in 1461-5. This latter John Wood, parliamentary burgess in 1467-8 for Newcastle-on-Tyne, where he was constable of the castle and deputy-butler and collector of customs dues, was of Bedstone (Shropshire). The *Pardon Rolls* of Henry VI and Edward IV, in which this John Wood and John Wood the Speaker both figure, afford quite invaluable aid in discriminating between them and their proper offices, and the risk of confusion between these two John Woods in the light of the evidence from this source becomes very marginal (Wedgwood, *History of Parliament, Biographies*, pp. 965-7). The chief difficulties over the Speaker are not with his offices in the central royal administration but with some of his local royal commissions, where there is occasionally danger of confusing him and his younger brother.

1483, Wood has an especial claim on the interest of local historians as the only member of parliament for the county ever to act as Speaker until the eighteenth century, when the Onslows filled the Chair, Sir Richard from 1708 to 1710, and Arthur Onslow from 1728 to 1761.

John Wood the Speaker was the son and heir of John Wood, who may very well have been he of that name who was clerk of the estreats in the Exchequer in Henry V's reign and who was still occupying that office in 1422-3.¹ The family appears to have originally belonged to West Wittering in the rape of Chichester, but also held lands in Midhurst and elsewhere in west Sussex. It was probably either the Speaker or his younger brother, John, who from Midhurst entered Wykeham's collegiate foundation at Winchester in 1426. Whichever it was, he left the same year.²

Although Wood came into the entailed lands of his family in Sussex, his official commitments in the Exchequer, whose staff he had joined by 1444, obviously required him to live near enough to Westminster. Possession of a handy country seat was equally desirable, and this came his way when some time between 1450 and 1452 he married, perhaps as his first wife, a presumably wealthy widow, Elizabeth, daughter and coheir of John Michell, grocer (later fishmonger) and alderman of London, who had been mayor of the City in 1424-5 and 1436-7 and who had died in 1445, and widow of Thomas Morstead, surgeon to each of the Lancastrian kings, who died in 1450. By this marriage, on the death (in 1455) of his wife's mother, Margaret, daughter and coheir of Hamelin de Matham, Wood came into possession of portions of the Michell manors of "Hauvills," "Botteles," and "Hooks" in Clothall (Herts.), and also into Margaret's manor of East Molesey, not far up-river from Kingston-on-Thames. Here he made his home, but towards the end of his life at any rate he also had a place nearby at Hampton Court. Through his marriage with Elizabeth Michell he also came into possession of Rivers Hall in Boxted in north Essex, a part of the manor of Great Oakley in Northants, and some lands in Cambridgeshire.³ Wood's first wife died on 26 March 1464 without issue,⁴ and he subsequently married Margery, daughter of Sir Roger Lewkenore of Trotton (Sussex), knight of the shire for Sussex in 1439-40 and 1453-4, and sister of Sir Thomas Lewkenore, sheriff of Surrey and Sussex in 1473-4, who, made knight of the Bath on the eve of Richard III's coronation, rose against the usurper in the following autumn in Buckingham's revolt, was attainted and temporarily incurred forfeiture.⁵

¹ Exchequer, Issue Roll, P.R.O., E403/612; Duchy of Lancaster, Accounts Various, P.R.O., 28/4/11. ² *Notes and Queries*, 12th series, vol. 8, p. 460.

³ *C.C.R.*, 1454-61, 92; *V.C.H.*, *Herts*, iii. 223; J. E. Cussans, *History of Hertfordshire*, i. 64; *V.C.H. Surrey*, iii. 453; *The Genealogist* (N.S.), XXXVI. 57; P. Morant, *History and Antiquities of the County of Essex*, ii. 241; *C.F.R.*, 1454-61, 152; J. Bridges, *History and Antiquities of Northamptonshire*, ii. 325.

⁴ Cussans, *loc. cit.*; *C.F.R.*, 1461-71, 126.

⁵ *Notes and Queries*, *loc. cit.*; *The Genealogist*, *loc. cit.*

John Wood was to be connected with the Exchequer for the greater part at least of his working life. He had joined its staff by 1444, and it was doubtless as an Exchequer clerk that on 12 April 1448 he received an Exchequer tally for £57 odd owing to Sir Roger Fiennes, late Treasurer of the royal Household.¹ To the second parliament of 1449, which met in November and sat in three sessions until June 1450, Wood was for the first time elected knight of the shire for Sussex. This was the parliament in the course of which the Duke of Suffolk was impeached and later executed at sea, the late Keeper of the Privy Seal, Bishop Moleyns of Chichester, was murdered, and Cade's revolt broke out in Kent and spread into Surrey and Sussex. To the parliament, which met in the autumn of 1450 after the return of the Duke of York from Ireland and in which the Court party was further discredited, Wood was not re-elected. Few of the "Westminster crowd" were. From these events Wood himself experienced no personal difficulties at the Exchequer. The recently advanced loans for which he received Exchequer assignments, amounting to over £105 between 5 and 15 July 1452, were probably book-keeping "loans," that is to say, not genuine loans but wages due to him, immediate payment of which he undertook not to press for. He was certainly now better able than formerly to allow such a postponement of his claims, for by this date he had followed Thomas Rothwell as Under-Treasurer of the Exchequer, *alias* Clerk to the Treasurer. His promotion had taken place some time in the Easter term of 1452, probably concurrently with the appointment on 15 April of John Tiptoft, Earl of Worcester, to the Treasurership. Worcester's appointment was perhaps designed to please Richard of York, whose duchess was the earl's aunt by marriage; in any case, it followed upon something of an accommodation between the duke and Somerset's party at Court. It is difficult not to imagine that the Yorkists regarded Wood as sympathetic to their political views; he was, of course, especially through his wife, associated with the City, and the City was developing at this time a strong anti-Lancastrian bias. His wages as Under-Treasurer were 8d. a day and 5d. a day "pro dietis suis," plus the ancient fee of the office, £40 a year.² That his promotion was not simply a routine one is suggested by the fact that he followed Tiptoft out of office just before Easter 1455, one of the effects of the King's recovery of health and of the end of York's Protectorship and the liberation of Somerset. At roughly the same time as his appointment to the Under-Treasurership was made, he was moreover for the first time appointed a justice of the peace in Surrey (on 29 June 1452), a commission he continued to bear until January 1459. If he did house pro-Yorkist sentiments in 1452 he was, however, soon to disembarass himself.³

¹ Exchequer Issue Roll, E403/771, mem. 1.

² *Ibid.*, E403/788, mems. 3-4.

³ *C.P.R.*, 1446-52, 596; *ibid.*, 1452-61, 678-9. The John Wood who was appointed J.P. in Sussex on 23 July 1453 and who remained a member of this commission until September 1460 was probably the younger brother.

In the three years of this his first Under-Treasurership, Wood was involved in a variety of activities related to his Exchequer work. On 19 August 1453 he was one of a party, nominally headed by the Treasurer, instructed to muster the retinues of Lord Say and others at Barham Down in Kent in anticipation of their departure to relieve the Talbots in Aquitaine.¹ In the following month, along with the Treasurer and Thomas Thorpe, Baron of the Exchequer and the then Speaker, he was involved in negotiating the transference to a City monopoly syndicate of a large quantity of rock alum and black foil (worth £2,000) then in Crown possession at Southampton and London. This raw material was doubtless part of a large consignment of alum worth £8,000 belonging to Genoese merchants that had been requisitioned to the King's use at Southampton in 1451, for the purpose of creating a monopoly—the price to be restricted to a gain of 2s. in the £—from which the Exchequer was evidently designed to profit. (In the parliament of 1450-1 the Genoese merchants had been given freedom to by-pass the Calais staple and a lien on the customs generally at Southampton to secure repayment.²) He was also engaged in these three years of his Under-Treasurership in selling or exporting royal wool, and did very well out of it himself: on 17 April 1454 the Council approved a pardon granted to him, to two men of the King's Household and to a London draper who was also controller of customs in the port of London, of all the moneys received by them for the king's wool, waiving their accounts, and remitting the consequences of any trespasses they had committed in shipping or in customing the wool.³ On 15 March 1455, the day when the Earl of Wiltshire superseded Tiptoft as Treasurer, but before Wood had himself relinquished his office as Clerk to the Treasurer (which he did about mid-April), he was licensed to ship some 214 sacks of wool at Southampton for the Mediterranean direct (an evasion of the Calais staple) and free of custom, on condition that he surrendered tallies worth £572, a sum he had himself spent on victuals for the King's Household.⁴ These practices soon brought him under fire. In the parliament that began its sessions in July 1455, after the Yorkist victory at St. Albans, Wood was directly petitioned against by the Commons. The main object of the bill to the King was to protest against evasions of the Calais staple route, and it stated that upwards of 1,226 sacks of wool had been recently shipped at London in the King's name ("and markyd with the Crowne") to pass overseas elsewhere than to Calais, to the owners' great profit but of little advantage to the revenues. The reason alleged for this was that Wood had embezzled the greater part of the customs due on the wool—the whole calculated at £3,000—Thomas Osberne and others being appointed the King's factors by Wood's arrangement. This was evidently the business for which Wood and his friends had been pardoned in April 1454. Now,

¹ *Ibid.*, 124.

³ *C.P.R.*, 1452-61, 157.

² *Ibid.*, 155; *Rot. Parl.*, V. 214-5.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 218.

it was requested that his appearance in the King's Bench early in the Michaelmas term following should be required by proclamation in the City, that his failure to answer to the charge be met with a penalty equivalent to the amount of his defalcation (£3,000), and that any attempt on his part to bar or delay process by pleading any royal pardon should involve him in a forfeiture of 10,000 marks. The petition was turned down.¹

Wood's Under-Treasurership had been profitable in other ways. It is true that in July 1453 he had to be given a mere assignment for £600, which was due either for repayment of a loan or as arrears of government indebtedness to him, and that some three months later he was associated with the Treasurer and other colleagues in the administration in making an advance to the Lower Exchequer of 2,000 marks.² But, in addition to the profits of his wool speculations, he had received at times substantial rewards over and above his wages and fees: on 8 March 1454 he had received £66 13s. 4d. in cash at the Lower Exchequer for his work in expediting royal business in the parliament that was then in its third and last session, and £100 (again in cash) as a special guerdon for his attendances in London; and on 19 February 1455 a further £100 in ready money came his way "for all the great costs and expenses borne by him in the time of the Treasurer and for furthering special causes and matters committed to him by the Lords of the Council at different times for the utility and profit of the King."³

During the four years of uneasy peace between the two main factions before their enmity flared up once more into open war in the autumn of 1459, little is known of John Wood's activities. Early in October 1456, when the royalist party, now led by the Queen, felt itself strong enough to make important changes in the ministries of State and to exclude the friends and sympathizers of the Duke of York, and when as part of this policy the control of the Exchequer was entrusted to the Earl of Shrewsbury instead of Viscount Bourchier, there was a rumour current that John Wood would regain his office as Under-Treasurer: as one of John Paston's correspondents wrote to him from Southwark on 8 October, three days after Shrewsbury's appointment, "John Wode shalbe Under-Tresorer. Thus thei say in the Chequer."⁴ This intelligence proved unfounded. It suggests, however, where at this time Wood's political sympathies were considered to be. He certainly continued through these years of tension as J.P. in Surrey; on 17 December 1457 he was put on the commission authorized to assess in the county the incidence of responsibility for maintaining its contribution to the royal force of archers sanctioned in the Reading parliament of 1453; and on 5 September 1458 he was a commissioner of array in Surrey.⁵ A year later

¹ *Rot. Parl.*, V. 335-6.

² Issue Rolls, E403/793, mem. 8; E403/796, mem. 15.

³ *Ibid.*, E403/796, mem. 1; E403/800, mem. 10.

⁴ *Paston Letters*, iii.¶103.

⁵ *C.P.R.*, 1452-61, 408, 490.

both political parties resorted openly to arms but, after an initial success at Bloreheath, the Yorkists were unable to withstand the King and at the rout of Ludford Bridge their leaders dispersed. Their treason was registered in the parliament which met at Coventry, as soon as could be, in November and December. Although in the previous January he had been dropped from the Surrey commission of the peace, on 21 December 1459, the morrow of the parliamentary dissolution, Wood was included among the county's commissioners of array appointed to resist the supporters of the rebellious lords, and on 27 April 1460 he was also one of a commission set up to inquire into escapes of prisoners in the county.¹ Since at latest November 1458 he had been Keeper of the Great Wardrobe of the Household, and he was still holding this office on 22 May 1460 when, in aid of the expenses of his department, he was granted the wardship and marriage of the daughter and heir of John Michelgrove, a tenant of the Crown in Sussex and Kent.² He had lost the office by the end of October 1460, but he had clearly kept out of trouble in the summer of this year. The season saw the false dawn of Yorkist success when the rebel leaders at Calais returned to England, secured possession of the capital, defeated the King's army at Northampton, and summoned parliament in the name of Henry VI (who was their prisoner) to meet on 7 October at Westminster. John Wood was elected for Surrey as senior shire-knight. His fellow knight, Nicholas Gaynesford, was during the first session appointed sheriff by the new masters of the administration, and his younger brother, John Wood junior, escheator of Surrey and Sussex. On Christmas Eve, during the recess, Wood himself was reappointed J.P. in the county and joined the *quorum* of the commission.

The parliament witnessed the bestowal of the reversion of the Crown on the Duke of York. He met his death at Wakefield in Christmas week, but although the Lancastrians followed up this victory with another at St. Albans, Edward, York's heir, seized the capital, had his claim to the throne recognized, and sealed his royal title with his overwhelming victory at Towton in March 1461. Wood had already by this time come over to the winning side. A week before Towton Field, on 22 March, he had been included in a royal commission to arrest some servants of Thomas Lord Roos who made his escape from the battle,³ and on 12 April, as King's servitor, he was granted the minor office of keeper of swans along the whole course of the Thames from Cirencester to Gravesend.⁴ At the beginning of the reign he had been dropped from the commission of the peace in Surrey, but on 5 July following he was made once again a J.P. in Sussex and retained office until the Lancastrian Readeption in November 1470.⁵ He was very probably the John Wood who, as

¹ *Ibid.*, 557, 607.

² *Ibid.*, 596; Issue Rolls, E403/S17, 820.

³ *C.P.R.*, 1461-7, 31.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 574.

one of the yeomen of the King's Chamber, was employed in the first half of 1462 in a variety of ways: on 22 February he was paid at the Receipt £5 expenses for missions on unspecified royal business to different parts of the kingdom; on 8 July he was given £1 11s. 4d. for his expenses when sent from London to Leicester to show the King divers matters at the order of the Treasurer; a week later 21s. for a like errand on the Treasurer's behalf; and a week later again he was paid 25s. for a journey from London to Fotheringhay with letters from the Council to the King and a further 30s. for his conveyance of £600 released by the Exchequer to the King's Chamber for Edward IV's private expenses.¹ He seems here to have been mainly acting as a messenger between the Exchequer and the King, a likely employment for an ex-Under-Treasurer and yeoman of the Chamber, and it is very likely that he was the John Wood esquire who in Easter term 1462 came to hold the office of one of the two ushers of the Receipt of the Exchequer and held it until 1469.² What makes the identification more feasible is that on 26 May 1463 he was associated with the Earl of Worcester (his old chief when Under-Treasurer from 1452-5, and now once again Treasurer from 14 April 1462 to 27 June 1463) and John Say, the present Under-Treasurer, in making a loan to the Exchequer of £200, for which they received an assignment four weeks later.³ In the meantime, on 4 July 1462 he had been made a member of a special commission of enquiry into the Surrey lands of the late John Busbrigge and, more recently, by patent of 30 March 1463, of a commission set up to investigate the illegal taking of swans and cygnets along the Thames and its tributaries and to arrest offenders, a commission directly connected with his own office of swan-keeper.⁴

Apart from the constant recurrence of his name as usher of the Receipt of the Exchequer in the Issue Rolls of that department, not a great deal else is known of John Wood in this first phase of Edward IV's reign. On 8 April 1464 he was re-included as a member of the Surrey commission of the peace, upon which he was now to serve without a break until 1475.⁵ On 10 June 1465 he was made a commissioner of *oyer and terminer* regarding offences against the peace in Surrey and Sussex, and on 22 July following for the arrest and production in Chancery of one John Lute.⁶ No further special royal commissions came his way for a number of years, but a few notices of a private description appear from time to time: on 18 October 1466 he was witness to a quitclaim of lands in the parish of St. Olaf, in Southwark;⁷ he may be the John Wood esquire who in November 1466 was one of the grantees of a London mercer's goods and chattels and debts and in September 1467 of those of a London tailor,⁸ and he was most probably the John

¹ Issue Rolls, E403/824, mem. 8; *ibid.*, E403/825, mems. 4, 7, 8, 10.

² Issue Rolls, *passim*.

³ *Ibid.*, E403/829, mem. 6.

⁴ C.P.R., 1461-7, 201, 278.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 573; *ibid.*, 1467-77, 632.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 1461-7, 487, 489.

⁷ C.C.R., 1461-8, 377-8.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 460, 445.

Wood who in May 1468 was one of the feoffees in the manors of Luton Hoo (Beds.) and Offley and Cockhernehoe (Herts.) on behalf of Thomas Hoo esquire of Roffey (Sussex), then parliamentary burgess for Horsham in Edward IV's third parliament of 1467-8, the parliament in which John Wood's younger brother sat for Midhurst.¹ In August 1469 he was the grantee of the personalty of another London mercer, and in the following November witnessed a grant of goods and chattels to the marshal of the College of Arms.²

John Wood evaded any serious consequences for himself of the commotions of 1469 which led up to the reinstatement of Warwick's political influence a year later, the restoration of Henry VI, and the temporary exile of Edward IV. Shortly after Edward returned to London in October 1469 (after being Warwick's prisoner in the north as a result of the battle of Edgecote), Wood was put on a royalist commission of array in Sussex, and again he served in this capacity in February 1470.³ But he was so little of a partisan that after Warwick's landing in September 1470, (following his reconciliation with Queen Margaret in France and the agreement to restore the Lancastrian line), Wood was put on a commission of *oyer and terminer* set up in Surrey on 18 October in Henry VI's name, on 27 October was included on inquiries in Surrey and Sussex into cases of felony, and although dropped from the Sussex commission of the peace was reappointed J.P. in Surrey on 15 December.⁴ On 14 March 1471 Edward IV returned from Flanders, landed in Yorkshire and four weeks later entered London. On 14 April Warwick was killed in Edward's great victory at Barnet, and at Tewkesbury on 4 May the Lancastrians were irretrievably defeated. In the short space between these two engagements, on 22 April, along with Richard Fowler (Chancellor of the Exchequer), William Essex (King's Remembrancer of the Exchequer) and John Roger (Under-Treasurer), Wood was bound by obligation to repay a group of London civic notables, including William Taylor (mayor in 1468-9) and Richard Gardiner (sheriff in 1469-70), a loan of £200 which they had advanced to the King some time before November 1469 when repayment had been due.⁵ As J. H. Ramsay justly remarks of the attitude of the City to the political crisis, its "higher mercantile community were bound to Edward by the money he owed them and by their interest in Flemish trade." The obligation illustrates Wood's continued close connection with the Exchequer.

Not until August 1472 was the country settled enough to warrant the King summoning parliament once again. It met on 6 October and was to continue in being, through seven sessions, until 14 March 1475. Wood's family interest in Sussex and perhaps official pressure were sufficient to secure him election as senior knight of the shire

¹ *Ibid.*, 1468-76, 327.

² *Ibid.*, 78, 96.

³ *C.P.R.*, 1467-77, 196, 199.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 247-9; 632-3.

⁵ Privy Seal Warrants for Issue, E404/74(2)/105; E404/75/1, no. 2.

for the first time for Sussex, his late first wife's nephew, William Druell, being returned as one of the Midhurst burgesses. Apart from the fact that on 18 August 1473, in the recess between the second and third sessions, Wood was put on the commission for investigating lapses of Exchequer rights by negligence on the part of sheriffs and other officials in both Surrey and Sussex, and that during the sixth parliamentary session, on 3 July 1474, he was made a commissioner for sewers along the south bank of the Thames between East Greenwich and Wandsworth, nothing is known of his doings throughout the course of this long parliament.¹ In the autumn after the dissolution of the parliament, however, on 5 November 1475, Wood was appointed as sheriff of Surrey and Sussex,² and four days later a privy seal warrant allowed him £40 at the Exchequer as a recompense for the great charges that his office would require him to sustain.³ Three weeks before this appointment he was present at the dating of a deed in which on 15 October Robert Langton of Bramber undertook to be faithful to Bishop Waynfilet of Winchester and to Waynfilet's foundation at Oxford, Magdalen College, which was now in possession of the former alien priory of Sele near Bramber, and to assist it to recover the property of the priory, in return for the bishop's good lordship and other rewards, including a fee of 20s. a year from the college.⁴ During his shrievalty, on 15 February 1476, he was a grantee, along with the marshal of the King's Marshalsea, of the goods and chattels of a tailor of Southwark, and on 1 April both he and his brother John attested the grant by a kinswoman, Alice Dautre, of some of her late husband's lands in Sussex.⁵ His year of office as sheriff ended on 5 November 1476. A month later, by royal patent of 7 December, as John Wood of Hampton Court, he was made one of the justices and surveyors of the lower and middle Thames, a commission which included the oversight of all weirs. Dropped from the commission of the peace in Surrey because of his appointment as sheriff, he was re-included when the next commissions were issued on 15 January 1477, and on 13 February following was made a commissioner once more for inquiring into the taking of swans and cygnets in the Thames and its tributaries from Cirencester to its mouth.⁶ On 16 December 1477 he was elected as knight of the shire for Surrey to the parliament that was to meet a month later on 16 January 1478, his fellow shire-knight being Sir George Browne, a former man of the Duke of Clarence, Edward IV's brother, whose condemnation for treason this parliament was mainly summoned to witness. The parliament ended, after a single session of six weeks, on 26 February, by which time Clarence had met his death in the

¹ *C.P.R.*, 1467-77, 405, 462.

² *P.R.O.*, *Lists and Indexes*, IX (List of Sheriffs), p. 137.

³ E404/76/1, no. 54.

⁴ Edmund Cartwright, *The Parochial Topography of the Rape of Bramber of the West Division of Sussex* (London, 1830), vol. II, part ii, p. 233.

⁵ *C.C.R.*, 1468-76, 435; *ibid.*, 1476-85, 44.

⁶ *C.P.R.*, 1477-85, 23-4.

Tower. In the course of the session, on 13 February, a privy seal writ had been issued warranting Wood's being paid 35 marks reward out of his account at the Exchequer as sheriff for 1475-6.¹ A number of commissions came his way in this year. On 16 March 1478, when inquiries were set going to permit the seizure of all Clarence's lands, Wood was put on the commissions appointed for Surrey and Middlesex; on 20 April he was included in another commission to find out what estates Clarence had held in Surrey by royal patents and what was their value. Two months later, on 20 June, his commission as surveyor for the Thames downstream from Oxfordshire and Berkshire was renewed.² On 25 June 1478 he was one of a group of feoffees for her lands in Southwark set up by Elizabeth, widow of the recently deceased Sir Thomas Cook, a City alderman who had made himself conspicuous by his support of the Lancastrian administration of the Readeption in 1470-1, after which he had fled to Flanders; among Wood's co-feoffees were Lords Hastings and Dacre and John Morton, then Master of the Rolls.³ In the autumn of this year, on 5 November 1478, Wood was appointed sheriff of Essex and Hertfordshire.⁴ Just as three years earlier when sheriff of Surrey and Sussex he had received a reward in advance, so now he was given a "grant in aid," only this time it was the substantial sum of £198 that he was allowed by privy seal warrant on 10th November. He held office until 5 November 1479.⁵

Dropped from the Sussex commission of the peace at the time of the Lancastrian Readeption, he was once again reappointed J.P. in this county—he was still J.P. in Surrey—on 12 July 1480. He continued to hold both commissions from now on until his death.⁶ He still continued to act on more occasional commissions in these counties from time to time. For example, on 1 August 1480, along with his younger brother and namesake, he was put on the inquiry in Sussex into cases of smuggling of wool and evasion of the Calais Staple by exporters; the commissioners had authority to examine sheep-farmers about the disposal of their wool during the previous five years.⁷ On 10 October following he was made a commissioner of array in Surrey, probably part of Edward IV's preparations for war against Scotland.⁸ In the meantime, at Michaelmas 1480, Wood returned to his old office as Under-Treasurer of the Exchequer, to serve as clerk to the King's uncle, Henry Bourchier, Earl of Essex, who had held the Treasurership since 1471.⁹ It was probably by his influence that his younger brother, John Wood junior, on 17 May

¹ E404/76/3, no. 32.

² C.P.R., 1477-85, 109, 111, 144.

³ C.C.R., 1476-85, 136.

⁴ *List of Sheriffs, op. cit.*, 45.

⁵ E404/76/4, No. 84.

⁶ C.P.R., 1477-85, 574-5.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 216.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 244.

⁹ P.R.O., *Typescript List of Officials*, under *Treasurer's Clerks*.

1481 was appointed controller of customs and subsidies in the port of Chichester.¹ Three days later (20 May) Wood senior himself was appointed deputy to the Earl of Essex in his office of Chief Steward of the estates of the Duchy of Lancaster south of Trent for as long as Bouchier held it.² Wood's predecessor in the deputy-stewardship (since 1474), William Hussey, was now promoted Chief Justice of the King's Bench. Wood's duchy appointment forms a minor comment on the Yorkists' scheme for treating the Lancastrian inheritance as an important appendage to their generally available sources of revenue. By this time, as Under-Treasurer, he was busy supervising the collection of a clerical tenth recently granted by the southern province of Canterbury.³ And not long after this, on 12 June 1481, the Under-Treasurer was included on a commission set up to survey Clarence's escheated lordship of Cheshunt and the land of the abbot of Waltham on the confines of Herts and Essex respectively, and to ascertain what their boundaries were, certifying the King in person.⁴

In the next year and a half, during which John Wood continued to occupy the Under-Treasurership, little is known of any of his extraneous pursuits. On 12 October 1481 he and his brother John, as feoffees of Robert Williamson of Isleworth, were party to a release which the latter made to Sir Thomas Frowyke and others of rights in estates in Isleworth abutting on lands of the abbess of Syon.⁵ He was an assignee of the lands and shops in Thames Street, London, belonging to a London draper on 10 February 1482.⁶ On 3 July following he and Sir Thomas Vaughan, Treasurer of the King's Chamber, conveyed to William Catesby esquire the office of steward of the manors of Burton Latimer and Corby (Northants)—it carried with it a fee of 2 marks a year—during the minority of Richard Neville, Lord Latimer, who was then in wardship to Cardinal Bouchier, his maternal great-uncle.⁷ Three days later, by royal patent of 6 July, Wood as Under-Treasurer, and John Fitzherbert were granted the right to present to the church of High Ongar (in Essex, London diocese), at the living's next voidance.⁸

At this time Edward IV's policy towards Scotland was going well and, thanks to the Duke of Gloucester (Richard Crookback), Berwick was soon to be taken. The royal schemes regarding France were, however, anything but as successful. The prospect of marriage between Edward's daughter Elizabeth and the Dauphin had to be abandoned when the latter became engaged to Margaret, infant daughter of Maximilian of Austria, immediately after the death of

¹ *C.P.R.*, 1477-85, 257.

² R. Somerville, *Duchy of Lancaster*, vol. 1, 431; *P.R.O.*, D.L., 28/5/11.

³ *C.F.R.*, 1471-85, 229.

⁴ *C.P.R.*, 1477-85, 288.

⁵ *Cat. of Ancient Deeds*, I, B1518-9.

⁶ *C.C.R.*, 1476-85, 244.

⁷ *Ancient Deeds*, *op. cit.*, IV, A8428.

⁸ *C.P.R.*, 1477-85, 315.

Edward IV's niece, Mary Duchess of Burgundy, the match being arranged in Maximilian's despite by his Flemish subjects of Ghent. The treaty of Arras of 23 December 1482 also brought to an end the pension to England undertaken by Louis XI at Picquigny over seven years before. Edward IV summoned parliament, for the first time for nearly five years, to meet him at Westminster on 20 January 1483, almost certainly to consider the prospect of reopening the former policy of war with France, or of blackmail by preparation for war. It was in these not so happy circumstances that Wood was elected to the parliament (he was very probably re-elected for Surrey whose electoral returns are, however, lost), and then chosen by the Commons as their Speaker.¹ The single session saw a certain amount of desultory legislation, mainly of a social and economic character, some semi-public business of significance (including the sanctioning of the conferment on the Duke of Gloucester of extraordinary rights on the N.W. border as a reward for his work against the Scots, and arrangements for the King's second son, the Duke of York, to acquire the Mowbray estates and for the Queen's sons by her first marriage to be given provision out of the estates of the King's late sister, the Duchess of Exeter), and the voting of a subsidy and a tax on foreigners. After sitting for only thirty days, the parliament was dissolved on 18 February, the Speaker being knighted for his pains, along with Justice Catesby, on parliament's rising.²

Some seven weeks later, on 9 April 1483, Edward IV died, leaving a kingdom whose stability was still very uncertain. The divisions at Court, mainly the result of Edward IV's partiality for the Queen's kinsmen, the Greys and Wydevilles, became intensified in the circumstances of the minority of the new King, Edward V. Little more than a month passed before Richard of Gloucester established himself as Protector, having already arrested the Queen's brother, Earl Rivers, the young King's late Governor, and other members of his council. A new Chancellor was appointed in Bishop Russell of Lincoln. It was Sir John Wood, the ex-Speaker, who was called upon to fill the Treasurership already left vacant by the death of the Earl of Essex, who had died a few days before the late King. Wood's appointment (during pleasure) passed the great seal on 17 May 1483.³ Two days later he undoubtedly exercised his official patronage in securing for his younger brother the post of the tronage and pesage of wool for the port and customs area of Southampton.⁴

On 26 June the Duke of Gloucester installed himself as King, mainly on the ground that his royal nephew was a bastard, Edward IV having been supposedly contracted in marriage before he wedded his

¹ *Rot. Parl.*, VI. 196.

² W. C. Metcalfe, *A Book of Knights Banneret, Knights of the Bath, and Knights Bachelor*, (1885), p. 6.

³ *C.P.R.*, 1477-85, 349.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 352; Wood junior was confirmed in his Southampton office on 25 July (*ibid.*, 404).

Queen. On 2 July, four days before Richard III's coronation, Sir John Wood was reappointed Treasurer.¹ He is known to have attended the coronation.² Less than three weeks later Richard left London on tour. Early in his absence Edward IV's two young sons were murdered in the Tower. The royal progress was disturbed by the rising of Buckingham, Richard's late supporter, and of other malcontents (in the Queen's and the Lancastrians' interest), and when the revolt had been crushed and Richard had once again returned to London, it was the end of November. In the meantime, on 1 August, the Treasurer had been included on the commission set up for the assessment and the appointment of collectors in Sussex of the paltry subsidy from aliens granted during his late Speakership.³ He was, of course, still a J.P. in the county and also in Surrey. And on 28 August he was appointed a commissioner of *oyer and terminer* in London and also in Oxon, Berks, Surrey, Sussex, Kent, Middlesex, Herts and Essex.⁴ Nothing further is known of Wood, apart from details of his routine employment at the Exchequer, until on 8 April 1484, he and Brackenbury, the constable of the Tower, and three civil lawyers were appointed as the King's commissaries-general of the Admiralty with authority to execute all that belonged to the office and to engage a notary to register their acts; Wood and Brackenbury were to be the King's vice-admirals.⁵ The Treasurer was evidently most sincerely trusted by his royal master, for this was a time when invasion in the interest of Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, was continually awaited. He was not, however, a member of the inner circle of Richard's closest advisers. Sir John Wood was also a commissioner of array in Surrey by patent of 1 May 1484, and his younger brother was another in Sussex.⁶ Later in this same month, on 24 May, Sir John Wood's brother-in-law, Sir Thomas Lewkenore, who had been implicated in Buckingham's rising of the previous autumn and had been attainted in the four-weeks parliament held earlier in this year, undertook in a bond for 1,000 marks to be true to the King, to serve him in peace and war when commanded, and also to remain in the Treasurer's custody until the King's pleasure was known.⁷

No further activity on Wood's part is recorded. He was spared the final débâcle of Richard's régime; not that, had he survived it, it need have involved his own. He died on 20 August 1484, and the writs of *diem clausit extremum* authorizing inquiries into his estates in Surrey and Essex and the City of London issued from the royal Chancery on 15 September following. He left no issue by either of his two wives, so that the entailed estates of his family, which he had

¹ *Ibid.*, 361.

² British Museum, Harleian MS. No. 2115, fol. 124.

³ *C.P.R.*, 1477-85, 394.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 465.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 391.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 400, 397.

⁷ *C.C.R.*, 1476-85, 365.

held, went to his younger brother, John, who survived him only until 4 October 1485, when he too died childless. Another brother's (Thomas's) daughters then came into the property. The Treasurer's second wife, Margery (born Lewkenore), survived him by over forty years. She remarried, her second husband being Thomas Garth, parliamentary burgess for Bletchingley in 1491-2. She survived him also—he died in 1505 when marshal of Berwick-on-Tweed—and held her first husband's estate at Rivers Hall in Essex until her death in 1526.¹

¹ *Notes and Queries*, 12th series, vol. 8, p. 206; *C.F.R.*, 1471-85, 289; *Morant, Essex*, II. 241.