

## HUGH DE CRESSINGHAM

BY NORMAN G. BRETT-JAMES, M.A., B.LITT., F.S.A.,  
Chairman of Council and Honorary Editor

THERE are, from time to time, brief notes in Evans' *History of Hendon*, which suggest further investigation, such as is possible to-day, with the greater opportunities for easy research which we enjoy. Here is one such note:—"A certain Hugh de Cressingham died seized of property in 1296 . . . it is impracticable to trace the property further; perhaps it forms part of Wyldes, granted by Henry VI to Eton College," and there are added a few lines from the *Inquisitiones post mortem* for 16th October, 25 Edward I, which is, incidentally, 1297, and not, as Evans says, 1296.

This Hugh de Cressingham, so briefly related to Hendon, is an important historical figure, with a tragic and startling end, one whom we may be glad to add to Hendon's roll of fame, if not of honour.

Hugh de Cressingham came presumably from one of the two villages of that name in South-west Norfolk, near Watton and on the river Wissey. In Great Cressingham, with a population of perhaps 500, there is a Church dedicated to St. Michael, with two early piscinæ, and with a holy water stoup in the porch.

### HIS NORFOLK ORIGIN.

There is also some trace of an ancient priory farm-house in the larger parish, while in Little Cressingham, only half the size of Great Cressingham, there is a Church of St. Andrew, with the doorway and steps to the rood loft in a good state of preservation. The place of his origin, as suggested by his name, is almost certainly one of these two Norfolk villages. Another small piece of evidence of his Norfolk origin is the fact that he was a witness to the partition of the lands of John de Vallibus, a Norfolk tenant-in-chief, who died in 1288, leaving a large estate, including the property of Blanchappelton in London. (*Cal. of Close Rolls*, Edward I, 1279-88, p. 530, 10 Feb., 1288, Westminster.)

Further evidence is suggested by the fact that his constant colleague, William de Ormesby, who shared his unpopularity in Scotland, but not his tragic fate, was a Norfolk man, and held property in Ormsby in East Norfolk, three miles from Caistor.

If we accept the suggestion that Hugh was a Norfolk man, then he was of the same county as Falstaff, whose congenital stoutness he anticipated. His stately proportions, to which further relation will be made, figure in his history as did Falstaff's, but our researches have failed to discover any such joviality as characterised Falstaff.

#### HIS EARLY OFFICIAL LIFE.

The date of his birth we do not at present know, but we find him in 1273 on 10th May, when he would probably be as old as 23, one of a group of government officials, charging William de Benges with the death of Geoffrey de Askeby during the disturbances in the reign of Henry III, associated with the rising of the Barons and the career of Simon de Montfort (*D.N.B.*). In 1282 he was a Clerk in the Exchequer, and was employed in the matter of wrongs done to the Abbot of Ramsey, presumably during the troubled reign of Henry, when there was so much disorder in Hendon.

He was by this time a Clerk in Holy Orders and was given the parsonage, of the village of Chalk in Kent, by the Prior of the Benedictine Convent of Norwich, where possibly he obtained his early training. Like so many of his time he was a pluralist, and held the Rectory of Doddington in Kent, and that of Ruddesby, probably Rudby in Cleveland, as well as several prebendal stalls (*D.N.B.*).

#### STEWARD TO ELEANOR OF CASTILE.

In 1290 he was appointed to hold an inquisition re the lands of a minor, William Pippard, living in Middlesex (*Cal. of Close Rolls*, Ed. I, 1288-1296, p. 70, 12th February, 1290), and at this time, and probably for some years earlier, he was Steward to Eleanor of Castile, the heroic queen of Edward I, for whose benefit the Hendon sub-manor of Hodford was later given to the Monks of Westminster to say perpetual masses for her soul. For Queen Eleanor he was also Bailiff of the Barony of Haverford in South Wales. It was at the end of 1290 in November that Eleanor died of a low fever at Harby, near Grantham, an irreparable loss to Edward I, who erected a fair cross, a miracle of sculptor's and mason's work, on every spot where her beloved corpse had rested on its final sad journey to the Abbey.

The death of the Queen left Hugh without any official post

save his clerkship in the Exchequer and his various prebends and livings, but in 1292 he was appointed auditor of the debts due to Henry III, who had been dead for 20 years. He seems to have carried out his duties to the King's satisfaction, for on 28th August, 1292, an order was sent to the Keeper of the royal forest of Salcy, instructing him to cause Hugh de Cressingham to have from that forest 6 bucks of the King's gift (*Cal. Close Rolls*, 1288-96, p. 241).

These two posts held by Cressingham were intimately associated with the life of the court, and are a clear indication of the regard in which Hugh was held by the King.

#### AN ITINERANT JUSTICE.

His progress was now rapid, for in the same year we find him serving as a Justice in Eyre for the Northern Counties. On 10th April, 1292, Hugh was appointed with William Ormesby and others as Justices in Eyre for Lancaster, Westmorland and Cumberland, with special injunctions to hear and determine complaints against the King's bailiffs and ministers (*Cal. Patent Rolls*, 1281-92, p. 485). Four days later, a writ of summons was sent from the King at Stepney to the Sheriff of Lancaster for an eyre to be holden in the Octave of Holy Trinity before the same Justices (*Cal. Close Rolls*, 1288-96, p. 261). On 20th August, 1292, a writ was sent from the King, who had come as far north as Pickering in his advance towards Scotland, instructing the Sheriff of Northumberland to arrange for an eyre for common pleas to be holden before the same Itinerant Justices (*Cal. Close Rolls*, 1288-96, p. 272; *Cal. Patent Rolls*, 1281-96, p. 507).

The Jurisdiction of Justices in Eyre has a conspicuous place among the institutions reformed by Edward I, and a brief explanation of the position before he came to the throne is necessary. In the 18th article of the Great Charter it was agreed that two Justices should visit each county twice a year for the purpose of holding assizes of *Mort d'ancestor*, *novel disseisin* and *darrein presentment*, thus modifying somewhat the previous arrangements for Itinerant Justices and their duties of general gaol delivery, dating from the reign of Henry II. In Henry III's reign these eyres were very frequent and active, and brought a large revenue to the Crown, thus turning a beneficent measure into a means of oppression. The Provisions of Oxford contain evidence of the unpopularity of these courts,

and in the first year of Edward I's reign, before he returned from Palestine, his ministers discontinued the work of the Itinerant Justices. In the statute of Rageman (and the second statute of Westminster, 1285) Edward revised the system of eyres, and in 1292 he divided the whole country into four circuits, each with two Justices. In the development of the work of these Itinerant Justices, de Cressingham played an important part.

#### DISPUTED SUCCESSION IN SCOTLAND.

The years of Cressingham's promotion were those in which Edward was busy with affairs in Scotland, where the death at sea of the Maid of Norway had caused a vacancy in the throne. For the next five years Cressingham is playing a very critical part both in Northern England and in Southern Scotland.

Edward I called the magnates of Scotland together to Norham Castle, that magnificent ruin above the banks of Tweed, which has been so splendidly restored by H.M. Office of Works. In Norham Church, Roger Brabazon, Chief Justice of England, and incidentally a considerable landowner in Hampstead, the adjoining parish and manor to Hendon, demanded from the Scots fealty to Edward, and after some delay this was accorded. From August, 1291, until November, 1292, a Court was sitting at Berwick-on-Tweed, then belonging to the Scots and the one great centre of commerce in that poor and disorderly land.

Edward fairly and wisely allotted the crown to John Balliol who did homage to him for his Kingdom, and on 3rd December Edward was at Roxburgh, in a castle perched up on high ground between the Teviot and the Tweed, now a heap of ruins, the details of whose plan can hardly be distinguished to-day. He was at the height of his power, having annexed Wales and checked the unruly Lords Marchers, having seemingly checked the Barons and kept in order the aggressive churchmen. He had reformed much of the legal system of the Country, acted with some success on the Continent, and was now overlord of Scotland. Everything might have seemed well, but with the death of his Queen his troubles had really begun. Soon afterwards he lost his Mother, his Chancellor Burnell, Bishop Kirkby, his shrewd financier, and Archbishop Peckham, meddlesome but bustling and business-like. He was faced with a generation of lesser men of the type of Cressingham and Ormesby, men of meaner stature, who provided a marked

contrast to his stern figure in its increasing loneliness, as difficulties gathered round him, both at home and abroad, in his declining years.

On 3rd November, 1292, Cressingham and Ormesby were at Carlisle, holding the inquests for Cumberland, and at the beginning of the next year they were holding the Northumbrian inquests at Newcastle-on-Tyne.

Edward's attempt at limiting the jurisdiction of the nobles by means of his writ *Quo Warranto* found a ready supporter in Cressingham, and no doubt many of the efforts which Hugh made to deprive lords and towns in the North of England of their ancient rights were approved if not suggested by Edward. It would be in this connection that the Lord of Millom Castle, one of the Huddlestone family, proved his title before Hugh de Cressingham in 1292, no doubt at Carlisle (*Lanercost Chronicle*, p. 147, *Hist. Doc. Scotland*, I, pp. 365 and 390).

#### EDWARD'S PERSONAL REWARD FOR CRESSINGHAM

From Roxburgh, where we left Edward in December, 1292, resting from his exertions in connection with the Scottish succession, he issued an order to the Sheriff of Westmoreland to cause a coroner to be elected for that County in place of Thomas de Piking, whom the King had removed from office because he was attending the King's affairs before Hugh de Cressingham and his fellows, Justices in Eyre for the County of Cumberland. It would be necessary for the Sheriff of Northumberland to act similarly in the next eyre to be held at Newcastle, for its affairs could not conveniently be expedited without his presence, as the King learned from the testimony of Hugh de Cressingham (*Cal. Close Rolls*, 1288-96, p. 276).

In February, 1293, the King sent a message from Kirkby in Ashfield to the Sheriff of York, enclosing a writ of summons of an eyre for common pleas to be holden at York in the quinzaine of Holy Trinity before Hugh de Cressingham, William de Ormesby and others, and on the same day, 19th February, Hugh, *inter alios*, was excused attendance at the eyre to be held in the County of Kent (*ib.* pp. 310, 311).

On 6th June, 1293, the King sent a message to the Keeper of the Forest of Galtris, ordering him to cause Hugh de Cressingham to have in that forest 6 bucks for the 6 that the King on 20th August in the 20th year of his reign had ordered the Keeper of the Forest of Salcey to send to Hugh as a gift from the

King. It appeared that Hugh had never received the present and the writ for the bucks had been returned to the King still sealed, so Hugh was to have ten bucks in all, instead of six (*Cal. Close Rolls*, ib. p. 286).

#### JUDICIAL ACTIVITY IN THE NORTH.

Hugh de Cressingham was during this time actively engaged in judicial work in Northumberland, Cumberland, Lancaster, Westmoreland and York, and on 2nd July, 1293, an order was sent to him and Ormesby telling them to restore to the men of Carlisle their city, if the Justices had taken it into the King's hands, solely because the men of the City did not produce to the Justices the charter of liberties granted by the King's progenitors. As a matter of fact the reason for the non-production of the charter was its destruction in a recent city fire. The King stated that he was glad to return the city to the custody of the citizens (*Cal. Close Rolls*, ib. p. 292).

Evidently Cressingham was carrying the King's legality to an extreme limit, and was showing the same desire to trample on rights and privileges which was to have so disastrous a result for him in Scotland.

In the same month an order was sent to him as to other Justices in other counties to the effect that in writs of *Quo Warranto* limitations were to be made in the courts thereof of the time of Richard I (ib., p. 294). Cressingham was at this time acting for the King at York, and it is of great interest to realise that in this same year of 1293 John Balliol, though King of Scotland, was more than once summoned to appear before the Justices in Eyre at York. Had he obeyed the summons, he would have had to plead before Cressingham and Ormesby.

Two years of great activity in judicial work in the north now followed for Cressingham. As Itinerant Justice for Northumberland he confiscated the liberties and fermes of the Earl of March because he did not appear at his summons, but on 20th July the King sent an order from Canterbury that the estates were to be returned (ib., p. 295). In the next month an order came to Cressingham from the King at Odiham to cause Walter de Cambhon to be released from the prison wherein he was detained, for a conviction for trespass established before the said Hugh and his fellows, last Justices in eyre in the County of Northumberland. This was to be done provided that Walter

found security for the 200 marks which Hugh had fined him for the King's benefit because of the said trespass (*ib.*, p. 297).

A further instance of Hugh's zeal, which seems again to have outrun discretion, is given later in the year, when the King sends from Westminster on 8th December to the Justices at York (including of course Hugh) ordering them to withdraw the fine of 100 marks inflicted on Gerard Archdeacon of Richmond for not admitting a suitable parson to Great Langton (*Cal. Close Rolls*, 1288-96, p. 337).

Two days later, on 10th December, there is an order from the King at Carlisle, that the fine is to be withdrawn against John, Bishop of Carlisle, in relation to four messuages and 82 acres of ground and a mill in the suburbs of Carlisle and Dalston, to which Hugh de Cressingham seems to have thought that the King had some claim (*ib.*, p. 338).

In 1294 there are six records of similar doings of Cressingham and Ormesby in the Northern Counties. On 7th June they and their colleagues were ordered not to molest John de Twenge, against whom a charge had been levied in the eyre of York for the death of Roger Colstan. De Twenge was pardoned by the King's orders, and he must have been a relative of Sir Marmaduke de Twenge who subsequently escaped from the battle of Cambuskenneth, and held Stirling Castle against Wallace (*ib.*, p. 350). On 12th June a message was sent to Cressingham from Westminster ordering him to prorogue the pleas at York. Another example of Cressingham's high-handed action is supplied by an order from the King at Fareham on 4th August sent to the Sheriff of Lancaster to return the liberties which de Cressingham had taken away from the town in connection with the fair and market held there. These corresponded with those held at Northampton, and were quite in order (*ib.*, p. 361).

In spite of his attempts to insist on the King's rights, or perhaps because of them, Cressingham still gave satisfaction to Edward, and on 8th August instructions were sent from Portsmouth to the Keeper of the Forest of Wauberge to give Hugh six more bucks (*ib.*, p. 362).

He still continued his severe measures in the North and had confiscated for the King's benefit the goods of one William Beaumont. On 3rd September the King sent a message from Westminster to York that the goods were to be returned, as William was about to set out on the King's business in Gascony

and the King wished to do him a favour (*ib.*, p. 370). Beaumont may well have been some relative of Louis of Beaumont, the well-known illiterate Bishop of Durham in 1317 and his brother, Henry. Edward was being treated by Philip of France in much the same way as he himself was treating Balliol, as a subservient vassal and not as an independent, and he was having considerable difficulty in Gascony to satisfy Philip's demands.

On 12th October Hugh sent a report to the King at Westminster that the property of Richard le Fraunceys of Westmorland, which had been confiscated because he was accused of harbouring felons, might be returned as the charge was apparently unfounded (*ib.*, p. 371).

#### DE CRESSINGHAM AND WALES.

King Edward, meanwhile, was getting more involved in trouble, as, in addition to his anxieties abroad and the growing disaffection among nobles and clergy at home, Scotland was becoming restive under King John, and Wales was not entirely settled. It was in connection with Wales that de Cressingham's new activity occurred. On 23rd April, 1295, the King, who was trying to solve his Welsh problems for good and all, ordered Hugh to take the 36 Welsh hostages who had been accepted for the good behaviour of the principality, and deliver them to Reginald de Grey, Justice of Chester, for him to hand over to the Justice of Shropshire at Shrewsbury (*ib.*, p. 410).

Two more confiscations by de Cressingham should here be mentioned. One concerned a certain John de Lek Paynel, suspected of the murder of Ralph Paynel. Hugh had confiscated his lands but the King on 23rd August, 1295, instructed him to restore them as the suspect had been pardoned (*ib.*, p. 422).

The second confiscation was ordered to be made good in the same month and concerned 52 acres of land in Bamburgh, Northumberland, which Cressingham had confiscated from William, son of William the Coroner. Forty-five of the acres were ordered to be returned (*ib.*, p. 424).

It is difficult not to see in these actions of de Cressingham that high-handed and ruthless method of administration which made him so hated both in England and Scotland. Although Edward had on some occasions to restore property confiscated in his name, in other instances he was glad to avail himself of



some of the rights secured for him by the efforts of de Cressingham. On 24th September, 1295, there is a record in the *Calendar of Charter Rolls* (Vol. II) to the effect that "whereas the King lately recovered in his court before Hugh de Cressingham and his fellows, Justices in Eyre in Lancashire, from the Abbot of Furneys the Sheriff's town in Furneys, which is worth by the year 6s. 8d. and also recovered from the Prior of Durham wreck of the sea in Litham, and also recovered from the Prior of Kertmel wreck of the sea and waif in Kertmel and also recovered from Nicholas Blundel wreck of the sea in his manors in Aymulvedale," he decided to give to Edmund, Earl of Lancaster, the King's brother, the said wreck and waif.

#### DE CRESSINGHAM AND SCOTLAND.

Meantime Edward's own high-handed action with Balliol had produced in Scotland the beginnings of a national spirit, which was after a few years of despair to unite all parties in their antagonism to England, a hostility which was to make the borders unsafe for two-and-a-half centuries, and an alliance with France which was to be Scotland's dominant policy. Balliol quite naturally refused to attend English Courts of Justice, to join Edward in his attack on France, or to surrender the border fortresses to the English, and so early in 1296 Edward marched into Scotland. Immediately after a pious pause at Easter, Carlisle was saved from a threatened raid by seven Scottish earls, and Berwick, which had massacred its English merchants, was captured and its inhabitants ruthlessly put to the sword for nearly two days.

Edward then advanced against Dunbar, but found the castle held by the Scots, though its lord, the Earl of March, was in Edward's army. This was the same earl whose Northumbrian property had been confiscated by Hugh de Cressingham, but returned by Edward's orders. In the ensuing battle of Dunbar the English won a complete victory, the Scots scattering "swifter than smoke," and the castle was surrendered. Edward captured Roxburgh, Edinburgh and Stirling with consummate ease from the demoralised Scots, Balliol made an abject surrender and the country was swept as far north as Elgin. Edward then marched back, sent the stone of destiny from Scone to Westminster Abbey, and summoned 2,000 notables of Scotland to do homage at Berwick. Few names of importance were absent from this Ragman Roll, as it was called.

On 22nd August, 1296, Cressingham and Ormesby received the reward of their faithful if somewhat ruthless service to the King. They were summoned to meet the King at Berwick and were appointed respectively Treasurer and Justiciar of Scotland, under Warenne as Warden. Balliol was taken south with Edward, who left behind him a nation that for the moment at least had ceased to be a nation. During the preceding months of 1296 de Cressingham had not been idle. He had sent information to Edward which induced him to send an order on 10th February from Conway to the Bishop of Bath and Wells, Treasurer of England, for all the sheriffs to come to the exchequer and furnish lists of all knights worth 40s. and over, and bid them come to the King's service (*ib.*, p. 439). He also deprived a clerk named John de Levynton of all his lands for harbouring a felon, but the culprit had purged himself before the Archbishop of Canterbury, and so the King, who was in Northumberland, sent an order for his release to the Sheriff of York (*ib.*, 475).

In the autumn of 1296 Edward was in the South of England preparing for his campaign in Flanders, and he had given strict injunctions to Cressingham and Ormesby to exact fealty and homage from all tenants-in-chief, and to drive into exile all who refused. Scotland was to be taught the meaning of a military occupation, and Cressingham carried out his instructions with more than needed vigour.

On 21st May, 1297, Hugh was in attendance on the King at Portsmouth, having left Scotland to attend a Parliament in London along with de Warenne. They left Ormesby to carry on single-handed and bear the brunt of the work and thus incur more than his share of odium (*Cal. Close Rolls, 1296-1362*, p. 107).

Three days later a message was sent to Patrick, Earl of March, ordering him to join Hugh de Cressingham, who had an important message for him from the King (*ib.*, p. 80). Edward was especially devoted to the Church of St. John of Beverley, and had arranged that a sum of money should be sent each year from Berwick for its support. Accordingly on 20th July, 1297, instructions were sent to de Cressingham to dispatch arrears amounting to £40 from Berwick to Beverley (*Cal. Close Rolls, 1296-1302*, p. 41). The next day he was instructed to pay over a sum of £179 to Hugh de Lawther, late Sheriff of Edinburgh.

## WALLACE'S RISING.

During the short year in which he was actively employed as Treasurer of Scotland, Cressingham succeeded in rousing the Scots to a state of fury. Both he and Ormesby treated Scotland as a conquered country and by outlawry and imprisonment exasperated the people against the English. Not only nobles like Bruce the younger, but Knights like Wallace, who had not signed the Ragman Roll, and common people as well, soon made common cause against the tyranny of the invaders.

Cressingham was almost as unpopular in England as he was across the border, being regarded by his fellow countrymen as a "worthless and unstable man, swollen with arrogance and wholly given to avarice." The many instances of restoration of lands which he had confiscated and of cancelling of fines which he had inflicted show his unfair behaviour as a Justice and bear out this contemporary estimate of his rapacity.

Wallace's rising was as successful as it was unexpected. He soon set the country in a blaze, captured castle after castle and put to the sword all the English whom he captured. Fugitives came across the border with tales of horror and bloodshed, revealing the unwelcome news that the country which had apparently been cowed was united under a worthy champion against the tyranny of Cressingham and Ormesby.

Part of the English collapse was due to the slackness of de Warenne, who found it unpleasant to live in the bleak climate of Scotland and so had left too much to his subordinates. He was ordered to march northwards and put down the rebellion. After some initial successes he advanced towards Stirling, the gateway to the Highlands. Meantime Ormesby had endeavoured to stem the tide of popular revolt but he had been defeated by Wallace at Scone, escaping with his life, but with the loss of all his possessions.

## BERWICK AND CAMBUSKENNETH.

Cressingham had a great deal on his conscience, for, in addition to his severity and cruelty which had alienated the Scots and his rapacity which had infuriated them, he had kept back money intended for the repair of the fortifications of Berwick.

It had been agreed that stone should be added for safety to the existing earthworks round the town, but he had neglected to see to this, with dire results for the town and its inhabitants.

The money allotted for the purpose he had, with customary greed, appropriated to his own uses.

To meet de Warenne, who was advancing with a substantial force, Wallace hastened from Dundee and took up a strategic position near Stirling. He chose his ground with skill, placing his troops on a slope overlooking Cambuskenneth Abbey, near a narrow wooden bridge over the Forth.

Before the battle Lord Henry Percy arrived at Cambuskenneth with re-inforcements from Carlisle, but Cressingham, who was soldier as well as priest, ordered him to dismiss his troops so as to save the King's money.

This monstrous suggestion, made probably for reasons of greed, so infuriated the soldiers that they were ready to stone him. De Warenne was getting old and had lost much of characteristic vigour. He delayed for some time, sending messengers hither and thither, but at last decided to advance and cross the bridge in spite of the warning of many who knew the ground. Cressingham, whom a contemporary chronicler calls "a man too handsome and fat . . . pompous indeed and the child of death," encouraged de Warenne with these words:—"My Lord Earl, it is not expedient to protract the business further and spend the King's treasure in vain, but let us cross and do our duty as we are held bound." Greedy though he was, Cressingham was not deficient in courage or perhaps in foolhardiness.

The English banners advanced, and many soldiers passed over the bridge, though some realised the trap into which they were advancing. When enough had crossed for him to deal with, Wallace flung the main part of his army upon them, seized the bridge and cut off their retreat. Cressingham, for all his unclerical helmet and breast-plate, was slain, and indeed hardly a man of the advanced guard escaped alive.

De Warenne led back a few of his troops with speed, and reached England defeated and disgraced.

Such was the fury which Cressingham had aroused, and so odious was his memory to the Scots, that, if we may believe the well-authenticated legend, his body was flayed after his death. He was unusually stout and blessed with a pink skin, so many of the Scots took small trophies therefrom and Wallace, for all his gigantic stature, had a sword belt made out of the skin of the hated treasurer.

In his *Tales of a Grandfather*, Sir Walter Scott comments on

the barbarous character of the Scots of those days as exhibited by this piece of brutal ferocity, but suggests that de Cressingham must have been amazingly unpopular to provoke it. In one almost contemporary chronicle we read that some made saddles and girths out of his skin, but no doubt the story lost nothing in the telling (Walsingham, *Chronicles*, p. 70; Heming, Vol. I, p. 118; Trivet, p. 299. All quoted by Hume, *History of England*).

#### DE CRESSINGHAM'S LAND IN HENDON.

The battle took place on 10th September, 1297, and the bad news came swiftly through to England, for on 18th September a writ was issued dealing with de Cressingham's property and on 16th October there is an entry in the *Inquisitiones post mortem* for Edward I's reign (No. 405) dealing with his Hendon land.

It runs: "Extent made at Hendon, 16th October, 25 Edward I, by the oath of William Halce and others, who say upon their oath that Hugh de Cressingham held nothing of the Lord the King on the day on which he died, in the vill. of Hendon, but he held certain lands in the vill. of Lord Richard le Rous by the service of rendering 21 shillings by the year. And they say that the capital message is worth by the year 21 shillings.

"Also there is there in demesne 240 acres of arable land and worth by the year 20 shillings, price the acre 2d. Also there are 9 acres of meadow and worth 13s. 6d. price the acre 18d.

("Also they say that there are at Finchesleye 27 acres of arable land held of divers lords by the service of 2s. 10d. by the year and worth by the year 6s. 9d. price the acre 3d. Also that there are there 2 acres of meadow and worth 3s. 4d.")

"Of the heir they say they are ignorant because they have heard from certain persons that the said Hugh was a bastard."

Evans, in his *History of Hendon*, makes the ingenious suggestion that Cressingham's property in Hendon was possibly Wyldes. It would seem that the property escheated to the Crown, and if so it may have formed part of the endowment which Henry VI gave to Eton College at its foundation in 1441.

When Wyldes was surveyed *inter alia* by Crow and Messeder in 1756, it was put down as 240 acres, 2 roods, 35 poles, almost identical in area with the property of Cressingham in 1297. But the fact that the land was held of Richard le Rous, who was Lord of the Manor until 1312, when he exchanged Hendon for

Hodford, makes it difficult to accept Evans' view, as Rous does not seem to have held any property south of the Brent.

If Cressingham's land should prove to be Wyldes, it would mean that the land which Dame Henrietta Octavia Barnett purchased for the garden suburb in 1908 was the same which escheated to the Crown after Cressingham's tragic end at the battle of Cambuskenneth more than 600 years before.

#### FURTHER COMPLAINTS AGAINST CRESSINGHAM.

But we have not entirely finished with Hugh de Cressingham. He obviously had no time to clear up the affairs of his office of Justice in Eyre and for 5 years after his death complaints were coming in to the King and are recorded in the Close Rolls.

In June, 1298, there was a dispute about some land in Bagoteby, given by Hugh to the convent at Wartre (perhaps Wavertree) (*Cal. Close Rolls*, 1296-1302, p. 170) and on 5th November the question of the land at Bamburgh, which he had confiscated, came up again in the Eyre for Northumberland at Newcastle (*ib.*, p. 186) and it was not finally settled until 10th August, 1302 (*ib.*, p. 546).

On 3rd October the King was at Jedburgh engaged in recapturing Scotland from Wallace, and while there he heard of a claim of Didacus lupi de Haro, Lord of Biscay, who complained that Hugh de Cressingham had seized in a sloop (calepo) off the coast of Wales goods belonging to the aforesaid Didacus. The King replied that Hugh had died in Scotland, and that it was therefore impossible to get at the rights of the case. He was, however, prepared to pay to Didacus £350 by way of compensation (*Cal. Close Rolls*, 1298-1302, p. 220). Two years later, on 23rd October, 1300, the King being at Dumfries ordered that land taken by de Cressingham from Walter de Bolleby, because he was charged with the murder of William de Mowbray, his wife, daughter and brother, should be returned.

It will be remembered that Hugh had harrassed the citizens of Lancaster about their market and fair, which the King had declared to be legal and in accordance with the precedent of Northampton. The matter came up once more on 9th February, 1302, while the King was at Roxburgh Castle (*ib.*, p. 514).

This and the matter of Bamburgh alluded to above were the last items of de Cressingham's office to be cleared up.

## HIS CHARACTER.

It is extremely difficult to get any clear impression of a man, when one tries to recapture his identity after more than 600 years, and one is apt to judge such a one by modern standards. When Hugh de Cressingham died at the battle of Cambuskenneth, he was probably under 50 years of age, and he left behind him the reputation of a rapacious greedy cleric, who had by his wits and with little backing risen to a position of great importance in the English judicial system, and to a post of still greater eminence in Scotland. But making out the worst case possible and accepting all the charges of greed and rapacity which have been brought against him, we must still admit that we have to do with a very versatile and able man, unscrupulous and cruel though he may have been. He was not afraid to deal faithfully with people of consequence, as is shown by his judicial proceedings against the Bishop of Carlisle and the Earl of March and by his daring though reckless rebuke to Lord Henry Percy.

He was a man of courage and daring as his advance into obvious danger at Cambuskenneth clearly proved. As a judge he was strict and exacting, jealous for the King's interests and probably working for his own well-being at the same time.

He brings us into touch with growing towns like Lancaster and Carlisle, anxious to establish some independence of the King's judges, with foreign seamen and soldiers, trading or fighting the King's battles overseas and he is an important and romantic link with Sir William Wallace, one of the greatest and most honoured of Scottish national heroes.

The evil that men do lives after them, and this is remarkably true of Cressingham. It is probably due as much to him as to anyone else that the Scottish national spirit was aroused against England when it was, and that Scotland became allied abroad against a common foe, that it cherished for nearly three centuries a loathing of England and the English, and that during all that time English foreign policy had always to take account of a close alliance between the Scots and France. Hugh de Cressingham is not one of those who have contributed much to the development of Hendon, but it is interesting that so notorious a character should have had even a passing connection with a simple and perhaps typical mediaeval Manor.