

THE PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATION OF BERKSHIRE AND ITS BOROUGHES DURING THE REIGN OF ELIZABETH I

J. E. JONES

UNLIKE a number of English counties, Berkshire was not dominated by a great aristocratic family. Until the dissolution of the monasteries much of the land was held by the church, and before the Reformation there were very few instances of families with extensive lands in Berkshire. Of the eight which Lysons names,¹ only five, the Achards, the Besils, the Norrises, the Essexes and the Winchcombes were still represented in the sixteenth century. By this time the lands of the Achards at Aldermaston had passed by female heirs to the Delameres and then to the Fosters.² The lands of the Besils, too, had passed through female heirs to the Fettiplaces.³ Although minor branches of the Fettiplace family continued to live in Berkshire in the sixteenth century, the sole heir to the Fettiplace estate at Wadley, again a female, married Hugh Unton from Hunton Hall, Lancashire, and their son, Sir Thomas, was granted arms in Henry VIII's reign.⁴ The most recently established family, the Norrises of Fyfield, had only been settled in the county for two generations by Elizabeth's reign.⁵ Other names which could be added to Lysons' list of five are those of the Englefields of Englefield, who had been in Berkshire from Henry III's

reign⁶ and the Hydes of Denchworth, who can be found among a list of the gentry in Berkshire in 1433.⁷

In 1547 the commission for peace includes the names of William Essex, Humphrey Foster, John Norris, Alexander Unton, Francis Englefield and William Hyde,⁸ but new families shortly appeared on the scene. In 1549 Richard Ward, a barrister and a crown official, who had already represented Windsor in parliament on six occasions, was granted lands by the crown at Cookham, Windsor, Abingdon, Reading, Bradfield and Abbots Waltham.⁹ In 1551 Sir Henry Nevill, gentleman of the privy chamber and brother to the future Lord Abergavenny,¹⁰ was granted the manors of Wargrave, Waltham St. Lawrence, Warfield, Culham and Billingbear¹¹ and two years later was licensed to retain twenty persons and give them his livery.¹² He represented Berkshire for the first time in 1553. In the same year Philip Hoby, master of ordnance to Edward VI, was granted all the lands of Bisham which had been formerly held by Lady Anne of Cleves.¹³ Eight years later young Thomas Parry, whose father, the queen's old Welsh servant and later her treasurer of the household, had already held some land in Berkshire, was granted the manor

¹ *Mag. Brit.* i (1806), 178.

² *Ibid.* William Foster (M.P. Berks., 1572) married the heir to John Delamare and is mentioned in the commission for peace 1509-1514 *Visitations of Berkshire*, ed. W. H. Rylands (Harleian Society) i, 29, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, H. VIII*, i (11), 1533.

³ *Mag. Brit.* i, 179.

⁴ *Vis. Berks.* i, 11 and ii, 221-2. He, too, is mentioned in the 1509 commission for peace. *Letters and Papers, H. VIII*, i (11), 1534.

⁵ The grandfather of William Norris, who became

M.P. for Berkshire on the death of William Foster, married the heir to John Fuller of Fyfield. *Vis. Berks.* ii, 184.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 121.

⁷ T. Fuller, *The History of the Worthies of England*, i, (1811), 96.

⁸ *Calendar of Patent Rolls, Ed. VI*, i, 81.

⁹ *Ibid.*, ii, 424.

¹⁰ *English Historical Review*, xxiii, 648.

¹¹ *C.P.R., Ed. VI*, iv, 151-2.

¹² *Ibid.*, v, 78.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 192.

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of Welford, part of the monastery of Abingdon, and the manor and park of Hampstead Marshall.¹⁴ The 1562 commission for peace includes once again a Winchcombe, Unton and Hyde and also Sir Henry Nevill, Richard Ward and Thomas Hoby.¹⁵ The name of a member of the Foster family (Sir Humphrey) reappears in 1586 when Thomas Parry too became a J.P.¹⁶ The Essexes and the Norrises of Fyfield played only a minor role in Berkshire during Elizabeth's reign but were again in the commission for peace in 1601.¹⁷ The catholic Sir Francis Englefield, who had represented Berkshire in four parliaments between 1553 and 1557, left the country under licence at the beginning of Elizabeth's reign and eventually went to Spain where he acted as an advisor on English affairs to the king. His estates, which included the manors of Englefield, Tidmarsh, Tilehurst and many others in Berkshire were sequestered to the crown in 1563 and were granted by the queen to the earl of Leicester.¹⁸ In 1593 an act was passed confirming the queen's title to the estates¹⁹ which, in fact, she had by then granted to the Earl of Essex.²⁰

The knights of the shire returned for Berkshire at the ten parliamentary elections between 1559 and 1601 were mostly drawn from these leading local families who had remained loyal to the Protestant settlement, and an account of the representation is largely a chronicle of the fortunes of the Nevills and Untons and their landed neighbours and rivals.

PART I

THE COUNTY REPRESENTATION

1559 Sir Henry Nevill, John Cheyney

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, *Eliz.*, ii, 75.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 434.

¹⁶ *Acts of the Privy Council*, xiv, 215.

¹⁷ E. Ashmole, *The Antiquities of Berkshire*, iii (1719), 404-7.

¹⁸ A. J. Loomie, *The Spanish Elizabethans* (1963), 21.

¹⁹ *Statutes of the Realm*, iv (11), 849.

²⁰ *A.P.C.*, xxii, 570.

²¹ Where possible, the names of M.P.s have been copied from *The Return of Members of Parliament, i, Parliaments of England 1213-1702*. In the case of 1559 (no returns for Berkshire found) and 1571

1563 Sir Henry Nevill, John Cheyney
 1571 Sir Henry Nevill, Richard Ward
 1572 Sir Edward Unton, William Foster, William Norris vice William Foster deceased
 1584 Sir Henry Nevill, Edward Unton
 1586 Edward Unton, Thomas Parry
 1589 Sir Henry Norris, Sir Edward Hoby
 1593 Sir Henry Unton, Sir Humphrey Foster
 1597 Sir Henry Norris, Francis Knollys
 1601 Sir Richard Lovelace, George Hyde²¹

As can be seen, Sir Henry Nevill of Billingbear, near Wokingham, was returned as senior knight at four of the first five Elizabethan elections. In 1572 he was sheriff of the county²² but as his term of office did not start until more than six months after the election this cannot be taken as the reason for his non-election. He had first represented Berkshire in 1553, one year after he was granted lands in the county, but he had not sat at all during Mary's reign. With Elizabeth's accession he became more and more a figure to be reckoned with in Berkshire. In 1560 he was joint lieutenant with Sir Thomas Parry.²³ By 1587 Sir Francis Knollys was lord lieutenant²⁴ but Sir Henry remained on the commission for musters and was a deputy lieutenant before his death in 1593.²⁵ The privy council relied on him to carry out any commission in the county and we read of him being asked, in 1564, to attend to having three persons put in the pillory at Reading 'for forgeing false propheties',²⁶ or being congratulated (together with the mayor of Reading) for care taken in apprehending a papist in 1588.²⁷ Sir Henry, unlike his predecessor in parliament, was a convinced

(no returns at all) the names have been obtained from W. Nelson Clarke, *The Parochial Topography of the Hundred of Wanting* (1824), 43.

²² *Lists of Sheriffs for England and Wales*, P.R.O. Lists and Indexes, ix, 6.

²³ *Calendar of State Papers (Domestic)*, 1547-1580, 152.

²⁴ G. Scott Thomson, *Lords Lieutenant in the Sixteenth Century*, 50.

²⁵ *A.P.C.*, xxiv, 31.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, vii, 177.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, xvi, 214.

Protestant. The privy council, anxious to ascertain whether or not the J.P.s throughout England were men who were likely to further the protestant cause, had in 1564 asked for reports from the bishops. The Bishop of Salisbury, in his letter, referred to Sir Henry as 'a furtherer earnest'.²⁸ In his later years he became high steward for Reading²⁹ and high seneschal of Windsor.³⁰ He was twice married, first to Elizabeth, daughter of Sir John Gresham,³¹ a wealthy Sussex ironfounder, and, in 1579, to the widow of Sir Robert Doyley of Wallingford,³² a judge who had died of the plague contracted during the Black Assize at Oxford in 1577.³³

Sir Henry's companions in the first three parliaments, though J.P.s,³⁴ were men of lesser standing. Throughout the country the position of senior knight of the shire brought with it the greater prestige and so was the more coveted. Until the last parliament of the reign the senior Berkshire seat was shared between the Nevills, the Untons and the Norrises of Rycote and, except in 1584, these families did not provide junior knights. The junior knight for 1559, John Cheyney, had estates at West Woodhay near Hungerford, in the south-west of the county, as well as at Cookham, Bray, Bucklebury, South Moreton and Sutton, inherited from his mother, sister and heir to Sir Lionel Norris.³⁵ Richard Ward, M.P. in 1571, was cofferer to the queen³⁶ and had estates at Hurst, not far from those of the Nevills.

In the 1572 parliament Sir Henry's place as senior knight was taken by Sir Edward Unton, grandson of Sir Thomas. He had been knighted at Queen Elizabeth's coronation and was

married to Anne, Protector Somerset's eldest daughter, widow of the Earl of Warwick and, therefore, sister-in-law to the Earl of Leicester. In the biographical portrait of her son, Sir Henry Unton,³⁷ she can be seen in the lower lefthand corner, seated, nursing her child. It is obvious at a glance that she is high born for she is represented as being twice as large as her attendant. She apparently suffered from a deranged mind and her condition gradually deteriorated so that eventually she was kept in close confinement.³⁸ Her husband entertained the queen at Langley, another of his houses, in 1574, when she was on her Bristol progress. He presented her with a magnificent jewel of diamonds, rubies and pearls, set in gold. He was a man who had travelled a great deal and also had a great interest in books.³⁹ He was a J.P. and commissioner for musters for both Berkshire and Oxfordshire,⁴⁰ and in 1567 he had been the first sheriff of Berkshire alone, after its severance from Oxfordshire. The privy council occasionally asked him to deal with local matters in both counties. In 1580 he was asked, together with Sir Henry Nevill and Lord Norris, to investigate reports of illegal mass being held.⁴¹ His religious sympathies lay with the puritans and Geoffrey de Brumen, the surgeon, writing to Sir Francis Walsingham in 1582 from Wadley, where he had been attending Sir Edward Unton, commented on the great love Sir Edward and his younger son, Henry, bore Walsingham and how they strove 'to extend the kingdom of Christ whereat you rejoice'.⁴²

Sir Edward had two companions in the long-lived parliament which had its first session in

²⁸ Letters of the Bishops to the Privy Council, 1564, ed. M. Bateson, *Camden Misc.*, ix, 38.

²⁹ J. Man, *The History and Antiquities of the Borough of Reading* (1816), 380.

³⁰ R. R. Tighe and J. E. Davis, *Annals of Windsor*, i (1858), 655.

³¹ *D.N.B.* under Edward Nevill. Where the *D.N.B.* has been the source of biographical material no further reference will be made. All other sources will be cited in footnotes.

³² *A.P.C.*, xi, 325.

³³ *Ibid.*, ix, 392.

³⁴ *Camden Misc.*, ix, loc. cit., 38.

³⁵ A. L. Humphreys, *Bucklebury, A Berkshire Parish* (1932), 338.

³⁶ W. Nelson Clarke, op. cit., 43.

³⁷ In the National Portrait Gallery.

³⁸ *Cal. S.P. (Dom.)*, 1581-90, 74.

³⁹ R. Strong, Sir Henry Unton and His Portrait, *Archaeologia*, xcix, 53-76.

⁴⁰ *C.P.R. Eliz.*, ii, 343 & 441. *Cal. S.P. (Dom.)*, 1547-80, 340.

⁴¹ *A.P.C.*, xii, 211.

⁴² *Cal. S.P. (For.)*, 1582, 87.

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1572. William Foster, who had been sheriff in 1569⁴³ but was not a J.P., was a member of the family of Fosters of Aldermaston. He died in 1574 and his place was taken by Sir William Norris⁴⁴ of Fyfield, which is on the Oxfordshire border in the north west of Berkshire. Under Elizabeth he was an usher of the parliament house. He is not mentioned as being a J.P. until 1587.⁴⁵ His wife, Mary, was a daughter of Sir Adrian Fortescue, who had been executed in Henry VIII's reign, accused of too close a relationship with Ann Boleyn. The Fyfield Norrises were related to the more eminent Norrises of Rycote, both families being descended from the Norrises of Speke, Lancashire.

In 1584, the date of Sir Henry Nevill's last parliament, Sir Edward Unton was dead, but his elder son, also Edward, became the junior member. He had already led an adventurous life, travelling on the continent, and, in 1583, when in Milan, had been imprisoned for his religious beliefs and suffered much hardship. He was released through the efforts of his brother, Henry, and on heavy sureties.⁴⁶ The Spanish Ambassador in England wrote to Don Juan de Idiaquez in February 1583, 'The inquisition in Milan had arrested, on the way from Venice, Edward Unton, a man of 6,000 crowns income, kinsman of the Queen,⁴⁷ and Leicester and Hatton at once spread the announcement that if he were not released, I (Mendoza) would be arrested'.⁴⁸ It is clear from this that the wealth of the Untons and their relationship to the queen were recognised in court circles and that Leicester's friendship towards his erstwhile sister-in-law extended to her sons. Perhaps Edward inherited some of his mother's instability, for three years later

we find him in Oxfordshire, on the queen's business, but also in trouble, since the privy council wrote to the sheriff asking for Edward's protection as he might be arrested for debt.⁴⁹ Because of his profligacy, he was deliberately omitted from the biographical portrait of his staid and more eminent brother, Sir Henry.⁵⁰

Edward stepped into the senior seat when Sir Henry Nevill finally retired from parliament, and Thomas Parry of Hampstead Marshall became the other knight of the shire. Parry had been under age when his father died in 1561, leaving his mother a widow for the third time.⁵¹ He was gradually becoming a recognised figure in the county, although this is the only occasion on which he represented it in parliament during Elizabeth's reign. He was to be its senior knight in 1614 with Sir Henry Nevill junior as his partner. By that time he had become chancellor of the duchy of Lancaster and had been ambassador to France in 1601 and knighted in the same year. He was twice sheriff,⁵² and also commissioner for musters in 1573⁵³ and deputy lieutenant in 1593.⁵⁴ From 1576 onwards he was frequently asked by the privy council to deal with local matters, often in conjunction with Sir Henry Nevill and, after his death, with Sir Henry's son.

In 1589, for the first time during the reign, Berkshire was represented by a member from outside the county. Sir Henry Norris was the fourth of the six soldier sons of Baron Norris whose main estates were in Oxfordshire. Henry, Lord Norris, had married Margery, daughter and heir of Lord Williams of Thame, and, through her, he had property in Berkshire, mainly at Wytham, where the family had lived during Mary's reign. They were, however, considered to be an Oxfordshire family, but

⁴³ *Lists of Sheriffs*, 6.

⁴⁴ He had represented Windsor in 1554 and 1557, when he was a member of Queen Mary's household.

⁴⁵ *Cal. S.P. (Dom.)*, 1581-90, 386.

⁴⁶ *Cal. S.P. (For.)*, 1583, 141, 161, 385.

⁴⁷ Through their mother, the Unton sons were cousins to Edward VI, and, therefore, indirectly related to the Queen.

⁴⁸ *Cal. S.P. (Span.)*, 1580-86, 443.

⁴⁹ *A.P.C.*, xv, 344-5.

⁵⁰ R. Strong, loc. cit., 59.

⁵¹ She had previously been married to Sir Charles Greville and Sir Adrian Fortescue. Young Thomas Parry was, therefore, related by marriage to William Foster of Aldermaston who had married his half-sister.

⁵² *Lists of Sheriffs*, 6.

⁵³ *A.P.C.*, viii, 98.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, xxiv, 254.

the counties of Berkshire and Oxfordshire have many links. Besides sharing a sheriff until 1566, at least two M.P.s who represented Berkshire boroughs were sheriffs of Oxfordshire sometime during their lives.⁵⁵ As has been seen, Sir Edward Unton was J.P. for both Oxfordshire and Berkshire. He was also a commissioner for musters in Oxfordshire.⁵⁶ After Sir Francis Knollys' death in 1596 Lord Norris, who had been lord lieutenant of Oxfordshire alone, became lord lieutenant of both counties,⁵⁷ a position he later held jointly with Sir William Knollys.⁵⁸

The Norrises of Rycote and the Knollys of Rotherfield Greys, both eminent Oxfordshire families, play a large part in the story of the representation of Berkshire, both of the county and of its boroughs. Fuller says of them, 'No county in England can present such a brace of families contemporaries, with such a bunch of brethren on either, for eminent achievements. So great their states and stomachs, that they often justled together: and no wonder if Oxfordshire wanted room for them, when England could not hold them together'.⁵⁹ Lord Norris's father had been executed in Henry VIII's reign for alleged overfamiliarity with Ann Boleyn. Lord Williams of Thames, Lady Norris's father, had been keeper of Queen Elizabeth, when, as a princess, she was in restraint during her sister's reign. She had a great affection for her keeper's daughter. 'Thus Queen Elizabeth beheld them both, not only with gracious but grateful eyes'.⁶⁰ All their six sons were valiant soldiers and noted for being quarrelsome. William, the eldest, was marshall of Berwick for a while, but died in Ireland, as did three of his brothers—John, who was in charge of troops in the Low Countries for many years and became lord president of Munster, Thomas, likewise a

president of Munster, and Henry, the M.P., who fought under his brother in the Low Countries and died of gangrene after having his leg amputated at Munster. Of the other two sons, Maximilian was killed in Brittany, and Edward, the only one to outlive his father, died in 1603, having been M.P. for Abingdon in 1584 and 1589. William's son, Francis, became Lord Norris's heir and was later created earl of Berkshire.

Sir Francis Knollys was married to Catherine, the daughter of William Cary and Mary Boleyn, and she was, therefore, first cousin to the queen. Sir Francis had been a Marian exile and, as Fuller says, 'Thus the husband was allied to the Queen in conscience (fellow sufferers for the Protestant cause); the wife in kindred'.⁶¹ They had seven sons, six of whom sat in parliament, and two daughters. The elder daughter, Lettice, was first married to the first Earl of Essex and was mother to the notorious second Earl. Her second husband was the Earl of Leicester, who, in the constant quarrels between the sons of the Norris and Knollys families, naturally sided with the Knollys. Fuller, in his picturesque language, sums up the situation admirably when he says, 'The Norrises were . . . all men of the sword and never out of military employment. The Knowlls (*sic*) were rather valiant men than any great souldiers, as little experienced in war. Queen Elizabeth loved the Knowlls for themselves; the Norrises for themselves and herself, being sensible that she needed such martial men for her service. The Norrises got more honour abroad; the Knowlls more profit at home, conversing constantly at Court; and no wonder if they were warmest who sate next to the fire'.⁶²

The Knollys family exclusively dominated the Oxfordshire seats throughout the reign.

⁵⁵ These are Michael Molyns of Clapcot, Berkshire, M.P. for Wallingford in 1589 and Sheriff of Berkshire 1583 and of Oxfordshire 1575, and Owen Ogleshorpe of Newington, Oxon., M.P. for Wallingford in 1597 and Sheriff of Oxfordshire 1585 and 1596. Fuller, *op. cit.*, ii, 238.

⁵⁶ *Cal. S.P. (Dom.)*, 1547–80, 690.

⁵⁷ *A.P.C.*, xxvi, 164.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 290.

⁵⁹ Fuller, *op. cit.*, ii, 227.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*, 228.

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Sir Francis sat for the county from 1563 until 1593, accompanied from 1572 onwards by first one, then another, of his sons. Lord Norris was, of course, not eligible for the Commons and it was only when one or more of the Norris sons were in England between martial commitments that they overflowed into Berkshire. Edward Norris was in England in 1584 and sat for Abingdon where his father was high steward. He did so again in 1589 when his brother represented Berkshire. The election was held late in 1588 when preparations were in hand for Drake's Portugal voyage. Sir Henry Nevill junior represented Sussex in this parliament—he was living in that county on estates which came to him through his mother—but Edward Unton was still alive. Both he and Thomas Parry were likely candidates for a county seat, and the reasons why Sir Henry Norris was elected as senior knight for Berkshire are obscure. Before the end of the session he was making arrangements to go to Portugal with his brothers, John and Edward, and Edward Unton.⁶³ Parliament was dissolved on 29th March 1589 and he sailed in April.

His companion in this parliament was Sir Edward Hoby of Bisham Abbey, a young man of scholarly tastes, who had been educated at Eton and Oxford where he gained an M.A. He was also a member of the Middle Temple. The fashion of finishing a young man's education at one of the Inns of Court had spread rapidly during Elizabeth's reign and Sir Edward was one of five Berkshire knights of the shire who attended both a university and an inn of court.⁶⁴ He does not appear to have taken any part in local affairs, for like Sir Henry Norris, his interests were international. He was the son of Philip Hoby's brother, Thomas, who married one of the four formid-

able daughters of Sir Anthony Cooke.⁶⁵ Sir Edward's first wife was Cecily Wentworth who, before her previous marriage, had been Cecily Unton, daughter to Sir Edward Unton.⁶⁶ His second wife was Mary, the daughter of Henry Carey, Lord Hunsdon. Sir Edward accompanied his father-in-law on a mission to Scotland where he became a great favourite with James VI, to the queen's displeasure. When James became king of England, Sir Edward frequently entertained him at Bisham. He had sat for Queenborough, Kent, in 1586. He did not represent Berkshire again, but sat for Kent in 1593 and Rochester in the four following parliaments. In 1591 he became a J.P. for Middlesex.

At the next election, for the 1593 parliament, Sir Henry Norris was fighting in Brittany,⁶⁷ and Sir Edward Hoby had transferred his allegiance to Kent. A third Unton now appeared on the scene. Sir Henry was the younger son of Sir Edward who had sat in 1572 and was brother of the member of 1584 and 1586. Henry had been living in Oxfordshire and had represented Woodstock in 1584, and after his brother's death in Portugal he returned to Berkshire to settle at Wadley.⁶⁸ He was a servant of the crown and had accompanied Leicester to the Low Countries, where he was knighted at the same time as Sir Henry Norris.⁶⁹ Later he was to be ambassador to France on two occasions, 1591 and 1596, when he became intimate with Henry IV and also became famous for challenging the duke of Guise to single combat for casting ungallant aspersions on the queen's good name. Although the quarrel was patched up without bloodshed, the gesture remains to show us Sir Henry's metal.⁷⁰ He died in France on his second visit of 'a

⁶³ *Cal. S.P. (For.)*, Jan.-July 1589, 119.

⁶⁴ The others were Richard Ward (Cambridge and Inner Temple), Sir Henry Unton (Oxford and Middle Temple), Francis Knollys jr. (Oxford and Gray's Inn) and George Hyde (Oxford and Gray's Inn). Four other Berkshire M.P.s attended Oxford University, Sir Henry Nevill jr., Edward Unton, Henry Norris and Richard Lovelace.

⁶⁵ The other three married Lord Burghley, Sir

Nicholas Bacon and Sir Henry Killigrew. Sir Edward was, therefore, cousin to Robert Cecil, Francis and Antony Bacon and Ann Killigrew, wife of Henry Nevill jr.

⁶⁶ *Vis. Berks.*, ii, 222.

⁶⁷ *A.P.C.*, xxii, 502.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, xxiv, 31.

⁶⁹ *Cal. S.P. (For.)*, 1586-7, 214.

⁷⁰ Strong, *loc. cit.*, 62.

purple fever'.⁷¹ In his preface to the *Unton Correspondence*, the Reverend Joseph Stevenson says 'Judging from the correspondence . . . Unton seems to have amply merited the high regard in which he was held by Queen Elizabeth and her council. He stands before us as the well-born and well-bred English gentleman, correct in his estimate of right and wrong and consistent in carrying it into practice'.⁷² He was an admirer of the Earl of Essex and cultivated him though he does not appear to have gained any preferment through this. It was in the 1593 parliament that the efforts of the Earl of Essex to appoint members became apparent and it is possible that Unton stood with Essex's support.

The other knight of the shire in the 1593 parliament was a local man, Sir Humphrey Foster, son of the 1572 member. He entertained the queen at his house at Aldermaston in 1601.⁷³ He was a J.P.⁷⁴ and sheriff in 1580 and 1593.⁷⁵ In 1596 he was to become deputy lieutenant of Berkshire⁷⁶ and was often asked by the privy council to deal with local matters. His name appears in the privy council letters, often in conjunction with that of Thomas Parry, and of all the M.P.s between 1586 and 1597 these two alone typify local gentry interested in and busy with local affairs.

In 1597 Sir Henry Norris was once more back in the senior seat. He had returned to England and was dealing with reinforcements for Ireland.⁷⁷ There is no definite evidence that he was an enemy of Essex, but the Norris brothers appear to have been devoted to each other and the enemy of one may well have been the enemy of all. Henry's brother John is reported to have died of a broken heart when Lord Borough was made deputy lieutenant of Ireland in 1597. Lord Borough was of Essex's

faction. Fuller remarks 'At last a great lord was made lieutenant of Ireland, of the opposite party to Sir John; there being animosities at the court of Queen Elizabeth (as well as of later Princes)'.⁷⁸ If this is true Sir Henry may well have felt it expedient to swell the rival ranks in a House well filled with Essex's supporters.

We find that he had an unexpected companion in Sir Francis Knollys junior, the sixth son of old Sir Francis, now dead. There is evidence that, as time went on, and in spite of the Earl of Essex, the reported animosity between the members of these two families was lessening. A letter, written by a member of the Norris household in 1600, said that 'Sir Francis Knollys and Sir Humphrey Foster were here last week at primeroes and huntings'.⁷⁹ Knollys had sat for Oxford City from 1572 until 1588 and was to represent Berkshire again in 1604 and 1625 and Reading, together with his son, in 1640, when he was 91. He was uncle to Essex and was probably in sympathy with his nephew. He was, in fact, held in custody in 1601 after the rebellion, but was soon released and a magistrate again in a few months.⁸⁰

In the last parliament of the reign the pattern changes back to its early Elizabethan shape. The county was represented by members of Berkshire families interested in local affairs. Sir Richard Lovelace of Hurley, near Maidenhead, whose father was a J.P. in 1587⁸¹ and sheriff in 1574,⁸² was a wealthy man, having made a fortunate marriage with a rich merchant's daughter. He had been knighted at Dublin on that occasion when 'the Earl of Essex made fifty nine knights . . . including . . . two Lovelaces . . . I fear his huddling them up by half-hundreds will bring the order into contempt'.⁸³ He was elevated to the peerage by Charles I in

⁷¹ *D.N.B.*

⁷² *Correspondence of Sir Henry Unton knt*, Preface, ed. J. Stevenson.

⁷³ A. Aspinall and others, *Parliament through Seven Centuries* (1962), 43.

⁷⁴ *A.P.C.*, xiv, 215.

⁷⁵ *Lists of Sheriffs*, 6.

⁷⁶ *A.P.C.*, xxv, 396.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 327.

⁷⁸ Fuller, *op. cit.*, ii, 228.

⁷⁹ *Cal. S.P. (Dom.)*, 1598-1601, 481.

⁸⁰ *A.P.C.*, xxxi, 171.

⁸¹ *Cal. S.P. (Dom.)*, 1581-90, 386.

⁸² *Lists of Sheriffs*, 6.

⁸³ *Cal. S.P. (Dom.)*, 1598-1601, 306. John Chamberlain to Dudley Carleton.

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1627. He was to represent Abingdon in 1603, Windsor in 1614 and Berkshire again in 1620. His companion was George Hyde, a member of the Denchworth family, who had represented Tamworth in 1597. He was married to the daughter of Sir Humphrey Ferrers of Tamworth Castle.⁸⁴ Together with Sir Edward Hoby, Sir Francis Knollys, Sir Humphrey Foster and Sir Thomas Parry, he was mentioned among the list of noblemen and gentry in the Berkshire commission for peace in 1601.⁸⁵

Of the families which provided senior knights of the shire during Elizabeth's reign, the Untons were the longest established in Berkshire and if any one family could be said to have had the pre-eminent position in the county, the Untons were that family. In the early parliaments it would seem that the dominant position was held by Sir Henry Nevill, the man, rather than the newly arrived Nevill family, since in 1586 his place was not taken by his son and namesake who was then twenty-three and had already represented Windsor, but by a member of the Unton family.

PART 2

REPRESENTATION OF THE BOROUGHES

The four parliamentary boroughs in Elizabethan Berkshire were Abingdon, Reading, Wallingford and New Windsor. Reading sent representatives from 1295 and Wallingford from shortly after.⁸⁶ New Windsor was represented in 1341 and between then and 1447 sent members intermittently.⁸⁷ Abingdon was not represented until Queen Mary's

reign. Newbury had, apparently, once sent burgesses to parliament in Edward I's reign, but there is no record of it having been represented again apart from one occasion when it sent representatives to a great council in Edward III's reign.⁸⁸

ABINGDON

Members of Parliament, 1559-1601

1559	Robert Bynge
1563	Oliver Hyde ⁸⁹
1571	Antony Forster ⁹⁰
1572	Antony Forster Richard Beake vice Forster deceased
1584	Edward Norris
1586	Miles Sandys
1589	Sir Edward Norris
1593	William Braunche
1597	Francis Lyttle
1601	Robert Rytte

Abingdon was made a free borough and town corporate by Queen Mary in 1556, one of the three single member constituencies added during her reign.⁹¹ At that time the town had fallen into ruin and it was allowed a grant of £102 6s. 7d. per annum to pay the fee farm. The population of the parish of St. Helens which made up the greater part of Abingdon was 1,400 according to a count made by order of Cardinal Pole in 1555.⁹² No reason can be found for the departure from the usual rule of two representatives for each borough unless the poverty of the town was taken into account. The charter was granted at the request of Sir John Mason, a native of Abingdon and chancellor of Oxford University. He was a protestant but high in the Queen's favour. The charter

⁸⁴ W. Berry, *County Genealogies, Pedigrees of Berkshire Families* (1837), 107.

⁸⁵ Ashmole, op. cit., iii, 404-5.

⁸⁶ Aspinall, op. cit., 4. Browne Willis, *Notitia Parliamentaria*, i (1730), 49.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 39.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Oliver Hyde died in 1566 while parliament was still in session and A. C. Baker in her article, 'The High Stewards', in *Historic Abingdon*, says local evidence suggests that Antony Forster succeeded

him then. Certainly a warrant was granted on 24th October 1566 to require a writ for the election of a new burgess and parliament was not dissolved until 2nd January 1567. Sir Simonds D'Ewes, *The Journals of all the Parliaments during the reign of Queen Elizabeth*, 125.

⁹⁰ Browne Willis, op. cit., 79.

⁹¹ J. E. Neale, *The Elizabethan House of Commons* (Peregrine ed.), 134.

⁹² Lysons, op. cit., 223.

lay down that there should be a mayor, two bailiffs and nine aldermen, which twelve were to elect sixteen or more secondary burgesses who alone should have the right to choose one burgess for parliament.⁹³

During the early years of Elizabeth's reign Sir John Mason, who had direction of foreign policy, still wielded influence in the borough.⁹⁴ He died in 1566 and in the same year the earl of Leicester became high steward.⁹⁵ In many boroughs the holder of the office of high steward expected the right to nominate at least one of the parliamentary representatives, and the earl, who held many high stewardships,⁹⁶ was able to place a number of his protégés in parliament. In 1580 he apparently resigned his office in Abingdon to Lord Norris of Rycote⁹⁷ who held it until his death in 1601.

The first M.P. in Elizabeth's reign was Robert Bynge, husband to Sir John Mason's step-daughter.⁹⁸ In 1563 Oliver Hyde was Abingdon's—and Sir John's—choice. He had been the first of the borough's M.P.s in 1557. He was a member of the Hyde Family from Dencheworth,⁹⁹ the second son in a family of twelve sons and eight daughters, and he went, at the age of twenty-one, to live in Abingdon where he married in succession two wealthy widows, one of whom brought him Banbury Court, a fine house in the town. He was mayor of Abingdon in 1561 and deputy master of Christ's Hospital under Sir John.¹⁰⁰

The earl of Leicester's influence is clearly seen in the two following elections. Antony Forster was chief controller of the earl's private expenses as well as his personal friend. He had been a lessee of Cumnor Place, near

Abingdon, when Amy Dudley met her death while staying there. Later he bought the house and lived there until his death in 1572.¹⁰¹ He was replaced by Richard Beake, third son of Thomas Beake of Whiteknights, Reading. He was also the son-in-law of Thomas Reade of Barton, Abingdon, who was on friendly terms with the earl of Leicester.¹⁰² The earl was master of horse to the queen and Beake became equerry of the stable. He was also keeper of Donnington Castle, Berkshire.¹⁰³

When the next election took place, in 1584, Lord Norris was high steward and the M.P. was his third son, Edward. At this time Edward was busy with military matters and had been acting as messenger between Walsingham and the Low Countries where his brother, John Norris, was in charge of troops.¹⁰⁴ Later he returned to the Low Countries and became governor of Flushing.¹⁰⁵ He was still there in 1586 when Abingdon chose Griffin Lloyd, principal of Jesus College, Oxford, as parliamentary burgess, but he had also been elected to represent Cardiganshire and, naturally, preferred the county seat. Abingdon's second choice was Miles Sandys, a clerk of the crown and member of the Middle Temple, who sat in all parliaments between 1563 and 1597, changing his constituency each time. He is an outstanding example of the professional politician who was prepared to represent any borough. The fact that mediaeval theory postulated that M.P.s were really attorneys for their constituencies is a point in favour of this type of 'carpet-bagging', particularly in the case of lawyers. There is some uncertainty about Sandys' patron. Neale suggests that

⁹³ *Selections from the Municipal Chronicles of the Borough of Abingdon* (1898), ed. Bromley Chaloner, 5 & 7.

⁹⁴ J. Townsend, *History of Abingdon* (1910), 113.

⁹⁵ *Vis. Berks.* i, 13 & 14.

⁹⁶ He was high steward of Great Yarmouth, Kings Lynn, Andover, Bristol, Reading and Wallingford, steward of New Windsor and recorder of Maldon. J. E. Neale, op. cit., 202.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 203.

⁹⁸ Baker, loc. cit.

⁹⁹ Oliver's eldest brother, William, had represented Berkshire three times during Mary's reign and was grandfather to George Hyde, M.P., Berks. 1601.

¹⁰⁰ A. E. Preston, 'Oliver Hyde, First M.P. for Abingdon and his Heraldic Tablet in St. Helen's Church', *Historic Abingdon*.

¹⁰¹ Townsend, op. cit., 116.

¹⁰² Baker, loc. cit.

¹⁰³ *C.P.R. Eliz.*, ii, 176.

¹⁰⁴ *Cal. S.P. (For.)*, 1582, 179, 185, 192 & 204.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 1585-6, 127.

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when he was elected at Plymouth in 1588 he owed his seat to Leicester¹⁰⁶ but in 1572 he had sat for Bridport where the Earl of Bedford was patron¹⁰⁷ and in 1571 he had sat for Lancaster where the chancellor of the duchy held sway.¹⁰⁸

In 1589 Edward Norris, now knighted, was back in England. He was, like his brother the Berkshire member in the same parliament, preparing to accompany Drake and Sir John Norris to Portugal. When he returned he went back to the Low Countries where he was made governor of Ostend. It seems that the manner in which the Norris brothers carried out their duties as governors of towns was not held in such high esteem as were their military exploits, for Captain Roger Williams wrote to Walsingham that Edward and Henry Norris 'ought rather to be in field than governors of towns of such importance'.¹⁰⁹ Although he returned to England in 1599 and settled at Englefield Sir Edward did not sit in parliament again.

In 1593, with Sir Edward in Ostend and his brothers either dead or fighting in Brittany or Ireland, there were no Norris sons to sit for Abingdon. It would seem that Lord Norris had no other protégé he wished to favour and the town was free to make its own choice. It elected a townsman, William Braunché, a woollen draper and maltster, who came from an important Abingdon family and had been mayor as well as a governor of Christ's Hospital.¹¹⁰ A similar situation apparently existed in 1597 when he was followed by Francis Lyttle, another townsman, at various times draper, brewer and innholder. He too was a governor of Christ's Hospital and was mayor on four occasions. A great benefactor of the town, he was also its first historian.¹¹¹

The representation of Abingdon in the last

parliament of the reign remains an enigma. Robert Rythe had no other parliamentary experience and yet does not seem to have been a townsman. He is known to have been a tenant of the house known as St. Nicholas Vicarage for two years from 1587¹¹² but nothing else is known about him. We have no knowledge of the successor to Lord Norris as high steward so that no light can be thrown from this angle.

Abingdon, during the time under discussion, seems to have been prepared to leave the nomination of its member to its patrons, Sir John Mason, the Earl of Leicester, and Lord Norris, until 1593. Apart from placing his own family it would appear that Lord Norris had no other interest in the nomination, so that the town was able to elect burgesses when Edward Norris was unable to sit. In the early part of the 17th century the town began to be represented by local gentry.¹¹³

READING

Members of Parliament, 1559-1601

- 1559 Thomas Aldeworth, Thomas Turner¹¹⁴
- 1563 Henry Knollys, Robert Rowbotham
- 1571 Henry Knollys, John Hastings¹¹⁵
- 1572 Robert Knollys, Francis Alforde
- 1584 Robert Knollys, Robert Harris
- 1586 Robert Knollys, Robert Harris
- 1589 Robert Knollys, sat for Brecon, replaced by Thomas Egerton, Robert Harris
- 1593 Humphrey Donnatt, Charles Wednesder
- 1597 Sir Humphrey Foster, Francis Moore
- 1601 Francis Moore, Antony Blagrove

Reading had been represented since 1295.¹¹⁶ The right of election was in the burgesses of the town. Man suggests that by 1545 all inhabitants voted, quoting as evidence the passage from the borough records which refers to the 'indenture made between John Bourne, Mayor

¹⁰⁶ Neale, *op. cit.*, 172.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 189.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 215.

¹⁰⁹ *Cal. S.P. (For.)*, 1585-6, 127.

¹¹⁰ *Vis. Berks.*, lvi, 14. Townsend, *op. cit.*, 57.

¹¹¹ File D/EP7/95. Berks Record Office.

¹¹² Baker, *loc. cit.*

¹¹³ Sir Richard Lovelace, replaced by Sir Henry Nevill in the county, sat for Abingdon in 1603, followed by Sir Robert Hyde and Sir Robert Knollys.

¹¹⁴ Aspinall, *op. cit.*, 106.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹¹⁶ Coates, *op. cit.*, 459.

of the Borough of Reading in the County of Berkshire, the burgesses and commonalty of the borough on the one part etc. witnesseth that the said Mayor, burgesses and commonalty unanimously assembled here have ordained chosen and named Thomas Vachell and Roger Amyce of the said borough, burgesses of parliament'.¹¹⁷ However, it seems likely that this was only a formality, for as late as 1640 we find that the representatives were elected by the mayor, aldermen and burgesses with a show of assent afterwards by the commonalty.¹¹⁸ By 1708 the right of election was adjudged to be in the freemen and inhabitants of the borough 'such freemen not receiving alms and such inhabitants paying scot and lot'.¹¹⁹

During the first half of the sixteenth century the M.P.s were mainly borough men or men from the immediate neighbourhood of the town.¹²⁰ In 1539 an order was issued by the mayor and burgesses that 'the burgesses of parliament should be burgesses of the borough, or at least one of them shall be a burgess'.¹²¹ but after 1563 only one bona fide burgess, Robert Harris, represented Reading.

High stewards of Reading were appointed by a charter of Henry VIII. The earl of Leicester became high steward in 1566, the first since Thomas Cromwell in 1539-1540. At Leicester's death, Sir Henry Nevill of Billingbear took over and he, in turn, was succeeded in 1592 by the earl of Essex.¹²² Sir William Knollys, Sir Francis' eldest surviving son, who was later created Baron Knollys of Greys, became high steward after Essex's death.¹²³ Apparently, when Essex was given the nomination of one of the parliamentary

burgesses in 1593 this was intended as a compliment, but in later years whoever held the position of high steward expected the privilege.¹²⁴ During Leicester's tenure of office, one of the M.P.s was a member of Knollys family, brothers-in-law to the earl, but it does not seem likely that they found it necessary to rely for their election on the high steward. Indeed, Henry Knollys was first elected in 1563 before Leicester became high steward. The only election which occurred during Sir Henry Nevill's term of office was that of 1589 when Reading originally returned the two M.P.s who had sat in the two previous parliaments.

The first parliament of the reign saw two local men returned for the borough. These were Thomas Aldeworth and Thomas Turner. Both were mayor on three occasions,¹²⁵ and Aldeworth had been Reading's M.P. in 1558, but in 1563 the pattern of the first part of the century was broken. Henry Knollys, Sir Francis' eldest son, then in his early twenties, gained his first parliamentary experience in this seat.¹²⁶ His father had been granted the manors of Caversham and Cholsey so that he had local connections. Henry was to be a sea-captain, preying on Spanish shipping, and De Spes, the Spanish Ambassador, who was put in Henry Knolly's charge when waiting to leave England at the government's request in 1571, referred to him as 'a great scamp'.¹²⁷

His companions in 1563 was Robert Rowbotham, an official of the wardrobe and controller of the customs at Newcastle-on-Tyne.¹²⁸ He had no local connections and this was his only parliamentary experience. When

¹¹⁷ Man, op. cit., 219.

¹¹⁸ *V.C.H. Berks.* ii, 360, 361.

¹¹⁹ Coates, op. cit., 459.

¹²⁰ Aspinall, op. cit., 40.

¹²¹ Guilding, *Reading Records*, i, 172.

¹²² Coates says that Essex became high steward in 1589 but this is not borne out by Guilding, 416. By 1597 Essex was high steward of at least twelve boroughs, including Oxford and Reading and it has been calculated that, in the parliament of that year, he placed eight of his servants, about twelve of his friends and eighteen Essex knights.

Twelve M.P.s from this parliament took part in the rebellion. Neale, op. cit., 229.

¹²³ Man, op. cit., 381.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Guilding, op. cit., 220, 250, 253, 294 & 311.

¹²⁶ The *D.N.B.* says that Reading's M.P. in 1563 was Sir Francis' brother and that the son did not sit until 1571, but both Neale, and Lambert in *Parliament through Seven Centuries*, say that it was the son both times.

¹²⁷ *Cal. S.P. (Span.)*, 1560-79, 356.

¹²⁸ Aspinall, op. cit., 41.

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Henry Knollys was returned in 1571 his fellow M.P. was John Hastings, a diplomat, who had already been employed in the Low Countries and later acted as envoy between the queen and the Prince of Orange.¹²⁹ He was known to Henry Knollys who had accompanied him on one mission, and presumably he was also known to Leicester.¹³⁰ He represented several boroughs during his parliamentary career, including Bridport and Poole, both of which were under the earl of Bedford's patronage.¹³¹

In 1572 Henry Knollys joined his father as M.P. for Oxfordshire. His place at Reading was taken by his younger brother Robert, Sir Francis' fourth son, who was to remain a Reading M.P. until 1589 when, although re-elected, he opted for the county of Brecon. At first he was partnered by Francis Alforde, a lawyer and a friend of Hatton and Burghley. He too sat for several boroughs between 1562 and 1589. He spoke a good deal in the House and was never afraid to take an unpopular stand. His wife was a catholic and he himself was against pressing for Mary's death. He also stood up for Arthur Hall, a fellow M.P., whose irresponsible behaviour more than once brought the wrath of the House about his ears.¹³² He had slight local connections as he owned land in Oxfordshire¹³³ and also had the appointment of men to the almshouses at Lambourn and the management of the estate.¹³⁴ After the 1572 parliament Robert Knollys' partner was Robert Harris, a townsman, twice mayor and recorder of the borough.¹³⁵ When in 1589 Robert Knollys decided to sit for Brecon, his seat was filled by Thomas Egerton, the queen's solicitor general.¹³⁶ He had no local connections, although he acquired some land at Burghfield in 1589.¹³⁷ Later he was to become lord chancellor and be elevated to the peerage as Baron Ellesmere.

In 1593 Essex's nominee, Charles Wednesder, an official of the exchequer, appeared as one of the representatives.¹³⁸ The other was Humphrey Donnatt, a chancery official, recommended to the borough by Sir John Puckring, keeper of the seal, who discharged payment and vouched for his honesty.¹³⁹ Boroughs had to pay their M.P.s two shillings a day while parliament was in session. If a candidate for the seat was willing to waive this fee in order to become an M.P. or, as in this case, if he had a patron prepared to take over the obligation, it was certainly a point in favour when candidates were being considered, although rarely by this time the deciding factor.

The earl of Essex's influence is not so apparent in the 1597 election at Reading in spite of the fact that he had more nominees in this parliament than in the previous one. Sir Humphrey Foster, who had sat for Berkshire in the previous parliament, gave up his seat to Francis Knollys, and himself sat for the borough. Francis Knollys was Essex's uncle and sympathiser and there is a possibility that an agreement was reached between them and Sir Humphrey as to the county and borough representation. The other member in this parliament was Francis Moore, a local man and a lawyer. His father was Edward Moore of East Ilsley and his mother was Elizabeth Hall of Tilehurst. He built himself a house at South Fawley near Wantage, and represented Reading on three more occasions.¹⁴⁰

Antony Blaggrave, who accompanied him to parliament in 1601, was also from a Berkshire family and the first of many Blagraves to represent Reading. His mother had inherited Bulmershe Court from William Grey, her first husband, and here the family lived. John Blaggrave, Antony's brother, a famous mathematician, built Southcote Manor House.

¹²⁹ Ibid. & *Cal. S.P. (Span.)*, 1568-79, 510.

¹³⁰ *Cal. S.P. (For.)*, 1563, 395.

¹³¹ Neale, *op. cit.*, 189.

¹³² Neale, *Elizabeth I and Her Parliaments*, i, 210, 259 & 338.

¹³³ *C.P.R. Eliz.* ii, 420.

¹³⁴ Lysons, *op. cit.*, 309.

¹³⁵ Guilding, *op. cit.*, 369, 387, 400-1, 449.

¹³⁶ Aspinall, *op. cit.*, 41.

¹³⁷ *V.C.H. Berks*, iii, 402.

¹³⁸ Guilding, *op. cit.*, 416.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ 1601, 1603 and 1614.

Antony's son, Daniel, also an M.P. for Reading, was one of the regicides.¹⁴¹

After 1563 the M.P.s for Reading were a mixture of men from Berkshire and 'carpet-baggers' with only one local burgess. The Knollys family predominated during the greater part of the reign. In the last parliament the two representatives were both men from the county, a practice which was to be repeated in most of the parliaments of the seventeenth century.

WALLINGFORD

Members of Parliament, 1559-1601

- 1559 Thomas Myn', John Fortescue
- 1563 William Dunche, Thomas Brown
- 1571 Thomas Dudley, Edmund Dunche¹⁴²
- 1572 Thomas Digges, John Fortescue
- 1584 Christopher Edmunds, Richard Knollys
- 1586 Richard Knollys, Thomas Stampe
- 1589 Michael Molyns, Thomas Stampe
- 1593 Thomas Fortescue, Antony Bacon
- 1597 Thomas Fortescue, Owen Oglethorpe
- 1601 Henry Doyley, Thomas Fortescue

The representation of Wallingford is more obscure than for other Berkshire boroughs partly because of lack of information about electoral rights and borough officials in the sixteenth century, and partly because several of the representatives remain little more than names. Wallingford is very close to the border with Oxfordshire and it will be seen that both counties provided M.P.s for the borough. The borough belonged to the duchy of Cornwall and, had enjoyed the privilege of sending members to parliament since the end of the thirteenth century. In 1562 it was said to be much decayed and the fee farm which originally stood at £42 per annum had been reduced by Henry VI to £15 per annum for forty years and again for a further forty years by Henry VII. In 1562 the reduction was again ratified for a further forty years because 'it is reported that

many burgesses and inhabitants are leaving the town because of the great burden of the fee farm and that not more than £15 yearly thereof can be levied without the final destruction of the borough.'¹⁴³

There is no record of the range of the franchise during the sixteenth century, but on 15th February 1641 the election of Edmund Dunche and Antony Barker was declared void because they had not been chosen by 'the commonalty'.¹⁴⁴ In 1689 when there was a disputed election the committee resolved that the right lay in 'those that pay scott and lott to the Church and poor' and no instance could be produced to the contrary except in 1659.¹⁴⁵ This is similar to the Reading ruling of 1708.¹⁴⁶

Wallingford had three high stewards during Elizabeth's reign. The earl of Leicester held the position until his death in 1588, Lord Norris became high steward before 1597, and Sir John Fortescue, chancellor of the duchy of Lancaster, held the office from 1599 until 1607.¹⁴⁷ Fortescue had, in fact, been M.P. for Wallingford in Elizabeth's first parliament, when he was just setting out on his career as a government official. He had estates in Oxfordshire, was a son of Sir Adrian Fortescue, and, therefore, brother-in-law to William Norris who sat for Berkshire in 1574. After his father's execution his mother had married Sir Thomas Parry, controller of the queen's household, who had estates in Berkshire. Fortescue had superintended the queen's studies when she was a princess. The other M.P. in 1559 was Thomas Myn' (or Mynde) of whom nothing is known except that he had represented the borough in 1555 and 1557 and was probably a townsman.

In 1563 the two representatives were William Dunche and a Thomas Brown. Dunche lived at Little Wittenham, five miles from Wallingford.¹⁴⁸ He was a member of a wealthy Berkshire

¹⁴¹ Aspinall, *op. cit.*, 43 & 56.

¹⁴² Browne-Willis, *op. cit.*, 67.

¹⁴³ *C.P.R. Eliz.*, ii, 355-6.

¹⁴⁴ M. Keeler, *The Long Parliament*, 34.

¹⁴⁵ Resolution of the Committee for Elections and

Privileges (Mss. W. Aep 4/1), Berks. Rec. Office.

¹⁴⁶ See n. 119 above.

¹⁴⁷ J. Hedges, *History of Wallingford* (1881), ii, 109 & 240.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 103.

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family, a J.P., and sheriff in 1570.¹⁴⁹ He had been auditor of the mint under Henry VIII and Edward VI.¹⁵⁰ It has not been possible to discover anything definite about his colleague, Thomas Brown.

In 1571 the earl of Leicester's hand can be seen in the election of Thomas Dudley, his kinsman and personal servant, who later represented Warwick.¹⁵¹ Edmund Dunche, the other M.P., was William Dunche's son.¹⁵² He was to be sheriff in 1587 and 1603¹⁵³ and was also treasurer for Berkshire.¹⁵⁴

The earl's nominee in 1572 was Thomas Digges, the mathematician, whose father's estates were in Kent. He had no local connections although his wife, a granddaughter of Lord Abergavenny, was related to the Nevills of Billingbear. He was to be muster master general in the Low Countries, a post he obtained through Leicester's patronage. John Fortescue, who had represented Wigan in the meantime, again sat for Wallingford in this parliament.

Christopher Edmunds, one of the 1584 members, was a servant of the queen, his wife, Dorothy, was one of the gentlewomen of the privy chamber, and they had been granted lands in Berkshire and Oxfordshire for their services.¹⁵⁵ Christopher joined John Fortescue in representing Buckinghamshire in the next parliament. The other M.P. in 1584 was Richard Knollys, Sir Francis' fifth son. He is described as of Stanford-in-the-Vale, near Faringdon. Sir Francis was constable of Wallingford castle. In 1586 he wrote a letter to the mayor asking for Richard's re-election¹⁵⁶ and it is probable that his influence had gained Richard the seat on this earlier occasion. The borough complied with Sir Francis' request in 1586 and also elected, as Knollys' companion,

Thomas Stampe from nearby Cholsey. The Stampes were well-known among the lesser Berkshire gentry. A relation of Thomas, probably his son, married the daughter of Michael Molyns of Clapcot, who was to be M.P. in the next parliament when Thomas Stampe sat again.¹⁵⁷ Molyns was a Berkshire J.P. by 1576 and sheriff in 1583. He was also sheriff of Oxfordshire in 1575.¹⁵⁸

In 1593 and 1597 another Fortescue was M.P. This was Thomas, who may well have been a relation to John (now Sir John) Fortescue. Thomas owned land in Donnington,¹⁵⁹ otherwise little is known of him. His companion in 1593, however, is much more widely known. It was Antony Bacon, Francis' brother, nephew of Burghley and close friend of the earl of Essex. From 1595 he lived at Essex House and in 1597 he became M.P. for Oxford where the earl was high steward. Bacon's place at Wallingford in 1597 was taken by Owen Oglethorpe of Newington, Oxfordshire (four miles from Wallingford). He was an Oxfordshire J.P. and sheriff, a cousin of Dudley Carleton and a friend of the Norris family.¹⁶⁰

Henry Doyley, a barrister-at-law,¹⁶¹ who sat in the last parliament of the reign, was a descendent of Robert Doyley, constable of Oxford Castle, who had come over with William the Conqueror. There were Doyleys of Wallingford Castle in 1090 and after that the family had property in the town.¹⁶² Henry's father, Robert, was one of the judges who died at the Black Assize at Oxford in 1577¹⁶³ and his widow married Sir Henry Nevill senior.¹⁶⁴ Thomas Fortescue sat for the third and last time in 1601, taking the place of John Herbert, secretary of state, the borough's original choice, who elected to stand for Glamorgan.

Wallingford's M.P.s were drawn from local

¹⁴⁹ *C.P.R. Eliz.*, ii, 434 and *Lists of Sheriffs*, 6.

¹⁵⁰ *V.C.H. Berks.*, iv, 382.

¹⁵¹ Leicester Correspondence, *Camden Soc.* 1843/4, 111, & Neale, op. cit., 241.

¹⁵² *V.C.H. Berks.*, iii, 466.

¹⁵³ *Lists of Sheriffs*, 6.

¹⁵⁴ *A.P.C.*, xxvi, 168.

¹⁵⁵ *C.P.R. Eliz.*, i, 391, iii, 283, iv, 139 & *V.C.H. Berks.*, iv, 400 & 424.

¹⁵⁶ Hedges, op. cit., 49 & 108.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 109.

¹⁵⁸ *A.P.C.*, ix, 135. *Lists of Sheriffs*, 6.

¹⁵⁹ *V.C.H. Berks.*, iv, 94.

¹⁶⁰ Fuller, op. cit., 238. *Cal. S.P. (Dom.)*, 1581-90, 275 & 1598-1601, 52.

¹⁶¹ Hedges, op. cit., ii, 104.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 193.

¹⁶³ *A.P.C.*, ix, 392.

gentry or from outsiders, who were usually government officials. There were few, if any, true burgesses. This may be due to Wallingford's poverty or because, as a borough belonging to the duchy of Cornwall, it was susceptible to court influence. Leicester seems to have had some say in the election of Thomas Digges, Thomas Dudley and, possibly, Christopher Edmunds. He would not, presumably, object to Richard Knollys, although there is evidence that Sir Francis was the architect of his election. The inclusion of Antony Bacon in the list of M.P.s makes it appear that Essex had some influence at Wallingford. He could perhaps have been high steward between Leicester's death in 1588 and 1597 when we know Lord Norris held the post, but there is no evidence that this was so. His manors of South Moreton and Tidmarsh, both previously belonging to the sequestered Englefield estates, are within a few miles of Wallingford.

NEW WINDSOR

Members of Parliament, 1559-1601

- 1559 Thomas Weldon, Roger Amyce
- 1563 Richard Gallys, John Gresham
- 1571 John Thompson, Humphrey Michell¹⁶⁵
- 1572 Edmund Docora, Richard Gallys
Humphrey Michell vice Richard Gallys
deceased
- 1584 Henry Nevill, John Crooke junior
- 1586 Henry Nevill, George Woodward
- 1589 Edward Nevill, Edward Hake
- 1593 Henry Nevill, Edward Nevill
- 1597 Julius Caesar, John Norris
- 1601 Julius Caesar, Sir John Norris

During the seventeenth century the right of election in Windsor was frequently contested. Apparently until 1640 the election was normally carried out by the mayor, bailiffs and burgesses.

Occasionally the inhabitants at large were consulted,¹⁶⁶ but this may only have been a formality. Browne-Willis says that election rested in the corporation and that this is laid down in a charter 1 Jac. 1. and confirmed in 1685,¹⁶⁷ although before 1806 it was determined that the right lay in the inhabitants at large.¹⁶⁸ It seems likely from this that during the sixteenth century the corporation elected the members with a show of assent from the inhabitants. In 1575 the corporation passed a resolution 'that when burgesses of parliament be chosen, a townesman shall be chosen for one'.¹⁶⁹ Unless Henry Nevill, M.P. in 1586 and 1593, was sworn to the liberties of the town as was an M.P. on an earlier occasion,¹⁷⁰ they do not seem to have kept their resolution for long.

The position of constable of Windsor Castle, formerly held by Sir Francis Englefield, was given to the earl of Leicester in 1562 and he held it until his death, when he was succeeded by Howard of Effingham.¹⁷¹ Leicester was also chosen as high seneschal of the borough by the mayor and burgesses in 1563. In 1589 this post was given to Sir Henry Nevill and he, in turn, was succeeded by Effingham in 1592-3.¹⁷² The post of high seneschal does not seem to have carried with it, as a matter of course, the right to nominate a representative to parliament and, apart from Leicester's choice of Edmund Docora in 1572, and possibly Sir Henry Nevill's nomination of his nephew in 1589, those M.P.s who were neither townsmen nor gentry from the immediate neighbourhood, were government officials rather than personal protégés.

Thomas Weldon, who sat in 1559, was both a government official and a member of the local gentry. He was referred to as 'Thomas Weldon of Cookham—a furtherer', in the Bishop's letter in 1564.¹⁷³ He was also a

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., xi, 325.

¹⁶⁵ R. R. Tighe & J. E. Davis, *Annals of Windsor* (1858), i, 611.

¹⁶⁶ J. Hakewill, *The History of Windsor and its Neighbourhood* (1813), 39/40.

¹⁶⁷ Browne-Willis, op. cit., 39.

¹⁶⁸ Lysons, op. cit., 434.

¹⁶⁹ Tighe & Davis, op. cit., 636.

¹⁷⁰ Edmund Docora, M.P., 1572.

¹⁷¹ Tighe & Davis, op. cit., 611.

¹⁷² Ibid., 633, 655 & 659.

¹⁷³ See n. 28 above.

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cofferer of the household.¹⁷⁴ Roger Amyce, the other M.P., although well known in Berkshire, where he was surveyor of lands to Edward VI and to Mary, was an Essex man.¹⁷⁵ He had been a dependant of Thomas Cromwell and sat for Reading in 1545 and Windsor in 1552. He was also master of Christ's Hospital, Abingdon after Sir John Mason's death.¹⁷⁶

In 1563 one of the few townsmen sat for Windsor. This was Richard Gallys who was referred to in the political satire describing the most vociferous members of the 1563 parliament as 'Gallys the doctor'. The list of these members—the Choir—included the names of many stalwart puritans. Gallys was three times mayor of Windsor and a great benefactor to the poor.¹⁷⁷ His companion was Sir John Gresham, possibly the wealthy Sussex iron-founder, whose daughter was Sir Henry Nevill's first wife. Sir John did not sit in any earlier parliament and he died the following year. It seems very likely, if this is indeed the man, that Sir Henry, who was representing Berkshire, had some say in the election of this rather unexpected figure.

1571 saw two more government officials as Windsor's representatives. John Thompson was an auditor of the exchequer,¹⁷⁸ and Humphrey Michell was clerk and surveyor of Windsor Castle.¹⁷⁹ They both had some connections with Berkshire, Thompson having purchased the manor of Princes Harwell in 1557¹⁸⁰ and Michell leasing the manor and rectory of Old Windsor and Frogmore,¹⁸¹ but Thompson represented Bedfordshire in the next parliament and became a J.P. for that county,¹⁸² and Michell sat for Poole on two occasions and Camelford in 1592.

In 1572 Leicester recommended Edmund Docora to the mayor and burgesses and an

entry in the mayors' book shows that 'Mr. Edmund Docura at the request of the said Mayor, Bailiffs and burgesses was contented to be elected as one of the burgesses and being so elected was sworn to the liberties of the town.'¹⁸³ He was a local man, from Thatcham, and had been recommended by the Bishop to the privy council in 1564 as a likely J.P., a man who was 'a furtherer and learned'.¹⁸⁴ He was, in fact, made a J.P. later.¹⁸⁵ Richard Gallys accompanied him to parliament but died in 1574 and his place was taken by Humphrey Michell.

Sir Henry Nevill's son and namesake sat for Windsor in 1584. Until his father's death in 1592/3 he lived on his estates in Sussex, probably inherited from his maternal grandfather. He was a courtier and was to be ambassador to France in 1599 when he was knighted. He took his father's place as one of the foremost members of the Berkshire gentry and was a deputy lieutenant in 1596.¹⁸⁶ In 1597, the year when Essex placed a great number of members, and his rival, Robert Cecil, strove to outdo him, Henry Nevill sat for Liskeard, one of Cecil's boroughs.¹⁸⁷ His wife, Ann Killigrew, was Cecil's cousin. Yet he was in the earl of Southampton's confidence and was sent to the tower in 1601 for his share in the Essex conspiracy. He was fined, dismissed his office and released. It would seem he had friends in both camps for Cecil, writing in March 1601, said, 'I take care of Sir Henry Nevill's fortune, being tied by friendship and nature'.¹⁸⁸

The other M.P. in 1584 was John Croke junior, a lawyer and later recorder for London, which city he represented in the 1601 parliament when he was Speaker. He was a protégé of Sir Christopher Hatton, a nephew of Sir Edward Unton, and was married to

¹⁷⁴ *Cal. S.P. (Dom.)*, 1547–80, 130.

¹⁷⁵ Tighe & Davis, *op. cit.*, 570 & 609.

¹⁷⁶ Preston, *op. cit.*, 70.

¹⁷⁷ J. E. Neale, *Elizabeth I and Her Parliaments*, i, 250.

¹⁷⁸ *C.P.R. Eliz.* ii, 217.

¹⁷⁹ Ashmole, *op. cit.*, iii, 43/4.

¹⁸⁰ *V.C.H. Berks*, iii, 488.

¹⁸¹ *C.P.R. Eliz.*, iii, 56 & 433.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁸³ Tighe & Davis, *op. cit.*, 636 n.

¹⁸⁴ *Camden Misc.* ix, 38.

¹⁸⁵ *A.P.C.*, ix, 135.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, xxv, 396.

¹⁸⁷ Neale, *op. cit.*, 232.

¹⁸⁸ *Cal. S.P. (Dom.)* 1601–03, 16. (Robert Cecil to Winwood.)

Catherine Blount of Mapledurham. He sat again in the following parliament and was joined by George Woodward, who may have been the son of a George Woodward who had been clerk to the constable of Windsor Castle and died in 1559.¹⁸⁹ Nothing further can be discovered about him.

In 1589, the only parliament to meet while Sir Henry Nevill senior was high seneschal, Edward Nevill, his nephew, was one of Windsor's M.P.s. Tighe and Davis quote the following from Ashmolean ms. no. 1126, 'On 10th October (1588) Henry Nevill esq. and Mr. Edward Hake were elected as M.P.s for Windsor, but the former being subsequently returned for Sussex, Edward Nevill, son and heir of Lord Abergavenny, was elected in his stead at Windsor on 24th October but his father dying and he succeeding to the peerage before the meeting of parliament, he did not take his seat'.¹⁹⁰ However, there was a prolonged dispute over both his father's and his own right to the title and he was not recognised as the eighth Lord Abergavenny until 1604.¹⁹¹ He was, therefore, able to join his cousin Henry as M.P. for Windsor in the following parliament. On this first occasion his companion was Edward Hake, under-steward of Windsor and one time mayor, who was also a puritan satirist. His best known work was 'Newes out of Paules Churchyarde; A Trappe for Syr Money', published in 1567, which dealt mainly with economic abuses in the market place.¹⁹²

In 1597 and 1601 Windsor's representatives were Julius Caesar and John Norris. Caesar, the son of Queen Mary's Italian physician, was a royal official, a lawyer and a judge, and later became chancellor of the exchequer. His wife

was a granddaughter of Sir Nicholas Bacon. His estates were in Mitcham, Surrey where he entertained the queen, and between 1589 and 1611 he represented a variety of boroughs. John Norris was the son of William Norris of Fyfield, the Berkshire M.P. of 1572. He was also father-in-law to Sir Edward Norris, Abingdon's M.P. in 1584 and 1589. It was at Sir Edward's house at Englefield, during the queen's visit to Berkshire in 1601, that John Norris was knighted.¹⁹³

Of the fourteen M.P.s who represented Windsor in Elizabeth's reign, six were government officials and five were local gentry or related to local gentry. If we count George Woodward as a townsman there were three burgesses, two of whom, Gallys and Hake, were men who, unlike most of the Berkshire townsmen who sat for parliament at this period, left the imprint of their personality to posterity.

There are many gaps still to be filled with regard to the representation of Berkshire during Elizabeth's reign but the picture which has emerged in very much the one which might be expected from a study of the membership of the house of commons as a whole. The process by which the country gentry were replacing townsmen as representatives of the boroughs, although by no means new in the sixteenth century,¹⁹⁴ was at this time gathering impetus.¹⁹⁵ Berkshire was no exception. Country gentlemen predominated, and there were also many royal officials, particularly in Windsor where court influence was strong.

There was no dominant aristocratic family to dictate the choice of candidates as in some counties, although the earl of Leicester, who held office in each of the boroughs, placed five of his protégés in parliament,¹⁹⁶ and his close

became marked in second half of the fifteenth century. M. McKisack, *Representation of the English Borough in the Middle Ages*, 113.

¹⁹⁵ In 1584 the House of Commons consisted of a proportion of members the reverse of statutory requirements. Neale, op. cit., 238.

¹⁹⁶ Antony Forster (Abingdon 1571 & 72), Richard Beake (Abingdon 1572), Thomas Dudley (Wallingford 1571), Thomas Digges (Wallingford 1572) and Edmund Docora (Windsor 1572).

¹⁸⁹ *C.P.R. Eliz.*, i, 108.

¹⁹⁰ Tighe & Davis, op. cit., 656.

¹⁹¹ *The Complete Peerage*, ed. Hon Vicary Gibbs, i, 33/35.

¹⁹² John Peter, *Complaint and Satire in Early English Literature*, 126/7.

¹⁹³ *Cal. S.P. (Dom.)*, 1601-03, 98.

¹⁹⁴ From the beginning of Henry VI's reign there was a noticeable tendency to substitute county gentry or government officials for burgesses but this

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connection with the Knollys family would seem to have rendered unnecessary any interference by him in the Reading elections between 1563 and 1589. The earl of Essex's hand is more obvious in the 1593 elections than in those of 1597, rather surprisingly, for it was in the 1597 elections that he had most nominations throughout the country. However,

the M.P.s who owed their allegiance to Leicester or Essex make up but a small proportion of the total number of Berkshire representatives.

In all there were sixty five M.P.s who, in the variety of their careers and the diversity of their interests help to give a picture of one section of Elizabethan society.