

The Mainwarings of Over Peover: A Cheshire family in the Fifteenth and early Sixteenth Centuries

By J. T. DRIVER

It is becoming increasingly recognised that many of the leading gentry families of Tudor and Stuart England had already established their local influence and connections in the fifteenth century and, in some cases, even earlier.¹ The Cheshire family of Mainwaring was not untypical in this as well as other respects. A glance at the pedigree chart will show how several other branches of the family were formed during the course of the fifteenth century, for example, the Mainwarings of Kermincham (Cheshire) and of Ightfield (Shropshire). Here, however, we shall concentrate on the members of the main line at Over Peover and Baddiley. Indeed, the interest of the present writer in the family was first aroused by the existence of the very fine monuments to Sir William Mainwaring in Acton church and to his half-brothers, John and Randle, in Over Peover church. Of equal interest and significance is the fact that the Mainwarings of Over Peover tended to accumulate land and other sources of economic power during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Again, having accepted the new dynasty of the Lancastrians after the overthrow of Richard II in 1399, the family remained loyal throughout the period—a point of some interest because it placed them alongside other Cheshire supporters of the Lancastrian government, such as the Fittons and the Troutbecks.² Within the limitation of easily available printed sources, we shall examine the basis of the wealth of the Mainwarings of Over Peover in the persons of John esquire I (*ob.* 1410), Randle esquire I (*ob. c.* 1456), Sir John I (*ob.* 1483), John esquire II (*ob.* 1495), and Sir John II (*ob.* 1516), their political, military, administrative and judicial activities, and their connections with their fellow gentry and the Church.

The basis of economic prosperity and social status in the later Middle Ages was still essentially in land, and the income derived from it either by direct possession and exploitation, or by lease of one sort or another. The fortunes of many gentry families were consolidated by the acquisition of manors or parts of manors through careful marriage arrangements. Thus it was that, in the latter half of the fourteenth century, the Mainwarings acquired Baddiley as a result of the first marriage of William Mainwaring to Joan Praers, and when their son, Sir William, died without male heirs in 1399, succession to Baddiley and Over Peover passed to his half-brother, John Mainwaring esquire, elder son of William by his

¹ Cf., for example, the work of Prof. J. S. Roskell. *The Commons in the Parliament of 1422*, Manchester, 1954, and others in their investigations into the composition of parliament in the fifteenth century, and Dr. M. Finch, *Five Northamptonshire Families 1540-1640*, Northamptonshire Record Society, 1956.

² For the latter see, J. Brownbill, 'The Troutbeck Family', C.A.S., vol. 28, pt. 2, 1929.

second marriage to Elizabeth, daughter of Nicholas Leycester of Over Tabley.³ When John died in 1410 he, too, left no legitimate male heir and so the inheritance went to his younger brother, Randle Mainwaring esquire.⁴ For the rest of the century succession was probably direct from father to son with one exception when, on the death of Sir John the first, it passed to his grandson, John, because of the premature death his own son, William. In addition to their interest at Peover and Baddiley, the family held lands (and sometimes property) elsewhere in Cheshire. From land transactions which have survived in the Mainwaring collection in the John Rylands Library, it appears that in 1400 John Mainwaring had land or was drawing rent from land in Baddiley, Brindley, Burland, Chester, Eaton, Faddiley, Hulme Walfeld, Lawton, Stoke, Upton, and Poulton in Wirral.⁵ In 1405 the family acquired lands in Chelford and Dittington [?] and in 1444 deeds refer to Mainwaring interests in Aston, Baddiley, Chester, Fouleshurst, Nantwich, Newhall, Peover, and Withington.⁶ Details of income from some of their lands can be examined in three rentals which are extant for the years 1425, 1459-60, and 1520-21.⁷ The first rental concerns Baddiley and Over Peover, the second lists the rents from the lands and properties of Sir John Mainwaring the first in Over Peover, Knutsford and Withington, and the third rental deals with Peover, Plumley, Lostock and other places in Cheshire. From this survey it is clear that the bulk of the family holdings were in mid-Cheshire, with Peover as the 'administrative centre' so to speak, a point underlined by the fact that it was there that the Halimoot Court was held, the proceedings of which have come down to us for the years 1423 to 1500.⁸

The profits of manors could be supplemented from a variety of other sources, such as the grant of wardship and marriage, the lease or acquisition of land forfeited to the Crown, and the profits of what can be called 'public office'. On 18 August 1403 John Mainwaring esquire was granted the lands forfeited by Sir Hugh Browe as a consequence of his having taken part in the Glyn Dŵr rising of that year.⁹ Earlier, in 1398, his younger brother, Randle, obtained a Crown lease for his lifetime of the demesne lands of Drakelow manor at an annual rent of 100s. (the family still retained an interest in Drakelow in the early sixteenth century for, in 1511, John Mainwaring, later Sir John the second, was made bailiff of the lordship of Drakelow and Rudheath).¹⁰ By 1405, Randle had

³ G. Ormerod, *History of the County Palatine and City of Chester* (cited hereafter as Ormerod), 2nd ed. T. Helsby, 1882, vol. 1, p. 480; J. P. Rylands (ed.), *The Visitation of Cheshire 1580*, Harleian Society, 1882, p. 165. Although the records frequently give 'le Mainwaring', I have, for the sake of simplicity, omitted the definite article.

⁴ 'Ralph' is the form frequently given by R. Fawtier, 'Hand-List of the Mainwaring and Jodrell Manuscripts at present in the custody of the John Rylands Library', *Bull. of the John Rylands Library*, vol. 7, no. 2, Jan. 1923, e.g. Mainwaring Charters, p. 31, Peover, nos. 212, 275.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Charters, pp. 14-15, Baddiley, nos. 181-3.

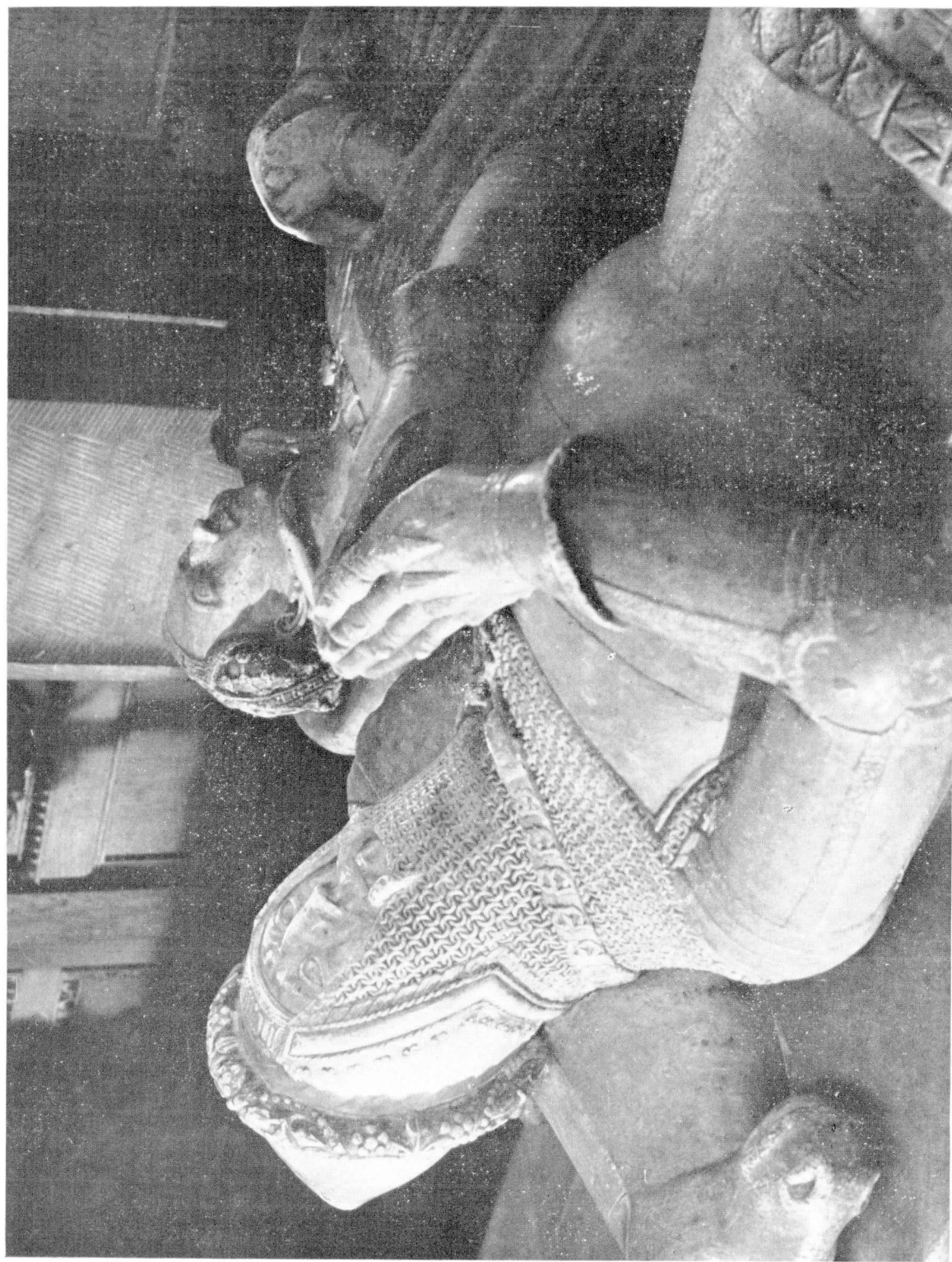
⁶ *Ibid.*, Charters, p. 20, Dittington [?], no. 193; p. 31, Peover, no. 275; p. 37, Withington, no. 276.

⁷ *Ibid.*, Rolls, p. 38, nos. 1, 3 and 5.

⁸ *Ibid.*, Rolls, p. 38, no. 4.

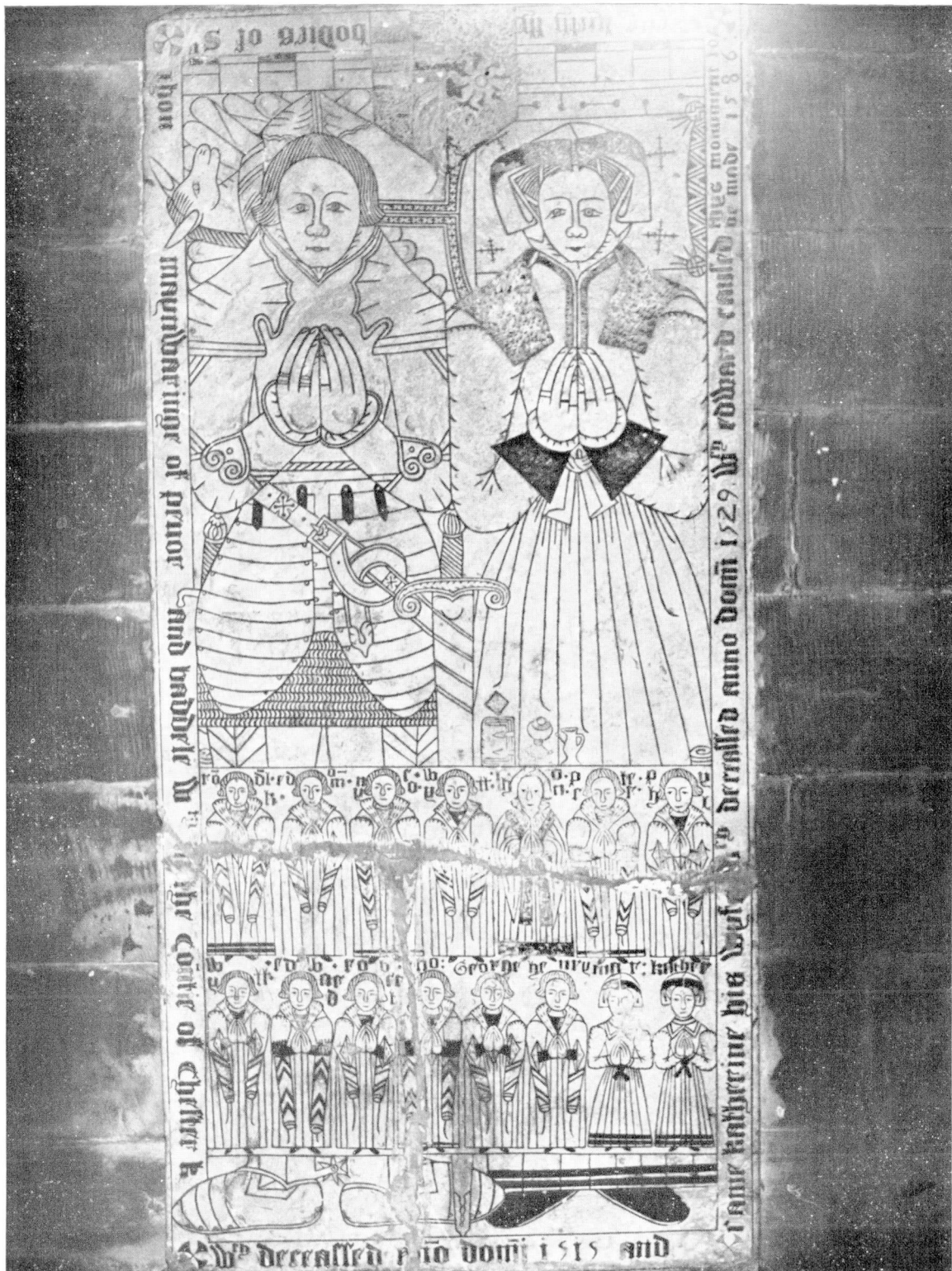
⁹ Recognisance Rolls, *Reports of the Deputy Keeper of the Public Records* [D.K.R.], 36th Report, 1875, App. II, p. 318.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 317; 39th Report, 1878, pp. 183, 184.



Alabaster monument in the church of St. Lawrence, Over Peover, of John Mainwaring (ob. c. 1410) and his wife Margaret, showing the chain of SS, a decoration worn by supporters of the Lancastrians.

Photograph by P. J. White by permission of Parochial Church Council of St. Lawrence, Over Peover.



Incised alabaster slab dated 1586 in the church of St. Lawrence, Over Peover, of Sir John Mainwaring II (1471-1516), his wife Katherine and their 13 sons and 2 daughters.

Photograph by P. J. White by permission of the Parochial Church Council of St. Lawrence, Over Peover.

acquired the office of rider of the forest of Mara and Mondrem [Delamere] and also the lease, for 5s. a year, of land in Ollerton known as 'le Brouteles place'.¹¹ His marriage to Margery, widow of Richard Bulkeley of Cheadle, enabled him to enjoy for a while the profits of the Cheshire holdings of the Bulkeleys during the minority of Richard, his stepson. Randle obtained these rights of wardship in 1391, which rights he was still apparently enjoying in 1418, when he presented John Blomer, chaplain, to the church of St. Mary, Cheadle—the presentation normally belonged to the Bulkeleys.¹² Here, in fact, may be a case of a 'guardian' clinging to his grant of wardship too long, for on 11 January 1414 Richard Bulkeley 'the younger' and others made a bond in 500 marks to keep the peace towards Randle Mainwaring.¹³ Perhaps the reluctance of Randle to surrender his rights had produced friction between him and his stepson. Another good example of the operation of the medieval system of wardship was the grant Randle obtained of the custody of the lands, wardship and marriage of William Bromley of Badington and Bromhall. On 7 September 1427, William obtained a writ ordering the return of his lands to him 'out of the hands of Randle Mainwaring'.¹⁴ By a stroke of luck, William died soon afterwards with the result that on 25 May 1431 Mainwaring was granted a lease of some of the lands and property of William's young son, John.¹⁵ A renewal of wardship was granted to Mainwaring in February 1433, when he was also given the reversion of the dower lands of Cecilia, widow of Richard Bromley.¹⁶ Clearly these leases would have provided additional revenue to the Mainwaring estates. Moreover, about the same time Randle Mainwaring was probably receiving some profits by way of the custody and wardship of Thomes Beeston, who sued for release of his property from the hands of Mainwaring on 16 August 1434; and for a short while, namely between August 1439 and January 1440, he had charge of the lands of the Fouleshurst family during the minority of Robert.¹⁷ An interesting example of an occasional perquisite of office or mark of royal favour was the gift of a doe from Delamere forest in 1436 on the occasion of the marriage of Elizabeth, daughter of Sir John Mainwaring, to Peter Warburton of Arley.¹⁸

Throughout the fifteenth century the Mainwarings of Over Peover seem to have taken an active part in local administration. Moreover, there is good evidence to show that they supported the Lancastrians. Although John I and his brother, Randle, had served Richard II—for instance, on 30 May 1398 Randle had been appointed a 'yeoman of the Crown' at 6d. a day during the king's pleasure, and a year later they both took out 'letters of protection' (presumably

¹¹ Ormerod, vol. 1, pp. 481, 509. The grant was renewed in 1423. [C]alendar of [P]atent [R]olls, 1422-29, p. 62.

¹² Ormerod, vol. I, p. 481; vol. III, p. 630; *Calendar of Fine Rolls, 1391-99*, p. 30; *D.K.R.*, 36th Report, App. II, p. 73; J. P. Earwaker, *East Cheshire*, 2 vols. 1877-80, vol. I, p. 219.

¹³ *D.K.R.*, 37th Report, 1876, App. II, p. 103.

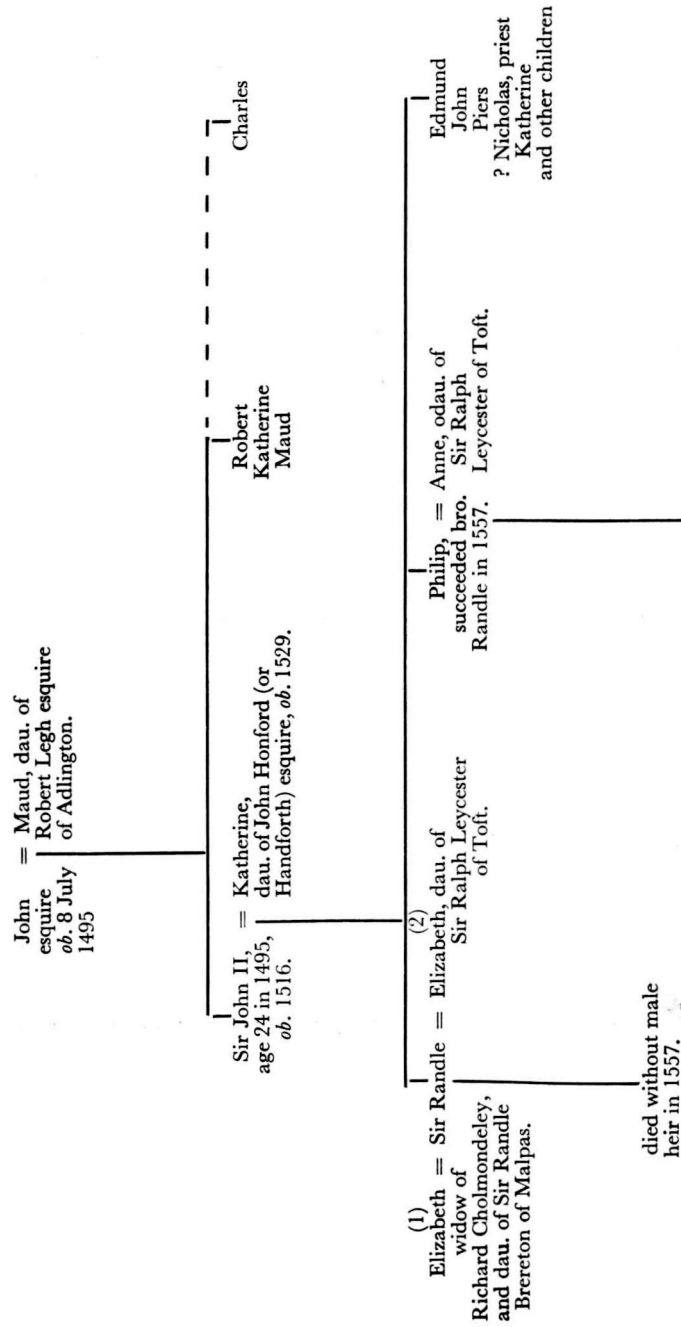
¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 493.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 495.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 37, 291, 496.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 495.



* Based upon information in Ormerod, vol. I, pp. 479-82, and *The Visitation of Cheshire, 1580* (Harleian Soc., 1882), p. 165. The genealogical table has been simplified to include only those mentioned in the text.

† Very old in 22 Henry VI [1443-44], in which year he made his will (*Visitation*, loc. cit.).

‡ According to the *Visitation*, Sir John I married Margaret, daughter of Lord Audley.

§ Ormerod, vol. III, p. 685 questions this marriage, but Lyson's, *Magna Britannia*, vol. II, pt. 2, p. 449, cites an inscription which refers to John Mainwaring of Over Peover and Joan, his wife, daughter of the Baron of Stockport [Warren], 9 Henry VI (1430-31).

|| A lease of 1444 refers to Elena, wife of William, son of Sir John Mainwaring, knight; a marriage covenant of the same date refers to "William Mainwaring, son of Hankyn [little John], with Elyn, the daughter of Sir John Butler, knight (Fawtier, 'Hand-List of Mainwaring Manuscripts in the John Rylands Library', p. 20, Eaton, no. 277; p. 25, *Mainwaring* (Family), no. 274).

against legal actions during their absence) immediately prior to 'going to Ireland in the king's service'¹⁹—they quickly readjusted themselves to the new regime of the first Lancastrian king, Henry IV (1399–1413). For instance, John was listed among those Cheshire soldiers who backed Henry IV against the Scots in 1400; he was appointed a keeper of the Hundred of Macclesfield in 1400–1401; and he remained loyal during the Glyn Dŵr rising of 1403, after which he was entrusted with such important posts as those of sheriff of Cheshire and constable of Caernarvon castle.²⁰ In September 1403 John Mainwaring was nominated sheriff of Cheshire by Henry, Prince of Wales and Earl of Chester, and he was certainly in office as constable of Caernarvon by 1406.²¹ Further proof of his attachment to the Lancastrian government is afforded by the facts that he obtained the usual 'letters of protection' in February 1406, when he was about to command a royal campaign against the Welsh, and that in the following October he was granted 20 marks [£13 6s. 8d.] a year by Prince Henry.²² The latter document referred to him as an 'esquire'. Similarly, the employment of Randle Mainwaring on such matters as commissions of array for the Hundred of Northwich in 1403 and 1404, and a commission to arrest gangsters in 1407 indicate that he, too, had accepted and was acceptable to the new regime.²³ Several years were to elapse before he was again put on a commission, but in February 1433 Randle was appointed with other Cheshire gentlemen to arrest certain wrongdoers and send them to Chester castle, and in May and again in October 1436 and March 1438 Randle was included on similar commissions.²⁴ The terms of the last commissions instructed the panel to arrest one William de Poole and others and to bring them before the king 'to answer certain horrible things'. In the meantime, Randle Mainwaring had been among the dignitaries of the county who had attended a meeting of the royal council held on 3 March 1436 at Chester castle in connection with the grant of a subsidy to the king.²⁵ The council was presided over by Robert Frampton, a baron of the Exchequer, William Troutbeck, chamberlain of Chester, and William Chauntrell, serjeant-at-law and deputy for Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester.

The pattern of serving as tax officials, commissioners to raise forces, to arrest wrongdoers and so forth was continued by the succeeding members of the Mainwarings of Over Peover. Sir John Mainwaring I (*ob.* 1483) was one of those ordered to arrest William Venables of Ridley in May 1436 (Venables possibly eluded capture, since the orders had to be repeated two years later).²⁶ In June

¹⁹ *D.K.R.*, 36th Report, App. II, p. 317. For a recent discussion on the importance of Cheshire to Richard II see R. R. Davies. 'Richard II and the Principality of Chester 1397–9' in *The Reign of Richard II: Essays in Honour of May McKisack*, ed. F. R. H. Du Boulay and Caroline M. Barron, 1971, pp. 256–79.

²⁰ Cheshire Sheaf, vol. XVIII, 1920, p. 27, citing *P.R.O. Exch. Q.R., Miscell. (Army)*, 55/3; *D.K.R.*, 36th Report, App. II, pp. 312, 318.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 318.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 55, 532; *C.P.R.*, 1405–08, p. 355.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 1429–36, p. 277; 1436–41, p. 83; *D.K.R.*, 37th Report, App. II, pp. 231, 762.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 671; Earwaker, *East Cheshire*, I, p. 241.

²⁶ *D.K.R.*, 37th Report, App. II, pp. 231, 762.

1442 he headed the lists of collectors of the subsidy for the Hundred of Nantwich, and in 1445, 1448, 1451, 1452, 1457 and 1458 he was again appointed to look into breaches of the peace, and to arrest wrongdoers in Cheshire.²⁷ On the latter occasion the commissioners had to deal with a group of men from Adlington who had used threatening language to a certain Joan Pygot. In May 1457 Sir John Mainwaring, Sir John Bromley and John Dutton of Hatton had met at Chester to take notice of a declaration of bastardy. This was made by Janet, wife of a certain John Malpas, who stated when she was dying that her daughters Ellen and Katherine were not her husband's children.²⁸ Earlier, on 20 December 1452, Sir John had been included on an enquiry into the state of the manor and castle of Hawarden, Flintshire.²⁹

At this point we can, perhaps, conveniently deal with the most interesting and significant aspect of the career of Sir John I, namely the firm evidence of his political affiliations to the Lancastrian cause. He seems to have been associated with two prominent Lancastrian noblemen, Humphrey Stafford, Duke of Buckingham, and James Touchet, Lord Audley (Audley was killed at the battle of Bloreheath in 1459), and also with well-known Cheshire gentry of similar political persuasions, such as Sir Laurence Fitton of Gawsworth and John Troutbeck, who succeeded his father as chamberlain of Chester.

At an unknown date, but probably between 1438 and 1444, Sir John Mainwaring entered into an agreement to serve Humphrey Stafford, then Earl (and subsequently Duke) of Buckingham, in peace and war. Under the terms of the indenture, Sir John was to receive

'an annual fee of £10 to be coming out of his [Buckingham's] lordship of Rothwell in the County of Northampton at the terms of Easter and St. Michael, by equal portions, for the which the said earl hath withheld to him the said Sir John for term of life, to do him service before all other in peace and war; that is to wit, in peace to come, when he is commanded, to the said earl's presence, to all places on this side the sea: to sojourn and ride with him, with as many men and horses, more or fewer, as the said earl list to assign reasonably, after the degree and power of the said Sir John, for the which the same Sir John shall have such bouche of court [an allowance of victuals] and *lyve* [livery] for him, his said men and horses, during his time of demur in the presence of the said earl, with reasonable allowance of his costs for his coming and returning home again; and in case the said earl be ordained in any voyage of war on this side the see or beyond, the said Sir John shall be ready upon reasonable warning, to go with the said earl in the said voyage, with such number of men of arms and of archers as the said earl shall list [i.e. like] to assign or appoint according to his degree; for the which the said Sir John shall have for him, his said men of arms and

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 496, 497, 498, 499, 643.

²⁸ *Catalogue of Ancient Deeds*, vol. VI, c. 4166.

²⁹ *D.K.R.*, 37th Report, App. II, p. 499.

archers, such wages and rewards as the said earl shall take of our sovereign lord, or any other of his captains during the said voyage, with shipson and reshipson [outward and return passage] reasonable for him and them.'

[Spelling modernised]³⁰

This document is particularly important because it is a comparatively rare Cheshire illustration of the late medieval system of retainer, which is sometimes termed 'bastard feudalism', and which provided the basic means of raising a fighting force during the Wars of the Roses.³¹

A few years after he made this indenture, the name of Sir John Mainwaring was listed among the witnesses to a deed for the Duke of Buckingham, dated 1 April 1446.³² His fellow witnesses included Sir Laurence Fitton and John Troutbeck esquire. In the following August, Mainwaring and Fitton were again included as witnesses to a legal transaction referring to land in Caldy and Heswall, and in February 1455 Mainwaring and Troutbeck were given as witnesses to a charter of enfeoffment in favour of John Touchet, son and heir of James, Lord Audley.³³ In the meantime Sir John Mainwaring had, as we have already noted, served on several commissions—an indication that he was trusted by the government. The point is made specifically clear in the terms of commissions of *oyer and terminer*, issued in February and March 1460, to which he was appointed to deal with Yorkist supporters in Wales and the Marches.³⁴ Later that year, on 13 July (and four days after the Yorkist victory at Northampton), Mainwaring was instructed by royal warrant to hand over to Lord Stanley several prominent Yorkists, including Sir Thomas Haryngton of Lancashire, who had been imprisoned in Chester castle after the Yorkist rout at Ludlow in October 1459 and their subsequent attainder in parliament at Coventry called on 20 November.³⁵ On this occasion, Mainwaring was probably simply carrying out the orders of the victorious party. For the next few years he does not seem to have been employed on any commissions, which could be taken as a sign that he underwent some sort of political eclipse. However, by 1464 he had apparently accepted the new dynasty (the Yorkist house ruled England from 1461) and had, in turn, been accepted, for in June his name headed a commission to collect the subsidy in

³⁰ Text in D. & S. Lysons, *Magna Britannia*, 1810, vol. II, pt. 2, p. 751. Humphrey Stafford (1402–60) was known as Earl of Buckingham from October 1438 until 14 September 1444, when he was created duke. If the indenture with Sir John Mainwaring was made during the time when Stafford was earl and not duke, it must therefore be dated between 1438 and 1444. Although Buckingham's sympathies were Lancastrian, he tried to exert a moderating influence. In January 1454 he was said to have raised a force of some 2000 men each bearing his livery of the Staffordshire knot (G. E. Cokayne, *The Complete Peerage*, revised V. Gibbs, vol. II, pp. 388–89; *Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. S. Lee, vol. LIII, pp. 451–53).

³¹ See, for example, K. B. McFarlane, 'Bastard Feudalism', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, vol. XX, 1945; and 'The Wars of the Roses', the Raleigh Lecture, in *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 1964.

³² *D.K.R.*, 37th Report, App. II, p. 63.

³³ *Catalogue of Ancient Deeds*, vol. VI, c. 4680; *Calendar of Close Rolls*, 1454–61, p. 53.

³⁴ *C.P.R.*, 1452–61, pp. 562, 564.

³⁵ *D.K.R.*, 37th Report, App. II, p. 499. For the career of Sir Thomas Haryngton, see J. S. Roskell, *The Knights of the Shire for the County Palatine of Lancaster* (1377–1460), Chetham Society, vol. 96, N.S., 1937, pp. 179–186.

Nantwich Hundred, and in 1473 he was called a 'king's servant' when he was made master of the king's game in the royal parks of Blakemore and Cheswardine in Shropshire during the minority of George, son and heir of John, Earl of Shrewsbury.³⁶ Next year, in August 1474, the authorities included him on a commission to take a muster of archers near Chester preparatory to their leaving for service in Ireland.³⁷

Sir John was succeeded by his grandson, another John, who only enjoyed his estates for some twelve years (1483-95).³⁸ Although little has come to light about this member of the family, save for the fact that he served on the occasional commission, his own son and heir, yet another John, turned out to be a figure of more than local importance.

Sir John Mainwaring II succeeded his father in 1495 when he was twenty-four years old.³⁹ Although there is not a great amount of detailed evidence of his activities, there is sufficient to mark him out as a figure of some account. For example, in April 1497 John Mainwaring was one of several prominent Cheshire gentlemen who, in the name of the county, granted a subsidy of 1000 marks [£666 13s. 4d.] towards the war with Scotland.⁴⁰ Two months later, on 1 June 1497, as 'John Mainwaring esquire', he was included among the commissioners to collect the subsidy in the Hundred of Nantwich.⁴¹ At the turn of the century, Mainwaring was involved in a dispute about possession of part of the manor of Lower Withington, which resulted in success for him (1500-1501).⁴² Again described as 'John Mainwaring esquire' of Over Peover, he was named a collector of a subsidy for the Hundred of Northwich on 12 June 1502.⁴³ In October 1505 Mainwaring was appointed with Sir John Brereton, Ralph Birkenhead (the first Recorder of Chester) and others to find out which manors and lands in Cheshire belonging to the Lordship of Halton were not in the king's hands.⁴⁴

An important post came his way in 1506 when he was made sheriff of Flintshire.⁴⁵ On 16 July John Mainwaring esquire and a group of trustees had to give recognisance to the chamberlain of Chester for his (Mainwaring's) satisfactory behaviour in office.⁴⁶ Three years later, on 6 June 1509, now described in the records as a 'squire of the body', he was again named as sheriff of Flintshire.⁴⁷ In the meantime, in May 1508, John and others had given an undertaking in a

³⁶ *D.K.R.*, 37th Report, App. II, pp. 499, 795; *C.P.R.*, 1467-77, p. 402.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 491.

³⁸ Ormerod, vol. I, p. 480; *Visitation of Cheshire*, 1580, p. 165; *D.K.R.*, 37th Report, App. II, p. 500.

³⁹ The inquisition *post mortem* on John Mainwaring, held at Chester on 3 September 1495, stated that he died on 8 July previously and that his son and heir was John Mainwaring esquire 'aged 24 years and more' (Mainwaring Charters in The John Rylands Library, see Fawtier, 'Hand List', p. 26, Mainwaring Family, no. 298).

⁴⁰ *D.K.R.*, 37th Report, App. II, p. 694.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 796.

⁴² Ormerod, vol. III, p. 720.

⁴³ *D.K.R.*, 37th Report, App. II, p. 568.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 502.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

bond of £100 that Charles Mainwaring esquire and his son, James, and their followers should behave peaceably towards Thomas Venables esquire, of Kinderton.⁴⁸ Between March and December 1511 he managed to secure the office of bailiff of the lordship of Drakelow and Rudheath for life, when he was again referred to as 'squire of the body' to the king.⁴⁹ In April 1511 he was included on a commission of array for the Hundred of Northwich and in June he, in company with other members of the Mainwaring family, promised to keep the peace towards Robert Fouleshurst.⁵⁰ The 'feud' with the Fouleshursts did not, apparently, end with this undertaking for, on 16 January 1515, another bond, now in £1000, was entered into, by which Mainwaring and his sureties bound themselves to behave peaceably towards Edward, son and heir of Robert Fouleshurst.⁵¹ Meantime, in 1512, Lord Audley had granted Mainwaring the post of constable of Heighley, Staffordshire, and in the same year he had been made steward of Nantwich.⁵² The culmination of his career came in 1513, when he took part in the French campaign, for which services he was knighted.⁵³

In all their activities, administrative and judicial, political and military, social and religious, the Mainwarings of Over Peover were closely associated with their fellow members of the Cheshire gentry. Frequently they are found named as trustees or feoffees, as sureties for the good behaviour of their friends, and as witnesses to legal transactions. Thus, for instance, John and Randle Mainwaring stood surety in £20 on behalf of John de Woodhouse, dean of the collegiate church of St. John the Baptist, Chester, in September 1394, and they were both executors of Sir Robert Grosvenor and, as such, were responsible to the Crown for arrears due from his tenure of office as sheriff of the county.⁵⁴ In December 1403 John and Randle, together with William Venables of Kinderton, were acting as trustees in a marriage settlement involving the family of Spurstow.⁵⁵ Randle Mainwaring and William Venables were brothers-in-law and in 1408 they were apparently at loggerheads with a number of prominent citizens of Chester, including the mayor of the day, John Ewloe.⁵⁶ The trouble was serious enough for both parties to give heavy surety in 1000 marks [£666 13s. 4d.] to the Prince of Wales, as Earl of Chester, for their future behaviour. This is just

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 502.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 39th Report, 1878, pp. 183, 184.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 184, 280.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

⁵² Fawtier, 'Hand List', p. 22, Heley, no. 323; *ib.*, p. 29, Nantwich, no. 324.

⁵³ *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII, Foreign and Domestic*, ed. J. S. Brewer, rev. R. H. Brodie (H.M.S.O.), vol. I, pt. 2 (1513) no. 2301. Sir John appears in a list of 'knights made at Tournay in the church after the king came from mass, under his banner in the church', 25 Sept. 1513. An earlier reference, dated June 1513, states that Mainwaring took 100 men with him when he accompanied nobles to Calais with the king in the division known as 'the king's ward'. Serving with him were Ralph Egerton of Ridley, Cheshire, who was the standard bearer, Sir Thomas Boleyn, and a Derbyshire squire Godfrey Foljambe (*ib.*, no. 2053). Most likely there were two John Mainwarings who fought in this war, for reference is made to John Mainwaring of Ightfield, Shropshire, who was knighted at Lille in 1513 (*ib.*, no. 2392). The latter was J.P. for Shropshire from February until 18 October 1514 (*ib.*, App. 26, p. 1543).

⁵⁴ *D.K.R.*, 36th Report, App. II, pp. 316-318.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 318.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 493.

one of several cases where the Mainwarings and their contemporaries were engaged in feuding. Another one occurred in April 1421, when Randle and his son John gave a recognisance or surety in £93 6s. 8d. to Sir John Savage, and a few years later—at an unspecified date between 1427 and 1429—Randle Mainwaring 'of Over Peover' and Sir Edward Weaver (for whom Randle had acted as attorney in 1442, when Weaver went to France in the retinue of Queen Katherine) were accused of granting 'liveries' of ruby gowns to their followers.⁵⁷ Probably one of the best illustrations of the 'standing' of the family in the early fifteenth century was the recorded presence of Randle Mainwaring and his son, John, in Macclesfield church on 4 April 1412, in company with the sheriff, Sir Laurence de Merbury, and over fifty other county notabilities at a grand ceremony of reconciliation between Sir Thomas Grosvenor and Robert de Legh of Adlington.⁵⁸

The phenomenon of feuding between individual gentry or groups of gentry and the attempts to curb such activities, by means of the taking of mutual pledges or recognisances, continued throughout the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Not unexpectedly, we find later members of the Mainwaring family very much involved in feuding and recognisance-making. In or about 1428 John Mainwaring 'gentleman' of Over Peover (later Sir John I) was accused with several other men, of breaking the peace and of engaging in 'tussles'.⁵⁹ Four years later, by which time he had become a knight, he was one of a group who made a recognisance, on 16 December 1432, to Thomas de Legh of Baguley; and two days afterwards he was one of the pledges that Ralph de Grosvenor would behave peacefully towards George de Weaver and Richard de Wheelock.⁶⁰ On 14 December 1434 similar undertakings were made, this time on behalf of Sir John Mainwaring, by a group of men who included Sir Laurence Warren of Poynton, the grandfather of Sir John's second wife.⁶¹ The very next day, Mainwaring jointly pledged the good behaviour of Hamo and William le Massey; and again, in October 1437, he likewise acted on behalf of Hugh Dutton.⁶² Early in 1442, on 10 January, Sir John and others gave an undertaking in a surety of £40 that William Brereton esquire and William Calthorn of Chester would abide by the decision of William Bulkeley, vice-justice of Chester, in their dispute with John Bruyn of Tarvin.⁶³

John Mainwaring esquire II (c. 1450–95), the grandson of Sir John I, and his own son, Sir John II, who died in 1516, also figured with their fellow gentry in recognisances and such like documents.

It is, perhaps, through intermarriage of the Mainwarings with other gentry families that we can best see the process at work whereby a tightly-knit social nexus was created at this time. One interesting point is that the Mainwarings tended, in the fifteenth century, to marry into local families rather than into ones

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 37th Report, pp. 493, 774; *Cheshire Sheaf*, vol. XVIII, p. 98.

⁵⁸ *Earwaker*, East Cheshire, vol. 2, pp. 487–488.

⁵⁹ Ormerod, vol. I, p. 482 n.

⁶⁰ *D.K.R.*, 37th Report, App. II, pp. 325, 494.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 495.

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 233, 495.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 496.

far removed from Cheshire. The exception to this was John Mainwaring esquire I, whose wife Margaret was the daughter of a Norfolk landowner, Sir John Stafford of Wickham. Yet Margaret had Cheshire connections for, by her first marriage, she had been the wife of Sir John Warren of Poynton.⁶⁴ The marriage of Randle Mainwaring brought association with two local gentry families, directly with that of Venables of Kinderton and indirectly with that of Bulkeley of Cheadle.⁶⁵ Randle had a large family by his wife Margery and, in addition, he had several illegitimate children. Here we need only be concerned with the more significant members of the legitimate line. His eldest son and heir, John, married twice.⁶⁶ John's two brothers were to found separate families: William established the Mainwarings of Ightfield, Shropshire, by his marriage to Margaret Warren of Ightfield; and Randle founded the Kermincham branch of the Mainwarings.⁶⁷ One of their sisters, Ellen, linked the family with the Fittons of Gawsworth by her marriage to Thomas Fitton,⁶⁸ and it was their son, Sir Thomas, who led a large retinue of some sixty-eight Cheshire men to fight on the Lancastrian side at Bloreheath on 23 September 1459. Other marriages contracted by the Mainwarings of Over Peover in the late fifteenth century gave them connections with such families as Botiller (or Butler) of Bewsey near Warrington, Warburton of Arley, Legh of Adlington, Honford or Handforth of Handforth, and Starkey of Wrenbury.⁶⁹ In the early sixteenth century intermarriage linked the Mainwarings with the important families of Brereton of Malpas, Leycester of Toft, and Ashton of Ashton-upon-Mersey. Randle, eldest son of Sir John Mainwaring II, married first Elizabeth, the daughter of Sir Randle Brereton of Malpas, and secondly, Elizabeth, the daughter of Sir Ralph Leycester of Toft; whereas his own sister, Joan, married Sir Thomas Ashton of Ashton-upon-Mersey in 1512.⁷⁰ Occasionally there is evidence of a child marriage arranged by the parents. Such was the case in 1436, when on 27 March, a contract was made between Sir John Mainwaring and Sir Geoffrey Warburton on behalf of Elizabeth, daughter of Sir John, and Piers, son of Sir Geoffrey. The agreement provided for the repayment of money to Sir John should Piers refuse to marry Elizabeth when he had reached fourteen years of age.⁷¹ The contract was, in fact, broken.

⁶⁴ Ormerod, vol. I, p. 480; *Visitation of Cheshire 1580*, p. 165.

⁶⁵ Ormerod, *loc. cit.*

⁶⁶ According to Ormerod (vol. I, p. 481; vol. III, p. 685) his first wife was Margaret, the daughter of John Delves of Doddington, but according to the *Visitation* (p. 165) she was the daughter of Lord Audley. His second wife was probably Joan, the daughter of John Warren of Poynton.

⁶⁷ Ormerod, vol. I, p. 481; *Visitation*, *loc. cit.*

⁶⁸ Ormerod, *loc. cit.*; Earwaker, *East Cheshire*, vol. I, pp. 219, 564.

⁶⁹ Ormerod, vol. I, pp. 479-82.

⁷⁰ Several marriage covenants have survived, for which see Fawtier, 'Hand List', pp. 25-26, Mainwaring (Family), nos. 203 (John, son of Ralph de Davenport to Joan, daughter of Randle Mainwaring, 1411), 238 (Piers, son of Geoffrey Warburton knight to Elizabeth, daughter of John Mainwaring knight, 1436), 274 (William Mainwaring, son of Hankyn [little John] Mainwaring, to Ellen, daughter of John Butler knight, 1444), and 325 (Sir Thomas Ashton to Joan Mainwaring, sister of Sir John the second, 1516).

⁷¹ A detailed settlement involving lands and property of the manor of Aston-next-Budworth was drawn up in English on 27 March 1436 (Fawtier, 'Hand List', p. 14, Aston-juxta-Budworth, no 239).

Although intimate details are lacking to give a really accurate idea of their personal thoughts and behaviour, yet there are one or two fragments of evidence worth recording. As landholders they enjoyed the rights of presentation to some churches in Cheshire. For example, in 1404 and 1407 John Mainwaring successively presented Hugh de Toft and Master John Fitton as rectors of Stockport, and in 1418 Randle Mainwaring presented John Blomer to Cheadle; whereas about a century later, the Robert Mainwaring, rector of Alderley from 1511 to 1542, was probably a brother of Sir John Mainwaring II, and the Nicholas Mainwaring, 'clerk', whose will was proved on 9 June 1537 was possibly a younger son of Sir John.⁷² In the tombs in the fine Mainwaring chapel at Over Peover to John Mainwaring esquire I and his wife, Margaret, and to his brother, Randle and his wife, Margery, we have a good indication of their social standing. Both men are depicted in plate armour, each wearing the Lancastrian collar of SS, with their heads resting on an ass's head—the family crest. The tomb chest and effigies of Randle and his wife are housed in a recess and on the wall above is a fine ogee decoration.⁷³ In addition to their tomb chest and effigies, Randle and his wife were also commemorated by stained glass. Unfortunately the glass has now disappeared, but it was seen by one of the Randle Holmes, who noted down the following inscription:

*Orate pro bono statu Randulphi Mainwaringe
armigero et Margere uxoris ejus cum pueris
suis* [Pray for the good estate of Randle Mainwaring esquire and his wife Margery with their sons].⁷⁴

An interesting piece of evidence, one which indicates social standing, religious piety and contact beyond the confines of Cheshire, is the record that in 1471 Sir John Mainwaring I was Master of the Guild of the Blessed Virgin Mary at Lichfield.⁷⁵ It is a pity that only one will has so far come to light of the fifteenth-century and early sixteenth-century Mainwarings, but that of Sir John II is full of interest. This document, drawn up on 4 March 1516, was proved in the following November. Its clauses suggest a man of considerable wealth, worldly wisdom, sense of responsibility and customary piety. He could afford to leave his elder daughter 300 marks [£200] and his younger daughter 200 marks [£133 6s. 8d.] provided they both married 'by the advice of their mother, their brother, Randle, and other good friends'; he did not forget his illegitimate brother, Charles, to whom he left 26s. 8d., nor his servants, who were to receive a year's wages. Furthermore, Sir John made several pious bequests, such as ten shillings to the church of Baddiley 'for forgotten tithes', a black gown to the church of

⁷² Ormerod, vol. III, 569, 630, 799. For the will of Nicholas Mainwaring, see *Cheshire Sheaf*, vol. XVIII, 1920, p. 75.

⁷³ Raymond Richards, *Old Cheshire Churches*, 1947, pp. 267, 268, 270; illustrations, plates 253, 256.

⁷⁴ Ormerod, vol. III, p. 358.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 481 n.

Over Peover for a cope, 13s. 4d. for a Mass priest there, and £20 towards the building of the steeple [i.e. the tower] and 20s. for the glazing of the window when the steeple was completed. He also left a damask gown to the church at Acton and 6s. 8d. to the church at Wrenbury. His will refers to lands in Cheshire, Staffordshire, Shropshire and the city of Chester.⁷⁶ At Over Peover he, his wife and his family are commemorated by an incised alabaster slab.⁷⁷

Sir John's widow lived until 1529. She was Katherine, daughter of John Honford or Handforth of Handforth. He was succeeded by his son Randle, who died heirless in 1557, whereupon the estates passed to Randle's brother, Philip.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Fawtier, 'Hand List', p. 26, Mainwaring (Family), no. 328.

⁷⁷ Richards, *op. cit.*, p. 269.

⁷⁸ Ormerod, vol. I, p. 480; *Visitation of Cheshire 1580*, p. 165.