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THE STAFFORDSHIRE POLITICAL COMMUNITY 1440-1500

IAN DOUGLAS ROWNEY

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CHAPTER IV

THE CHURCH

An oft-neglected aspect of the county community in studies of other counties at this period has been the role of the clergy and in particular the clerical nobility. In this chapter I intend to present such a survey for Staffordshire, examining how clergy and laity interacted and were to a large extent inter-dependent. My emphasis is on the social and economic rather than the sacerdotal relationship. Most of the chapter deals with the bishopric of Coventry and Lichfield, as this was by far the most important and wealthy religious institution in the shire; but some space has been spared for Burton Abbey and some of the other local monastic houses. Supplementary material can be found in other chapters, particularly the one on crime and disorder, in which the activities of criminous clerks are touched upon.

Most of my sources for the bishopric are drawn from the account rolls and episcopal registers found in the County Record Office, the William Salt Library (both at Stafford), the diocesan Joint Record Office at Lichfield, and the Public Record Office at Chancery Lane, London. There is a reasonable run of estate accounts from 1424 to the Reformation. The only significant gap in these is between 1429 and 1444, though many of those for the early sixteenth century are mere paper draft accounts. Some of these are so mixed up that accurate dating is almost impossible. Further research might rectify this and add more names to the list of estate officials included among the appendices to this thesis.

The diocese of Coventry and Lichfield covered most of the north-west Midlands including Staffordshire. The cathedra of the bishop had moved between Chester, Coventry and Lichfield several times since the installation of the

first incumbent in 656. By the later middle ages, although the bishop was frequently styled as of Chester, the see's centre was firmly at Lichfield in south-eastern Staffordshire. This was not one of the most sought-after episcopal offices, being not particularly wealthy. It was regarded by ambitious clergymen as more of a staging post from which a bid for one of the more prestigious and wealthy sees might be anticipated.

Of the nine bishops here in the fifteenth century, four were translated from even more isolated and impecunious sees: John Burghill from Llandaff in 1398, John Catterick from St. Davids in 1415, Nicholas Close from Carlisle in 1452 and Reginald Boulders from Hereford in 1453. For the others, three deans, one abbot and the chancellor to Queen Margaret of Anjou, Coventry and Lichfield was their first episcopal appointment. Within these nine men can be found most of the varieties of later medieval bishop.

I begin with the saintly John Heyworth (1419-47), who had been persuaded to leave the wealthy cloisters of St. Albans for this position. The late eighteenth-century antiquarian, the Rev. Stebbing Shaw, was perhaps a little cynical and over-influenced by the clerical mores of his own day when he cited approvingly in his antiquarian study of Staffordshire Fuller's Church History concerning Heyworth:

'Wonder not that he should leave the richest abbey of England....In temporal considerations the poorest bishop was better (and might be more beneficial to his kindred) than the richest abbot, seeing he by will might bequeath his estates to his heirs.'²

To be fair, Shaw does later describe Heyworth as 'a person of sharp judgment and learning'³, but he nowhere mentions the patent conscientiousness which later scholars have come to regard as one of the bishop's greatest virtues. The interest

he took in the affairs of the diocese, particularly after the absenteeism of his predecessor, was rivalled only by Boulers and Halse among his successors in the century. Toward the end of Heyworth's life, the Lord Chancellor, Bishop John Stafford, wrote asking that he 'putte remedy' to a complaint from Lady Audley concerning a ~~paxon~~ who was apparently unwilling to provide a priest for the vacant chapel of St. Michael, Shrewsbury 'in whos defaute the parisshons decese withoute thair ryghts.'⁴ Heyworth's register indicates that he was not the sort of man to allow such a situation to prevail for long. Its numerous references to visitations, ordinations and various sorts of dispensation (e.g. to marry within the prohibited bounds of consanguinity to divorce, to take up a benefice with cure of souls though one had been illegitimate) testify to his activity as bishop. His was an episcopacy upon which contemporaries doubtlessly looked back with affection and approval- in contrast to that of his successor.

No later-medieval bishop of Coventry and Lichfield attracted such a torrent of abuse as did William Booth (1447-52). He came from Lancashire gentry stock and was only one of three brothers who took up the bishop's mitre.⁵ He was a pluralist, who like many an episcopal colleague, owed his office to the patronage of the Crown and leading noblemen at court. Booth was closely allied to Suffolk and the queen Margaret of Anjou (whose chancellor he was). As such, he was persecuted in the disturbances of 1450. In the previous year he had been the butt of a vicious poetic diatribe.⁶ I remain unconvinced that all of the flaws alluded to therein relate to Booth's personal record; much is characteristic of the standard medieval railing against evil councillors. In the poem parallels were drawn between the rule of Suffolk's faction and the corruption of Classical times,

particularly as regards the manipulation of the law. In the pieces aimed directly at the bishop, his general unfitness for his office was firstly proclaimed:

'Thy goode and thy catelle made the to mete
With the church of Chester, whiche crieth alas
That to suche a mafflarde marryede she was.'

Here it is implied that Booth bought his office in some way. Next the poet proceeded to divide the court faction into two classes, traitors and the covetous, placing Booth in the latter as one 'that servyth silvyre and levyth the law oute.'

How justified were these and other attacks? For many, his was just not the sort of background from which bishops should be drawn. Judging from the repetitious blasts of the humourless Thomas Gascoigne, Booth's greatest sin was not a lack of personal virtue, but that timeless failing of not being an Oxbridge graduate.⁷ His 'vices' indeed seem to have sprung from this deficiency. Booth was not uneducated. He had passed through Gray's Inn and was thus condemned for mixing holy orders with a legal training— an incestuous union at the best of times. Furthermore, when he was translated to York in 1452 the fact that the chapter there had not had a free hand in the election was also held against him. Here Gascoigne found it convenient to forget that free elections to vacant sees had never been standard practice. While at York Booth 'qui nec est bonus grammaticus, nec scientificus, nec virtuosus reputatus, nec graduatus, sed legista juris regni' was accused by Gascoigne of conferring benefices and prebends on youngsters. I find no proof that such was his practice at Lichfield, though six of the ten new prebendaries appointed during his episcopacy held no degree. Many charges against him undoubtedly sprang from political animosity for his principal preoccupation was not the affairs of his diocese but maintaining his faction's domination of government. In 1450

he had obtained papal permission for his duties of visiting religious houses in his diocese to be vested in a deputy.⁸ This was ostensibly because he had argued that it was less burdensome to be descended upon by episcopal officials than by the bishop himself, but actually it stemmed from a lack of time to spare from his work at court. A few months later he was placed third in a parliamentary list of evil councillors (behind Somerset and the widowed Duchess of Suffolk) 'by whos undue means', it was alleged, the royal possessions have been 'gretely amenused.'⁹ The accused were ordered to stay at least a dozen miles from the King.

Booth's sucessor at Coventry and Lichfield, Bishop Nicholas Close of Carlisle, had been one of the six original scholars at King's College, Cambridge and was presumably a man favoured by Henry VI. However, he died within three months of his translation and had no time to leave a mark on his new diocese. He was followed by Reginald Boulers (1453-9). Like Booth, Boulers had been a friend of Suffolk and Somerset, enjoying their patronage. Unlike Booth, he endeavoured to remain as free from politics as possible. All the same, he does appear in parliamentary records¹⁰ and was appointed to the council of the infant Prince of Wales in January 1457.¹¹

There seems to have been a consistent link between the court faction and this see from the late 1440s until the dawn of the Yorkist sun in 1461. With Coventry being such a favourite haunt of both Henry VI and Margaret, it is small wonder that an interest was taken in the affairs of the diocese. Bishop Booth had been one of those 'that for the swayne sewe'- the swan being the badge of the Queen. One of her chaplains, John Whelpdale, became Lichfield Cathedral's prebendaries & Longdon (1454-8) and of Tarvin (1458-90) and episcopal receiver-general under Boulers (and possibly under Booth too).¹² This Lancastrian link

was at its closest in September 1459 when another of Margaret's chaplains, the Devonshire-born John Halse, was provided to the see following the death of Boulers.

Halse was an Oxford University theologian and academic, who had collected prebends at York, St. Paul's and Exeter.¹³ In 1456, while Archdeacon of Norfolk, he had been elected bishop of his native diocese of Exeter, but had then been persuaded to relinquish this in favour of George Neville. The Queen soon compensated him for this loss by arranging for papal dispensation that he might hold an otherwise incompatible benefice with his archdeaconry, and he was promptly appointed Dean at Exeter. She also obtained for him the first vacant bishopric, which was Coventry and Lichfield.

After 1461 Halse begot an accommodation of sorts with the Yorkists. He needed to, after allowing Margaret to use his palace at Eccleshall as a headquarters in 1459 and arranging the escape of her and her infant son after the disaster at Blore Heath. Whelpdale too had problems to be sorted out with the new rulers. He had been noted among the Lancastrians at Towton and was thus duly attainted.¹⁴ Furthermore, Halse's receiver-general Edmund Basset was constrained to behave himself, as he had been active (presumably on Halse's orders) attempting to stir up the episcopal tenantry on Henry VI's behalf. In December 1460 and July 1461 commissions were issued for his arrest 'touching false news' he had been spreading against the Yorkist hierarchy.¹⁵ Those directed to seize him were Sir John Gresley, Ralph Wolseley and the Wrottesleys- all committed Yorkists. Yet there is no evidence that Basset was forced to go into hiding, quite the opposite. He continued with his

regular estate duties, travelling around the episcopal estates, scrutinising accounts and collecting revenue. Indeed, on 19 July 1461, just two days before the issue of the second commission for his arrest, he and his wife were dining quietly with Wolseley's parents and the Bishop at Haywood.¹⁶ The only other guest present then was Thomas Arblaster (a Stafford family lawyer and episcopal office-holder), so the after-dinner conversation may well have concentrated upon ironing out difficulties between the Yorkists and the see.

With the advent of Yorkist rule Halse and his fellow Lancastrian sympathisers could not expect preferment unless those sympathies were patently altered. Matters, however, soon quietened down, though the Bishop had to wait until 10 February for his pardon.¹⁷ If Edward IV suspected that Halse was incorrigible, he was right. During the Readeption Halse became keeper of the privy seal, and took on another of Margaret Of Anjou's chaplains, Andrew Docket, as Chancellor of Lichfield Cathedral.¹⁸ His own strained relationship with the Yorkists probably explains why he never climbed higher up the episcopal ladder.¹⁹ His stay at Coventry and Lichfield lasted some thirty-one years (1459-90) and has been described as 'serene paternalism'.²⁰ He devoted much time and patronage to improving the academic standard of Lichfield's chapter. Nearly three-quarters of new prebendaries during his term in office (excluding of course exchanges within the chapter) were graduates. Four were doctors of Theology, while most of the rest were canon lawyers.²¹ It was a case of one academic helping others in the hope that eventually his would be a bishopric filled 'ex academiis eruditos et discretos viros'. Shaw wrote of him:

'This holy father found this church in a bad condition,

and therefore...he sent for certain learned and discreet men from the universities, whom he preferred to the prebend, and the offices in the church.'²²

Like Halse, the final two bishops of Coventry and Lichfield in the fifteenth century, William Smith (1492-6) and John Arundel (1496-1502), were Oxford graduates.²³ Smith even became Chancellor of the university for two years later. They were kindred spirits and, though both certainly played the part of an ecclesiastical courtier with interests in politics, it is to Halse rather than Booth that they are best likened. Halse had chosen the losing side in the wars of the roses and paid for it. Smith and Arundel prospered under the victorious Tudor banner of Henry VII. Before moving to Coventry and Lichfield William Smith had been Dean of St. Stephens, Westminster and Archdeacon of Surrey. He was a native of Lancashire and had links with the see before being consecrated bishop here, being prebendary of Syerscote in the collegiate church at Tamworth. A fervent academic, he was one of the founders of Brasenose Hall, Oxford and, revealing an interest in the scholastic health of this his first see, provided for a principal and twelve fellows there to be drawn from the diocese of Coventry and Lichfield (if possible from Lancashire too). Although he was a royal councillor, Lord President of the Council of the Marches of Wales and sat in the court of Star Chamber, he somehow found time for affairs in Staffordshire. There are a couple of arbitration cases he helped to decide in 1494²⁴, and he also founded the hospital of St. John's, Lichfield for a master, two priests and ten poor men.²⁵

When Smith moved on to more valuable pastures as Bishop of Lincoln in 1496 he was succeeded at Coventry and Lichfield by John Arundel. Arundel, in the 'best' traditions of later-medieval bishops, had been a royal chaplain- to Edward IV from 1479 to 1483. In this, as in his being Dean of Exeter when translated, he followed John Halse. It was to Exeter that

he returned as bishop in 1502. There is little to write concerning him. As was common, he collected a long list of benefices during his career. However, he was mainly notable for being Chancellor to the infant Prince Arthur. He came, sojourned and left, all quietly.

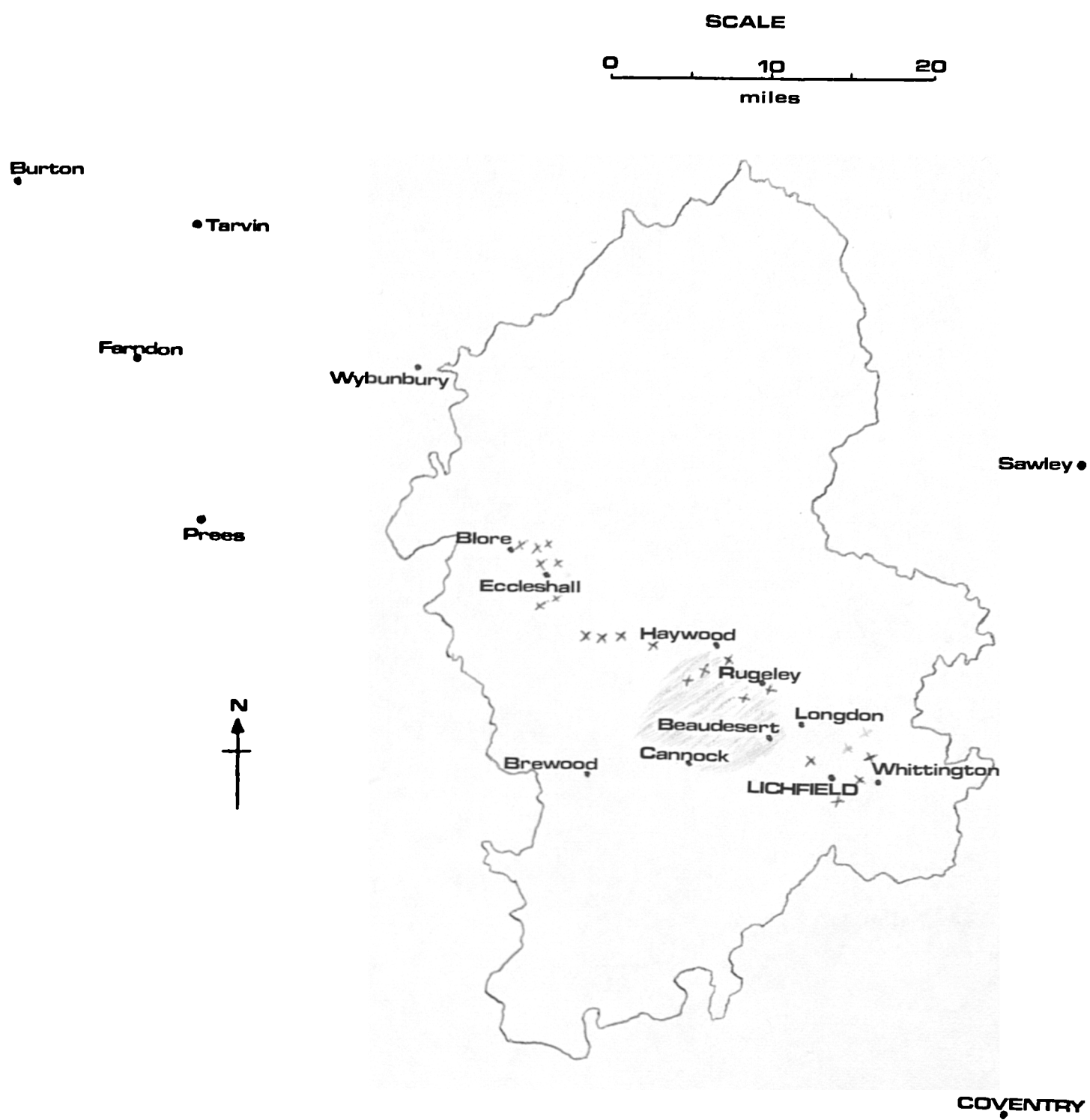
By the end of the fifteenth century the diocesan administration had developed (possibly through necessity) a near-autonomous existence, thus compensating for long periods of absence or disinterest on the part of incumbents at St. Chad's Cathedral.²⁶ Such absences were not unusual. Since bishops, with their immense landholdings, wealth, education and influence, had always been political appointees, it is hardly surprising that so many of them were political animals. This may have made it difficult for them to be regarded as spiritual leaders, but that was only one of their roles and perhaps not the most important at that. All of these bishops were different, though I have drawn attention to whatever similarities that can be found between them. Such similarities refer to their careers, but woefully little evidence survives as to character and tastes, making it foolhardy to venture sweeping generalisations on those scores. Professor Hilton has described the bishops of Coventry and Lichfield in the fourteenth century as 'promoted civil servants with national rather than local preoccupations'²⁷, but for the fifteenth century they were less servants than academics on the make.

Hilton's study of Staffordshire concluded that in the fourteenth century the county was led, if not quite dominated by the two main landholders there, the Earls of Lancaster and the Bishops of Coventry and Lichfield. Later generations saw a change in this balance of power. There was

a gradual erosion of episcopal influence and, once Earl Henry of Lancaster had seized the throne in 1399, there was also a reduction in the personal interest of his family in this area. Hilton lists eight principal manors of the bishopric in Staffordshire: Baswich, Brewood, Cannock(bury), Eccleshall, Haywood, Longdon and Rugeley. All but two of these (Baswich and Longdon) had lucrative markets. By the middle of the fifteenth century Baswich had been incorporated into Haywood manor and Haywood itself had lost its market- probably due to competition with the one at nearby Rugeley which too was held on Thursdays.²⁸

The episcopal property cut a swathe across the heavily-wooded centre and south-east of Staffordshire. It also extended beyond the county border to Wybunbury(Cheshire) and Prees(Shropshire) in the west and to the three Warwickshire manors of Chadshunt, Itchington and Tachbrook beyond Coventry in the east. In addition, there were isolated estates at Sawley-by-Derby(Derbyshire), Farndon, Tarvin and Burton-in-Wirral (all north Cheshire)and several London houses. The Staffordshire property was now organised around a different octet of manors: Brewood, Cannock, Eccleshall, Haywood, Lichfield, Longdon, Rugeley and Whittington. There were lesser estates at Beaudesert and Blore-by-Eccleshall.²⁹ As a residence, Lichfield was preferred to the monastic Coventry and when not on business at London the bishops made frequent use of other Staffordshire residences at Beaudesert, Eccleshall and Haywood.

To determine the state of the episcopal finances and understand the relationship between bishop and county community requires the scrutiny of numerous account rolls and divers deeds. Through these some idea of the structure of estate management and the pattern of income and expenditure may be derived.



THE ESTATES OF THE BISHOPRIC OF
COVENTRY AND LICHFIELD

x denotes other lands
within the manors.

Cannock Chase

Tachbrook

Itchington

Chadshunt

The bishops of Coventry and Lichfield, like any lay lord, required competent, literate and numerate administrators for their estates. These would maintain the short- and long-term supply of produce and specie upon which their power and status largely depended. There was a distinct difference in social rank between those whose official responsibility was limited to an individual manor (usually yeomen or minor gentlemen) and the major estate and household administrators (important gentlemen) to whom the former group had to account. Stewards were normally of a higher rank than bailiffs and rent collectors. The bishop had at his disposal a large number of offices, each of which would provide influence and perquisites for the holder according to its power. Some posts were usually reserved for patronage purposes, often with the work being done by a deputy-e.g. the parkers of Haywood, riders of Cannock wood and collectors of ad hoc rents in Rugeley. Other posts, more time-consuming and less profitable, were filled by the abler of the bishop's tenants; usually yeomen and probably recommended by the stewards or receiver-general. The structure of episcopal estate management was simple and not unusual. Manorial stewards, bailiffs, rent collectors and farmers were accountable to the receiver, as were parkers for their financial responsibilities. Parkers were otherwise put under the master forester. There was also an auditor to check the accounts and a steward and bailiff for the bishop's liberty.

The plethora of estate appointments can best be understood when divided into three categories: manorial officials, supervisory staff and sinecure appointments. These categories were not exclusive, but they are a useful distinction.

The first of these groups contained men whose lives were led mainly on or around the manor to which they were appointed. These were the stewards, bailiffs, rent collectors and parkers. Stewards tended to be a cut above the rest, being drawn from gentry families whose property was either held of the bishop or closely intertwined with episcopal lands. For the bailiffs and rent collectors, the normal term in office was a twelvemonth and rarely above two or three years. Exceptions to this occurred when certain posts, perhaps by tradition perhaps for administrative convenience, were held in severalty. The balliwicks of Longdon, Beaudesert and the ad hoc rents in Rugeley were held by a single individual during the second half of the fifteenth century, and that of Haywood was added to these early in the sixteenth. The bailiff of Lichfield and collector of nearby hittington were also usually the same person. Under the Yorkists, and afterwards, the Cheshire estates of Tarvin, Burton-in-Wirral and Farndon were administered by the same man, John Brown, later the episcopal steward; and by 1484-5 Thomas "halley was bailiff of all the bishop's property in Warwickshire. From this it is tempting to talk of the development of a layer in the administrative system between manorial official and receiver. Each accountable unit would be supervised directly by either the nominal bailiff or more likely his deputy, but local clusters of manors were developing under one man, though each manor was accounted for separately. Two other posts were also held in severalty because of overlapping jurisdictions. The bishop's free chase at Cannock was administered through the anor of Haywood, so it is not surprising that the ridership of Cannock wood and parkership of Haywood were held jointly.

This linking of offices gave additional influence to whoever held them, but there is no evidence that any attempt was made by the gentry of the area to monopolise this source of

patronage. It seems unlikely that they were uninterested in the same; perhaps the bishops did not need to sweeten the gentry as much as did the lay nobility. This is not to say that no such sweetening went on; quite the opposite was true, as we shall see.

The majority of officeholders were drawn from the ranks of the literate yeomanry of the episcopal estates; men who could not aspire to county office, though were occasionally used as electors in parliamentary elections or as collectors of subsidies. Occasionally, more exalted names appear in the lists of estate officials. Gentry cooperation was needed for the smooth running of the bishop's estates and this could be a lucrative patronage forming a valuable supplement to the family prestige and coffers. Usually it was an elder son who was appointed to an estate post by the bishop, such as John Stanley of Elford who became collector of Whittington 1448-9. These appointments served partly to keep an heir busy, for idleness (as events on the Derbyshire border showed) could lead to antagonism and expensive litigation; and partly to enable the young man to acquire valuable experience in estate management and accountancy, which would serve him well when he came into his own inheritance. The heir to the Aston family from the northern edge of Cannock chase was appointed collector of the ad hoc rents in Rugeley in 1447, 1465 and probably 1491, while a younger son of the Astleys of Patshull held the post 1484-5. This particular office seems to have held some considerable attraction for the local gentry as in 1473 and 1497 the powerful Ralph Wolseley, whose family was the only one capable of rivalling the Astons around Rugeley, accepted appointment to it. On the former occasion he too was still the heir to his family's estates, though by then he had been a baron of the Exchequer and was in need of neither an independent income from the bishop nor administrative experience.

The involvement of sons of gentry associates helped to strengthen ties between the see and successive generations of its lay neighbours. Many of the young men would have been educated in the bishop's household, like John Harcourt of Ranton, whose family enjoyed a position in the Eccleshall area equal to, if not greater than, that of the Astons and Wolseleys around Rugeley and Abbots Bromley. Usually, however, it was the educated yeomanry and minor gentlemen that the bishops turned to for their manorial officials. The extremes in class were well illustrated in the 1470s when the collector of ad hoc rents in Rugeley for 1473-4 was the eminent Ralph Wolseley, but four years later it was a poor widow Agnes Weston, who was his tenant.³⁰

As with the Stafford family, the bishops operated an administrative ladder which could be scaled by the able, but lowly-of-birth. This might take a lifetime, or in the case of a family in episcopal service, more than one lifetime. Few names appear in both Stafford and bishop's service, and where they do, as with the Astons and Arblasters, one lord was favoured above the other. Evidence is not lacking of yeoman families giving service over more than one generation to the affairs of the see. Among the collectors of ad hoc rents in Rugeley William and John Smith (1428-9 and 1466-7), John and William Willot (1449-50 and 1470-1), and Nicholas and Richard Norman (1454-5 and 1468-9) were probably fathers and sons; while at Cannock the collectors William and John Brook (1426-7 and 1466-7 & 1474-5), and William and Richard Chapman (1454-5 and 1463-4) seem likely to have been similarly related. Certainly at Blore-by-Eccleshall two generations of Kenricks served as parker, and son followed father as the Rugeleys of Shenston held the ridership of Cannock wood from the early 1420s until 1459. However, the Thomas Rugeley of Hawksyard who was sometime collector of Whittington and of ad hoc rents in Rugeley was not related to these.

It was through these lesser men rather than the local knights and squires, that such links as the bishop possessed with his estates and tenantry were maintained. It was for this reason that they figured so frequently as dinner guests at the episcopal table alongside the pride of the county gentry.³¹

Like some of the gentry, it is possible that some of the yeomen received an education of sorts in the bishop's household. Certainly they were employed for wider services than the mere collection of rents and dues or protection of the property against poachers (of whom, as the Plea Rolls reveal, there were any). They were the bishop's men and were expected to take an active part in his quarrels. For instance, it was Thomas Butler, the long-serving collector of Longdon and Beaudesert, who organised and led Lichfield's tradesmen for Dean Verney in an episcopally-inspired riot there in 1442 against the Stanleys.³² This role as marshaller of the tenantry was important. If the bishop wanted a crowd, it was to his estate officials- those closest to the tenants-that he relied upon to arrange for this. In Bishop Halse's long struggle with the Wolseleys over illegal enclosures they had erected at Wolseley to the detriment of the right of episcopal tenants, three sortées were made to destroy the constructions, in 1466, 1479 and 1483.³³ The bishop's tenants were led by many current or sometime officeholders of his. Those supervising the initial assault included the Stanleys, the receiver-general Edmund Basset, the rider of Cannock wood John Egerton, a former collector of Whittington John Shaw, and a couple of the Rugeleys of Hawksyard.³⁴ In 1479 Richard Shirbourne, soon to be a leading cleric in the diocese and also receiver-general, led such bishop's men as John More, William Nevowe and William Wood; while four years later Shirbourne's associates in the raid included the Halses of Haywood, Ralph Nevowe, Thomas Nixon and Ralph Salt.

The bishopric had never been particularly wealthy, its endowments being adequate rather than lavish. In June 1448 the newly-installed Bishop William Booth found it expedient to consult with his two deans and then petition Rome for permission to close down or at least be excused having to keep in good repair many of 'the excessive number of palaces, castles, manors, lodgings' and other buildings of his within the diocese.³⁵ How far this stemmed from short-term economic pressures, how far it was Booth merely wishing to increase his own income in the knowledge that the buildings would go unused due to his preoccupation with matters of state in Westminster, and how far this was a move of long-term financial wisdom as the bishopric relieved itself of what had perennially been an unnecessary drain on its resources is uncertain. It was probably a combination of all of these.

Assessing the financial health of the see is difficult, and not helped by the way in which economic historians disagree over what constitutes reliable data. Dr. Carole Rawcliffe's work on the Staffords has shown that

' It was possible to offset long-term economic and organisational difficulties by careful management, and while this situation continued Buckingham had no immediate cause for concern. This was also the case in Staffordshire, where from 1450 onwards arrearages accounted for more than two thirds of the receiver's total charge....Most of it comprised 'real' debts, often written off years before. Paradoxically, clear receipts remained fairly constant. 36

This could apply almost word for word to the estates of the bishops of Coventry and Lichfield. Arrears distort and confuse the financial picture, but, as Dr. Pollard has pointed out in his study on the Talbots at Whitchurch (Shropshire), it does not follow that failure to collect these arrears or even their very accumulation is a sure measure of

inefficiency.³⁷ In the accounts of the bishopric confusion is exacerbated by the lack of any detailed breakdown of many of the constituent elements in the charge and discharge, including arrears. It should also be remembered that arrears were written off on the death or departure of an incumbent or at least they were supposed to be. Curiously the large amount of arrears in the account for the new rents in Rugeley was not cancelled in 1447, nor were the Whittington arrears in 1447, 1452, 1453 or 1459. Perhaps their size made the new man or receiver-general reluctant to follow the standard practice.

Some officials, such as the collector of Beaudesert and rider of Cannock wood, who had only a limited range or amount of accountable elements within their spheres of responsibility, consistently showed few or no arrears in their accounts. These were the exceptions. Most balliwicks showed arrears which need interpreting. A fairly static figure over a long period, as at Rugeley (new rents) before 1454 or in Haywood manor or the park there under the Yorkists, suggests the existence of one-off or old debts which successive bailiffs have ignored or been unable to collect. During the years 1459-62 Ralph Bishton's balliwick of Haywood ran up arrears of £31, which had been reduced to £22 under later officials by the time of Bishton's death in 1475. Significantly, Bishton's widow was sued in that year by Bishop Halse for a debt of £20.³⁸ (All these figures are rounded off to the nearest pound.) It was the arrears, unpaid for a generation, which made up this debt and were the major element in the Haywood arrears until they were finally written off in 1486. Between Michaelmas 1485 and Michaelmas 1486 the arrears there dropped from £26 to twenty-two shillings.

A decline in the arrears of a balliwick could indicate either the repayment or cancelling of debts or that allowances for the preceding year which had been accepted too late to appear in that year's account and consequently showed up as arrears were now recognized. This probably explains the annual ups and downs in the accounts of Longdon and Rugeley (new rents) under Bishop Heyworth. A general increase in arrears is equally difficult to be certain about. Large and/or growing arrears may indicate that revenue was not being raised because of bad harvests, tenant intransigence, administrative slackness or corruption. However, although none of these can ever be completely ruled out, the major factor was usually the cumulative effect of old, often petty debts or vacant tenancies, the expected rents for which the bailiff was nevertheless being held accountable. The example of Haywood in the 1460s and 1470s has already been mentioned in this respect. To it may be added that of the arrears of the collector of new rents in Rugeley. The arrears there in the six surviving accounts between 1424 and 1445 show an average arrears figure of £24-25 a year, whereas during the rest of the century the arrears never again reached £10- and it took the cumulative effect of over twenty-five years to produce that figure in 1485. The usual figure was well below £4 and the most likely reason for the high arrears before 1445 is that there were substantial uncollected or uncollectable debts predating Henry VI's reign, which mask an otherwise highly efficient administration.

Perhaps the best way to understand the financial situation is to deduct the figure for arrears from the total charge in the accounts of each balliwick. Once this is done

a picture of a reasonably stable or marginally falling income is revealed. Consider the manor of Whittington in the prosperous south-east of the county. The total charge on the rent-collector there in 1425 was £55. Fifty years later this had risen to £203. However, a closer examination of this latter sum reveals that over three-quarters of it consisted of arrears and that if arrears were subtracted from both the 1425 and 1475 totals, the charge had actually decreased during the period by just over £2 from £49 to £47.

Charting the course of the rise of the arrears total in the Whittington accounts, there was a steady rise through the century apparently unaffected by the passage of bishops or collectors: £6 in 1425, £16 in 1429, £29 in 1444, £34 in 1457, £43 in 1462, £77 in 1464, £106 in 1469, £159 in 1475 and £188 in 1485. As with the Bishton debt at Haywood, some of Whittington's arrears were finally written off at this point and by Michaelmas 1486 the figure stood at a comparatively modest £73- in itself the equivalent of eighteen months revenue from the manor. On the translations of Bishops Smith and Arundel the slate was again wiped clean, but by Michaelmas 1498 an arrears total of £45 appears on the account. Something evidently was very wrong with the theoretical charge on the collector, for the charge less arrears (except in freak high years like 1476 and 1504) stayed persistently between £41 and £52, usually closer to the latter.

The example of Whittington could be repeated on other of the bishop's manors, particularly at Cannock (the value of which never varied from between £17 and £20 during the century) and Longdon (charged at £35 plus arrears). From the scant evidence that exists for the bishopric in general, it

appears that this pattern of stable or slightly falling revenue (arrears discounted) holds generally. There were naturally annual fluctuations, but no sharp decline in the monetary estate income of the bishopric.

I have twice pointed out sudden changes in the arrears figures for estates between the Michaelmas of 1485 and 1486. From these, it seems plausible to suggest that some financial reappraisal took place during that period, which significantly coincides with the first full year in office of Archdeacon Richard Shirbourne as receiver-general. He had succeeded Bishop Halse's namesake on whose death early in 1485 it had become apparent that the estate income was gradually being eroded. Shirbourne and his successors fought to counter this. However, this could not be done without opposition. Elizabeth Brews wrote to John Paston III around 1488:

'We ladys and jentil-women in this contrey
that is wedows be sore trobyled with the
Bysshop of Chestre, and haskeith of vs more
than we may pay.'³⁹

Beauesert provides a pertinent, if somewhat extreme example of the general picture. In 1424 the charge on the demesne lands was £10/4s/0d. By 1457 *this had fallen to £4/15s/6½d* and by 1476 it was a miserable 14s/6d. None of this decline was due to any renting out or sales. In 1486 the figure had risen slightly to £1/14s/4d and was up to £5/5s/8d by 1504. The historian Thomas Harwood gives a figure of £7/13s/4d for 1534, which was still less than it was a century earlier, though a marked improvement on the slough of despond entered into under the Yorkists. In those dark days rents to the bishop from Eccleshall had fallen by at least a third over the previous two hundred years.⁴⁰ There was also a Tudor revival in both the numbers of seigneurial courts on the episcopal estates and the income

derived therefrom. Income from these fluctuated annually to a greater extent than any other element in the charge of a bailiff. Sawley, Prees and the three north Cheshire manors held courts, though the last of these did very little business. Tachbrook was alone among the Warwickshire estates in holding a court and presumably heard suits and administered entry fines for the other lands in that county. Within Staffordshire there were courts at Eccleshall, Brewood, Haywood, Cannock, Rugeley and Lichfield. Matters from Whittington and Longdon were determined at Lichfield, though accounted in the Whittington records. For Cannock and Rugeley, by the fifteenth century the earlier alternation of court between the two had broken down, probably due to increased pressure of work. Henceforth, both towns held regular courts to which cases from either might be brought.

In the half century before 1485 profits of court fell by over a third and the numbers of sessions held by about half. However, some years were worse than others and annual fluctuations can make a nonsense of any attempt to link too closely these twin declines. For example, the nineteen courts and two views of frankpledge held in Rugeley in 1449-50 raised only £1/17s/6d, while in 1480-1 only eight courts and two views there brought in £2/18s/0³/₄d. The accounts give no indication as to what comprised the perquisites of court. It seems likely, however, that the increase in income, which was interestingly not paralleled by a similar increase in the number of courts held, was due mainly to increased entry fines on customary and copyhold leasees, as part of the general episcopal drive against falling income from its estates.

Often some discrepancy exists between the figures for the charge less arrears given in the individual manorial accounts and those in the receiver-general's account. In most cases the figure in the individual account is usually the larger. I presume that during the time between the drawing up of the manorial account and that of the receiver later either there were deliveries of money to the receiver or that more acquitances for expenditure had been accepted, thus reducing the outstanding charge and explaining the discrepancy.

An overall figure for the value of the bishop's estates is difficult to produce. Though a large number of accounts survive, these mainly refer to land in central and south-eastern Staffordshire. I can discover only two accounts for Prees and Wybunbury and very few for Eccleshall, Sawley and the extra-Staffordshire properties. There are a couple of receiver-general's accounts, for 1463-4 and 1472-3, and one for 22 August to 29 September 1485.⁴¹ A partial account for the second half of the year ending Michaelmas 1459 also survives⁴², along with full accounts for 1484-5 and two conflicting totals for 1533-4.⁴³ The account for March-September 1459 gives a total charge (there were no arrears mentioned) of £248, but omits eight sources of revenue worth an extra £100 in that period. This might suggest an overall total of around £700, but it is doubtful whether income was derived equally from each half of the year. The account for 1463-4 gives a charge of £921 with arrears of £321, making a clear charge of £600; the like totals in 1472-3 were £1127, £310 and £810. In 1484-5 there was a clear estate charge of £791 to which should be added £40 from the Archdeaconry of Chester, and other petty sundries which would raise the total to about £850. The account for harvest-time 1485 (August-September) gives a clear charge of £455, once arrears of

72^d of the original charge are allowed for. For 1534 Thomas Harwood puts the bishop's income at £756; while sometime earlier Thomas Tanner had set that figure at £703. It is difficult to make any confident assertion as to the episcopal estate income, but a figure of between £750 and £800 seems likeliest to prove a workable mean around which to judge the annual yield and fluctuations.

The following table gives some idea of the relative value of the individual estates. I have included any separately accounted-for parks within their respective manors. The figures are drawn from the manorial accounts.

| <u>ANNUAL CLEAR VALUE</u> | <u>MANOR</u> |
|---------------------------|---|
| Over £100 | Eccleshall |
| £75-£100 | Lichfield Sawley (Derbys) |
| £50-£75 | Brewood Haywood Prees (Shropshire) |
| £40-£50 | Whittington-by-Lichfield |
| £30-£40 | Itchington (Warwicks) Longdon Tachbrook (Warwicks) Wybunbury (Cheshire) |
| £20-£30 | Cannock Chadshunt (Warwicks) |
| £10-£20 | Burton-in-Wirral (Cheshire) Farndon (Cheshire) Rugeley Tarvin (Cheshire) |
| Under £10 | Balliwick of the liberty Beaudesert Blore-in-Eccleshall Coventry palace (Warwicks) |

The estates of the bishopric were remarkably compact, compared to those of most laymen of comparable social status. There were no isolated plots of land hundreds of miles away to worry about, which were difficult and

expensive to administer and draw revenue from. However, with the exception of property farmed out, such as Wybunbury (£31) and the palace at Coventry (five marks), no-one knew from year to year how much any given balliwick would produce. The vagaries of the English climate meant that crop yields would vary at each harvest, while harsh winters affected sales of wood and the proportion of livestock that could be kept until the spring. Not only was this of relevance to land directly farmed by the bishop, it also affected the ability of his tenants to pay their rents. Most of the bishop's estates were extensively leased out, for example, the Cheshire lands, Rugeley and Sawley. There was a little demesne farming at Cannock, but only at Haywood, Brewood and in particular Beaudesert did this make a significant contribution to the issues of a balliwick. The decision to lease out the demesne certainly predates the 1420s. At Rugeley the demesne had completely disappeared as early as 1277.⁴⁴ The overall situation did not change significantly during the fifteenth century, except that Haywood park was gradually added to the other leased areas during the final quarter.

It was also a general policy among the bishops to lease out what might be termed 'industrial' assets. These included the coal workings at Beaudesert⁴⁵, various forges, fulling and corn mills (whether driven by water or wind). This brought benefits to both lessor and lessee. The mill at Lichfield was farmed out at £40 a year for most of the century and presumably brought in considerably more to the farmers. Leases and farms were handy morsels of patronage. During the troubled 1460s the pro-Lancastrian Bishop Halse thought it prudent to go a-courting for friends among the local gentlemen with Yorkist sympathies. Warwick's ally John

Delves was granted the lucrative farm at Wybunbury in south Cheshire (where he was already a notable landholder and was ultimately buried) on 24 June 1460, before the battle of Northampton where Buckingham was killed. Halse may have been an ardent Lancastrian, but he was hardly the most confident. After Delves' own death at Tewkesbury his powerful kinsman in the area Hugh Egerton of Wrinehill became farmer. A Neville aide, William Hugford, was appointed steward of Chadshunt and Tachbrook, drawing a fee of forty shillings from each⁴⁶, while the elder John Savage (an intimate of the Lords Stanley) was made keeper of Oakley wood in Tachbrook. To this list may be added the appointments of that political proselyte John Harper of Rushall as steward, George Stanley of Elford as bailiff of the liberty and his elder brother, Sir John, as steward of the same in 1464.

Bishop Halse was not the only leading figure in his diocese who felt the need of powerful friends in this time of uncertainty. The Abbot of St. Werburgh's, Chester, who held a huge, though somewhat distant manor at Weston-on-Trent in Derbyshire to worry about- it was worth £75-£80 a year- shrewdly made William, Lord Hastings his steward there. The Yorkist's interest in the protection of the manor was ensured by granting him an annuity of £8 from it.⁴⁷ This sum, obtained from an account of 1471-2, contrasts vividly with the more usual figure of 66s/8d paid in 1436-7 to one of Hastings' predecessors, the lawyer Peter Pole. In 1472 the Abbey also paid fees of 53s/4d to Robert Staunton and 6s/8d to John Fitzherbert, local gentlemen, emphasising the importance of good relations with lay neighbours. I do not know how cordial the relationship between St. Werburgh's and the laity of and around Weston-on-Trent was, though judging from the histories

of other monastic houses in the diocese, there may have been difficulties. Conversely, the Bishops seem to have got on well with their tenants and the gentry.

It should be emphasised that the relationship between local gentlemen and episcopal estates was not usually politically motivated. Much was a simple association of neighbours. The successive generations of Arblasters, who became parkers of Beaudesert in 1426 and held that office for the rest of the century, were merely an administratively able family from the episcopal lands at Longdon. It was to another neighbouring family, albeit a cut above the Arblasters, the Astons, that the bishops turned as their stewards of Haywood, where the family had their principal residence in this century. The Astons were also masters of game and rule for the bishop in Cannock forest- which post they successfully claimed as hereditary after an arbitration hearing in 1496.⁴⁸

Neighbouring gentlemen were well placed to assist in or hinder the day-to-day administration of the bishop's estates, with which their own were interlocked. Gentlemen and successive bishops regularly leased small patches of each other's lands in an attempt to consolidate landholdings and reduce agricultural costs by slightly simplifying the tenorial complexities in an area. Leasing property on a larger scale to the local gentry became a standard method of cultivating favour. It also meant that the Church relieved itself of the day-to-day worries involved with running its estates, and need only concern itself with what it knew best- collecting money from the laity.

Several examples can be cited of gentlemen

leasing middling amounts of the bishop's property. Perhaps significantly, these were also men of middling gentry status. For instance, the Sacheverells of Hopewell (Derbys) paid eight shillings annually for part of the bishop's nearby manor of Sawley, while in Staffordshire Humphrey Peshale of Checkley (died 1489) and Humphrey Salway (died 1493) rented episcopal lands in Bishop's Offley and Hednesford respectively.⁴⁹ Hatton-by-Brewood was leased by Bishop Halse to Edward Burton, a yeoman of the Crown, who had married the widow of Ralph Lane and who controlled the affairs of that influential family during the lengthy minority of Lane's son and heir. After Burton's death Bishop Smith passed on this lease in 1495 to a couple of the Lanes' gentry neighbours, John Giffard and Roger Fowke, but not before quietly almost doubling the rent in the process.⁵⁰ Desired friendships notwithstanding, the Tudor bishops still had to take every opportunity open to them for increasing their income.

Both the bishops and their gentry associates could also channel episcopal patronage towards lesser men, upon whom they relied. The Thomas Lange who received half a mark annually as keeper of the bishop's meadows in Willford in 1456-7 and 1463-4 was thus appointed to please the Stanleys of Elford whose man he was specifically set down as being.⁵¹ Not all the available patronage went to sweeten the gentry and their followers. Some went to favoured yeomen from the bishop's own estates, such as Hugh Collins who shared a twenty-one year lease of the Cannock watermill from 1463.⁵² Both he and the previous lessee, John Justice⁵³, later appear as the bishop's collectors for Cannock. Perhaps the lease to Justice had been an attempt to stop him causing

trouble or repetition of an offence for which Bishop Booth had sued him in 1448, of taking his corn to be ground at a rival mill in Cannock.⁵⁴ The Thomas Smith who collected ad hoc rents in Rugeley 1466-7 may have been the lessee of Brewood forge in 1485. Another instance of patronage dates from 18 May 1492 when Bishop Smith secured from his friend and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster Sir Reginald Bray, who was visiting Lichfield at the time, a grant that one John Orchard should have the farm of the Duchy mill at Tutbury once the existing lease had expired.⁵⁵

The bishopric paid few annuities, though the emoluments pertaining to such offices as the steward and bailiff of the episcopal liberty must have not gone unappreciated by the officers of the same. Certain other posts carried annuities. Edmund Basset collected £5 as constable of Eccleshall castle, while Robert Careswall picked up £3/0s/8d in the 1460s as keeper of the prison there.⁵⁶ The receiver-general's fee was set at twenty marks, twopence a day was written off for the clerk of the consistory court, while the keeper of the episcopal gardens reaped half that amount from the issues of Haywood. The bishops even retained their own plumber and stonemason, paying them £1/13s/4d and 13s/4d respectively to repair their palaces. The auditor's fee changed in level and form between the occasions for which details survive. Thomas Rogers was paid £5 in 1464 and 14 5, but in the 1420s a predecessor apparently got £2 less. However, the difference was more than compensated for by a separate annuity of forty shillings he received as parker of Beaudesert and a profitable lease of the coal mines there.

William Smith's appointment in April 1452 as keeper of the episcopal household in St. Mary le Stroud, London, not only

carried an annual fee, but was also made for life.⁵⁷ Other posts, without fees, were sometimes granted for life, with the prospect of collecting the perquisites and incidentals accruing to them for a lengthy period doubtlessly enhancing the value of the grant. William Grimsby was made steward of the liberty in Warwickshire for life on 8 December 1458. David Kenrick and son Stephen were appointed appositors general for life from September 1453. After Stephen's early death, Bishop Halse (never one to forget a friend) replaced him with one of his household men.⁵⁸ Later, in 1464, David was given life-tenure of the parkership of Blore jointly with another episcopal consort, the identically-named John Halse of Haywood.⁵⁹ Yet another associate of the bishop, this time from his days in the household of Queen Margaret of Anjou, Edward Ellesmere (who was at the time also constable of Newcastle-under-Lyme), was given another lucrative sinecure as rider of Cannock wood on 17 December 1459, while the Yorkist leadership was in exile.⁶⁰ Yet when it became clear that not only were these rebels back in the country but had also seized power, that sinecure was quickly revoked as part of the see's attempt to foster good relations with Edward IV. The new rider of Cannock was the bishop's namesake and kinsman John Halse. Roger Everdon, who was appointed bailiff of the liberty in January 1459, was the brother of Thomas the justice of the peace in Staffordshire and kinsman to the influential Stafford and royal household man John Hampton.⁶¹

John Halse of Haywood, who developed into one of the bishopric's most powerful estate officials, began his career as the humble collector of Beaudesert in the 1440s. However, once his relative had been translated to Coventry and Lichfield in 1459 he noticeably prospered. On 7 June 1461 he was created rider of Cannock, as just mentioned, by which time he may well have already been the parker of Haywood. Certainly

he was parker there by that Michaelmas. As just mentioned, he added to these the joint-parkership of Blore in 1464 and rose to succeed Edmund Basset as receiver-general on Lady Day (25 March) 1473. There seems little doubt that this Halse benefited from the patronage of his episcopal namesake. Although I would hesitate to suggest that nothing more would have been heard of him as an administrator in the diocese had his connection with the bishop not existed, it is pertinent to note under the category of nepotism the successful career of another Halse within the diocese. This was the theologian and fellow kinsman of the bishop Edmund Halse. Edmund prospered and became Archdeacon of Salop in 1483 and of Derby two years later. Between 1475 and 1490 he was appointed to no fewer than five prebends in Lichfield Cathedral.⁶² The last of these was that of Eccleshall, which brought him £20 a year and was the second most valuable one not attached to a principal office in the close.

The administration of the episcopal properties, as I have discussed, was left to the laity. Although Archdeacon Tho as Chesterfield of Salop held the farm of Coventry Palace in the 1440s, only two clerics served as estate administrators. Both were employed at the highest level, as receiver-general: John Whelpdale in the mid-1450s and Richard Shirbourne during the first part of Henry VII's reign. Shirbourne also succeeded Edmund Halse as archdeacon of Salop in 1485, the duties of which post he could hardly have had much time to spare for. He is in fact once referred to in the Close Rolls as Dean of Lichfield after Heywood's death, though he was never so elected.⁶³

Although I initially stated that the emphasis of this chapter lay on the administration of the secular rather than the spiritual affairs of the see- the woolbearing rather than sinridden flocks- it is worth digressing briefly to discuss some of the episcopal officers, many of whom had estates which like the bishop's needed lay administration.

The diocese was divided into five archdeaconries: Chester, Coventry, Derby, Salop and Stafford. An archdeacon dealt with matters of probate and the administration of wills, taking the fees and profits accruing to the same. He also exercised a basic ecclesiastical jurisdiction, except in such matters as divorce and heresy which, together with such cases as he thought warranted episcopal examination, the archdeacon passed onto the bishop's consistory court at Lichfield. The most important of the archdeaconries was that of Chester. This paid handsomely (either £20 or £40 a year) for a jurisdictional independence in ecclesiastical matters similar to that which the lay palatinate of Chester enjoyed from the common law courts and parliamentary taxation.⁶⁴

The only fifteenth-century bishop to object to and challenge this situation was William Booth in 1449.⁶⁵ He used his court connections to confirm his right to 'cite any persons resident in the county and city of Chester in all matters concerning ecclesiastical law.'⁶⁶ His reasons ostensibly related to an inability on the part of others to carry out correction because of the truculence and maintenance of powerful men within Cheshire, but it seems equally likely that Booth had sensed yet another way of increasing his income, by reserving extra profits of court to himself and Lichfield. Nonetheless, this was an

exception and for the most part it was the archdeacon of Chester, rather than the bishop, who was the leading diocesan figure in that county.⁶⁷ The archdeaconry was much sought-after, and numbered among its occupants in this period two Stanleys, a Talbot and, in John Morton (1474-78), a future cardinal and archbishop of Canterbury.

If the bishops, abbots and priors can be described as the clerical nobility, it is these archdeacons and cathedral prebends, rather than the humble parish priests, who should be seen as the counterparts of the county gentry. Indeed, many of these were drawn from that class. As has been indicated, and especially under Halse, a university education was increasingly becoming a standard, even necessary qualification for office. Tuition fees and high costs of maintenance ensured that men with degrees were usually drawn from well-to-do or wealthy families. The Church had been seen for centuries by the aristocracy in the same light as the law and professional soldiering- as a suitable career for a younger son, whether spiritually minded or not. As this tradition continued through the fifteenth century, it is not surprising to find among the prebendaries of Lichfield between 1440 and 1500 representatives of such prominent local families as the Agards, Birminghams, Delves', Egertons, Mountforts, Newports, Talbots, Vernons and Whitgreves.

There were thirty-two prebends, ranging in value from £56/13s/4d to ten shillings. The wealthiest were attached to each of the senior cathedral officers: the Dean, Precentor, Treasurer and Chancellor.⁶⁸ In addition, the prebend of Bolton (Lancashire) went with the archdeaconry of Chester, and the prebend of Pipa Minor was regularly granted to a cleric of similar rank, such as the Dean of Wells (1415-40), and the Archdeacons of Stafford (1440-59) and Salop (1473-1500).

Like the bishop, the chapter at Lichfield was relatively poor, compared to others in England. From the 1534 values of the prebends given by Harwood, a figure of £370 per annum for the chapter's estates is obtained, exclusive of the values of the prebends of Brewood and Bolton (Lancashire), which are not given. Bolton was worth £10 and Brewood would raise the total to around £400. There was a general trend towards collecting prebends of increasing value, often by exchange. However, a regular income from one of the more moderately endowed positions was often worth more than a theoretically greater, but more difficult to collect income from another.

Little is known about the administration of the chapter's property. When one of the bishop's bailiffs, John Northall of Brewood, was sued in 1480 and 1482 for arrears there (having, as was usual, entered into a bond concerning the issues), the suit was pressed by both the episcopal receiver-general and Dean Heywood.⁶⁹ The latter's interest is explained by the association of his office with the prebendary of Brewood and it seems reasonable to deduce that he was concerned with arrears from his lands there which were being accounted for by Northall too. The use of a common set of officials may hold only for where both bishop and chapter had property in a particular locality, for in the early 1440s at Hope (Derbyshire) where the bishop held nothing it was the Talbots that the Dean and chapter had to rely upon to secure for them rents and arrears.⁷⁰ The chapter's steward at Hope, James Eyre, held no position under the bishop, but was from a leading north Derbyshire gentry family who were later to lease the

property in question.⁷¹

Much of the prebendal land was leased out. The estates at Sawley, which were the most valuable held by a member of the chapter, at one point even formed part of the episcopal patronage. Bishop Booth persuaded the prebendary to lease them to his brother Roger Booth.⁷² In the early 1450s the prebendal property at Colwich was farmed out for three years at £20 annually to Thomas Jorce of Bradley.⁷³ Other lessees and officers of the chapter's lands were local clergymen (conspicuously absent from the affairs of the bishop's property). The receiver of Bakewell in northern Derbyshire in 1438, William Broom, was the local vicar; Thomas Gocelyn, vicar of Thornton-by-Horncastle (Lincolnshire) was another receiver, when pardoned on 30 October 1441 for not appearing to answer the chapter's plea that he render an account⁷⁴; while the chaplain of Frith and Fernilee, again in north Derbyshire, was leasing these from the Dean and chapter at £8 a year in December 1434.⁷⁵ The tithes from Little Langton, yet another Derbyshire estate, were leased out in 1493 for five years at twelve shillings a year.⁷⁶ Divers mineral and occasionally wool-tithes from the wilderness of the Peak District were also leased out.⁷⁷

Whether the personal interest in their estates was markedly greater on the part of the individual prebendaries in Staffordshire, where the property was at least more accessible, is unknown. From a brief account of harvest time in 1500 on the land of the prebend of Alrewas (the Chancellor of Lichfield Cathedral) at Alrewas, there certainly was some demesne land.⁷⁸ The account refers to sheep farming and the cultivation of rye, wheat, corn,

oats and hay. A detailed breakdown of the expenses was presented to the prebendaries, itemising every aspect of the harvesting process- though exactly what the cleric made of the claim for one shilling 'for expenses tha I dronke at the angell' is unfortunately not recorded.

Having begun this chapter with a survey of Lichfield's bishops and continued by detailing their land and the role of the gentry in administering this, I want to conclude with an examination of lay patronage in clerical appointments. This will involve extending the frame of reference from the bishops and chapter at Lichfield to include certain of Staffordshire's monastic houses.

Western Christianity never developed a separate priestly tribe, such as that of Levi in the Old Testament, so that it was from the laity in general that the clergy were drawn. Dr. Colin Platt has written of the county clergy:

'Very little is known of the social origins of that priesthood, for it belonged, for the most part, to the level of society that left little behind it in records. Unquestionably, though, it was essentially local in character, recruiting its members from the county or the city and from the class most appropriate to the office.'⁷⁹

Certainly, as was shown with the prebendaries of Lichfield, many clerics in what were undoubtedly benefices of a more exalted status to those of obscure country parishes, were drawn from gentry families, many of which were local. Frequently, however, a parish church, the advowson of which lay with a gentry family, is found with an incumbent of the same surname as the presentor. Most were either (often impoverished) relatives or younger sons sent off to take holy orders, whose living constituted their portion of the family inheritance. Examples of this are legion and

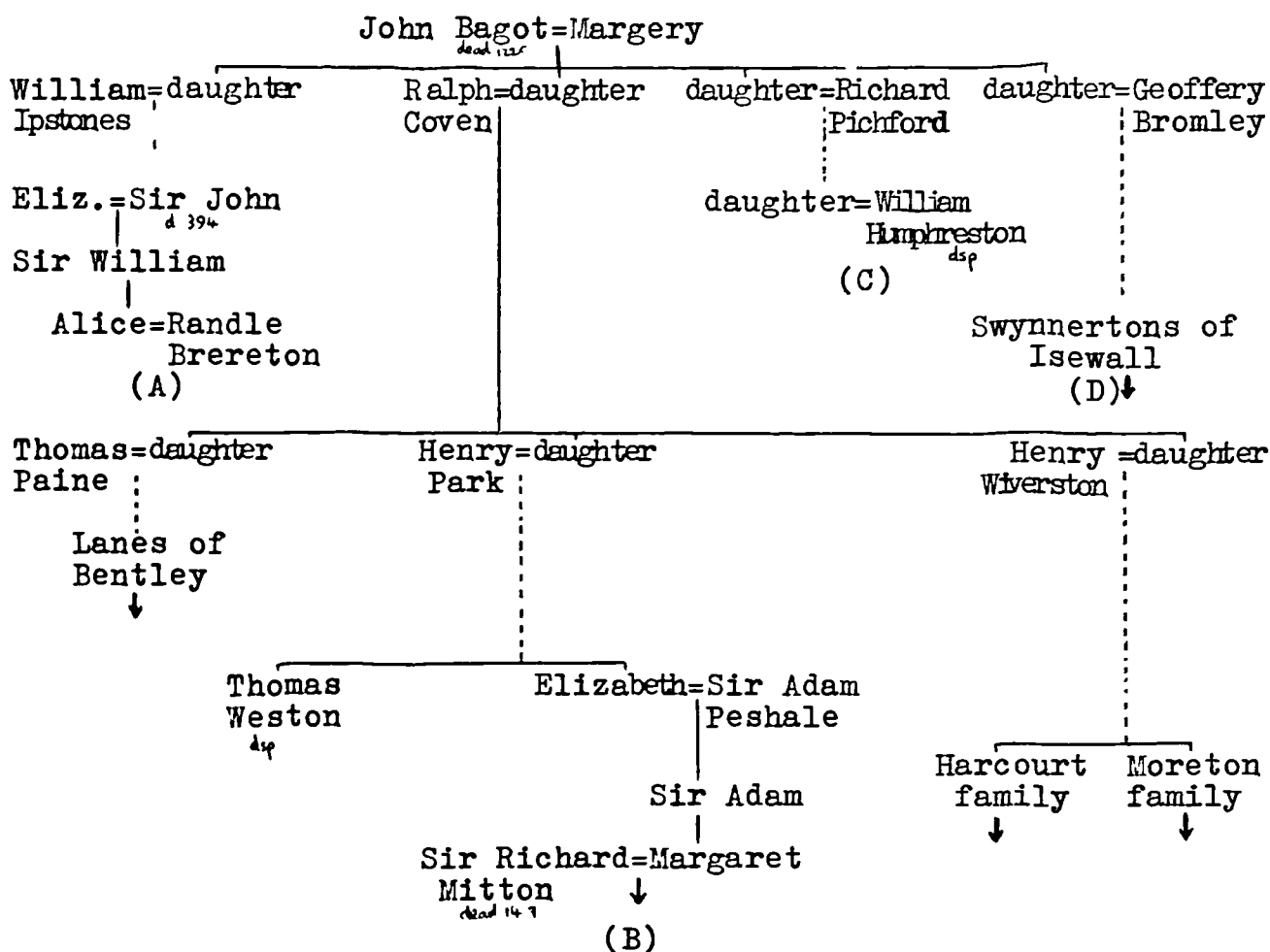
may be found in almost every parish history. I will include one example to illustrate both this and how an advowson often rotated among several patrons.

Just as subinfeudation and failure to produce a male heir combined with other factors to mangle the theoretically-simple feudal system of raising an army using the knight's fee as a basis, so they also complicated the situation concerning who held particular advowsons. The advowson of the parish church at Blymhill in western Staffordshire on the Shropshire border belonged to the lord of the manor. Back in the middle of the thirteenth century this lord, John Bagot, was succeeded by four daughters and, following an attempt by one branch to ignore the rights of the others, the advowson was settled such that each branch presented on one occasion in four. Using extracts pertaining to the church, culled from various episcopal registers, as set out in a sixteenth-century manuscript book, a near-perfect list of incumbents and their patrons in the century and a half following the Black Death can be drawn up.⁸⁰

| <u>Date</u> | <u>Incumbent</u> | <u>Patron</u> |
|----------------|--------------------|--|
| 1349 | Stephen Bromley | Thomas Weston |
| 1370s or 1380s | John Stretton | ? |
| 30 Dec. 1399 | Richard Ball | Elizabeth Ipstones |
| 8 Nov. 1410 | William Perton | Adam Peshale |
| 27 July 1428 | William Ivett | Robert Synnerton |
| 6 Oct. 1430 | John Bristow | Elizabeth Ipstones |
| 29 March 1431 | Hugh Hexstall | William Mitton |
| 10 Apr. 1442 | Robert Badenhall | Robert Swynnerton |
| 5 Oct. 1471 | Thomas Swynnerton | Randle Brereton |
| 8 Dec. 1485 | William Hamett | John Harcourt, William Mitton, James Moreton & Richard Lane |
| 23 Jan. 1486 | John Moreton | William Mitton |
| 28 May 1499 | William Swynnerton | John Swynnerton |

The rotation of the advowson can be seen when these names are set against a genealogy of the descendents of John Bagot of Blymhill and a letter (A,B,C or D) is used to denote

the four branches.



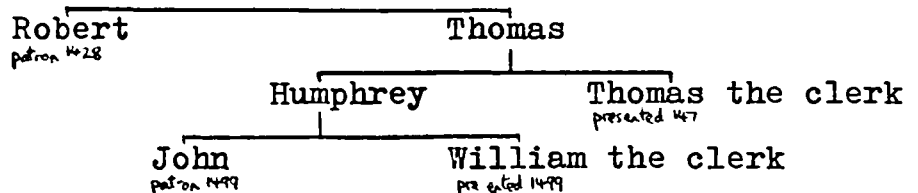
As the right to present was vested in the lord of the manor, it was passed on with the property to subsequent heirs or purchasers. Thus when the Paine third of the Coven portion was sold in 1267 to the Hide family and later passed to the Lanes of Bentley, the share in the Blymhill advowson originally held by Paine pertained to those families in turn. Applying the letters denoting branches of Bagot's heirs to the list of patrons, the following sequence emerges:

B, ?, A, B, D, A, B, D, A, B, B, D.

The unknown patron of John Stretton was probably Humphrey Swynnerton, who married Hillary, widow of John Bromley; but even ignoring this, a clear pattern can be distinguished. By the later middle ages the Pichford branch has been passed over, and the Coven branch is beginning to dominate the advowson.

The presentation of Hugh Hexstall in 1431 is a prime example of aristocratic intervention. William Mitton, who headed the branch whose turn it was to present, was a minor at the time. As feudal overlord Humphrey, earl of Stafford undoubtedly stepped in and nominated the next incumbent- his servant Hugh Hexstall. The Earl was soon involved again in the manor, as the Pichford branch's land became the subject of dispute. His 'arbitration' in favour of William Humphreston has been examined in a previous chapter.

An example of presenting a member of one's own family or a kinsman can be seen in 1349, when a member of the fourth branch was presented by the then-head of the second. It is also apparent in the presentations of 1471, 1486 and 1499. In the first of these, Randle Brereton presented the nephew of Robert Swynnerton (patron 1428 and 1442); and in 1499, when the Swynnerton turn to present came round again, the head of the family had his younger brother installed:



The incumbent from 1486 to 1499, John Moreton, was probably a close kinsman of James Moreton, who participated in the four-handed presentation of December 1485. It may have been that John Moreton was the choice of James and William Mitton (who presented him in January 1486) in that presentation, but that the other two co-patrons, John Harcourt and Richard Lane, refused to agree to this. Lane in fact was a minor at the time, who was married to a daughter of Harcourt and may well have been residing in that man's house, pending his majority. If it was a case of Mitton/Moreton v. Harcourt, the latter's success in December 1485 was negated six weeks later.

When the King was lord of the manor he presented to the living like any other patron, but royal patronage in clerical matters did not stop there. As mentioned in the first part of this chapter it was the King who chose the English and Welsh bishops. The Crown was also patron of many religious houses. In Staffordshire these were the Cistercian abbey at Dieulacres near Leek, Rocester Abbey and Trentham Priory (both Augustinian foundations), and the former alien priory at Tutbury. The heads of these houses were royal appointees, though as only Tutbury (the property of which was valued at £245 a year at the time of the dissolution) was anything other than poorly endowed, these were not greatly sought-after appointments. At Tutbury, links with its French mother-church at St. Pierre-sur-Dives in Normandy, broken by the general royal measures against alien houses under Henry IV and Henry V (which saw the destruction of Staffordshire's other alien priory, at Lapley-by-Brewood in 1415), were continued for a short while in the early 1430s by the appointment of its last French prior, Adam Preaux.⁸¹ Preaux's successor, Thomas Gedney, was a monk from Westminster, who may possibly have been known to Cardinal Beaufort; the King was still a minor at the time of this appointment in 1433. After Gedney, monks from Tutbury occupied the priorship for the rest of the century. Internal appointments were also usual for Rocester and Trentham, so royal patronage in these houses was not particularly evident.

Internal appointments were also common at many other religious houses in Staffordshire at this time, such as Brewood (Black Ladies), Calwich, Farewell, Ranton and St. Thomas' Priories and Burton Abbey. Again,

ABBEYS, PRIORIES AND COLLEGIATE CHURCHES IN STAFFORDSHIRE
IN STAFFORDSHIRE 1422-1535.



- ☐ Diocese of Worcester
- Benedictine
- Cistercian
- + Augustinian
- △ Collegiate Church

this should be seen as reducing the importance of the patron, for the combination of the insignificance of many of these institutions and their lack of generous endowments made it difficult to find prospective candidates from outside. Thus it is difficult to assess the value of their rights to such families as the Longfords, who were patrons for Calwich, the Talbots for Croxden or the Harcourts for Ranton- in this last case they certainly confirmed elections there.⁸² In some of these institutions the choice of head was further restricted by the small number of inmates from which to choose. At Calwich in 1449, 1461 and the 1520s there were only two clerics- a prior and monk. Canwell, Farewell, Hulton, Ranton, Rocester, St. Thomas', Sandwell and Trentham all had less than ten monks at the time of the dissolution; and even the wealthier houses such as Burton, Croxden, Dieulacres and Tutbury held only about a dozen. Although the number of monks and nuns in the abbeys and priories of Staffordshire rose slightly in the fifteenth century, it totalled no more than about a hundred and twenty at any time in the later middle ages.

When appointments were not internal promotions they regularly concerned monks from within Staffordshire or its environs. St. Thomas' provided priors for nearby Ranton in 1433 and Trentham in 1485-6, while the Cluniacs of Lenton (Nottinghamshire) supplied the same for Canwell in 1456 and Sandwell in 1488. Sandwell also had priors from Shrewsbury and Evesham in the fifteenth century, and Stone one from Kenilworth. However, with the exception of the Irish bishop of Achonry, who was presumably a friend of Bishop Smith of Coventry and Lichfield (whose suffragan he became), who became Prior of Stone in 1493, the monastic

houses of Staffordshire certainly do not seem to have attracted distantly based or academically distinguished clerics.

I know of only two occasions when serious dispute arose over an election to the headship of one of these institutions. In both, the trouble was caused not by the monks who supposedly made the election, but by outsiders. The first of these involved the wealthiest of Staffordshire monastic houses, Burton Abbey, in September 1430. Whether the string of corrupt abbots there had finally spurred Bishop Heyworth to put in a man of known integrity or whether he merely wanted to advance the career of an old friend from his time at St. Albans, there was certainly considerable episcopal pressure put upon the monks of Burton to elect Robert Ownesly, a member of Heyworth's household. The Bishop was reported as having said that he would rather lose a thousand marks than that his man fail to get the post. However, the monks reacted to this pressure by stubbornly refusing to elect Ownesley. It was not until Sir Richard Vernon, whom Heyworth had ensured was present at the deliberations, promised that if they elected someone else, they would not live to enjoy their 'victory', that the monks acquiesced.⁸³ In fact, it was Heyworth whose victory was short-lived. Within three years there was a new abbot- Ralph Henley, a monk from the abbey itself and a return to the bad, old ways. Henley's four successors in the fifteenth century were also drawn from the abbey's own ranks.

The other dispute concerns the tiny, impoverished priory of Canwell by the Warwickshire border. This was a Benedictine foundation, dating from the first half of the

twelfth century, the patronage of which had passed from the Beauchamp earls of Warwick to the Talbots and then Lises. My source for the dispute is an undated letter to Richard Harper, servant to Anne, duchess of Buckingham, from the Prior of Maxstoke.⁸⁴ Maxstoke was the principal residence of the Stafford family in the north Midlands and the priory's interests were naturally theirs too. Much of Canwell's property lay in north Warwickshire and was farmed out to Maxstoke, but the latter had grander designs and with its patron's support was attempting to annex the south Staffordshire house. This move was naturally opposed by Lord Lisle, and also by the Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield. The Prior of Maxstoke wrote that he thought the Bishop might be bought off, but 'the charge ther of wold be to us to grevos to bere'. The lack of a date for all these machinations is frustrating. However, as it was to the Duchess rather than Duke Humphrey that the tidings are to be relayed, it seems likely that the letter dates from 1460-80. The letter continued with a report that Lisle 'has put yn a monk ther and mayntenyth hym ther agenst the prior. And hath laboryd to the byshop to have the prior deprived'. The writer concluded that without Stafford support this forcing-out was likely to be successful and that Maxstoke would lose even the farm of Canwell's estates. The reaction of Lisle to the then-prior, whose original nominee he must have been, suggests that the Staffords had somehow persuaded the cleric to support the annexation- hence Lisle's attempt to have him replaced by a monk whose feelings on the matter were in keeping with his own.

All this is remarkably similar to the magnate struggles for influence in local, lay politics. Stafford interests were being pursued by the exercise of 'goodlordship'

towards part of the affinity; in this case Maxstoke Priory. Bribery (for that is what it was) and maintaining a suit, as revealed here, were the same tactics which a lord regularly employed to further the aspirations of any lay 'client'. Similarly, it was only through the support of other powerful lords, Lisle and the Bishop, that poverty-stricken Canwell was able to withstand the take-over bid. Its own right to an independent existence was hardly a strong one. In 1456 and 1468 the Bishop had to appoint a new prior because there were no monks living there to elect one, even at Lisle's behest.⁸⁵ This could explain the episcopal reluctance to see the priory closed; the bishop may have been hoping that his patronage could be extended permanently to include Canwell.

Magnate patronage was also occasionally evident in the appointments to the Collegiate churches in the county. There were five of these in the fifteenth century: St. Michael's, Penkridge; St. Mary's, Stafford; St. Edith's, Tamworth; St. Michael's, Tettenhall; and St. Peter's, Wolverhampton. Of these, Tettenhall's patrons were the Ferrers of Tamworth, and the Deans of Penkridge, where the Crown was patron, were the Archbishops of Dublin. Royal patronage at Stafford was granted away by Henry VI to Humphrey, duke of Buckingham on 16 March 1446.⁸⁶ In June 1447 the King granted away more of his clerical patronage in the area when he gave John, Lord Dudley the right to present the next dean at Wolverhampton.⁸⁷ Edward IV made a similar grant in March 1479 of Tamworth to William, Lord Hastings.⁸⁸ Both Dudley and Hastings took the advantage to use the deaneries as they would a lucrative parochial benefice and appointed close kinsmen. Hastings'

choice was Ralph Ferrers of Tamworth, younger brother to Sir Thomas Ferrers, whom Hastings' sister had married. For Dudley, it was his son William (later Bishop of Durham). Dudley's interest in the deanery of Wolverhampton did not end there, for another of his sons, Clement, succeeded William in that office. In 1477 the Wydevilles' accumulation of posts reached Staffordshire in general and Wolverhampton's deanery in particular with the installation of Lionel. Three years later the deanery was annexed to that of St. George's at Windsor under Richard, bishop of Salisbury. Evidently it was now considered lucrative enough to be a spoil worthy of the interest of exalted clerics. Lionel Wydeville took over the see of Salisbury in 1482, making it even less likely that he took any real interest in the affairs of the deanery.

Like the Lichfield chapter, the Collegiate churches consisted of a dean and prebendaries. For the Crown, these prebends were extra patronage. At the college of St. Edith, Tamworth, for example, there was the dean, who was ex officio prebendary of Amington (worth £21 a year), and five other prebendaries: Bonehill (£7), Coton (£8), Syerscote (£3/6s/8d), Wiggington (£10) and Wilnercote (£8). That these prebends were used to assist royal clerks and servants is indisputable. Thomas Shippy, prebendary of Syerscote 1457-60, was Henry VI's first physician; Edmund Audley, William Cox and Richard Balder were just three of the king's clerks appointed to prebends; John Arundel, chaplain to Edward IV, was prebendary of Wilnercote from 1479; and other royal servants and petitioners, such as William Taylor, scholar of Oxford University and prebendary of Wiggington 1498-99, many with other offices (e.g. dean of Warwick, prebendary of Wells or York Cathedrals), can be found drawing some of their income from Tamworth.

Royal patronage in the clerical sphere did not end there. There were also corrodies. These were 'requests' from the Crown that a religious house take in, feed and generally provide for a royal nominee. There were two types of corrody. In the first, the beneficiary was a lay servant, rewarded for long service, such as Peter Aumener, clerk of chancery, who in January 1440 was thrust upon Burton Abbey.⁸⁹ Tutbury Priory reacted to the imposition of William Balguc in October 1439⁹⁰ by asserting that it was not bound to accept corrodians. However, it dared not push this to the point of refusing to accept Balguc and wrote back stating that he had been accepted, having renounced the initial royal letters close.⁹¹ This reply, made in February 1440, added that Balguc's acceptance into the priory should not be taken as a precedent. This independent, truculent tone did not find favour with the King, and within a few days Tutbury found it expedient to send off another reply, accepting without protest the Crown's right of corrody. Monastic houses, however, could hardly be expected to welcome the practice.

The second type of corrody occurred when the Crown used the change-over from one bishop, abbot or prior to another as an excuse for presenting to items of patronage normally pertaining to the prelate in question. Some institutions were bound, on the accession of a new head, to find a benefice for a royal nominee and a corrody for him while this was being arranged. Burton Abbey had to do this for an under-clerk of the royal kitchen after the election of Abbot Henley in 1433⁹², while forty years later the election of Abbot Field brought a royal demand that the abbey pay a pension instead of the corrody, before providing its nominee with the required benefice.⁹³ Back in 1435 the royal choice

for the corrody and benefice which the newly-consecrated Bishop of Worcester was bound to supply, was John Bate.⁹⁴ Whatever living Bate did receive, he was not there for long. In August 1436 the Crown found him another office—that of Dean of the Collegiate church at Tamworth. Bate was one of the more successful of royal appointees to clerical office in Staffordshire. Unlike his predecessors (he was the fifth dean since 1429), he proved not to be an absentee who left as quickly as possible because of the church's poverty. He brought stability and leadership⁹⁵, though, as pointed out elsewhere, his personal morals were not all that they might have been.

I can find no reference to this corrody and benefice practice regarding the see of Coventry and Lichfield, though there is evidence that the Crown took advantage of inter-regna to present to the see's prebends. Henry VI presented to the prebends of Offley and Tarvin following Bishop Booth's translation to York in 1452, while seven years later, after Bishop Boulers' death, he did likewise to those of Dernford and Pipa Minor (Prees).⁹⁶ The Crown also seems to have presented royal clerks regularly to the prebend of Flixton, though as with the other chapter offices, this supposedly lay within the sphere of episcopal patronage.⁹⁷

With this set of presentations by the King to the bishopric of Coventry and Lichfield, a full circle has been reached. What general picture has emerged? For the bishops at least this seems to have been a time of quiet, if not particularly profitable co-existence with the rest of the county. The insidious financial problems of the see could only be solved by either wholesale rent increases

or an increase in the farms of mills, mines and other assets. Although the bishops (Booth and at the beginning of the century Catterick excepted) certainly spent more time in the diocese than contemporary complaints lead us to believe was common for later-medieval bishops, they had no direct relationship with their tenantry, and hence little immediate cause of friction- in short, 'out of sight, out of mind'. The extensive employment of local men as estate officials also seems to have helped keep relations between the bishops and their neighbours and tenantry running smoothly. This was in stark contrast to the state of affairs between many of the county's monastic houses and the laity. While the bishop was around but not ever-present, the very activity and ubiquity of small numbers of often-licentious monastics seems to have aroused antagonism. Certainly houses such as Burton made greater efforts towards increasing their income by estate improvements and were a more prominent feature of the county community than the bishops. A connection between the activity of a clerical institution and its popularity would scarcely be surprising. Perhaps the bishops were liked (or at least tolerated) because they left everyone in peace. The abbots and priors acted and were counted more as part of the local gentry; hunting with them and participating in their quarrels.⁹⁸

As for patronage, again much was in the hands of the bishop or larger religious houses. Of the remainder, it was used to help out relatives in holy orders or, in the case of the Crown and possibly such magnate families as the Staffords, clerical servants and occasionally favoured petitioning scholars. In general, however, the paucity of the endowments ensured that Staffordshire offices went to Staffordshire men- few others were interested.

1. The registers are at the diocesan record office at Lichfield (cited as LJRO):
 LJRO, B/A/1/9 Heyworth
 LJRO, B/A/1/10 Booth
 LJRO, B/A/1/11 Close and Boulers
 LJRO, B/A/1/12 Halse
 LJRO, B/A/1/13 Smith and Arundel
 The manorial and receiver's accounts are at the county record office at Stafford (cited as SRO), the William Salt Library, Stafford (cited as WSL), the Public Record Office (cited as PRO), and Lichfield Joint Record Office:
 SRO, D(W)1734/3/2/1-4
 SRO, D(W)1734/J.1948, J.2032 and J.2046
 WSL, Original collection, SMS 335i
 LJRO, B/A/21/123312, 122314-5, 124075 and 124078-9
 PRO, Ministers and Receivers Accounts, SC6/Hen.VII/1846
2. S.Shaw, The History and Antiquities of Staffordshire, (London, 1798-1801), I, p.231.
3. Ibid., I, p.271.
4. LJRO, B/A/1/9 fo.188^R.
5. E.Axon, 'The family of Bothe (Booth) and the church in the 15th. and 16th. centuries', Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society, LIII(1938), pp.36-49
6. T.Wright (ed.), Political poems and songs relating to English history, (Rolls Series, 1859-61), II, pp.224-9.
7. T.Gascoigne, Loci e libro veritatum: passages selected from Gascoigne's theological dictionary illustrating the condition of Church and State, (ed.) J.E.T.Rogers (Oxford, 1881 edition), pp.47-8, 52, 194.
8. Calendar of Papal Registers- Papal Letters, X (1447-55), (H.M.S.O., 1913), p.59.
9. J.Strachey and others (ed.), Rotuli Parliamentorum, (London, 1767-77), V, p.216. Other Staffordshire names in the list were John, Lord Dudley, William Mynors, John Hampton and the Stanleys of Elford.
10. e.g. Ibid., V, p.241.
11. Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1452-61, p.359.
12. According to D.Jones, The Church in Chester 1300-1540, Chetham Society, third series, VII(1957), ppl9-20 Whelpdale, who was a prebend of St. John's collegiate church in Chester 1453-4 had been receiver-general to the bishop of Carlisle. This was Nicholas Close, who became bishop of Coventry and Lichfield in 1452 and presumably was instrumental in bringing Whelpdale to this area. He (Whelpdale) was receiver-general for his master's new see by Michaelmas 1453, by which time Close was dead. It seems likely that Close brought him to Lichfield as receiver-general and that Whelpdale's appointment as such for this diocese dates from Michaelmas 1452, just before Close's death.

13. A.B.Emden, A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to A.D.1500, (Oxford, 1957-9), II, pp.856-7.
14. J.Strachey and others (eds.), Rotuli Parliamentorum, (London, 1767-77), V, pp.477-8.
15. Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1452-61, p.654; Ibid., 1461-67, p.65. The statute he contravened was 2 Richard II, St.1 c.5.
16. SRO, D(W)1734/3/3/264.
17. PRO, Patent Rolls supplementary, C67/45m.43. The prior and convent of the cathedral church at Coventry had to wait even longer for their pardon, to 12 May 1462 (Ibid, m.21).
18. A.L.Browne, 'Lichfield Cathedral Chancellors', Collections for a History of Staffordshire (cited as SHC), William Salt Archaeological Society, 1939, p.65.
19. He was, however, a royal councillor under Edward, along with the other English and Welsh bishops.
20. Victoria County History of Staffordshire, III, p.28.
21. All the evidence for the prebendaries and their qualifications comes from J.Le Neve, Fasti Ecclesiae Anglicanae 1330-1541, X: Coventry and Lichfield diocese, (ed.) B.Jones, (London, 1964).
22. Shaw, op.cit., I, p.272.
23. Emden, op.cit., III, pp.1721-2; I, pp.50-1.
24. Derbyshire Record Office, D231M/E484, between Humphrey Okeover and Tutbury Priory over land in Okeover- this was not to be a final settlement, as evidenced by the renewed litigation in the early sixteenth century (PRO, Entry Books of Decrees and Orders, DL5/3 fo.203D; SRO, D661/2/336, between John Bracy of Lichfield and Thomas Fauconer over property in Streethay.
25. L.Toulmin Smith (ed.), The Itinerary of John Leland, (London, 1907-10), V, p.100.
26. Victoria County History of Staffordshire, III, p.28.
27. R.Hilton, 'Lord and peasant in Staffordshire in the middle ages', North Staffordshire Journal of Field Studies (cited as NSJFS), X (1970), pp.1-20; reprinted in his book The English peasantry in the later middle ages, (Oxford, 1975), pp.215-43.
28. D.M.Palliser and A.C.Pinnock, 'The markets of medieval Staffordshire', NSJFS, XI (1971), pp.49-63.
29. This Blore was not the village by which the battle of Blore Heath was fought on 23 September 1459. That was Blore-in-Hales. This was really little more than a park a couple of miles from there towards Eccleshall, and so I have emphasised this difference in the name of it.

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30. G.Wrottesley, 'Extracts from the Plea Rolls of the reign of Henry VI', SHC, III new series (1900), pp.215, 220.
 31. SRO, D(W)1734/3/3/264.
 32. Wrottesley, Plea Rolls- Henry VI, p.160.
 33. G.Wrottesley, 'Extracts from the Plea Rolls, temp. Henry VI and Edward IV', SHC, IV new series (1901), pp.139-40; Wrottesley, Plea Rolls- Henry VI, pp.123-4, 157.
 34. These Rugeleys of Hawksyard must have severed their links with the Wolseleys only a short time before this, as they were certainly in the Wolseleys service in the early 1460s.
 35. Calendar of Papal Registers- Papal Letters, X (1447-55), (H.M.S.O., 1913), pp.471-2.
 36. C.Rawcliffe, The Staffords, Earls of Stafford and Dukes of Buckingham 1394-1521, (Cambridge, 1978), p.112.
 37. A.J.Pollard, 'Estate Management in the Later Middle Ages: the Talbots and Whitchurch, 1383-1525', Economic Historical Review, second series, XXV (1972), pp.563-4.
 38. G.Wrottesley, 'Extracts from the Plea Rolls', SHC, VI new series i (1903), p.95.
 39. N.Davis (ed.), Paston Letters and Papers of the Fifteenth Century, (Oxford, 1971-6), II, no.815.
 40. P.Spufford & M.Spufford, Eccleshall, (Keele, 1964), p.20.
 41. SRO, D(W)1734/J.1948 m.14; WSL, SMS 335i m.28; PRO, SC6/Henry VII/1846 m.16.
 42. LJRO, B/A/21/124075.
 43. T.Harwood, The History and Antiquities of the Church and City of Lichfield, (Gloucester, 1806), p.120; T.Tanner, Notitia Monastica, (Cambridge, 1787 edition), chapter on Staffordshire p.xv.
 44. Victoria County History of Staffordshire, III, p.159.
 45. The Beaudesert coalmines were farmed out from 1461 until least 1485 to Richard and William Blurton for £3/6s/8d a year.
 46. SRO, D(W)1734/J.1948 mm.1^R, 2^R.
 47. SRO, D(W)1734/J.2004 m.3. This is from a short set of accounts; 1436-40, 1447-8, 1471-2, 1495-6. Weston was all leased out.
 48. I.H.Jeayes, 'Calendar of the Marquess of Anglesey's Longden, Lichfield and other Staffordshire charters, formerly at Beaudesert', SHC, 1939, p.77 no.1579b. The arbitrators were Edmund, Lord Dudley, the Abbots of Croxden and Rocester and the Prior of Trentham. The Astons relinquished their claim in 1538.

49. Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem- Henry VII, (H.M.S.O., 1898-1955), I, nos.423, 484, 874. Bishop's Offley formed part of Eccleshall manor and Hednesford part of Cannock.
50. WSL, SMS 35ii fo.4^D(no.28). The annual rent was raised from £4/13s/4d to £8/10s/0d.
51. SRO, D(W)1734/3/2/1 m.48^R; SRO, D(W)1734/3/2/2 m.9^R. Willford was about half a mile from the Stanleys' principal manor of Elford in south-east Staffordshire.
52. Victoria County History of Staffordshire, III, p.161.
53. SRO, D(W)1734/3/2/1 m.43^R.
54. Wrottesley, Plea Rolls- Henry VI, p.183.
55. PRO, DL5/3 fo.83^R.
56. LJRO, B/A/1/11 fo.44^R; LJRO, B/A/1/12 fo.124^D.
57. LJRO, B/A/1/10 fo.52^R.
58. Ibid., fo.125^R.
59. LJRO, B/A/21/122314, pp.37-8.
60. LJRO, B/A/1/12 fo.124^R.
61. Ibid., fo.125^R.
62. We ford (1475-8), Whittington (1478-80), Offley (1480-1), Colwich (1481-90) and Eccleshall (1490-death in 1501).
63. Calendar of Close Rolls, 1485-1500, p.226. Dated 26 June 1494.
64. P.Heath, 'The Medieval Archdeaconry and Tudor Bishopric of Chester', Journal of Ecclesiastical History, XX (1969), pp.243-52. For the lay independence see A.E.Curry, The Demesne of the County Palatine of Chester in the early fifteenth century, (Unpublished Manchester II.A.thesis, 1977) and D.J.Clayton, The Involvement of the Gentry in the Political Administrative and Judicial Affairs of the County Palatine of Chester 1442-85, (Unpublished Liverpool PhD thesis, 1980).
65. British Library, Cottonian Mss., Cleopatra E.III fos.95^D-96^R.
66. Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1446-52, p.261.
67. In Chester itself the Abbey of St. Werburgh dominated everything. The bishops must have envied the Abbots' power and vast wealth. See D.Jones, The Church in Chester 1300-1540, Chetham Society, third series vii (1957).

68. The values of the prebends in 1534-5 were: Alrewas £26/13s/4d; Bishop's Hull £2; Bishop's Itchington £26/13s/4d; Bobenhull £1; Bolton £10 or £65/10s/0d; Brewood ? ; Colwich £13/6s/8d; Curborough £6/13s/4d; Dasset Parva £12/3s/4d; Dernford 10s/0d; Eccleshall £20; Flixton £7; Freeford £20; Gaia Major £5; Gaia Minor £2; Hansacre £14; Longdon £8; Offley £16; Pipa Minor (Prees) £1/6s/8d; Ryton £11/6s/8d; Sandiacre £10/11s/5d; Sawley £56/13s/4d; Stotfold £5; Tachbrook £10; Tarvin £26/13s/4d; Ufton £26/13s/4d; Ufton Decani £2/13s/4d; Weeford £14; Wellington £10; Whittington & Baswich £13/6s/8d; and Wolvey £2/3s/1d. The larger figure for Bolton prebend is given by H.Baylis, 'Prebends in the Cathedral Church of Saints Mary and Chad in Lichfield, Transactions of the Lichfield Archaeological and Historical Society, II (1960-1), pp.38-52.
69. Wrottesley, Plea Rolls, SHC, VI new series i (1903), pp.129, 143.
70. Harwood, op.cit., pp.175-6.
71. I.H.Jeayes, Descriptive Catalogue of Derbyshire Charters, (London & Derby, 1906), nos.1444-5.
72. Axon, op.cit., p.36. This brother, Roger Booth, moved to and died at Sawley.
73. Wrottesley, Plea Rolls- Henry VI & Edward IV, p.102.
74. Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1441-46, p.8.
75. Jeayes, Derbyshire Charters, no.627.
76. Ibid., no.1617.
77. Victoria County History of Staffordshire, III, p.162.
78. SRO, D783/5/3/15.
79. C.Platt, The Parish Churches of Medieval England, (London, 1981), p.78.
80. SRO, D(W)1810 fo.239.
81. Victoria County History of Staffordshire, III, p.337.
82. Ibid., III, p.253.
83. Historical Manuscripts Commission, Series 69 (Middleton), pp.248ff. This is the Register of Abbot Field.
84. PRO, Ancient Correspondence, SC1/60/6.
85. Victoria County History of Staffordshire, III, p.216n.
86. Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1441-46, p.413.
87. Ibid., 1446-52, p.54.

88. Ibid., 1476-85, p.155.
89. Calendar of Close Rolls, 1435-41, p.369.
90. Ibid., 1435-41, pp.352-3.
91. A.Saltman, 'The Cartulary of Tutbury Priory', SHC, fourth series IV (1962), nos.300, 301.
92. Calendar of Close Rolls, 1429-35, p.257.
93. Ibid., 1468-76, p.309.
94. Ibid., 1429-35, p.362.
95. For his Statutes of 1442 for the rule of the church, and in particular the vicars (the prebendaries themselves being absentees), see D.A.Johnson, 'Dean Bate's Statutes for St. Edith's, Tamworth, Staffs., 1442', Transactions of the South Staffordshire Archaeological Society, X (1968-9), pp.55-62.
96. Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1452-61, pp.28(bis), 484, 498.
97. Twice in 1426 and again in 1434, 1443 and 1444. The first of these appointees, George Radcliff, does not appear in Le Neve's lists. The reference for him is Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1422-29, p.340.
98. See for example, how the Abbot of Dieulacres sided with Sir Sampson Meverell in that man's struggle with Ralph Basset in the Peak District in the 1440s; or how the Prior of Stone took the part of the Fittons against Richard Whalley over the manor of Darlaston-by-Stone. Both cases are discussed in the chapter on law and order.

CHAPTER V

CRIME AND JUSTICE

In the fifteenth century the political history of Staffordshire, like its scenery, appears at first sight to consist of almost unmitigated drabness. Save for the antics of the Erdeswick-Mynors gang who terrorised the north-west during the opening decades, the county witnessed little of the corruption, violence and feud traditionally associated with this period. Yet this is a blessing in disguise. The lack of such features frees the historian from the mesmeric sound and fury of isolated incidents of bloody-mindedness and blood-letting, which, though rare and affecting the lives of only a tiny minority of an area's inhabitants, have dominated accounts of the period.

The vast majority of lawsuits brought before the plethora of courts in the fifteenth century related to petty matters. Minor debts, wandering cattle, arguments between neighbours, poaching and pilfering- these, rather than riot, rape or ransacking, were the staple diet of the later medieval legal system. Yet it is upon the occasional serious crimes and instances of murder, gang-warfare or struggles over an inheritance that attention has been mainly focused; possibly because they are more interesting, but more because of the greater impact they are felt to have had upon society. This in itself is a debatable assumption. For the majority of the rural population it was the petty disputes over grazing rights or debts of a few shillings that were of more immediate importance for their survival or prosperity. However, as it is with the gentry and nobility rather than the peasantry that this thesis is concerned, I only intend to concentrate upon suits involving these. I also have included a section on the use of arbitration, which was particularly prevalent in this county.

My major sources have been the legal records of central government, now stored in the Public Record Office at Chancery Lane. There are also the calendared Close, Fine and Patent Rolls, and the Rolls of Parliament, printed in the seventeenth century. Of the records in the Public Record Office the most important classes have been the Plea Rolls of the courts of King's Bench (KB 27) and Common Pleas (CP 40), the Ancient Indictments of King's Bench (KB 9), the Early Chancery Proceedings (C 1), the Pardon Rolls (C 67), and the records of the court of Star Chamber. The Plea Rolls up to 1485 were examined at the turn of this century by General Wrottesley and in the transactions of the William Salt Archaeological Society (Collections for a History of Staffordshire) extensive extracts were published. In addition numerous deeds have been referred to from several county record offices and the British Library.

Most crimes, minor or serious, were directed against property rather than the person. Above all, the importance of the inheritance dominated and conditioned attitudes to litigation and lay at the root of much of the business brought before the courts. It was the ambition of every landholder to pass onto his heir (preferably a son) an inheritance at least as secure and as valuable as when he received it. To that end, and also if there were an opportunity to improve it, he was prepared to engage in almost any amount of expensive litigation, erect or resurrect wistful claims to land held by another, and risk the disapproval or worse of neighbours, relatives or lords.

Many of the lawsuits involving Staffordshire gentlemen in the late fifteenth century relate to this obsession with the inheritance. It is with these that I will begin.

Security of tenure depended on documentary evidence of one's entitlement to hold the property in question—hence the need to keep a strong hold on the whole range of land deeds of oneself and one's forebears.(enfeoffments, fines, grants, leases, quitclaims etc.). Several Staffordshire figures had to sue associates for the return or handing-over of their deeds, since it was a common practice to lodge one's muniments with trusty friends, usually feoffees to use. John Barbour did so in 1440, as did the Dean of the royal Free Chapel in Wolverhampton and James Leveson in the following year, John Hampton in 1450, John Delves in 1463 and Robert Kynnardsley of Loxley in 1474— the list is by no means exhaustive.¹ Sometimes trouble of this nature was inter-necine, such as when Thomas Littleton sued his mother-in-law Margaret Burley at Hilary term 1459.² This suit related to the death of Margaret's husband William a few months earlier. In the disturbed political atmosphere of that time and with William Burley's previous close allegiance to Richard of York, Littleton was eager to get his hands on the Burley papers as soon as possible. He wanted to secure the inheritance due to him and his wife Joan, who was one of Burley's daughters and coheiresses (and also the wealthy widow of Sir Philip Chetwynd). Littleton's claim was for two chests of deeds, writings and other muniments, which implies that either he was making an indiscriminate grab for the Burley 'evidences' or that Joan's share of the family papers was enormous. Littleton, who was later to achieve fame as the author of the seminal work on contemporary land law, was well placed to appreciate the value of being able to produce at short notice proof of title. He and his wife had had to fight off an attempt in the late 1440s by the heirs of Sir Philip Chetwynd, the Chetwynds of Alspath, to enter Sir Philip's

inheritance, despite this having been enfeoffed jointly upon Chetwynd and Joan Burley his wife, whom Littleton later married. One must have some sympathy with the Chetwynds of Alspath, three of whose heirs Joan was to outlive before her death in 1505, having kept out her first husband's heirs for sixty-one years. Successive Chetwynd of Alspath heirs kept up a series of suits against the Littletons, none of which had much chance of success against the prowess of Littleton, who also managed to play off Buckingham and Warwick, both of whom sought exclusive use of his skills. The obvious aim of the Chetwynds of Alspath was to so wear Littleton down that he would give up part of the inheritance to obtain peace. This failed. All that was granted away was a lease of certain properties in and around Stafford for eight marks in 1467 to William Chetwynd (about whom more later).³ Littleton was, however, forced to compromise with Margaret Burley after 1459. Another possible reason for his quest for the Burleys' papers was that he and his wife claimed Arley as part of her portion of the family estates. This Margaret disputed and at length was able to make the great lawyer give way. He bought her out in 1465.⁴

While Littleton was generally able to achieve his ends by getting possession of the required pieces of parchment, one Staffordshire gentleman did manage to come out on top by using documents he should have handed to another as pawns in an attempt to get a set of debts written off. John Bagot of Blithfield, whose step-daughter was to marry one Robert Tyrell, avoided repaying money owed to Tyrell's father (money he, with both father and grandfather still alive, simply did not have) by making the delivery of "alle suche dedis of entaile and other evidencis" concerning what was to be the bride's inheritance and dowry conditional on the debts being

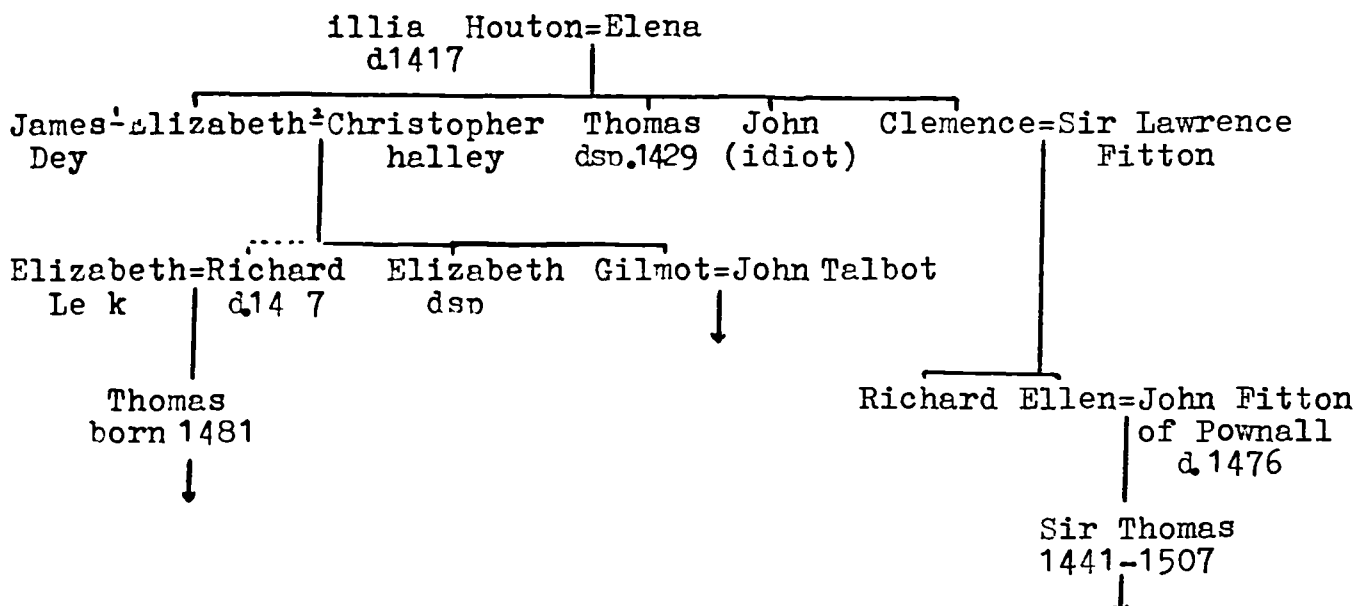
remitted in December 1465.⁵

Most lawsuits in Staffordshire in the fifteenth century concerned with a disputed inheritance were decided by the production of authenticated title deeds. Where these existed, it was vital to have them securely yet conveniently stored; where they did not exist, there was a great temptation to indulge in forgery. The classic features of such lawsuits are well revealed in the following Fitton-Whalley dispute. William Houton died prematurely in 1417, leaving two sons and two daughters, all of whom were juveniles. One of the girls, Elizabeth, had married James Dey, and Dey administered the Houtons' manor of Darlaston-by-Stone for six years until the heir Thomas came of age. However, in the late 1420s both Dey and Thomas died and the property passed to Houton's other son, John. Unfortunately John was mentally retarded. The subsequent struggle over Darlaston stemmed from this fact and concerned the husbands and descendants of John's two sisters: Elizabeth, already mentioned, and Clemence, who married Sir Lawrence Fitton of Gawsorth (Cheshire). After the death of James Dey Elizabeth fell in love with one Christopher Whalley and bore him a son, Richard, before they were eventually married in 1430. Later they were to have a couple of other children, one dying a spinster, the other, curiously named Gilmot, being wedded to John Talbot. Initially it was the Fitton rather than the Whalley claim to Darlaston that prevailed. In 1436 Sir Lawrence persuaded the dim-witted John Houton to release to him all right to the family inheritance, which was settled upon Sir Lawrence's son. When Elizabeth's bastard Richard came of age he staked a claim to this property, challenging the Fittons.

It was probably this challenge which led to the Crown taking an interest in the inheritance, but the Fittons produced evidence of enfeoffments to use which thwarted the

royal attempt to take over the lands. This victory may have owed something to Stafford family support. Buckingham was feudal overlord in Darlaston and is known to have written to Sir Laurence Fitton 1450-1, possibly over the coming lawsuit the record of which was personally delivered into the court of King's Bench.⁶

This victory should have secured Darlaston and the other minor properties of the Houton inheritance in Annesley near Burton-on-Trent and Aston-by-Stone permanently for the Fittons. However, sometime during the 1450s or 1460s Richard "halley recovered Darlaston. The next reference to trouble there refers to 20 February 1472 when the Fittons oved into and illegally expelled 'halley from Darlaston. By this time the major protagonists were Sir Laurence's son John and John's nephew and eventual heir Sir Thomas Fitton.(see genealogy below).



The Fittons were far more powerful than "halley, and were part of a large clan by that name in Cheshire and south Lancashire. They seem to have had the support of other landholders around Darlaston, such as James Lee and the Prior of Stone. It was with this prior that Sir Thomas

Fitton was convicted of the illegal disseisin of 20 February 1472 and ordered to pay damages of £180.⁷ The family refused to hand back the occupied estates and on 12 July a commission for Sir Thomas' arrest was issued to the Earl of Shrewsbury, John Acton, Ralph Wolseley, the sheriff of Staffordshire and others.⁸ Another jury found for Whalley on 3 October, but he still could not get these judgements in his favour translated into actual recovery of the lands.⁹ He did have the good lordship of Thomas, Lord Stanley, who was one of his feoffees, but Stanley was loath to alienate the Fittons on so petty a matter (as it undoubtedly seemed to him). However, Stanley did agree to arbitrate with Bishop Laurence Booth of Durham between the disputing parties, though this produced no acceptable solution. Stale-mate continued for the rest of the decade, with Whalley, aided by his friend Robert Boughay, desperately trying to end the Fittons' disregard for court decisions and they in turn sporadically pursuing litigation to disprove the authenticity of Whalley's title and deeds.

At some stage before his death in October 1487 Richard Whalley did recover Darlaston from the Fittons, though he cannot have had long to enjoy the property. He died leaving a son and heir, Thomas, aged only six; thus there was scope for yet another claimant to appear. One of Richard's sisters (born in wedlock), Gilmot, and her husband John Talbot turned up at Richard's inquisition post mortem hearing and claimed that the deceased's illegitimacy invalidated his claim to the Houton inheritance. This likewise meant that young Thomas should not come into the lands. The Talbots swore that they were the rightful heirs of Christopher Whalley and Elizabeth Houton and that Richard had occupied Darlaston by right of a life-interest in the same granted to him by themselves (the

Talbots.¹⁰ This version was initially accepted, but their's was only to be a temporary victory, as Thomas Whalley recovered his father's property upon attaining his majority early in the sixteenth century.¹¹

However, even with evidences locked away in a safe place and a clear title to one's properties, there still remained the problem of feoffees. The transfer of common law ownership of these estates to a set of trustees or feoffees was a legal fiction developed to prevent sequestration by the courts or a feudal overlord. Use of the lands of course went unaffected, and the Court of Chancery, its judgements in such matters based on equity, was used by 'land-holders' against recalcitrant feoffees, who refused to carry out their required duties.

Who were the feoffees? They were mainly friends, kinsmen and neighbours of the grantor. Lawyers were useful acquaintances and regular appointees, while few lists were complete without at least one cleric, who might belong to any of the above categories. Noblemen figured less frequently. Even among men with known close connections with a particular magnate, they are a rarity. The feoffee, like an executor, was someone thought unlikely to abuse his position of trust after the grantor's demise. One's number of feoffees depended upon one's status; a minor gentleman might have only four or five, a magnate a couple of dozen with small groups allocated to his estates in the particular area where they lived. The idea of having more than one feoffee was partly to insure oneself against that one person dying still seized of one's lands and partly to reduce the risk of one's wishes being disregarded. Collusion was more difficult as the number of feoffees increased. The number of one's feoffees would be

maintained by replenishment if and when old feoffees died, were no longer suitable or quarrelled with one.

Such cases as came before the Chancellor involving complaints against feoffees- and there were many- usually related to a refusal (or could it be in some cases just slowness) on the part of the feoffees to execute some request. The most common complaints were from heirs, who wanted livery of their inheritance, or from grantors, who wanted, for whatever reason, the return of the common law title to their estates. There are dozens of such cases¹², but one will suffice to make the point. In 1454 a Lincolnshire gentleman Henry Hawkin, whose kinsman Richard Hawkin was vicar of Madeley (about four miles east of Newcastle-under-Lyme), revealed that the cleric had enfeoffed Robert Davy, clerk and Oliver Bromley in a hundred acres of land in Madeley, intending that they should make an estate of this to Hawkin. When this was not done, Hawkin began a suit before Chancery to force them to do so.¹³ In answer to such a charge feoffees had a number of ripostes. They might deny ever having been enfeoffed in the property in question, as John, Lord Dudley did in the mid-1460s in a suit brought by one John Huddleston over land and rents in Wednesbury; or that there were other factors to be taken into consideration before a re-enfeoffment could be made, as John Leventhorp (another of Huddleston's feoffees) claimed- in this case a debt of £296.¹⁴

Occasionally feoffees were sued not for failing to make any enfeoffment, but for making an 'illegal' one. For example, after the death of the long-time Stafford family servant John Barbour in 1468, his feoffees were supposed to grant the manor of Haseley-by-Stafford as dower to his widow with reversion to his younger son Robert.¹⁵ Instead, after their mother's death the elder son Humphrey conspired with the feoffees to dispossess the younger and was granted the land.

One of the constant fears of an under-aged heir was that his guardians, out to make as much money as possible from their temporary control of his inheritance and sparing no thought for the economic condition they left this in, would run down all the property's resources and neglect repairs and necessary maintenance to buildings. Sir Robert Harcourt tried in vain from 1436 to at least 1444 to get restitution from his guardian's executors (who included Sir Thomas Blount) for damages allegedly done during his minority to his patrimony in Oxfordshire and at Ellenhall in western Staffordshire.¹⁶ He claimed that the Ellenhall fisheries had been destocked and buildings everywhere so neglected that they were now structurally unsound; but with Blount as deputy-steward of the Honour of Tutbury he had little chance of collecting the three hundred marks he wanted as damages.

Some heirs did not even wait to enter their inheritances before commencing litigation. In 1485 William Birmingham, who incidentally was later declared non compos mentis, after keeping a close watch upon his mother's dower lands in Birmingham¹⁷, sued her for selling off a large number of trees and allowing a mill to go unroofed.¹⁸ Tenants were also liable to be taken to court on similar charges. In 1441 Hugh Erdeswick at Hintes and Philip Chetwynd at Penkrige sued tenants for failing to keep leased property in sufficiently good repair.¹⁹ It was, however, possible for a tenant to protect himself from this sort of action by ensuring that his lease contained a clause guaranteeing their tenure to be 'without impeachment of waste'.

Neighbours often fell out when the action or inaction of one adversely affected another. Straying cattle might damage crops, untrained dogs worry sheep, or, as at

Wychnor in 1463 an untended fire lead to the burning down of an adjoining building.²⁰ On the more 'deliberate' level is the difficulty caused by the Curzons of Kedleston building a weir at Barton-under-Needwood which led to a series of complaints by the farmer of the royal mill there between 1486 and 1490 that his income was thereby reduced.²¹ The council of the Duchy of Lancaster dispatched Sir Humphrey Stanley to the site and, upon his report that the weir 'stoppis the water gretely', it was broken up.²² However, the major source of antagonism of this type was caused by enclosures.

The blanket term 'enclosure' covers two distinct processes involving a change in land-use. The first was a continuation of the centuries-old reclamation of wasteland for cultivation (assarting); the second, and for Staffordshire at this time the more important, was the conversion of arable land into pasture with an accompanying loss of jobs and homes for numerous farmers, whose small-holdings and rights to common were disregarded in the aristocracy's search for profit or sport. The Staffords in 1500 may have claimed that Duke Henry had 'ade the allowance to a penny' to his tenants at Thornbury (Gloucestershire) for having 'used them hardly for inclosing theyr grounds', but even if this were true (which I doubt) it was exceptional.²³ The aristocracy were wealthy enough to finance the construction of enclosures and powerful enough to protect their investment. There was little thought for the social implications of their actions as the sheep and deer beggared both those tenants who tried to stay and those who could not. Thomas More in Utopia, written in 1516, complained:

' They're even tearing down houses and demolishing whole towns- except, of course, for the churches, which they preserve for use as sheepfolds. As though they didn't waste enough of your soil already on their coverts and game-preserves, these

kind souls have started destroying all traces of human habitation, and turning every scrap of farmland into a wilderness....It only takes one shepherd or cowherd to graze animals over an area that would need any amount of labour to make it fit for corn production.²⁴

To be accurate, this was no class war with gentlemen cooperating in each other's enclosures. That occurred only rarely, as in March 1490 when the closely-allied Basset and Okeover families in the Peak District exchanged pastureland in Rathfield and Coldwall specifically to facilitate enclosures that they wanted to construct at Blore and Okeover.²⁵ The more usual situation was for one gentleman's attempts to enclose to be (often violently) opposed by neighbouring gentlemen acting with or alongside those of their tenants who would be adversely affected by the move. Not everyone got a licence to enclose, as John Hampton did in May 1446 for three hundred acres of arable land, pasture, meadow, marsh and wood in Stourton.²⁶ The Wolseleys only bothered to get sanction for their enclosures at Wolseley in the 1460s after armed opposition from the Gresleys, Stanleys and the Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield- this case will be discussed later in this chapter and elsewhere. Enclosures of the kind that were to cause so much distress in the sixteenth century were, at least in Staffordshire, rare in the fifteenth and usually confined to its last two decades. Earlier, the Abbot of Burton at Burton in the early 1450s, Nicholas Fitzherbert at Snelston (just inside Derbyshire) in 1443, and John Delves at Crakemarsh-by-Utttoxeter in 1466 had been openly opposed in their attempts to enclose. Delves, who was lord of the manor at Crakemarsh, had built hedges and ditches around a large field where the people of Utttoxeter had traditionally been allowed to pasture cattle after harvest and when it was lying fallow. Some of these men made a hole in the enclosure and continued grazing

their beasts.²⁷ Delves won damages of £12, though there is no record of his ever receiving any of this. A further attempt to enclose at Crakemarsh was made in 1502 by Sir Robert Sheffield (who had married one of Delves' granddaughters and heirs), when the tenants of Uttoxeter petitioned the council of the Duchy of Lancaster for a commission of inquiry.²⁸

From the last quarter of the century local gentlemen seem to have been increasingly loath to support the opposition of local people and tenants to the enclosing activities of their gentry neighbours. From the inquiry into enclosures since the advent of the Tudors led, by Wolsey in 1517²⁹, it appears that the reason for this decrease in gentry opposition was that neighbours gradually saw enclosures less as a threat to their own prosperity and position (or those of their tenants), and more of an opportunity for aggrandisement. In other words, they too decided to enclose. According to the inquiry, Thomas Cumberford enclosed thirteen acres of pasture at Cumberford in 1489 and also 'augmentavit parcum suum ibidem eidem anno de communiis terre per spacium xl. perchiarum.' He enclosed another forty acres there three years later. In all, the inquiry lists fifteen gentlemen who enclosed a total of 488½ acres in Staffordshire between 1485 and 1517,³⁰ of which just over a third (175½ acres) went to provide pasture for sheep, while the rest provided game for sport as emparked hunting areas (pro feris nutriendis). Of these, the largest single amount was one hundred acres emparked by John Aston the younger at Tixall in August 1497 for a hunting chase. We may speculate that this action was prompted by Aston's successful defence of his family's claim to be episcopal masters of game and rule in Cannock forest the previous

summer. It is also possible that the large cost of the work came from his share of the compensation paid by Thomas, earl of Ormond at this time to other claimants of the Bergavenny inheritance- both of these episodes are referred to more fully elsewhere in this thesis.

Wolsey's inquiry, as previous examples have shown did not produce an exhaustive list of enclosures in Staffordshire since 1485. While there is no evidence that anything of the scale of the thousand acres enclosed in the 1460s by the Wolseleys went unrecorded by the Cardinal's commissioners, enclosures of up to thirty acres were often missed. Only in the north-west of the county were enclosures rare by 1517, though why this should be I cannot say.

From affairs concerned principally with land and the inheritance, I turn now to offences directed more against the individual. Of these, debt and crimes of violence are the most important.

The word 'debt', when used in medieval litigation and pardons, although strictly meaning a claim for money owed by one party to another, covers a multitude of sins. Frequently the records are uninformative as to the nature of the debt and occasionally there is only circumstantial evidence for its very existence. It seems likely that an outstanding debt of sorts lay behind a certain Robert Taylor's breaking into the Stafford residence of the recently-deceased Robert Whitgreve in June 1453 and removal of most of the furniture therein contained, but of what the debt consisted can only be speculated upon.³¹

An analysis of what details do survive concerning the nature of debts in suits involving the gentry, reveals that these could generally be placed within one of four categories. Firstly, there were debts arising from non-

payment of the cost of goods received. For example, through the 1460s William Bailey tried in vain to collect the bulk of the £33/6s/8d owed to him by Anne Swynnerton of Hilton from 1462 for forty-two oxen she had purchased from him at Walsall market.³² In the following decade Robert Middleton had a similar difficulty with Thomas Curzon of Croxall. This time the goods in question were not livestock but haberdashery, or to be more precise, half a dozen pairs of breeches and 82½ yards of dyed cloth.³³

Secondly, there were cases of executors suing and being sued for debts pertaining to the deceased. The vigour with which these were pursued was naturally greater and more tenacious when the executors were close relatives or heirs than when they were simply friends or business acquaintances. Thomas Whitgreve, for instance, was still pursuing one unfortunate debtor of his father Robert in 1466-fourteen years after Robert's death.³⁴

Thirdly, there were broken bonds or recognizances. These might deal with a wide variety of matters-e.g. agreements to keep the peace towards someone, to save someone harmless (not let him suffer after having agreed to stand surety for one), to go to arbitration, or to repay a debt, and so on. The final point here leads into the fourth of the types of litigation concerning pleas of debt; non-repayment of a loan.

Just how common it was for Staffordshire gentlemen to take out loans in the fifteenth century is uncertain. Few engaged in trade and although several fought in the French wars, only Sir William Peyto is known to have been unfortunate enough to get captured. In 1451 he had to mortgage his estates at Wyrley and in Warwickshire at Sowe and Chesterton to the lawyer and controller of the Chetwynd estates Thomas Littleton for £390 to pay off his ransom.³⁵

One possible indicator of gentry financial problems is the land market. One's inheritance, as shown in the struggles of gentlemen earlier on in this chapter, was jealously guarded; so sales of part of it surely signify a desperate need for money. Humphrey Stafford the younger of Grafton (Worcestershire) certainly was in difficulties. Towards the end of 1465 he had to sell off Chebsey, Bradwell (Warwickshire) and Dynchampton (Wiltshire). The buyer was Thomas Littleton - further indication of how lucrative the legal profession could be. Stafford's problems were not helped by an inability to get his debtors to pay up. Sir William Birmingham owed him money, but could not even be got into court by Stafford³⁶; while Edmund Hastings, a fellow Worcestershire squire, whose bond for £20 Stafford had held since 27 January 1456, successfully procrastinated in the court of Common Pleas until at least Trinity term 1469 on the unlikely grounds that he was illiterate and knew not what he had signed.³⁷ By August 1473, when Stafford was appointed to a commission enquiring into monies owed to but not paid over to the Crown, he was certainly well qualified for the post.³⁸

Another plea regularly used to evade paying a debt, especially after breaking a bond, was to claim that one had been forced to sign under duress - which, if proven, would invalidate the bond. Given the tremendous power and often unscrupulous character of Sir John Savage, it is not inconceivable that the bond in one thousand marks he exacted from his son-in-law Roger Draycote the younger on 2 September 1464 (curiously, with the assistance of Draycote's father) was forced out of him³⁹; but it is hard to swallow that the London jeweller Edmund Shaa could have frightened that most pig-headed and litigious of all Staffordshire lawyers Ralph Wolseley into signing a bond for a mere forty marks through

fear of his life.⁴⁰ The bond was dated 9 December 1468 and referred to a debt owed to the jeweller for exactly half that amount. Evidently, Wolseley, one of the barons of the Exchequer, having eventually got around to paying that back, had no intention of giving Shaa any profit on the deal.

The other common cause of litigation for debt concerns the administration of estates. A bailiff was personally responsible for the issues of his balliwick and might be sued for any shortfall in the accountable revenue, even though that shortfall was not his fault. I have gone into this point more fully in the chapter on the Church in Staffordshire, but it is worth emphasising here the different ways in which a land-holder expressed his dissatisfaction with the financial running of his property. Sometimes it was even necessary to take a bailiff or receiver to court to get from him an account in the first place. The list of gentlemen who had to so sue is lengthy and includes John Lane in 1451 and 1458, John Hampton in 1472, Simon Mountfort in 1484 and also such clerics as the Prior of St. Thomas', Stafford and the Dean of the King's Chapel, Wolverhampton. It seems reasonable to presume that accounts were occasionally late in appearing not because of any excessive work involved in their being drawn up, but because the bailiff or receiver in question, knowing that a significant proportion of the expected revenue was uncollected or uncollectable, was loath to lay himself open to being sued for the same. Some arrears could be recouped, others were chronic. Few would have envied the position of the Crown's bailiff of Barton-under-Needwood who complained to the Council of the Duchy of Lancaster in 1481 that he was unfairly being charged for uncollectable rents under an out-of-date rental.⁴¹ Sometimes it was the arrears themselves that a land-holder would sue for, but equally common was the claim

for the amount stipulated in the bond covering arrears drawn up before the bailiff or receiver took up office. These bonds go far towards explaining why the Plea Rolls record large numbers of cases involving a member of the county gentry suing obscure yeomen and husbandmen for enormous sums of money, several times the annual income of the latter. For example, Sir John Talbot and the Abbot of Croxden sued three husbandmen from Ramsor-by-Alton for sums of £60 each which they 'unjustly' detained.⁴² The money must have been connected with an estate income of some sort; there is no other plausible explanation of the suit.

Sheriffs too were, on a financial level, no more than glorified bailiffs (shire-reeves) and could be sued if their accounts showed unvouchered shortfalls of revenue. Accordingly, it is no wonder that many are found suing their receivers for accounts and specie pertaining to the shrievalty. When a man who has been sheriff is found suing as 'late sheriff' others for a debt, it is more than likely that the money in question was part of his shire farm. Similarly, sheriffs could be sued if they failed to hand over money allotted to individuals from their farms. Two examples will suffice to illustrate this. In the first, Nicholas Warings M.P. for Staffordshire 1461-2 won an undefended case in 1464 for £22/16s/0d in unpaid wages and travelling expenses for his parliamentary duties and forty shillings in damages from the then-sheriff John Harcourt.⁴³ In the second, Sir Henry Stafford sued at Michaelmas term 1469 every Staffordshire sheriff appointed from 1455 onwards, with the exception of Walter Wrottesley and Sir John Stanley, for a fee farm of six marks a year due to him from Walsall in the right of his wife.⁴⁴ Successive sheriffs had received

the money in question from the bailiff of Walsall, but had not passed this on to Stafford. The most likely explanation for this is that authorisation for the payments was lacking, rather than that the money was purloined or deliberately directed towards other purposes. Why Stanley and Wrottesley should not have been sued along with all the rest remains a mystery. Perhaps they were empowered to pass on the six marks; perhaps, for some reason or another, Stafford chose not to inconvenience them with litigation. He had certainly taken his time in deciding to sue.

Before turning to violent crimes, there are a few odds and ends to be quickly dealt with.

The courts for fifteenth-century Staffordshire were not without 'consumer complaints'. In 1477 John Harcourt of Ranton sued a couple of Seighford masons for building him a tower at Swynnerton so badly that it soon collapsed.⁴⁵ At least Harcourt got a tower of sorts for his money; William Cumberford in 1440 and Robert Aston in 1460 had to take their builders to court for not even bothering to begin work on edifices commissioned from them.⁴⁶ In 1459 James Leveson, the wealthy Wolverhampton wool merchant, sued a craftsman there for fulling his cloth so negligently that part was ruined.⁴⁷ Most consumer complaints appear on manorial and urban court rolls, as bakers, fishmongers, publicans and other sinners were regularly arraigned for proffering shoddy or wrongly described merchandise. A few such cases even reached the Plea Rolls. For instance, a husbandman from Stonehall-by-Lichfield was sued in 1476 for selling honey adulterated with sulphur and other impurities⁴⁸; while at Burton-on-Trent a decade earlier a butcher had been caught using loaded dice in a gambling game called 'le dozen'.⁴⁹ The clergy too were not above employing deception in the market place. In

1466 and 1472 respectively the Prior of St. Thomas, Stafford and the Abbot of Burton were accused of selling horses which, although presented as healthy, were in reality only fit for slaughter.⁵⁰ Had the clergy been as ready and ingenious to proclaim the Gospel and live according to the precepts of the Good Shepherd and the monastic founders as they were to fleece their flocks, then doubtlessly their standing in the eyes of the laity would have been considerably higher than it was.

Anti-clericalism was rife. It was this, together with cynicism, rather than doctrinal unorthodoxy that lay at the heart of most of the heresy trials in the diocese of Coventry and Lichfield. From the records of these, it becomes apparent that it was the (often superstitious) accretions to the central dogmas that aroused the most antagonism, especially when these accretions were exploited for monetary gain by the clergy. For example, John Blunston of Coventry was convicted in 1485 of denying the value of pilgrimages, requiem masses and alms-giving for the dead, or that those powers granted to St. Peter by Christ were handed down to succeeding Bishops of Rome. What annoyed Blunston most was the way in which such things were used to suck money out of ordinary people, and he angrily swore 'an vengeance on all suche horeson prests ffor thay have gret envy that a pare man shulde gete hys levyng amonge hem.'⁵¹

Not all priests, however, approved of all the lucrative customs that the Church was generally seen to favour. Doctor John Bredon, an elderly friar of Coventry, in 1446 was banished from there by Henry VI for having 'stured and moeved the people of oure said cite otherwise then wel and agenst the laudable custumes herebefore had and used in our cathedral chirch there.'⁵² As a certain German monk was to do at Wittenburg sixty-one years later, Bredon had taken a

dispute with ecclesiastical authority to the point of nailing up his views and condemnations to a church door. Bredon promised to deliver the inhabitants of Coventry from 'the thraldom of Pharao'.⁵³ However, his were no 95 Theses. His quarrel concerned who should get the candles surrounding funeral biers in the cathedral after the funerals!

Both Blunston and Bredon quickly recanted when faced with the might of the church establishment. As with all the other convictions in the diocese, they received, after agreeing with 'pure herts and frewills to forsake the seyde errors'⁵⁴, full absolution. Doctrinal heresy, as already stated, was rare in this area. There is a legend of a secret Lollard meeting place at Rushton Spencer (near the Cheshire border), and a travelling Lollard preacher is known to have operated briefly in south Staffordshire and Coventry in the 1420s.⁵⁵ Coventry supplied most of the heretics mentioned in this diocese's episcopal registers of the period- evidently a centre for religious freethinking. An exception in the list of heretics was John Woodward of Wiggington-by-Tamworth in south-eastern Staffordshire. He was alone in being charged on solely doctrinal grounds. He appeared in the bishop's consistory court in 1453 for denying the real presence in the eucharist and the need for baptism in certain cases.⁵⁶ Like the others, he recanted and the diocese was spared an auto-da-fé.

How justified was the caricature of the later-medieval cleric as less devoted to the sacraments, Virgin Mary and vespers than to the worldly wine, women and song? Clergymen appear surprisingly rarely in the Plea Rolls, and when they do, it is just as likely that it is as the plaintiff than as the defendant. Many of the lawsuits in

which they were involved were the same petty matters with which all land-holders were bogged down- straying cattle, poaching, minor debts and the like- for there was much ecclesiastical land in the county. Some was held by the Bishop and chapters of Coventry and Lichfield, some by the local monastic houses, and some was glebeland pertaining to the parish priest. However, occasionally there were more serious incidents which, together with a general moral laxity that is widely attested to though difficult to produce empirical evidence for, served only to brand the clergy en masse as hypocritical parasites. Monasteries and nunneries were widely regarded as dens of iniquity, and, since they were often stocked with men and women whose 'calling' had been chosen for them rather than by them, there was frequently some truth in the popular view. Many made a convenient distinction between the way of the flesh and the pleasures of the flesh; renouncing one but not the other. This was certainly the case in the most depraved of Staffordshire religious houses, Burton Abbey.

By the time the Crown stepped in and granted custody of the Abbey on 20 July 1433 to Humphrey, earl of Stafford, John Harper, Robert Whitgreve and William Munden for seven years, the Abbey had long been financially and morally bankrupt.⁵⁷ No accounts had been kept since at least the turn of the century and successive abbots were in the habit of having to resign.⁵⁸ As for their monastic habits, these were most frequently to be seen on the ground while their some-time wearers busied themselves with prostitutes and other men's wives. The most notorious of Burton's abbots was Ralph Henley (1432-55). His fort   was not womanising, but getting on everybody's nerves. Under Henley, whose absenteeism, drunkenness and gambling finally resulted in

his being forced to resign in 1455, the Abbey's relations with the rest of the county reached an all-time low. He fell out with Burton's townsfolk over enclosures he tried to erect. He fell out with the Abbey's tenants and in July 1439 sued them in Chancery, alleging that they had 'procured theym [selves] to be empanelled on questys for the kyng to that entent that they maliciously and wrongfully endyte certein of the covent (sic) of the seid Abbey'.⁵⁹ There is a certain irony in Henley concluding this petition 'and thus devyne service ys gretely hyndred'. It was hindered by a lot more than the antics of a few husbandmen. At this time the Abbey also fell out with the local gentry. In 1449 two commissions were issued for the arrest of the Gresleys of Drakelow, Thomas Dethick and others to prevent them continuing their divers trespasses, riots and other offences against the monks of the Abbey.⁶⁰

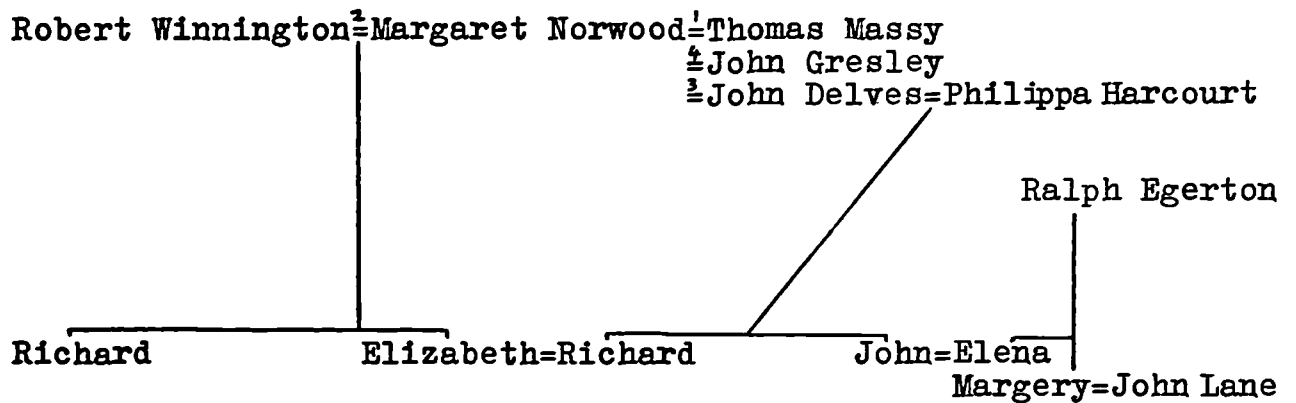
The worst clerical womaniser of the period came from another religious house- he was Dean John Bate of Tamworth, who was also involved in a lengthy lawsuit with Nicholas FINDERNE of Derbyshire throughout the 1440s and 1450s over the Tavernor inheritance.⁶¹ Bate was obviously a man of strong passions, not all of them spiritual. He was accused of raping Margaret Chamberlain on 4 October 1457 and, though he found securities for his future behaviour, was arraigned on a similar charge four years later- this time he got off on a technicality.⁶² Whether in these cases rape meant sexual intercourse with an unwilling other party or simple adultery is unclear. Medieval records on this point tend to be ambiguous. Sometimes a charge of rape was used to bring to heel an errant wife or daughter⁶³, or in cases of abduction. One of Bate's servants, John Bredhill, who is

the last criminous clerk I want to examine, was involved in at least two of these rape/abduction cases. On 18 September 1430 he carried off the wife of one John Harward.⁶⁴ This would appear to have been a genuine, straightforward abduction, as he also stole over £20 worth of the man's cattle at the same time- hardly the action of someone just out for a quick night's wenching. In 1438 he was pardoned for breaking into the house of Felicia Derby at Alcester (Warwickshire) five years earlier. This time only theft was alleged, but on 9 January 1439 he made off with the wife of a certain Reginald Tanner - less than eighteen months after being indicted for knowingly receiving a man who had just stolen some communion silver.⁶⁵ He evidently had no scruples about the sacrosanctity of church property. Bredhill had a stormy relationship with his patron Sir John Sutton (Lord Dudley from 1440). He seemed positively to revel in poaching on the Sutton estates, especially as he knew their owner to be frequently abroad or tied up with affairs of state in London. Back in June 1433 Sutton had ransacked the parsonage at King's Swinford and according to a petition to Chancery submitted by Bredhill on the incident, had removed goods worth £133/10s/0d.⁶⁶ The list of stolen items is worth referring to, as besides household goods Bredhill lost several 'glosed' biblical commentaries, some devotional literature, eight books of grammar, a dozen of divers poets, and twenty 'tretys of logik, musik, geometre & othor sciencis'. This is evidently no s mi-literate, backwoods priest with whom we are dealing, but a man of culture who, like Chaucer's Parson in the Canterbury Tales, could knit mighty matters out of books. In the end, he was shipped off to France (probably Dudley's doing), where he became rector of Chalkwell and St. Nicholas, Calais.⁶⁷

Kidnapping was rare. In 1437 Sir John Gresley the elder complained that he and his wife had been imprisoned at Abbots Bromley by Richard Lane for three days so that they could not reach Chester, where a court was deciding on the ownership of two parts of a manor called 'Marchalle', which Gresley was disputing with Richard Winnington.⁶⁸ Foul play of some sort there certainly had been, though it seems more likely that the couple were somehow deliberately delayed rather than that they were held captive, as they later alleged.

But why should a lawyer from the south-west of the county want to delay a gentleman and wife from the south-east en route for Chester? The answer is as complicated as the situation which spawned it, but beneath everything is, again, a struggle for land. At the centre lay the formidable and four times married Margaret Norwood. By her second husband, the short-lived Robert Winnington of Winnington (Cheshire) she had two children, Richard and Elizabeth. After Winnington's death late in 1428 Margaret arranged for the marriage of her daughter to Richard, the eldest son of her Staffordshire and Cheshire neighbour John Delves.⁶⁹ Soon after this Margaret and Delves, both having lost spouses decided themselves to get married. However, almost before their wedding celebrations had died down, Margaret was once more a widow. She took a fourth husband sometime later, Sir John Gresley the elder, by which time she had three sets of dower to recommend her and was a highly eligible catch. What then followed was a struggle for control of the Delves estates throughout the late 1430s between on the one side Margaret and Gresley and on the other Richard Delves, aided by his mentor and father's friend Ralph Egerton of Wrinehill. Every opportunity was taken to frustrate the ambitions of Margaret and Gresley. Even if his marriage to Elizabeth

Winnington was gradually breaking up⁷⁰, this did not prevent Delves with Egerton from assisting Richard Winnington (a young man approaching his majority and in roughly the same sort of position as Delves viz a viz Margaret and Gresley) as best he could.



Thus when the Gresleys and Winnington clashed over what the latter felt was part of his inheritance Egerton got in touch with Richard Lane, whose eldest son had married one of Egerton's daughters, and Lane was instrumental in delaying the Gresleys, probably under the guise of offering them hospitality en route. This squabble between various members of the Delves family and friends produced yet another 'kidnapping', when Delves and Egerton 'liberated' the former's younger brother John in 1439 and married him off to another of Egerton's daughters Elena. There is no evidence that any of this was against John's will; indeed he and Egerton enjoyed a friendship that lasted until death parted them. On the other hand, none of this was to Gresley's liking and may well have prompted him to seek the Staffordshire shrievalty, to which he was appointed on 5 November 1439. If, by taking office, he hoped somehow to reverse his fortunes in l'affaire Delves, he was to be disappointed. Things continued to go against him and Margaret. Even after Richard

Delves' early death in 1446, they were unable to secure any of the family property. John Delves and Ralph Egerton, after a lengthy series of inquiries (the bulk of the Delves family estates were held in chief), secured all for John.⁷¹

Most so-called kidnappings or abductions were achieved with the consent of the 'victim', and many were effected to avoid feudal incidents. In 1452 Sanchia, widow of John Curzon of Croxall and her nephew Sir John Gresley the younger (son and heir of the John Gresley involved in the last case-study) smuggled away Sanchia's eldest son Thomas from Lutterworth in order to deprive their feudal lord Sir Edward Grey, Lord Ferrers of Groby of the lad's wardship and marriage.⁷² Similarly, in 1474 ~~another~~ widow, Elena Ward of Stafford, was sued with John Harrington from Lancashire, for so abducting her child John that Margaret Harcourt lost his wardship and marriage.⁷³ A variation on this had occurred three years earlier when the child alleged by Thomas Littleton to have been abducted in fact had only been taken into Halesowen Abbey, and presumably in time holy orders.⁷⁴ There were other feudal dues which might be evaded, given a plea of abduction. On 22 January 1472 Humphrey Cotes of Woodcote (Shropshire), son of one Staffordshire sheriff and brother to another, carried off his Helen to a border Troy. According to the prosecution, he seized Margaret Ryman, widow of William Burley and carted her around half of Shropshire before feloniously ravishing her. Margaret was a wealthy widow who presumably wished to marry Cotes without having her jointure seized by her feudal lord- hence the plea of abduction. Cotes produced a general pardon in Trinity term 1474 and no more was heard of the matter. Had the abduction

been 'for real', as it was in the Kebell-Vernon case of 1502 when Margaret Kebell was seized by two of Henry Vernon's younger brothers (one of whom wanted her hand in marriage)⁷⁵, a far greater fuss would have ensued.

The principle of trial by jury was completely accepted, even though juries, open to bribery and intimidation, often seemed as loath to put in a court appearance as many of the litigants. Only on one occasion was any other form of trial- by combat- suggested or arranged. Even then it was merely a chivalric gesture in a collusive suit of 1446 by which John Savage acquired half of Dove-by-Norton (just inside Derbyshire) from his step-brother Richard Peshale.⁷⁶ A determined man might remain at large for years, though few were as bold as John Forman who was freed by friends 'like as it hadde be Robyn-hode and his eyne' in December 1438 while being taken from Scropton (Derbyshire) to stand trial at Tutbury.⁷⁷ The usual course of action was simply to evade any writs or enforcement officers coming one's way. This was often not particularly difficult as sheriffs might not get round to serving writs on their friends or innocently return those writs to Chancery, pleading that such and such a person could not be found within the shire. When the cat and mouse game proved too wearisome, a defendant could always buy a blanket pardon from the king. Not surprizingly there were few convictions.

Yet not all those ordered to be arrested evaded the officers sent after them. Those who evaded arrest or summons figure more often in the legal records because of references to their continual non-appearance in court on successive law terms. The impression that this was a time of empty jails and a countryside teeming with men on the run is a false one. The frequent commissions of jail delivery indicate a different situation. The prisons of Staffordshire are unlikely to have

been substantially different from those of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire, which were so over-crowded that in 1443 the King had to grant permission for men to be sent all through them soliciting alms for their inmates.⁷⁸

A high level of violence was even taken in some quarters as a source of national pride. Ex-Chief Justice John Fortescue enthused in his Governance of England

'Ther bith therfore mo men hanged in
Englande in a yere ffor robbery and
manslaughter, then ther be hanged in
Ffraunce ffor such maner of crimes in
vij. yeres.'⁷⁹

In addition to actual killings, there were large numbers of alleged attempted murders and of conspiracies to murder. In actions for serious assault it was almost common practice to stress an element of premeditation, claiming that one's assailants had plotted, assembled 'in riotous wyse' and lain in wait before doing the foul deed. However, such details should be treated with caution. Much of the record borrows less from the actual events than from contemporary legal formulae and phraseology- themselves a function of the conventional exaggeration in such matters.

A master sueing thugs who beat up one of his servants would commonly add that the wounds inflicted meant that he lost the services of his man for some time, but whether this was just half an hour while a black eye was seen to or a couple of months for broken limbs is not recorded. There were other stock phrases. An undated petition (probably from the early 1440s) from Thomas Nevowe complained that while he had been peacefully growing hay at Handsacre, Walter Griffith, one of a sizeable number of hot-headed young gentlemen in Staffordshire at the time, had sought him out intending to slay him. Had Nevowe not fled the area, he continued, he would have been killed and he 'never sithen

durst be seyne in his owen contrey for drede of betyng or of lesyng of his lyf unto his grete hynderyng and perpetual destruccion.'⁸⁰ This point about not daring to return to one's own 'contrey' was a common feature of actions for assault and threatened assault, though by 'contrey' we should not assume that county is meant. In this case it might only have been the field of hay, about which there had doubtlessly been some altercation.

I am not arguing that court records contain little or nothing but misleading or inaccurate references to the crimes they are covering, rather that the various features or aspects of those crimes were recorded in a stylised form. It is when additional details and variations from this stylisation occur that the historian is best justified in claiming knowledge of a precise sequence of events. For such courts as Chancery and Star Chamber in the fifteenth century detailed sets of pleadings may even have survived, but these are rare for King's Bench and Common Pleas. One interesting letter, written between 1496 and 1505 also survives concerning one case of attempted murder in Staffordshire. It was written by William Harper J.P. to the Keeper of the Privy Seal:

'Ryght reverent and onorabull good lord wt all dew recomandacyon Sir hyt ys soe that my lord Farrus [Ferrers] hath wryten to me aletter desyryng me wryte to yowr lordschyp of a mater that was knowlageyd and confested before Sir humfrey Stanley george Stanley Nicolas agard and me at Pype acordyng to the trowth of the mater. my lord hyt was soe that won Morgan Neuton brought before us and oder dyvers parsones beyng present that he was desyred by won Wylllyam Orchard to kylle the seyd Morgan and also won Wylllyam Bothe reported be for us and confessed that he was desyred to doe the same and by cause he wold not agre therto he was put owte of hys sarvyce.'⁸¹

This matter may well have been bound up with Newton's position as the Ferrers' bailiff of Chartley at the time; bailiffs have never been much liked. In 1499 the one for the collegiate church of Wolverhampton was attacked inside that very house. Swords were drawn, blood spilled and the holy place desecrated.⁸² Back in 1480 John Agard, one of the most important administrators in the Honour of Tutbury, was assaulted at his lodgings by a yeoman and a crowd of well-wishers, when he had arrived in Newcastle-under-Lyme to collect 'ye kinges dueties'.⁸³ However, these were isolated incidents. There was no general resistance to or violence offered against a lord's officials.

Most of the county's crimes were the work of its own inhabitants, though, as might be expected, people from adjacent counties are found in suits concerning border areas. Staffordshire was far enough inside England to escape the attentions of the marauding gangs of Welsh ruffians and cattle rustlers, who dogged neighbouring Shropshire and the Marches. Some stock was taken from Weston-under-Lizeard in June 1448 by a group led by Griffin Vaughan of Wales, but this was an exceptional incident and anyway Vaughan's men were mainly drawn from and operated out of Shropshire.⁸⁴ The Celts in general were regarded as vicious and bestial, and were held in contemptuous fear by the English. This prejudiced generalisation was occasionally reinforced by instances of crime, such as when one of the number of unruly Welshmen employed by the powerful Griffith family of Wichnor in eastern Staffordshire, Rhys ap Madoc, cold-bloodedly

knifed to death Richard Edward, a fellow servant, on 1 January 1447 at Barton-under-Needwood.⁸⁵

However, if there was one section of the county community which did contribute more than its 'fair' share to the amount of crime in Staffordshire, it was not an ethnic one. Irresponsible youth was to blame- men such as Christopher Draycote (younger brother of the escheator and Stafford family administrator, Roger), who was indicted in October 1444 with an associate for cattle and horse theft in Leicestershire and for the murder of an owner who disturbed them in these activities.⁸⁶ Such angry young men were certainly at the heart of the troubles in the Peak District throughout the 1440s and 1450s. It is these I now want to turn to and examine in some detail.

During these decades Staffordshire was generally quiet. It was spared any of the bloody, factional feuds which ran through several other counties, including Warwickshire and Derbyshire. There were disputes, but no society has ever got by without these. The major series of disturbances was centred on the harsh uplands of the Peak District along the Staffordshire-Derbyshire border. However, there is no reason to assume that the parting comment of the sheriff of Derbyshire that 'the people is wilde' can be attached as an epitaph to all Staffordshire.⁸⁷

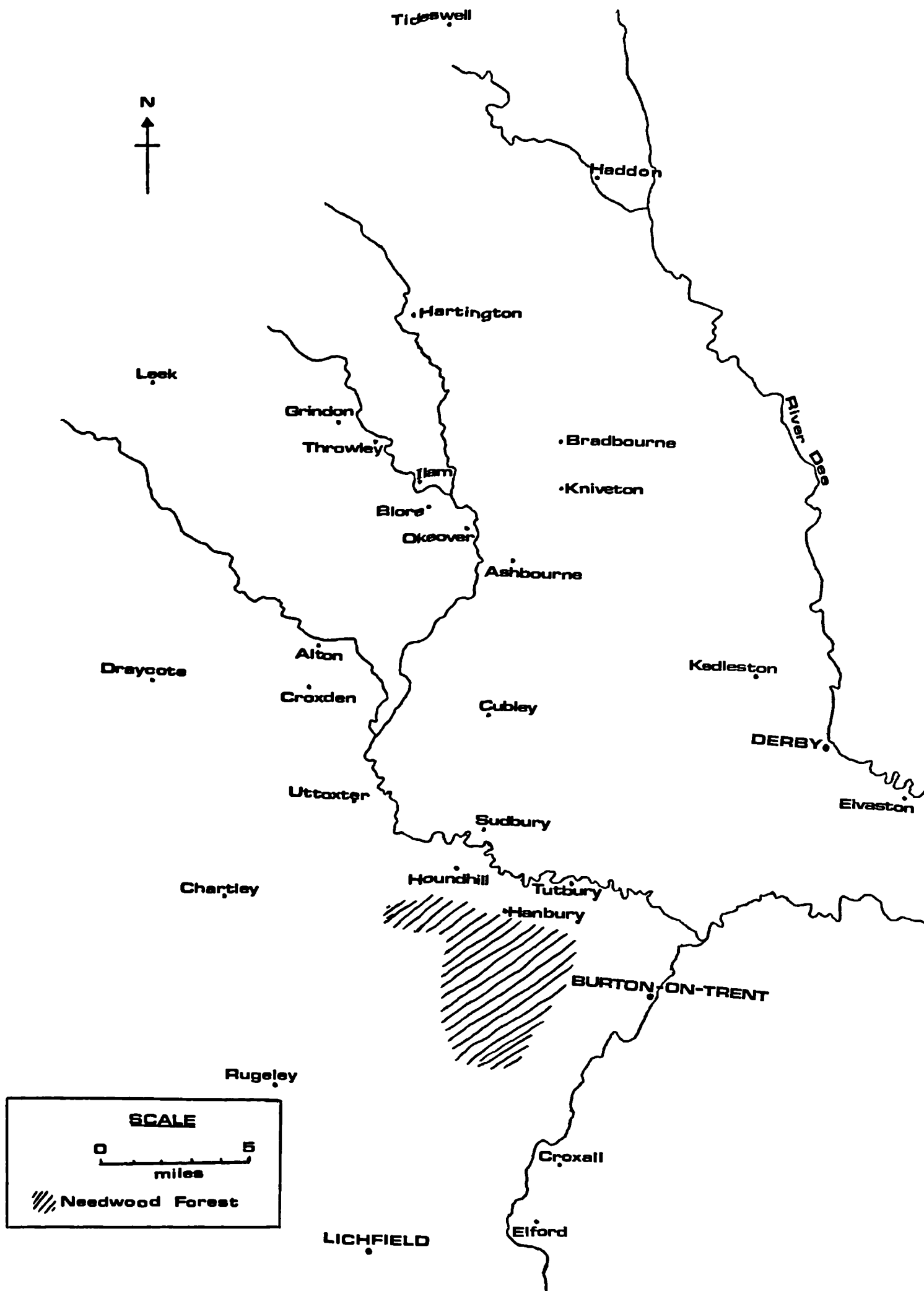
Many historians have exaggerated the importance of these events in determining later political allegiances and their severity at the time. Everything is relative, and let it not be forgotten that no-one was killed or even seriously wounded in these troubles. Although at times

portions of land or revenue were at stake, these were soon superseded by pride as the principal motive behind the continuing discord. To use an appropriate canine metaphor, the attacks of one gentleman upon another in this area were more akin to the bites of a bulldog in the backside than a wolf at the throat. Such tactics as were employed emphasise this; there were no attempts to kill or maim, rather, the targets were the property of one's opponent, his time and patience.

The border between Staffordshire and Derbyshire stretched for about seventy miles from the bleak Peaks of the north, along Dovedale and the Trent valley, and around the great royal forest of Needwood, until it finished near Clifton Camville on the edge of Warwickshire. The land, although heavily wooded, supported a great deal of sheep farming and became increasingly amenable to arable farming the further south one went. However, neither Staffordshire nor Derbyshire at this time were particularly wealthy counties. Such disturbances as there were took on a political significance towards the southern part of this border, towards Warwickshire. They were caught up in the struggle for control of the northern part of that county between Buckingham and the Beauchamp/Neville Earls of Warwick. In the Peak District most of the trouble involved and, more importantly, originated among the competing gentry families, with little more than pride to fight for and jealous of every aspect of their status. Generations of inter-breeding and doubtlessly in-breeding had woven so complicated a pattern of kinships among those of gentle birth that it is difficult

to be certain how important family ties actually were in determining how an individual acted. The following cases show kinship was no guarantee of goodwill and support; people in the fifteenth century got on well with their relatives no more regularly than in any other age. The classic example of one of these disputes (and one which was later to develop into something more serious) concerned the Meverells of Throwley and Tideswell and the closely-allied Bassets of Blore and Okeovers of Okeover. Such matters, though undoubtedly of immense importance to the participants, hardly merit the term 'feud'. They were conducted along predictable and surprisingly restrained lines. There was no general breakdown of law and order; such raids as were carried out were accepted as much as an accompaniment to litigation as a cause of it. The origins of the dispute are obscure, but were of only local concern. What was probably at the heart of the matter was the fate of the tithes of Meverell's principal manor of Throwley. These belonged to the church at Ilam whose vicar, John Southworth, was a close friend of Ralph Basset. Sometime around 1442 Southworth devised these tithes to Basset, to the fury of Sampson Meverell- a substantial contributor to them. Southworth had been presented to his living by Basset's ally Thomas Okeover, whose grandson and heir had recently married Basset's daughter.

On 8 September 1442 Meverell and some associates raided property that Basset held at Throwley and set their cattle to graze there, as an expression of Meverell's anger..Thus began a series of petty, yet annoying offences against Basset and Okeover. Behind Meverell's actions can be seen the strong determination of a landowner to prevent any erosion of what he considered to be his rights and privileges. Sir Sampson had entered his inheritance only earlier on in that year and had discovered that he was being cheated out of certain lands in Stapley (Cheshire) by one John Roope, who had stolen the Meverell seal while Sir Sampson's father lay ill and used it to



to forge a deed, returning it 'enbrowed with reed wax.'⁸⁸ Thus Meverell was extremely sensitive about his interests, real or imagined. There may have been other factors too. Meverell had a younger brother Richard, about whom little is known except that he was on and stayed on good relations with Basset and had received an extremely generous livelihood from his father.⁸⁹ Fraternal jealousy may have entered into Sampson's heart as he saw his own inheritance under threat from not only Roope but also the bequeathing of Ilam's tithes to his neighbour Basset, and this may have helped sour relations between the two families. The raid on Basset's estate was the old soldier's way of expressing his feelings on the matter. Meverell's wrath was also vented upon Southworth. The clergyman was not prepared to take things lying down and refused to have anything to do with the Meverells in church. To his cost, however, he had reckoned without the knight's connection with the Archbishop of Canterbury, John Stafford. After Meverell had complained about Southworth the vicar was excommunicated on 29 July 1444 for failing to answer the charges made against him, namely:

'That Sr Jon Southworth vicar of Ilam dede corus Sr Sampson Meverell and Dam Isabell is wyff the v. day of Aprill in the ii and xte yer of K.H. the vi. without any acontie... having told all the prests in the contie that they schold do no service when I or my wyeff or any serveys of ourus wer in any of the churches.'⁹⁰

This was not the only quarrel in which Basset was concerned at the time, but these were unconnected with the Meverell matter. For instance, he and Okeover were in dispute with Nicholas Fitzherbert of Norbury (Derbyshire) over property there for which Okeover was a feoffee.⁹¹ An attempt by Fitzherbert to erect enclosures may lie behind this. Certainly Basset and Okeover reacted to a Fitzherbert theft of timber

from a close at Snelston (about four miles from Blore) by leading their tenants on an expedition to demolish these enclosures; for which escapade they were summoned to answer before the King's council.⁹² With tongue no doubt in cheek Basset protested to the assembled worthies that although Okeover's men had thrown down the ditch, 'thei that cam with him had jakkes bowes arowes & salades to see that the poeple sholde not riotte.'⁹³ In the albeit fragmentary records of the case which survive there is significantly no mention of any violence having occurred. This implies that nothing of the sort actually transpired; for it is inconceivable that with Archbishop Stafford presiding at the hearing any opportunity would have been lost to present evidence of lawlessness on the defendants' part had it existed. The court's decision, if there ever was one, has not survived, though the Close Rolls record that Basset and Okeover had to give recognizances not to harm Fitzherbert or any of his servants and a commission was issued to three judges in February 1444 to inquire into crimes committed by the pair of them.⁹⁴

One point which needs constantly to be borne in mind when judging medieval legal pleadings is that a tremendous amount of exaggeration went on over the severity of the alleged crimes. This, if not recognized, can lead to a misunderstanding of the scale of lawlessness at the time. For instance, few crimes seem to have been committed without 'vi et armis' and few people who had been assaulted did not have their lives despaired of. Raiding gangs of allegedly over a hundred strong were in reality groups of between a dozen and twenty, while losses put at the annual income of

a prosperous knight can probably be divided by ten for a more accurate figure. Thus when Ralph Basset described the Fitzherbert theft from Snelston as involving the felling of a hundred oaktrees and the carting away of both these and two hundred loads of underwood- and all in one day- this Herculean feat, worthy of an entire royal army, should not be taken as the economic decimation of a plot of 'olde England'. That the outcome of this matter is unknown is unfortunate, but it is not unlikely that it was all soon settled amicably or slowly fizzled out. The former of these possibilities, as the Paston Letters show for East Anglia, was quite common, with disputants being on good terms generally despite difficulties over a specific issue. The dispute is also of the kind that might reasonably have been sent for arbitration.

Nevertheless, Basset felt in need of substantial support and good lordship. He turned to Humphrey, duke of Buckingham, with whom he had had earlier dealings both as sheriff of Staffordshire 1437-8 and also when he was one of the electors who returned the Stafford placemen Robert Whitgreve and Richard Brown to the parliament of 1442.⁹⁵ Buckingham retained Basset with an annuity of ten marks in October 1444. This arrangement suited both Basset and the Duke, who was trying to build up an affinity in the Peak District. Basset's links with such other local families as the Bradbournes, Bagots and Curzons of Kedleston (Derbyshire) were useful to the Duke. As the 1440s were to progress this relationship was to become somewhat strained, but initially there were benefits for Basset and his allies. On 14 October Southworth's excommunication was lifted and over the following two years life generally quietened down. A possible indication of Stafford support

for Basset comes from a petition that Meverell (of all people) sent in to the Chancellor, his friend the Archbishop, in the mid-1450s, complaining of 'wronges, extorsions and mysreules' done to him by Basset.⁹⁶ Meverell's complaint that he can get no remedy at common law because of the 'grete myght and support' given to his enemy may be no more than standard wording (it was certainly a common phrase in such petitions), but it may also be evidence that Buckingham was aiding Basset. Having retained him the Duke could hardly ignore the man's problems without it reflecting badly on his own ability to provide good lordship.

There were two other reasons why the dust began to settle in the area. The first of these was that the mid-1440s saw an increased assertion of power by the Blounts of Elvaston-by-Derby. This family seem to have been a force for restraint at the time, moving easily among the various gentry cliques in the area. Blounts appear among the witnesses to deeds with Basset and John Curzon in the early 1440s and with Meverell, Fitzherbert, Fulk Vernon and John Cockayne (who will enter the story shortly) in September 1447.⁹⁷ Not only were the Blounts a powerful family in their own right, but they also exercised considerable authority in the Honour of Tutbury, where the head of the family, Sir Thomas, was deputy steward under Buckingham. He was also sheriff of Staffordshire 1444-5 and of Derbyshire 1446-7 and on the Derbyshire commission of the peace. Humphrey Blount, a kinsman, was escheator of Staffordshire 1445-6 and sheriff there 1446-7.

The other reason for the lull in the hostilities was that Basset, probably at Buckingham's suggestion, joined the ducal retinue at Calais for a short period.⁹⁸ However, nothing had been settled permanently and on his return Basset was greeted by a fresh round of cattle rustling and trespassing. He was also to find Buckingham less ready to assist him. Southworth was ambushed and

forced to grant the tithes to Meverell.⁹⁹ Meverell was later acquitted of this, a fact which owed less to any innocence on his part than to the occupation of the Derbyshire shrievalty at the time by Nicholas Fitzherbert. It may well be that the reopening of anti-Basset sentiment was fostered by this occupation. Certainly Meverell and Fitzherbert were by this time acting in concert against Basset.¹⁰⁰

Gradually the number of people involved in these disputes was growing. The longer the bad-feeling continued, the more pride was invested and the more difficult it became to achieve any compromise solution. In 1444 an attempt to bring about arbitration between Basset and Meverell by John, Lord Dudley had failed, as neither party was prepared to compromise. Status was an important commodity in these barren and often inaccessible areas and that, rather than the financial stakes, soon became the heart of the matter. Many of the charges brought against a disputant were extremely petty and, as mentioned before, wildly exaggerated- I cannot believe that these gentlemen faced economic ruin as a result of a neighbour's grazing of a dozen cattle on a plot of their land for a day. Deliberate depasturing of cattle and the subsequent taking of the matter to court were recognized steps in such a dispute and were designed to annoy and provoke one's opponent. Bloody-mindedness had replaced blood-letting.

There was no time when separate factions as such could be identified in the area, but small gangs of gentlemen and their associated tenants did exist. Certainly the same names recurred whenever the Meverell group was sued.

In the late 1440s incidents of lawlessness in the area became increasingly violent, a trend accelerated by the emergence to prominence of John Cockayne of Ashbourne (Derbyshire). Cockayne was certainly a major thug. As both Sir Richard Vernon and even Buckingham himself allowed a daughter to marry Cockayne at various

times, he must have had redeeming qualities; though all I can discover about him which might have commended him was a sizeable inheritance in north Warwickshire- but by medieval standards this was enough. A more charitable R.L.Storey, while classing him as a 'lawless and dissolute ruffian', continues:

'It is possible, however, to make him some allowance for his father had so disposed of his property that for many years the son enjoyed only a small proportion of his inheritance. Sir John [the father] had arranged that all his lands in Warwickshire and Staffordshire should be held by his widow until her death, leaving John the son only the Ashbourne property. Sir John died in 1438, when John junior was some sixteen years of age, but his widow was still alive in 1466.'¹⁰¹

The widow of the elder Sir John Cockayne remarried Thomas Bate of Pooley (Warwickshire), a lawyer, councillor and retainer of the Staffords. Son and step-father hated the sight of each other, though to his credit the Duke did not allow this to lead to either of them leaving his affinity. Cockayne's financial straits certainly contributed to his sour relations with Bate and led him to be ever vigilant for the possibility of pressing a claim to property (whether or not it was a legitimate claim). That his close friends should be young men is hardly surprising. His gang, including such people as Thurstan Vernon and Thomas Meverell, consisted of heirs and younger sons of the local gentry with time on their hands as they waited in financial stringency for their fathers to die. Bonded together and bogged down by the legacy of an older generation and fired by the impetuosity and exhibitionism of youth, they habitually put valour before discretion and the chevauchée before the writ. The Cockayne-Vernon gang existed as early as May 1443 when Bate was besieged at home by a band of rustlers raised from Ashbourne and various Vernon manors in Staffordshire and Derbyshire.¹⁰²

The Cockaynes formed a bridge between Meverell and the Vernons, with a little help from the Montgomerys and Longfords. The Vernon connection helped Meverell get appointed to the Staffordshire

commission of the peace in July 1449, as Meverell himself lacked links with Duke Humphrey. In 1450 Meverell was being sued by William Trussell for being on a jury which accepted bribes from Sir Richard Vernon back in June 1448 to return a wrong verdict in Vernon's struggle with Trussell over the Pembridge inheritance.¹⁰³

An appreciation of the position of the Vernons is necessary if one is to understand local politics during this period. They were among the half a dozen most powerful gentry families in Staffordshire and western Derbyshire. Sir Richard Vernon was a knight of the shire for Staffordshire in 1419 and for Derbyshire in 1422 and 1426- for which last parliament he was Speaker of the Commons. Three of his sons also became members of parliament: Richard in 1433, Fulk in 1439-40 and William in 1442, 1449-50 and 1450 all for Derbyshire- William also sat for Staffordshire in 1455. These are just the known times when the family provided M.P.s. They were well represented in other county offices too, and Sir Richard's power was extended on 16 December 1439 when the Duke of Norfolk made him steward of his property in Derbyshire and later knight-steward in the Earl Marshal's court of chivalry.¹⁰⁴ He was also steward of the High Peak for the Duchy of Lancaster and not the sort of man to be crossed if possible. Around 1440 the council of the Duchy was petitioned by several of its tenants complaining of Vernon's high-handedness in pursuit of his duties and accused him of imprisoning people without cause. One complainant added that 'the said Richard is so mighty in the said county that the "besecher" may not abide the danger of the suit' he had brought against Vernon.¹⁰⁵ It was Sir Richard's large number of sons, secure in the knowledge that their father's power would protect their every action, who were involved in most of the disturbances at this time. For instance, William Vernon needlessly made enemies of the Gresleys of Drakelow over the petty matter of the admission of cattle to a plot of

pasture land. This was eventually settled by the arbitration in 1447 of William, Lord Ferrers, but relations between the two families were to remain permanently strained.¹⁰⁶ Another son, Thomas, was outlawed in 1449-50 for poaching in Queen Margaret's parks at Stockley in the Needwood forest,¹⁰⁷ and a third son, Thurstan, was ordered to be arrested by a royal commission of 26 June 1450 for various offences committed with Hugh Davenport (who with a fourth of Sir Richard's sons, Edmund, had married the Handsacre heiresses while they were wards of Vernon).¹⁰⁸ In late 1450 Agnes Hert, the widow of a Gresley servant, appealed William Vernon, Davenport and others of the murder of her husband, and in 1455 when Buckingham eventually intervened to arbitrate between the Vernons and Gresleys, one of the clauses of the award he made insisted that twenty marks compensation be paid to Agnes.¹⁰⁹

The whole matter of arbitration in gentry disputes is an important one and will be dealt with more fully at the end of this chapter; but one point does need making here. It concerns the Ferrers arbitration of 1447 mentioned earlier. Vernon had been part of the Ferrers affinity in the area, an affinity which had never attained the importance it had had under Edmund, Lord Ferrers in the 1420s and 1430s and which was slowly breaking up. That in their quarrel with the Gresleys, the Vernons turned as late as 1448 to Ferrers rather than to Buckingham, however, indicates that the Staffords who had retained Sir Richard in 1441 and had also retained Sir John Gresley the elder is significant in explaining the politics of the area. It was Buckingham's uncertainty of his influence with the Vernons and his need for their support and his tactics in trying to prevent them following most of the rest of the Ferrers affinity into the camp of his rival the Earl of Warwick that led him to turn a blind eye to the disturbances in the Peak District and to the plight of his retainer Ralph Basset. Lords,

were not always expected to interfere constantly in the affairs of their supporters, but when violence occurred some action on their part was demanded to give credibility to their 'good lordship'. When the Meverells and Cockayne-Vernon gang attacked Basset's property at Blore next, he reacted by not only suing them in the courts but also petitioning against them in parliament. This decision was prompted not so much by any notable losses sustained in the attack (of 30 October 1448), but by his feelings that Duke Humphrey was not going to come to his rescue again, and by a similar more serious attack by the same group five days later on the Okeover's home manor at Okeover. Philip Okeover had only a short time before taken over that manor from his grandfather after the latter had gone to live on his second wife's property in Nottinghamshire. One likely theory for this second attack is that John Cockayne had manufactured a claim to the land. Certainly the complex interweaving of the lands of the two families gave scope for an unscrupulous exploitation of the territorial boundaries.¹¹⁰ The attack on Basset may have been a warning not to interfere, coupled with a reaction to the fact that Sir Sampson Meverell was at the time in prison at the Marshalsea being tried for the attack on Southworth mentioned earlier. On 8 December Okeover's property received yet another visitation from the travelling thuggery as what had previously been sporadic harassment developed into something more sinister. Okeover too petitioned parliament, possibly so advised by Edward, Lord Grey of Groby upon whom he had been attending at the time of the attacks. These petitions were full of vivid descriptions of the raids. Okeover's, for instance, related how after breaking up 'the dores, baywyndowes and other wyndowes of the seid maner with fourmes, trestille and tabulle dormant', they added insult to injury by using these to cook all but five of the deer in the adjacent park in a barbecue of destruction.¹¹¹ A jury later assessed the damage at three

hundred and ninety five marks, though it is unlikely that Okeover was ever compensated for the attack. In 1452 Basset was awarded £80 damages and £20 costs for the raid on him. The defendents were difficult enough to get into court. As in the case concerning Okeover, the money was probably never paid. However Basset too had friends, as was revealed in his petition to parliament:

'Had not John Curboun, Richard Bagot and Henry Bradburne with others ...come thider to the entent for to se pees kept and for to entrete them to go thens, thei the attackers hadde brennyd the place of youre seid besecher, and his brother Richard Basset and other divers of his tenaunts the which were at that tyme within the seid place, and so at the request and at the instaunce of the seid John Curboun, Richard Bagot and Henry Bradburne the seid misgoverned and riottous persones were intretide to go thence and so thei dide.'¹¹²

From this passage two interesting points may be drawn. First, it is significant that three of Basset's saviours were closely related- Bradbourne and Curzon had married Bagot's sisters. This whole episode reveals how the 'extended family' could assemble within a surprizingly short period of time for a common purpose- in this case to rally to the support of an ally. Did Cockayne's raid, or rather the extent of it trigger off some defence mechanism within gentry society by over-stepping some unconscious threshold of acceptable violence? Certainly the sudden show of solidarity and 'gathering of the clans' was in marked contrast to the apathy of the previous half a dozen years. There was a real danger of someone getting killed, possibly by accident, and then a blood feud could well develop. The reaction of Bagot, Bradbourne and Curzon was instinctive rather than calculated, as contemporaries clearly saw the attacks as going beyond the undefined boundaries of accepted illegality.

Secondly, it is significant how effective the show of support was. The words 'entrete', 'request' and 'instaunce', used to

describe how the attackers were stopped in mid-rampage, suggest a growing belligerency among the relievers, which may help explain their success.

The central point to bear in mind when examining all these disputes is the extraordinary mixture of local and wider factors that contributed to the course that events eventually took. Overlaying the petty rivalries was the building and maintenance of magnate affinities. Buckingham could not afford to take any action which might result in the political alienation of either Cockayne or the Vernons, but failed to see the long term disadvantages of ignoring the morality of issues for short term gain. The longer he acted in this vein, the more he risked losing the goodwill of the uncommitted and limiting his freedom of manoeuvre. Dr. Carpenter has shown for Warwickshire that his failure to dominate that county was ultimately due to the way 'he upheld the use of force for illegitimate ends, and so identified himself with a tyrannical attitude to property.'¹¹³ Dr. Rawcliffe in her study of the Staffords has best summed up the Duke when she wrote that 'against an obvious talent for dealing with his own estate staff must be set a harsh and often vindictive disposition, which... continued to cloud his political judgement until he fell at the Battle of Northampton in 1460.'¹¹⁴ This is not to argue that all the problems with which Buckingham was faced could have easily been solved by a more-gifted man. There were constant, dangerous undercurrents within the Stafford affinity and often the Duke was compelled to support one man on one issue and oppose him on another- individuals were recruited for their personal ability and/or local influence, not for their ability to get along with one another. In a perfect world there would have been no disputes within the affinity to strain loyalties, but this was far from being a perfect world and the Duke was left having to consider the day-to-day preservation of his

affinity as his prime task. He certainly would have agreed with the Red Queen that 'it takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place.' Two examples of the awkward position which the Duke could find himself in occurred at this time.

The first was that the nobleman whom Philip Okeover was waiting upon at the parliament of February 1449 and because of whom he was absent earlier on in that winter when the raids were perpetrated, Edward Grey, Lord Ferrers of Groby, was one of the Duke's staunchest supporters in Warwickshire at the time- and here was Cockayne whose support Buckingham also needed ransacking one of Grey's attendants' home- three miles from Grey's own manor of Wootton.

The second involved the struggle over the Mountfort inheritance (related elsewhere) in which Buckingham laboured long and hard to disinherit Baldwin Mountfort in favour of his younger step-brother Edmund- despite the fact that Baldwin was married to Joan Vernon, Sir Richard's sister. So while bending over backwards in one dispute not to antagonise the Vernons, the Duke was doing just that in another.

After 1450 these Peak District disputes gradually petered out, to be replaced by more overtly political in-fighting within Derbyshire, which led to the alienation of the Blounts from the Staffords and was led by a Cockayne-Vernon gang strengthened by the Egertons and Longfords; but that story is outside the parameters I have set for this thesis on Staffordshire. There was, however, one more disturbance along the border which was both politically motivated and Staffordshire-based. Again, behind it lay the Stafford-Neville struggle for northern Warwickshire, and again, it concerned part of the old Ferrers of Chartley affinity.

A cadet branch of the Ferrers family held Tamworth on the Warwickshire border (about six miles south-west of Clifton Camville). In 1449 fighting broke out there between them and Buckingham's men.

On 20 September Thomas Ferrers the elder and his son Thomas attacked a couple of the Duke's men, Richard Emme and Hugh Colman, supposedly so injuring and frightening them that they were unable to leave their homes for thirty weeks.¹¹⁵ However, nine days afterwards they were fit enough to join with others led by Thomas Hexstall (brother of William, clerk of Buckingham's household and Stafford family placeman in the parliament of early 1449) in a return attack on the Ferrers family. Thomas the younger petitioned parliament that his attackers numbered over eighty and at Coleshill

'assaute made to the seid Thomas Ferrers, Gilbert and Hugh More [his servants], and theym thenne and ther bete wounded and...lefte for dede and...come to the seid towne of Tamworth yn the seid shyre of Warrewik arraied in maner beforeseide and than and there assauted the castelle of Thomas Ferrers the elder Squyer to the entente to have slayne hym yf they might have goten the same castelle.'¹¹⁶

It should not be forgotten that at the time of all these disturbances Thomas Ferrers the elder was sheriff of Staffordshire. He was soon to be replaced by Humphrey Swynnerton, a friend of Buckingham. Not surprisingly the justices of the peace presided over a jury which found against the Ferrers, but the award of costs and damages was suspended while the effect of the verdict was assessed. Perhaps Buckingham wished to make some conciliatory gesture in the hope of wooing the Ferrers family away from Warwick, to whom they had become attached; if so, he was unsuccessful. In fact it was to Richard, duke of York rather than Warwick that the Ferrers' allegiance was closest. The marriage of Thomas the younger to Anne Hastings in the summer of 1448 may indeed have been instrumental in provoking the troubles of that autumn, as the Hastings family were among York's most loyal supporters.

This, like the Peak District problems, was not continued in Staffordshire in the 1450s, but did help fashion

the eventual allegiances of 1459-61.

This sort of violence, however, was rare. Most people simply got on with the business of producing and providing for the next generation as quietly as possible. Trouble meant distress and expense; and there is no evidence that the people of the fifteenth century were generic masocists seeking out ways of antagonising their neighbours. Such disturbances as there were tended to be of a personal nature. Riots were almost unknown. Staffordshire remained quiet in 1381 and 1450, but there was always a fear of popular insurrection in the minds of the establishment. Certainly the burgesses of Coventry were greatly alarmed by rumours that the area was on the point of rising after a series of Lollard sermons preached there and in south Staffordshire in 1424.¹¹⁷

The county's only major urban disturbances occurred in Lichfield in 1436, 1442 and 1488, all involving the Cathedral chapter there. In the first of these, tradesmen besieged the close, even using slings and war-engines to hurl stones over the walls.¹¹⁸ This led to a royal grant in 1441 that the close be outside the jurisdiction of secular officers- the cause of the trouble. The 1442 riot was organised by episcopal estate officials and directed against the Stanleys of Elford for some obscure reason. However, it was the trouble on 28 December 1489 when a brawl inspired by three of the Chapter vicars led to four deaths, mayhem with gentry from the Bishop's estates riding armed about the town throughout the following day, and a somewhat belated royal commission into the matter which did not sit until the following 12 September.¹¹⁹ Lichfield chapter was not the only local religious institution whose relations with neighbouring townsfolk were not always harmonious; Lilleshall Abbey, Shrewsbury and St. Werburg's, Chester had their problems too. However, it was neither the clergy nor the common people who were the major source of social disorder. As shown

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by the incidents in the Peak district, it was the gentry- and in particular its younger elements- who were to blame. This was not a phenomenon confined to those harsh northern uplands,

In autumn 1498 Roger Dingley the mayor of Walsall complained to the court of Star Chamber about a couple of young swash-buckling gentlemen, John Beaumont of Wednesbury and Walter Leveson.¹²⁰ Two men had been arrested for their part in a Walsall brawl in which a third participant had been badly, possibly fatally injured. Then Beaumont and Leveson, who obviously had some connection with the imprisoned duo, rode into the town, threatening to run riot if their friends were not immediately released. However, they were turned away by William Harper and William Wilkes, J.P.s who lived locally. Beaumont and Leveson were later to claim that they had turned up simply out of curiosity.¹²¹

All of this happened on Wednesday 13 June 1498 and Harper and Wilkes, fearing that more trouble might develop the following Sunday at Willenhall fair immediately forbade all the inhabitants of the locality to go there- at least that was how Dingley the mayor reported their words. Leveson and Beaumont claimed that the only ones forbidden to attend what was after-all a traditional Trinity Sunday affair were those armed and looking for trouble. On this point at least the mayor's version seems less plausible, and may well have been an attempt to further blacken the reputations of his antagonists. Whatever the truth of all this may be, there is little doubt that, come the day of the fair and probably enlivened by readily-available intoxicants, Leveson and friends made a considerable nuisance of themselves, cavorting about, as Dingley put it, in riotous assembly. That phrase covers a multitude of sins, but the high-jinks apparently included one man yelling he was Robin Hood, another the Abbot of Marram and several that they would see to any Walsall folk they could lay hands on. The reply to Dingley stated that

all this was simply a show put on to raise money for charity!¹²²

Most so-called feuds were little more than brief, petty differences, settled after posturing, threats and inconvenient litigation without violence. There were exceptions. In April 1456 the Cox family of Wolverhampton, minor burgesses with whom Nicholas Warings had had dealings three years earlier when he sued for a £40 debt, broke into the Warings home at nearby Lea and abducted a serving wench.¹²³ They were later acquitted of this by a local jury, but not before Warings and his men had been out to exact what Francis Bacon called that wild justice that is revenge. They beat up the attackers and kidnapped John Cox the elder, who was held captive for three days until he agreed to sign a bond in £100 to Warings.¹²⁴ Presumably this was intended to forestall any legal retaliation; if so, it failed. However, perhaps significantly, the suits begun by Warings are known to have been heard almost immediately, whereas two years elapsed before there is the first reference to suits brought by his antagonists- after all, Warings did have two kinsmen on the Staffordshire bench in John Hampton and Thomas Everdon. He and his men swiftly arranged for and received pardons in spring 1458 and the matter was apparently left there.¹²⁵

This was not the only piece of litigation Warings' servants got him involved in with Wolverhampton burgesses at that time. He had to sponsor a petition to the Chancellor on behalf of his man Stephen Heuster against the Salford family. They had come to Heuster's house at night to attack him and when he refused^{to} step outside they set the property on fire and smoked him out before beating him up.¹²⁶ Such a level of arson and premeditated violence, however, was rare, risking as it did a participant's death.

The number of unlawful killings in the area during this period was remarkably low. For instance, John Young of Charnes-by-Eccleshall killed one Thomas Wybbunbury with a lance in 1473 when defending himself from an attack¹²⁷, while John Mynors the younger, bailiff of Utttoxeter was pardoned on 15 November 1457 for mortally wounding a troublemaker at the local market the previous July, whose brawl Mynors had been called in to break up.¹²⁸ The coroners' court also had to sit on such cases of accidental death as when the Earl of Shrewsbury lost a son in a joust at Caurs Castle in 1443, or when Elizabeth Taylor fell from her horse at Over Penn on 15 June 1496.¹²⁹

1496 was an extra-ordinarily busy year for the county's coroners. They presided over views of eight corpses, of which seven were found to have been murdered.¹³⁰ Rarely can this figure of murders have been surpassed. In the fifteenth century it was rare for Staffordshire to have more than one murder per year, if that. Murders, when they did occur, rarely involved the gentry. They were usually the results of arguments involving yeomen, husbandmen or town traders, and death was often caused by a blow with either a club or an agricultural implement, such as a billhook. Occasionally, however, a gentry family was implicated, as when the Coyneys (Robert Coyney was escheator in 1460-1) got away with killing a certain husbandman Henry White of Mere and wounding his wife as they lay in bed.¹³¹

Convictions, especially against the gentry, were hard to secure. Arranged acquittals or the production of easily-purchased pardons so mocked natural justice that it is more noteworthy that violent revenge was not commonplace than that it occurred at all. Only two local murders between 1440 and 1500 were premeditated acts of revenge- those of Sir Robert Harcourt

in 1470 and William Chetwynd in 1494.

How the feud between Sir Humphrey Stafford of Grafton and Sir Robert Harcourt began is unknown. Stafford had acquired fees totalling £71 a year, of which forty marks came from Humphrey, duke of Buckingham.¹³² Stafford was also the Duke's lieutenant at Calais (1442-4), while Harcourt has been linked with Suffolk.¹³³ Though the affair cannot be proved to have grown from or expressed factional rivalry, it may be pertinent to note that the Harcourts were part of the Ferrers affinity and turned to Richard, earl of Warwick rather than Buckingham in the 1450s.

As far as we know, hostilities opened on 22 May 1448 when the Harcourts ambushed the Staffords in the middle of Coventry fair. The dust settled to reveal Sir Humphrey Stafford lying unconscious and badly wounded and his eldest son dead of a blow to the head from Sir Robert Harcourt's own broadsword.¹³⁴ Any hopes the Staffords might have entertained of judicial vengeance were dampened by Harcourt's good lord William, Lord Ferrers presiding over the indictment proceedings on 16 July. There was also the difficulty of getting a defendant to appear in court, but Harcourt was eventually outlawed on 16 June 1449.¹³⁵ Nonetheless the Staffords plotted violent revenge. On 1 May 1450 Sir Humphrey, his second son (Humphrey the younger), and kinsmen Richard Beauchamp and Thomas Burdet gathered a large war-party and rode south through the night to raid at dawn their enemies' principal residence, Stanton Harcourt in Oxfordshire. Arriving as the family were hearing matins in the village church, they attacked the same and drove them into the church tower. A six-hour siege then ensued with volleys of arrows raining down on the cowering defenders, until either as a result of resignation or news of an approaching force of relievers, the Staffords retired.¹³⁶

By 23 May a commission of oyer et terminer into the Stafford raid had been ordered.¹³⁷ However, both sides played 'the pardon game', producing the all-important pieces of parchment to halt legal proceedings against themselves- Humphrey Stafford the younger on 6 July 1452 and Harcourt on 18 November 1452.

This was not to be the end of the matter, though the Harcourts went seemingly unpunished for the murder of May 1448. Humphrey Stafford took no further part in the feud -or indeed in anything- for he was captured and executed by Cade's Kentish rebels in June 1450; but the younger Humphrey still sought an eye for an eye. This pre-occupation with revenge cost him dear. Dr. Carpenter has written of young Stafford's career during the 1450s, a decade which saw the Harcourts ally themselves with Warwick, that he 'lost most of the friendships his father had built up, [and] was unable to get a hearing against the Harcourts even when that family was rendered vulnerable by the Yorkist confiscations of 1459.'¹³⁸ Even his family's friendship with Buckingham seems to have cooled when it became apparent that the Duke was not able to procure Harcourt blood. Revenge was to be a long time coming. The Harcourts were even more powerful in the 1460s than they had been earlier on. While Sir Robert's attention lay mainly around his Oxfordshire estates¹³⁹, his brothers William and more particularly John of Ranton (sheriff 1461-3, 1466-7) represented the family and its power in Staffordshire.

The opportunity for the Staffords to avenge themselves came during the Readeption, when for the first time in over a generation their enemies lacked the protection of Ferrers/Neville good lordship. Although Sir Robert

Harcourt accompanied Warwick on a diplomatic mission to France in the early summer of 1467 for Edward IV.¹⁴⁰ Evidence for the continued closeness of their relationship thereafter is lacking in deeds or lawsuits. The Harcourts suddenly found themselves omitted from county commissions in the late 1460s, which is particularly noticeable given their prominence within the county gentry, the frequency of their appearances on the same in the earlier part of the decade and their previous prominence among the Earl's allies in the area. From general circumstantial evidence it appears that, along with many other of Warwick's gentry associates, the Harcourts were not enthusiastic about his alienation from Edward IV. They were loath to support his alliance with the Lancastrians, favouring loyalty to the Yorkist king. Certainly there is a letter from Harcourt's brother Richard to Thomas Stonor dated 1 February 1470 stating 'ye know wele the besynesse that I have aboute the Kynges maters atte this tyme.'¹⁴¹ At this time Warwick and Clarence were arming for the final break with Edward. Perhaps the appointment of John Harcourt sometime between Michaelmas 1469 and 14 June 1470 by that Lancastrian partisan Bishop John Halse of Coventry and Lichfield as bailiff of his episcopal liberty was part of an attempt to woo the family into support for the return of Henry VI- a support which would go far towards securing the county's loyalty to Warwick and his new regime. The Harcourts may have found themselves unsure of their best interests in a political no-man's land; tempted, but loath to desert Edward IV.

Simultaneously (and perhaps not unconnected with this) was a growth in the Stafford of Graftons' support for Edward IV. When Warwick and Clarence finally broke with Edward in March 1470 part of the royal reaction to this

was to remove the Earl from the shrievalty of Worcestershire and replace him with someone more dependable. The choice fell upon that long-standing Neville enemy Humphrey Stafford the younger of Grafton. He was appointed sheriff on 30 March 1470. With Harcourt in political difficulties and Stafford in (at least temporary) power the springboard for revenge was constructed. Sir Robert Harcourt's movements were scrutinised and on 14 November, with their prey half a dozen miles north of Wolverhampton at Hilton, nemesis was exacted.¹⁴² At two o'clock in the afternoon Harcourt was knifed to death by raiders led by Stafford's half-brother William.¹⁴³ News of the murder travelled swiftly, if not entirely accurately. A letter from Margaret Paston in East Anglia written 1 December 1470:

'Trost not mych vp-on promyses of lordes
now a days that ye shuld be the suerere
of the favour of ther men; for there was
a man, and a lordes sone, seid but late
and toke it for an exampill, that Ser
Roberd Harecourt had the good will of the
lordes after ther comyng in, and yet
wyth-in short tyme after here men kylled
hym in his owyn place. A mannes deth is
litill set by now a days.'¹⁴⁴

Although the inaccuracies in this account (Harcourt was cut down neither in his own place nor by agents of the Readeption) show the author to have been misinformed about or completely misunderstood the significance of these events, it appears that Harcourt's acquisition of the goodwill of Warwick and Clarence was sufficiently noteworthy to be taken as an example. Here is surely evidence both of the rift between Sir Robert and the Earl and also of the latter soliciting desperately needed support by assuring Harcourt that past differences had been put aside and he need fear nothing from the new order. That Harcourt was murdered so soon after the return to power of the Lancastrians is unsurprising

since the Staffords were not Warwick's men. Nonetheless, the incident, misconstrued as it was by the East Anglian lady or by those from whom she got her information, may have been only one of a number of pieces of information which led her to remark on the lack of control a lord could exercise over the members of his affinity. It was precisely because so much was set by a man's life, rather than so little, that the fraternal single-minded hatred lasted over twenty years before being sated and that the Staffords were able to count upon the support of not only kinsmen and tenants but also several wealthy Wolverhampton burgesses such as Richard Leveson and the Salfords, who may well have also supplied the vital information as to Harcourt's movements.

This time it was the Staffords who cloaked themselves with the immunity fostered by public office, powerful allies and procured pardon.¹⁴⁵ With Humphrey as sheriff in Worcestershire, the wheels of justice were sure to get clogged. Indeed the coroner's report took nearly nine months (4 August 1471) to be returned. There the matter rested. Harcourt's widow spent a fruitless five years trying to secure a court verdict against her husband's urderers, but with as little success as the Staffords had had a generation earlier.¹⁴⁶ In addition to the other factors pertaining to the Harcourts' escape from judgment, there was also a general feeling that two wrongs had made a right. Throughout the early 1470s Humphrey Stafford was a confirmed, protected and favoured Yorkist. In October 1474 his position was buttressed by a grant of the forfeited Ormond estates of Clent, Handsworth and Mere in southern Staffordshire.¹⁴⁷ This loyalty to the house of York extended to Richard of Gloucester, for whom the Staffords of Grafton

fought at Bosworth. Humphrey was later executed in 1486 following an unsuccessful revolt against Henry Tudor, but that is another story.¹⁴⁸

Murder most foul, however, was rare in Staffordshire, political assassination particularly so. The death of Sir Robert Harcourt had resulted from a blood-feud, but that of William Chetwynd in 1494 is shrouded in mystery.

Sir Humphrey Stanley was the architect of Chetwynd's murder. He had not risen to be the most powerful man in Staffordshire after 1485 by being a fool; he and his family were renowned for surviving through flexibility of response to crises rather than being in on their precipitation. In short, the murder was planned and, more importantly, calculated. Written evidence for Stanley's motives does not survive (in fact it probably would have never existed), but from the questions which are raised by the detailed description of the attack on Chetwynd given by his widow Alice in her petition for justice to Henry VII, certain suppositions become highly appealing. Alice's account of the events of 20 and 21 June 1494 runs as follows:

'The friday at nyght next before the Fest of Sent John Baptist last past, a counterffet letter was then directed in the name of Randolf Brerton, Squyer, unto your sayd late servante[William Chetwynd], specyably dysyryng hym by the same to mete with hym at Stafford at v. of the clock the next morning after, whereapon your said late servaunt thynkyng the sayd letter to have byn good and true, where in troth no such was made nor directyd from the said Randolf, but was feyned and craftly by the ungoodly dispocyon of Sir Humfrey Stanley, on of the knights of your Body, counterfete, dressyt hynself, beyng accompanied bot with ii of his servaunts, and his owne son, toward Stafford aforsayd, and as he was going on his fote the next wey thederward in your highway upon an heth calyt Tyxall Heth, then and ther issued out of a schep cote and a depe pyt upon the same heth

...houshold servaunts of the said Sir Humfrey Stanley, accompanied with many other evyll dyspossyt persons....fersly assautun your sayd late servaunte, saying all with on voyse, upon the horysson he schall dye, and there wyth summe of them scott at hym, and strake hym with swerdds, and knyvis in such wyse, as that they kyld hym then and there owt off hand, and wyle the sayd misdoers were doying the sayd mischevous deed, the said Sir Umfrey accompanyd with xxiiii persons and above came rydyng for bye the sayd place, saying that he had byn there to hunt a dere, where no dere was seyn there xl yers byfore.'149

Alice then went on to complain that Stanley's power and position as sheriff made it impossible to get justice. This was despite a coroner's jury indicting one James Stanley and two others of the murder three days later.¹⁵⁰

Yet what was the connection between Chetwynd and Brereton, and what sort of business was it that had to be conducted before dawn. From the coroner's return it seems that it was all supposed to look like a hunting accident, but why was Stanley so coincidentally there and with so patently lame an excuse? Finally why was no action taken against the murderers of not only a leading county gentleman but also an usher in the royal chamber?

There is no doubt that Stanley sent the letter in Brereton's name to ambush and murder Chetwynd. There is also no doubt that Chetwynd was not expecting trouble; otherwise he would have taken a larger protective retinue and not have had his teenage son and heir along with him. Stanley must have known that Chetwynd would answer the summons from Brereton. What could the reason for the meeting have been and why fix the time of it at five in the morning? The cause must have been important, but had it resulted from a serious illness of Brereton's, for example, Chetwynd would surely have been asked to come immediately or as soon as

possible- hardly at precisely five o'clock. Had the cause of Chetwynd's journey not been either urgent or confidential surely a more sociable time would have been arranged. What seems most likely is that this was a secret rendezvous that Chetwynd was attending. That Stanley knew what would drag Chetwynd from his bed to such a meeting is clear, as is the way he used this knowledge to lure Chetwynd to a violent death. But what secret could there have been such that it cost Chetwynd so dear?

The most commonly advanced theory is that he became entangled in the negotiations ('plot' is too strong a word) with Perkin Warbeck and Margaret of Burgundy. Others involved included Sir Simon Mountfort, Robert, Lord Fitzwalter and above all the king's chamberlain Sir William Stanley. Stanley was betrayed, convicted and on 16 February 1495 beheaded, but Polydore Vergil implies that Fitzwalter and Mountfort were at least arrested sometime before him.¹⁵¹ The King had known that negotiations were going on since the middle of 1493. Could it be that Chetwynd's part in the matter had been one of the first to be uncovered by Henry VII's agents, and that what appears to have been a murder was more of an execution for treason? Factors that point to this are the closeness of the Mountfort and Chetwynd families, the general suspicious circumstances surrounding the killing, a grant to Randle Brereton of some of Sir William Stanley's confiscated property in 1498¹⁵², and the apparent unconcern on the King's part at the death of one of his most intimate servants. It may well be that punishment for his treason was meted out quietly on Tixall heath instead of after a show trial because Henry, no doubt shocked and afraid that one so close to him had proven false, wanted to ascertain exactly how far the cancer had

spread. He may not have wanted to disclose the sources and extent of his information, judging that to do so would be more likely to send the other conspirators scurrying into exile beyond his reach than the news of Chetwynd's murder.

All of this has to remain speculation, as there is no conclusive evidence as to why Chetwynd was disposed of. Brereton's role may have been akin to that of Sir Robert Clifford in the conviction of Sir William Stanley and the others- that of either turncoat or royal spy. That Sir William, Lord Fitzwalter and Chetwynd were all prominent members of the royal chamber suggests that this was a plot based upon there; but more than that I am loath to speculate upon.

Whether Henry VII later repented of the murder of Chetwynd or whether he was not fully informed of the matter is debatable. The King's incredulity at the eventual revelations concerning his chamberlain¹⁵³ seems to indicate that he knew less about the conspiracy than was previously thought. In this case, the decision to eliminate Chetwynd may have been taken by 'loyal advisors' rather than the King. Sir William Stanley's fate was sealed by the production of later corroborating evidence ('indisputable' was how Vergil put it). Was this evidence supplied by Brereton (some genealogies have Joan Brereton of Brereton as Sir William's wife)? If so, Chetwynd's culpability would have reached the King in full, explaining why the widowed Alice got nowhere in her suit against Sir Humphrey and his men. Perhaps the King knew of Chetwynd's elimination only after the event; in which case Sir Humphrey's gradual loss of power in Staffordshire after 1494-5 might be explicable in terms of royal wariness at

such power as Stanley exercised there being in the hands of someone so ruthless. Certainly Sir Humphrey seems to have gone unrewarded for his part in the affair. Indeed, I cannot find evidence for any royal grant to him after Chetwynd's death. Indeed he was taken off the commission of the peace for three years (1496-99) and never again appointed sheriff, despite a desire for the office.¹⁵⁴

Such then is the picture of crime within Staffordshire in the second half of the fifteenth century. From the tales of woe recounted in the legal records of other counties, it appears that this one was exceptionally quiet- I hesitate to say lawabiding. Why should this be? In part, it must be put down to a fortunate absence of scoundrels. Much mischief can be wrought by the actions of one unruly individual or family and Staffordshire in the late fifteenth century lacked the likes of a Hugh Erdeswick of the earlier part or the Gresleys of the fourteenth. There was a background level of unrest and bullying, as I have shown, but nothing systematic or prolonged. Even the antics of John Cockayne were as nothing compared with those of, for example, the Herberts in Herefordshire or the Courtenays of Devon.¹⁵⁵ The development of the blood-feud was something to be avoided at all costs. In Staffordshire, this was done successfully and contributed greatly to the stability of the area. Such violence as there was came, to borrow a term from atomic physics, in quanta- that is, in small, discrete packets, rather than as a high continuous amount. For most of the people and most of the time life continued unaffected by violent or prolonged disputes. What needs to

be played down is the sensationalism of earlier historians for whom the fifteenth century held little worth recording once the spilled blood had dried and the thunder faded into silence. Yet it is upon just those silences that the real emphasis should be laid. For every incident of rustling, let us not forget the thousands of sheep who safely grazed; for every unfortunate dying violently, let us recall the thousands who passed on in peace (if not always in comfort or good health). Of course, the very nature of the source material contributes to the erroneous picture of England at this time as being nothing more than an arena of crime. As Professor Lander has pointed out:

'The good fame of any age generally withers before documentation of its practices as distinct from its legislation, and the publication of some of the judicial records of earlier times shows a state of affairs so appalling that any theory of massive deterioration in the fifteenth century is hardly credible.'¹⁵⁶

As long as studies concentrate upon judicial evidence, which are merely catalogues of crime, this aspect of life will continue to occupy its position of prominence. Yet that position must never go unqualified or the historian forget how in Shakespeare's words:

'The evil that men do lives after them,
The good is oft interred with their bones.'

One instance of that good, to which frequent mention has already been made in this and earlier chapters, is arbitration. The popularity of this in Staffordshire in the fifteenth century is another reason for the low level of serious crime. Here was a method of settling disputes without recourse to the regular courts wherein settlements were difficult to obtain and litigation both expensive and fraught with danger.

With perhaps only the dispute and attempts to achieve one's desires by force predating it, arbitration surely ranks as one of the earliest of all human activities. The later middle ages saw a resurgence in the popularity of arbitration (especially in gentry disputes) as an alternative to litigation and the regular court system reaching a peak at the end of the fifteenth century. Almost every kind of dispute or lawsuit, with the exception of treason, currency offences and other crimes against the state, went to arbitration- together with a selection of other non-illegal quarrels. A parliamentary attempt at restricting the likely disputes of certain magnates travelling to France for Henry VI's coronation there decreed that: ' [Should] enny dissention or debate fall betwix Lorde and Lorde, the remenant....shall, all other thynges left, labour and entende to the redresse and appresyng of the saide dissention or debate, and that withouten holdyng of partialtee, or more favoir shewing to oone partie thenne other, to stond hool, unit and knyht togedres; and the seid lordes bytwix whom peradventure such division shall fall be stand in heigh and lowe to the redress and reule of the remnant.' 157

Here, distant behind the forced optimism of chivalry, lies much of the theory though little of the practice of arbitration. Any attempt to explain or restrict our description of arbitration by legal terminology wrongly emphasises the actions and attitudes of the adjudicators, when it is the disputants whose actions and attitudes were the crux of the matter. Philippe de Mézières' letter to Richard II in 1395 comes far closer to encapsulating the essence of arbitration than does the above 1430 parliamentary proclamation. Mezières wrote pleading that the 'wound' between England and France be healed and stressed that 'each side must do its share, so that, by the mercy of Jesus, both sides will be satisfied and divisions removed and brought to nought.'⁵⁸ Using not unsuitable religious metaphors, here in the world of statutes and

precedence was once more enacted the age-old struggle between ritual/liturgy and improvisation/initiative- with quality of response the determining factor.

Part of the attraction of arbitration lay in its provision of a quick and reasonably equitable solution, which was all that most men asked of the law. Yet, the contemporary legal system in which 'labouring' meant bribery or threats rather than persuasion based on the justice of one's case, and in which acquittal followed should even the defendant's name be misspelt on a writ hardly presented the law as an adequate deterrent to the criminal or the courts as a viable forum for the redress of injury. When a certain Robert Curtis of Fauld-by-Hanbury took out letters of pardon in February 1456 for his part in the Cockayne gang's attack on Okeover (nearly eight years earlier) he insisted on no fewer than forty-seven aliases being set down in the deeds before feeling secure against the legal machinations of his enemies.¹⁵⁹

Litigation was often initiated to harass one's opponent rather than in expectation of obtaining a just verdict. Unshackled by the technicalities of the law, and (for the most part) lawyers, 'lay' arbitration simply got things done. That its rise in popularity coincided with and paralleled that of equitable jurisdiction of Chancery is significant. Both were parts of the three-pronged attack in response to dissatisfaction with existing legal processes and institutions- the third being a growing tendency for seigneurial councils 'to act as tribunals in quarrels arising not only between tenants and retainers, but also those with less tangible connexions.'¹⁶⁰ Extra-legalism- that is action outside of, though not necessarily contrary to, the law- flourished while established institutions remained unappreciative

of (or at least unresponsive to) such changing aspects of life as the enfeoffment to use and developments within trade and finance. The possibility of quick, cheap and intelligible justice attracted business from the regular courts, persuading the interested parties to forgo the traditional processes. It was such cases which featured in the bulk of arbitration awards. However, arbitration never became a succour to, or a refuge for the poor and needy; it remained essentially class-based (i.e. tradesman with tradesman, gentleman with gentleman, lord with lord). There were few exceptions to this rule. One is revealed by an award from King's Bromley dated 1466. In it Sir John Stanley and his wife Elizabeth arbitrated between his friend William Praers, lord of the manor there, and John Lynton, one of Praers customary tenants, who wished to relieve himself of certain feudal incidents. Praers claimed merchet and a massive heriot from his customary tenants consisting of 'all ther horses, bees, gees, swyn, bacons, hide, cloth dyed, brasen pots and all other soundre war and iron bounden wayn.'¹⁶¹ The Stanleys awarded that for a payment of forty marks Lynton and his heirs were to escape from the merchet and hand over only the best beast or goat as a heriot. I suspect that the real cause of the arbitration was not the feudal incidents in themselves, but the amount to be paid for their reduction. Praers had only bought the manor of Kings Bromley weeks before this award and would doubtlessly have welcomed an opportunity to recoup some of his financial outlay.

The very role of the arbitrator, like arbitration itself, was that of a transitional link. Often chosen by only one of the disputants, yet expected to produce an award acceptable to all, he exhibited features of both medieval and

modern views of a juror. The former saw him as a member of a small, intimate community who might realistically be expected to arrive in court with a knowledge of the facts and a preconceived verdict. The latter stressed the need for impartial adjudication based upon weight of evidence. This was an age of reaction, adaptation and innovation, and, though change was slow in coming, to characterise the fifteenth century as an age of stagnation is to misinterpret the subtle dynamism of pupation.

There were four stages in the arbitration process: the choice of arbitrators, the exchange of bonds to abide by the decision, the submission of 'claymes, chalanges, unswares and replications' by the disputants, and the award itself, sealed by all concerned.

The number of adjudicators varied from one to about seven, depending on the matter and participants. Unless the quarrel had been taken to a single individual, the number of actual arbitrators was usually an even one, with half chosen by each side. Occasionally, an umpire acceptable to all was added. This was more to prevent there being any stalemate in the decision-making process, rather than to cast a deciding vote. The essence of arbitration was agreement not democracy. A solution agreed upon by all the arbitrators was likelier to be adhered to than one in which some dissented. Sometimes a rider was added to the award directing the arbitrators to hand the matter over to someone else if they were unable to agree on a decision or to perform their duty for any reason.

One Staffordshire example of passing on the role of arbitrator dates from 1451. A struggle between two gentry

Kinver forest families arose over Rommenysland in Morfe and Lutley. The disputants, Robert Grey of Whittington and John Whorewood of Compton, called in as arbitrators John Wood and John Hampton of Stourton (ranger and lieutenant of Kinver forest). Hampton and Wood passed this on to their friend the lawyer Richard Bingham who was a royal justice on the Staffordshire bench, though he held no land within the county.¹⁶² As Grey's son Humphrey held the disputed land in 1485, it seems reasonable to assume that Bingham's decision was in favour of that family (though the award itself has not survived to the present day).

There was no simple formula governing the choice of arbitrators. Family, friends, lawyers, judges, lords, members of a guild, burgesses, clergymen- all might be used depending on the issue and participants concerned. Some were involved because of a personal connection with one of the parties, some because of an expertise in the matter at hand, others might have their say as part of the wider community in which dissent was evident. For example in an award of 1488 between Burton Abbey and William Dethick over a few minor plots of land, the list of arbitrators ended with 'and other of there frendys frendly commyng be twyxt them.'¹⁶³ This was the community settling its own problems without recourse to outside interference or the law (the two were not always viewed as distinct).

At the level of the Boughay family of Whitmore, who were little more than prosperous yeomen/traders, arbitration was through relatives and neighbours with the addition of a more eminent member of the local squirearchy.¹⁶⁴ Turning to a big fish in a small pond was common. It was evident in the above-mentioned Grey-Whorewood dispute in the choice of Hampton, who was through his Stafford family and royal connection the most powerful gentleman in that area. Involving such

people partly ensured compliance with the award (as refusal to obey it would offend them) and also brought in expertise; for these local worthies were the more likely to possess a legal education and experience in government and administration which might increase their attractiveness as arbitrators. Along the Staffordshire-Derbyshire border certain families' names recur so frequently that they must have established a reputation of sorts in such matters. Such families as the Agards, Babingtons, Poles and Curzons of Kedleston were certainly frequently called in to add respectability to these panels. A tradition of going to arbitration may also have been developing, though whether this was national or regional is uncertain. Staffordshire, at least, saw frequent use of the institution of arbitration.

Important gentry cases, especially if they involved the descent or division of an inheritance, were occasionally referred to judges for expert opinion. In the 1490s arbitration was effected by the two common law chief justices, the lords Dinham and d'Aubigny, over part of the much-contested Bergavenny inheritance, resulting in Thomas, earl of Ormond having to pay £800 to three rivals- Sir Henry Illoughby, Sir Thomas Ferrers of Tamworth and John Aston of Tixall.¹⁶⁵

Less successful was the attempted settlement of the Delves of Uttoxeter and Apedale lands in the last two decades of the century. Sir John Delves (the sheriff of Staffordshire during the readeption) had fallen at the battle of Tewkesbury in May 1471 and his eldest son John (not James as reported in Warkworth's chronicle) had been executed three days later for his part in the affair. This left the younger John's two infant daughters as coheiresses. However, the family estates were confiscated after post-mortem attainders were passed against the two men. Although these lay unreversed until 1483, some of the forfeited lands found their way back to the family on 12 June 1475 when Apedale, Uttoxeter and Marchington were granted to Sir James Blount who had married one of the girls, Elizabeth. The attainders were reiterated at the time of this grant.¹⁶⁶ The other girl was wedded to Sir Robert Sheffield from Lincolnshire. Stafford family influence was evidently behind

both of these matches, for Blount was the younger brother of Walter, Lord Mountjoy who had married the widowed Anne, duchess of Buckingham, and Sheffield was a councillor to the Duchess. Meanwhile, Ellen Delves (widow to the elder Sir John), thrown back upon her own resources and small personal amount of property and preyed upon by neighbours taking advantage of her weakened state, lived on to a cantankerous old age. The experience of her struggle to retain what little was left her after the loss and disgrace of her husband and first-born had made her wary of all with whom she had dealings. It is small wonder that on the reversal of the attainders she staked a fiercely-contested claim to a sizeable proportion of the family estates and proved to be a formidable negotiator over the legitimacy and composition of the same.

The matter was sent for arbitration at least four times before some sort of an agreement was seemingly reached. The attempts were made in April 1484, July 1484, December 1484 and August 1485.¹⁶⁷ The first three panels were led by judges; the third included two London aldermen. The fourth panel was a local affair using officers of the Honour of Tutbury: Sir Marmaduke Constable (the steward), Sir John Babington, Nicholas Montgomery and William Harper. When none of these panels succeeded, the Delves and their kinsmen the Egertons tried force and raided Blount's land at Tillington, but eventually what was envisaged as the final award was given on 6 December 1486.¹⁶⁸ This set Ellen's jointure at £91/16s/4d a year including Doddington (Cheshire). Sheffield was allocated the residue of the inheritance save for Apedale which went to Blount.

Clues as to why arbitration proved so difficult and protracted in this case can be gleaned from the following extracts from letters in the Plumpton correspondence dated 1490, by which time trouble had again flared up between Ellen and the husbands of her two grand-daughters:

(a) 'I rode to your comandment by my lady Delphes,
a full troubleous way in that great snaw;
notwithstanding I cold not speed of your matters

at that tyme. But now she is at London, and promyses me well.' - 10 February.

- (b) 'I cannot gyt myne entent of my lady Delphes, wherfore I have comyned with Masters Blunt and Sheffield in this forme; the(sic) say they will take yt in ferme, or els make yt exchaunce with you of lands lyeing in Yorkshire, or els pay you redy money therfore.' - 4 November.
- (c) 'Sir, afore your lands in Crakenmarsh, I can not deale with my lady Delfs; I find hir varyable in hir promyse, wherfore I have according to your comandment, letten them in your name to Mr. Blount by indenture.' - 27 November.

The background to these letters¹⁶⁹ is that Sir Robert Plumpton (to whom the letters were written) held property in Crackermarsh alongside the Delves' lands. He was a Yorkshire knight and found these isolated plots difficult and expensive to administer and therefore sought to lease or exchange them for more accessible lands. Dispute over the Delves inheritance's division had festered on and he was uncertain which side to deal with. A further arbitration tribunal consisting of the Bishop of Ely, Lord Dinham and James Hobard had been appointed on 28 February 1490 presumably to settle this.¹⁷⁰ Bad feeling persisted between Ellen and the others. That the former was 'varyable in hir promyse' undoubtedly would have hampered any settlement, as unwillingness to accommodate stifled mediation. Ellen's years of struggle had made her suspicious and she would surely have agreed with Chaucer when he wrote that

'It is an hard thing and right perilous that a man putte him al outrelly in the arbitracioun and iuggement and in the might and power of hise enemies.'¹⁷¹

Refusal to comply with the terms of an award was, however, rare and often a later generation or an initially-uninvolved party was to blame. That the success rate was so high is hardly surprising given that solutions unlikely to be adhered to tended to be rejected in debate by the arbitrators or on first hearing of them by the disputants. For disputants 'examined, agreed and assented' to the

awards, rather than were forced to accept the decision of their arbitrators. Sir Walter Griffith, who had arbitrated in the 1470s between the Abbot of Burton and one William Scherard over a small amount of land, wrote a humble, advisory letter to the Abbot which concluded

'I thinke yt gode wysdom yt ye calle yor lerned counsell to you and deuyse ffor yor surete heryn [so that] ye waste nott yor rewarde and as ye herafter ar contented soo I schall sealle as shall please you.'¹⁷²

Conciliation rather than judgment lay at the heart of arbitration, which is why the phrase 'submitting to arbitration' has been avoided in this study. Although the conflicting parties had agreed to abide by the decision of the adjudicators, in practice this only meant that the principle of arbitration had been accepted. Even after an award had been decided upon there still remained the problem of getting it implemented.

In a dispute over the inheritance of the humble More family of Penkridge, the arbitrators, who included two members of the powerful Erdeswick family, John Lane 'a lernede monne in the lawe' and the Duchess of Buckingham's chaplain, reported that they had 'entreted' the heir, Thomas, that he should make some provision for his siblings but 'the seyde Thomas denyed hit and seyde that they shulde have no parcell of his lyvelode and so be longe tretes wee entreted hym that he granted hem certen parcelles'. Eventually the pressure on Thomas told and he consented to make over some minor plots, provided that his antagonists promised to be 'to hym gode brother and suster.'¹⁷³ That somebody who could not have been of more than yeomanly status could defy the likes of these gentry arbitrators for so long says much about the nature of arbitration and stands in contradiction of many traditional attitudes about the totality of class control in the later middle ages. Nor was this merely a 'freak' case. The

elder son cannot have been alone in realising that unless his 'betters' wished to get involved violently in the matter, there was little other than persuasion they could bring to bear on him. Arbitration was a matter of diplomacy and negotiation rather than brute force or legal manipulation.

Not all awards, however, could be 'sold' verbally to both sets of disputants; especially if the decision involved only one side having to make concessions or pay compensation. Refusal to accept arbitration might cause resentment and certainly failure to abide by an award, once it had been initially accepted, could produce retribution. Members of a guild were often bound by rules to take inter-fellowship disputes to a panel of the guild's officers. The Guild of St. Mary, Lichfield drew up a new set of ordinances in 1486-7, the second of which decreed :

'Also it is ordened that if ony vnkindely, or ony caus vnkindely to be giuen in deling amongst the seid xlviii [i.e. the members of the guild], that then the knowlege therof cum to the master, he and his brothers here the mater and cawses betwixt them; and the parties to abyde the rule, arbiterment and award of the seid master and his brothers. And the seid parties so moved wyl not abide the ordinaunce of the seid master and his brothers, they to be kept owt of the worshipfull eleccion and fraternyte of the seid Cyte, and neuer to cum amongst them to noo Councell, but be discharged as a man forsworne openly and audyently vpon a boke.'¹⁷⁴

However, few were members of a guild. The loss of good relations with those drawing up an award was not always a sufficient deterrent to someone who would only take note or advantage of arbitration when it operated in his favour. For the victim of a refusal to comply with an award once it had been accepted, several courses of action were available. In theory arbitration was not enforceable in the regular courts, but in fact suits concerning the practice do appear in their records. Although the award as such could not strictly be enforced by King's Bench or Common Pleas, the bonds given to abide by the arbitration were legal contracts and breaking these came within the province of the

courts. An example of this occurred in 1427 over the costs and damages awarded to one Ralph Hosee by Henry Booth and the Curzons of Croxall, after Hosee's wife's struggle with her sons by a previous marriage to Robert Dethick of Uttoxeter over dower lands in Nottinghamshire.¹⁷⁵ Other alternatives included petitioning Chancery for a decision based on equity or (for disputes between clergymen or the church and a parish) appeal to Rome. Unfortunately I can find no Staffordshire examples of these, though plenty of clerical disputes needed arbitration before they were settled.

For example, the claim by the Abbot of Burton that Sir John Bagot had been poaching from his park at Abbots Bromley and with-holding rents due to the Abbey from their lands in Fauld-by-Needwood (which all probably stemmed from a dispute over common pasture in Abbots Bromley) went to arbitration by Humphrey, earl of Stafford and Bishop Heyworth of Coventry and Lichfield in 1428.¹⁷⁶ In this case the Abbey prevailed and three years later Bagot quitclaimed all right to the pasture in question.¹⁷⁷

Much of the problem was due to Burton Abbey's chronic shortage of money. Never the most devout of institutions, it had for centuries suffered from a glut of financiers and a dearth of accountants. Relations with the surrounding laity were perennially bad, as the Abbey was unable to prevent their frequent encroachment on its lands and privileges. It was probably in an attempt at increasing its income, which had never been more than adequate, that the Abbey enclosed some of its property on the outskirts of Burton in the early 1450s. However, this met with considerable resentment from the townsfolk who broke down the 'dykes and heggez of diversez closez.'¹⁷⁸ This matter too went to arbitration, as did a slightly later squabble between the Abbey and a gentry neighbour, Sir John Gresley, in 1467 over rents and property in Burton, Drakelow and Tattenhill which the Abbey held,

but were claimed by the Gresleys.¹⁷⁹

It was often in a disputant's interest to accept arbitration when offered, especially if that offer came from a powerful or valued relation or acquaintance. Edward IV's intervention in the early 1470s in a dispute between Henry Vernon, John Stanley and William Troutbeck telling them to 'observe oure peas....til ye shall have opened your griif unto us and herd our advis and commandement' has about it an air of indeclinability.¹⁸⁰ Such an intervention was not a part of any general or conscious policy of maintaining peace on the King's part- though he doubtless had such a policy. Neither when magnates so intervened were their actions part of one. These were personal responses to particular situations. The principal concern was to prevent the dispute spreading and escalating in gravity. Edward IV in the above example cautioned the disputants about the possible consequences of their actions, remarking that 'grete unrest and trouble is like to growe to thinhabitantes of our Countiees about you onlas than we see for sufficient remedie in that behalve.'¹⁸¹ Magnates stepped in when the normal legal processes failed to take the heat out of a potentially-dangerous situation, when their affinity was involved or when they had a personal interest in the matter.

It was not expected of a lord that he intervene in every scrape that an associate of his got into. Retainers might ask for support in major suits, but in practice 'good lordship' did not mean that such support was automatic. Evidence of a lord's 'biased activity rather than his inactivity was the more likely to produce disaffection and defection. The only noblemen who seem to have arbitrated with any regularity are the Stanleys- and their activities were confined to Cheshire and Lancashire. Some lords undoubtedly did try to enhance their positions and reputations through arbitration, finding, as the Stanleys had, that lasting success demanded the provision of public justice and an absence of sectarian partiality.

From the lord's point of view, arbitration could be both tiring and time-consuming, even if much of the work could be delegated to retained lawyers and officials. William, Lord Hastings certainly regretted intervening in a dispute in the early 1480s between Ralph Wolseley and the Bishop of Coventry & Lichfield over rights in Wolseley Wood and the enclosure of certain grounds there. The Wolseleys were a pig-headed family at the best of times and in exasperation Hastings finally confessed that 'ther be such defyculties on aither partie that withoute longer laisure and forther examinacon I can not seually determyn ther titles and claymes.'¹⁸² In other words neither he nor his council could afford to spend any more time on the matter. At this time Wolseley had only just concluded an argument with the Gresleys of Drakelow over a similar matter, which had been sent to three different sets of arbitrators at various times: to Richard Bagot, Walter, Lord Mountjoy, and a third, unknown party.¹⁸³ Both Bagot and Blount were related to Wolseley and the Gresleys. As in the Delves inheritance dispute, mentioned earlier, a settlement was difficult to effect because of a basic lack of goodwill between the protagonists. Wolseley had begun enclosing as early as 1465, though it was four years before he got a licence for this. Old Thomas Wolseley, Ralph's father, had agreed initially to a compromise with Anne, wife of Sir John Gresley when complaints were first raised on the matter, but Ralph had Gresley arrested after 'much sinister labour' before this could be arranged. The enclosures hit at the rights of Gresley, the Bishop of Coventry & Lichfield and their tenants and by the time Hastings, as Steward of the Honour of Tutbury, was called in the dispute had festered on in the courts for nigh on fifteen years- a testimony to Wolseley's procrastination and an indictment of legal practice. Both Sir John Gresley and his son Thomas were

Hastings' retainers by 1479 and this, linked to the death of Thomas Wolseley the year before that, may help explain the renewed interest in settling the dispute by arbitration. Hastings was known as a fair judge and Ralph Wolseley can hardly have wanted the matter to drag on indefinitely and may have wished to clear outstanding problems up on entering his inheritance. Hastings too would have welcomed such an opportunity to enhance his position in Staffordshire by a show of accomplished lordship. As things turned out, negotiations proved difficult and the award had to include the rider that it was merely a stop-gap measure and

'after the deth of eny of the said parties be
in no wyse takyn for title evydence ne presumpc'on
to hurt any of the said parties, there successoures
or heyres in the ryght title or possession of the
premissess or eny parte of theym, bot only for a
direc'on and peas for the tyme betwene the same
parties at my disyre and enstaunce.'

Such concepts as altruism and a general hope for prosperity through peace are unfashionable, but patronage cannot be used as the medievalists' touchstone, answering all questions and silencing the quizzical. Its all-pervasiveness can often provide an attractively simple, though misleading solution to the perennial search for motives. I am not arguing that magnates always acted selflessly, only that they should not be assumed always to act selfishly. Each case must be judged on its own merits. Reputations for good or ill, were the products of experience. Humphrey, duke of Buckingham was not asked often to arbitrate in Staffordshire because past experience had shown the gentry there that impartiality was not one of his qualities. Many were prepared to accept his fees and livery, though not his intervention in their disputes as an arbitrator. Buckingham's propensity for subordinating justice to immediate political expediency certainly contributed to his failure to build an effective affinity in the Peak District. It was not until 1459 that he (and the Earl of

Shrewsbury) intervened in the protracted Basset-Meverell dispute; and then it was only because of the need for unity within the Stafford affinity as civil war became increasingly likely. The award was given at Burton-on-Trent on 10 July 1459 and that it was the young Thomas Meverell and not his father Sir Sampson who was in dispute with William Basset, the head of that family, suggests that 'the Derbyshire disease' of sons and younger brothers with time rather than prosperity on their hands was causing much of the county's woe. After enforcing bonds in two hundred marks from the disputants to accept and abide by the award, Buckingham and Shrewsbury awarded damages of £20 to Meverell and ordered the cessation of all suits between him and Basset.¹⁸⁴ Even this did not bring peace and ten years later Henry, Lord Grey of Codnor had to intervene and arbitrate once more.¹⁸⁵ What Basset thought of the 1459 award is not recorded, but significantly he had become a prominent Yorkist by the time of Edward IV's accession. This sort of dispute stemmed from pride as much as material harm and that deadly sin was at the heart of other cases, beyond the jurisdiction of the courts, which could be settled by arbitration at the time.

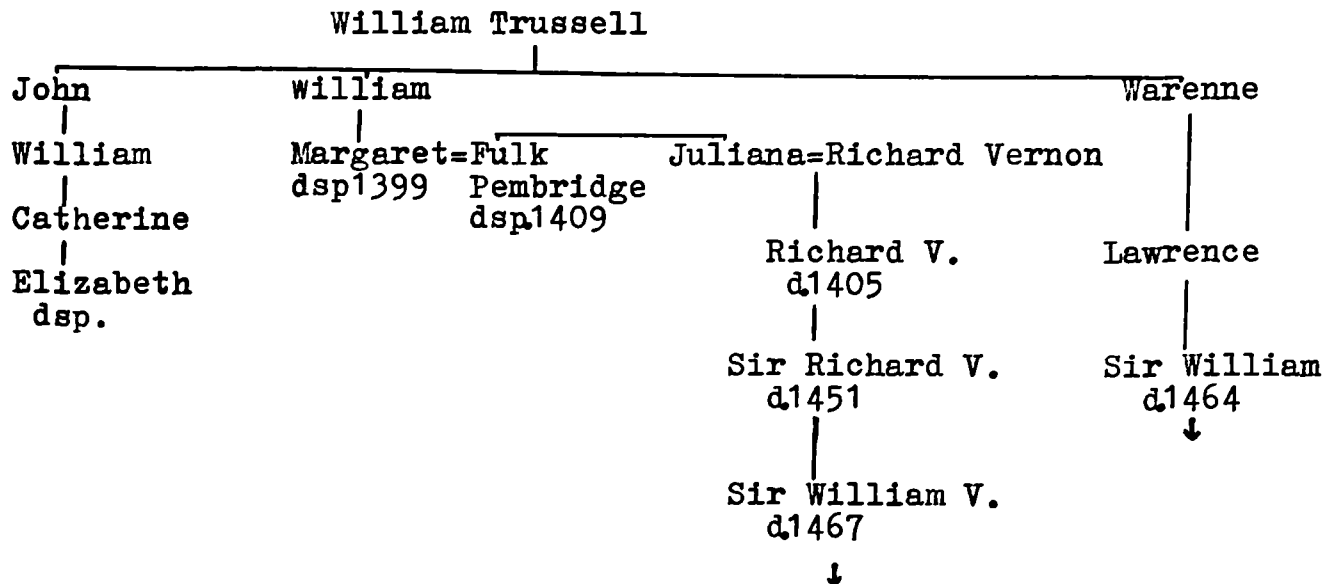
In 1484 a dispute arose between parishioners in Horton-by-Leek over seating arrangements in the village church. The parishioners were ordered to assemble and 'prove by ancient custom where each person ought to sit for the messuage he occupied.'¹⁸⁶ Nine of them were nominated by the steward of Wall Grange, Hugh Egerton, to arbitrate between their fellows and decide the matter. A similar case arose just over the Cheshire border at Little Moreton in 1513, as part of a wider dispute between William Moreton and Thomas Rood. George Bromley, the deputy-justice of Chester and William Brereton arbitrated generally, but were unable to produce an acceptable solution to the matter of which of the disputants 'shuld sit highest in the churche, and

foremost goo in procession.'¹⁸⁷ That point had to be referred to a committee of twelve of the oldest parishioners; but even they could not agree and ultimately Brereton decided the matter on the criterion of annual income.

Finally, the Vernon-Trussell struggle in the 1440s and 1450s reveals both arbitration as a mechanism to be turned to when the law could not respond in a required way and also an area for further research- that of hidden evidence of arbitration settlements where no documentation survives.

The estates of the Trussells of Acton Trussell became the subject of contention between the powerful Vernon family of Haddon (Derbyshire) and the Trussell family of Billesley (Warwickshire). Whatever the rights and wrongs of the situation, it is clear that here was an instance of one gentry family's attempt to use political muscle to achieve its ends. Certainly the lands in question were worth contesting- over nine thousand acres, one hundred and thirty messuages and between £30 and £40 worth of annual rents. Property without a clear-cut title or which was passing from one person/family to another was likely to attract the attention of covetous persons, who would produce weak or fabricated claims to it. To challenge successfully even a single deed or get a 'newly-discovered' one accepted in court might radically affect the descent of such land.

The Trussell property at the heart of the dispute lay mainly in Staffordshire. It consisted of the manors of Kibblestone and Acton Trussell and half of Sheriff Hales on the Shropshire border. In addition there were the Berkshire manors of Shotestbrook, which came to the family in 1335, and Eton Hastings, which the Crown exchanged in return for other Trussell lands in 1359.¹⁸⁸ The inheritance was entailed upon the main branch of the family, with reversion to a second and then to a third (see diagram).



The whole case rested upon the validity of a grant of this property in 1409 to Fulk Pembridge by his feoffees. The Vernons claimed that Pembridge held it in fee simple and that it should come to them as his rightful heirs. On the other hand, the Trussells claimed the property as the third branch of the old Trussell family who were the rightful remaindermen for the entailed inheritance.

Even before the Vernon claim, which was not made until the early 1440s, the Trussell estates had attracted fortune-hunters. During Henry IV's reign Pembridge had fought off Sir Alfred Lathbury and Thomas Appleby who alleged that they were the rightful heirs of John Trussell through a daughter of his. However, on closer examination of their claim, it was discovered that the girl in question came from a totally different Trussell family, from Northamptonshire. The Vernons had been silent about 'the Pembridge inheritance', as it is sometimes known, between 1409 and c1442 and, perhaps significantly, they made no claim on the death of Pembridge. Thus it seems likely that either a chance perusal of old documents or conversations with Pembridge's second wife, Isabella (not on the above, simplified genealogy) or a deliberate search by Sir Richard Vernon for extra revenue led to the advancement of his family's claim. That he possessed

considerable political muscle in the area can only have encouraged him to chance his arm. Vernon's action to oust the Trussells of Billesley began in 1442 when he disseised William (d.1464) the Berkshire manors. However, Vernon's influence did not extend so far south and at Easter 1443 a local jury found against him with a hundred and twenty marks damages.¹⁸⁹ Although Vernon tried to get this decision overturned by suing the jury for allegedly accepting bribes from Trussell, he knew he was fighting a losing battle. By May 1446 Trussell was secure in his possession of these estates and able to report that his damages had been satisfied.¹⁹⁰

Attention now centred on the more valuable Staffordshire lands and Trussell took the precaution of making William Burley and Thomas Littleton his feoffees. He could hardly have made a wiser choice; both were able lawyers and among the close advisors of several magnates, both were also descendants of one John Grendon. Grendon had been one of the Trussell family's original feoffees in the fourteenth century (as was William Trussell himself, coincidentally). In 1447 inquiries were held concerning the contested lands and once more Trussell's claim was upheld.¹⁹¹ However, soon afterwards a jury was assembled at Tutbury, in the heart of 'Vernon country' which not surprisingly found for Vernon, awarding him in addition damages totalling a staggering £2080.¹⁹² Trussell naturally retaliated by suing these jurors for accepting bribes, in the time-honoured convention. He also alleged that Sir Richard Vernon and two members of the Brown family of Cold Norton (half way between Eccleshall and Stone) had forged a deed which purported to be a quitclaim to Pembroke of the Staffordshire lands now in dispute and also Blacon (Cheshire) and Guild Norton (Leicestershire) dated 4 August 1406.¹⁹³ Vernon's reasons for including these other manors in the deed were presumably to muddy the waters; for the

Leicestershire property was undoubtedly his, while the Cheshire one had been Trussell land since the reign of Edward II and was not part of the 'Pembroke inheritance'. Guild Norton in fact, as Vernon well knew, formed part of a grant made in 1410 by Pembroke's second wife to the Vernon-controlled college at Tong on the Staffordshire-Shropshire border, a handful of miles south of Sheriff Hales, for the benefit of the souls of her late husband and his first wife.¹⁹⁴ Perhaps Vernon coveted this land as well. Certainly the date of the alleged forgery, 5 December 1446, was during the last few days of Isabella Pembroke's life.

The appeal against the verdict in favour of Vernon was pressed early in 1451 and involved not only William Trussell but also his wily legal friends, as anyway it was they who in law had been disseised. While Vernon had attacked using the court of King's Bench, the Trussell side used the court of Common Pleas. Judging from the records of the lawsuits, it seems that this change of court was a tactical move rather than due to problems over jurisdiction. The result was that while Vernon won in one court, Trussell won in the other, having had the case transferred to Stafford. The Trussell victory in Common Pleas was made easy by the death of Vernon in August 1451. Burley and Littleton, knowing of this, managed to get a decision against him on the grounds that his nonappearance had meant that he lost by default. Gradually the legal records of the two lawsuits dry up. Although in many cases this just means that these records have failed to survive the intervening centuries, in this case I feel there is another explanation.

Sir Richard Vernon's son and heir William was not a man of outstanding talent and it must have soon become apparent to him that his chances of defeating the opposition ranged against him were slim. Equally, Trussell was loath to fight a long and expensive legal battle, especially as the Vernons were

drawing increasingly close to Humphrey, duke of Buckingham, whose support might be engaged to manipulate the courts. Compromise and arbitration by persons unknown was at some time effected. Later records show that the Vernons held Kibblestone and the Trussells Acton Trussell and Sheriff Hales. A closer inspection of the properties involved shows that Kibblestone (4100 acres) was almost exactly equal in size to the Trussell parts of the other Staffordshire manors (3915 acres), so it is reasonable to assume that there was a simple division in half of the disputed lands. This could not have occurred as part of a court decision. As far as the legal situation stood, the inheritance was indivisible; either it was held in fee simple and thus went to the Vernons or it was entailed and stayed with the Trussells of Billesley. Only an extra-legal settlement could have produced the agreed-upon division and compromise, but it would be misleading to imply that the courts failed in this dispute. They were simply not designed to operate against the tenets of medieval land law, which was what was needed to satisfy the disputants.

Although references exist illustrating the popularity of arbitration in the fifteenth century, these usually relate to only a single aspect of the process. However, the lack of complete sets of documents for particular cases is partially compensated for by revealing phrases within what has survived. The indentured award often gave details of the nature of the dispute which lay behind it, while there was within the award a fluidity of language and diplomatic which emphasises their individuality and 'independence' from institutional legalism. Lawyers were consulted occasionally, but arbitration was essentially an extra-legal procedure. Ideas rather than set formulae were what different awards had in common.

Although all parties, including the legal profession, assisted and even occasionally advocated arbitration, it never

made a serious impact on the number of suits dealt with by the regular courts, nor were these ever replaced in the public mind by the adjudicating panel as the natural forum for settling disputes. Arbitration's real value lay in dealing with problems uncatered for by existing legislation and in defusing potential sources of serious disorder. Each award was tailored to meet particular needs. It by-passed the court system, offering an honourable and cheap compromise, substituting satisfaction for victory and avoiding the rancour and humiliation of defeat. The decline of arbitration under the Tudors resulted from the creation of new courts, improved procedures in established ones and the need for the greater security of title and judgement pertaining to a court verdict. Nevertheless, in the fifteenth century it was a process which was a regular feature of Staffordshire disputes. How regular we cannot tell; neither do we know how often it was suggested, but not adopted because of the intransigence of one or both of the parties or the unwillingness of the only acceptable arbitrator to intervene in a particular quarrel. Yet, as the examples I have given reveal, arbitration was used by all levels of the county gentry, as indeed it was among the titled nobility and (often on a less formal basis) by the sub-gentry classes. Though the subjects for their disputes might vary, all had a vested interest, financial as much as anything, in 'appeasing', as a later writer was to put it, 'thos troublesome sutes by which I think in thend neyther partie will gaine, but the lawyers enriched.'¹⁹⁵

FOOTNOTES

As mentioned in the course of the chapter, I have made use of Wrottesley's extracts from the plea rolls up to 1485. I have used the following abbreviations concerning these.

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| <u>Plea Rolls</u> , Henry VI | Extracts from William Salt Archaeological Society's <u>Collections for a History of Staffordshire</u> (cited as <u>SHC</u>), III New Series (1900). |
| <u>Plea Rolls</u> , Henry VI & Edward IV | Extracts from <u>SHC</u> , IV New Series (1901). |
| <u>Plea Rolls</u> , Edward IV-Richard III | Extracts from <u>SHC</u> , VI New Series i (1903). |

1. Plea Rolls, Henry VI, pp.154, 157bis,206; Plea Rolls, Henry VI & Edward IV, pp.126,210.
2. Plea Rolls, Henry VI & Edward IV, p.112.
3. H.E.Chetwynd-Stapleton, The Chetwynds of Ingestre, (London, 1892), pp.325-6.
4. S.Shaw, The History and Antiquities of Staffordshire, (London, 1798-1801), II, p.257; Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1461-67, p.452; Historical Manuscripts Commission, Hastings papers, Series 78, I, p.151. Littleton's feoffees and later executors were Humphrey Salway and Guy Westcote. Westcote was Littleton's father's surname; he himself had been given the surname of his mother Elizabeth Littleton.
5. Staffordshire Record Office (cited as SRO), D986/87.
6. Plea Rolls, Henry VI, pp.210-11.
7. Plea Rolls, Henry VI & Edward IV, pp. 181-2.
8. Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1467-77, p.329.
9. Public Record Office (cited as PRO), King's Bench Ancient Indictments, KB9/330/24.
10. Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem- Henry VII, (HMSO, 1898-1955), I, no.628.
11. There is a mention of the Fitton-Whalley dispute in the history of Pirehill Hundred by Walter Chetwynd in SHC, XII New Series (1909), pp.95-100, but this is full of errors and seems to be based more on a garbled earlier account than on Chetwynd's own appraisal of the evidence.

12. See for instance, PRO, Early Chancery Proceedings, C1/7/180 Grobhere v. Erdeswick, Griffin and Horbourne; C1/16/158 Fitzherbert v. Okeover; C1/24/97 Jorce v. Bromwich and Collier; C1/28/487 Fitton v. Abbot of Croxden; C1/36/28 Longford v. Halse.
13. PRO, C1/24/135.
14. PRO, C1/33/285-6.
15. PRO, C1/45/128.
16. Plea Rolls, Henry VI, pp.133, 136-7, 150, 164-5.
17. Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem- Henry VII, op.cit., III, no.1050.
18. Plea Rolls, Henry VI & Edward IV, p.161. For similar cases see Plea Rolls, Henry VI, pp.183, 218.
19. Plea Rolls, Henry VI, pp.157, 159.
20. Plea Rolls, Henry VI & Edward IV, p.128. For a similar incident at Gratwich in 1467 see Ibid., p.149.
21. PRO, Entry Books of Decrees and Orders, DL5/3 fo.63.
22. Ibid., letter bound between fos.174-5.
23. SRO, D(W)1721/1/3 fo.90^R. In the accounts of Humphrey, duke of Buckingham for 1447-8 £4/6s/0d was paid for the cost of enclosing parks of Caurs and Minsteley, and another £2 for enclosures at Lowhogstow- SRO, D641/1/2/19m.8^R
24. T.More, Utopia, (ed.P.Turner), (London, 1965), p.47.
25. Derbyshire Record Office, D231M/T278.
26. Calendar of Charter Rolls, 5Henry VI-8Henry VIII, (HMSO, 1927), pp.59-60.
27. Plea Rolls, Henry VI & Edward IV, pp.154-5.
28. PRO, DL5/3 fo.214^R.
29. I.S.Leadam, 'The Inquisition of 1517; Inclosures and Evictions', Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, new series VII (1893), pp.270-6. There is also an article by H.R.Thomas, 'The enclosure of open fields and commons in Staffordshire', SHC, 1931, pp.61-99. Thomas uses the Wolsey inquiry returns, but gets the dates of Staffordshire enclosures wrong.
30. The listed enclosures are:

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| 2 April 1486-30 acres at Biddulph by Richard Biddulph. | |
| 12 May 1486-60 acres at Throwley by George Meverell. | |
| 2 Henry VII - 5 acres at Chillington by John Giffard | |
| 1 May 1487-20 acres at Adbaston by Francis Bredock | |
| 1 March 1488- a cottage at ? by Lord Berners | |
| 1 March 1488- a messuage at High Offley by Wm. Cotton | |
| 1 March 1488-40 acres | } at Bridgeford by Simon Harcourt |
| & messuage | |
| 12 Nov. 1489-13½ acres at Cumberford by Thos. Cumberford | |

10 Feb. 1492-60 acres at Rushall by John Harper
 13 March 1492-40 acres at Cumberford by Thos.Cumberford
 9 Henry VII - 4 acres at Hoar Cross by Thos. Wells
 12 Henry VII - 3 acres at Patshull by Richard Astley
 1 August 1497-100 acres at Tixall by John Aston
 3 August 1501-30 acres at Haywood by Humph.Stanley
 1 March 1502-60 acres at Cheadle by Thos. Walton
 20 Henry VII -23 acres at Loxley by Thos. Kynardsley

31. Plea Rolls, Henry VI, p.221.
32. Plea Rolls, Henry VI & Edward IV, pp.148, 152.
33. Plea Rolls, Edward IV - Richard III, p.129. The cloth was bought at Burton-on-Trent on 22 October 1475.
34. Plea Rolls, Henry VI & Edward IV, p.144.
35. G.Wrottesley, 'The Final Concords, or, Feet of Fines', Staffordshire A.D.1347-A.D.1547', SHC, XI(1890), p.248; L. Drucker, 'Warwickshire Feet of Fines, III, 1345-1509', Dugdale Society, XVIII (1943), pp.173-4 and Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1446-52, p.257. There may have been an earlier mortgaging for this purpose in 1445 to Sir William Mountfort, John Curzon (of Croxall?), Sir John Gresley, William Lucy, Robert Francis and John Pulteney.
36. Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1467-77, p.7.
37. Plea Rolls, Henry VI & Edward IV, p.150.
38. Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1467-77, p.406.
39. Plea Rolls, Henry VI & Edward IV, p.132.
40. Ibid., p.108.
41. PRO, DL5/1 fo.57^D.
42. Plea Rolls, Henry VI, pp.186-7.
43. J.C.Wedgwood, 'Two Staffordshire Elections to lost Parliaments', SHC, 1928, pp.272-3.
44. Plea Rolls, Henry VI & Edward IV, pp.165, 167-8; Victoria County History of Staffordshire, XVII, p.170.
45. Plea Rolls, Edward IV - Richard III, p.112.
46. Plea Rolls, Henry VI, p.155; Plea Rolls, Henry VI & Edward IV, p.176.
47. Plea Rolls, Henry VI & Edward IV, pp.114-5.
48. Plea Rolls, Edward IV - Richard III, p.105.
49. Plea Rolls, Henry VI & Edward IV, p.154.
50. Ibid., pp.148, 174.
51. Lichfield Joint Record Office (cited as LJRO), B/A/1/12 fo.166^R.

52. Sir H.Nicolas, Proceedings and Ordinances of the Privy Council of England (cited as POPC), (London, 1834-7), VI, pp.40-1.
53. Ibid., p.45.
54. LJRO, B/A/1/12 fo.167^R.
55. M.D.Harris (ed.), The Coventry Leet Book, Early English Text Society, (London, 1907-13), I, pp.96-7. The preacher was a hermit called John Grace. He preached at Coventry on 30 November 1424 and for four days following that, claiming that he had episcopal sanction for his ministry and had previously preached in the cathedral close at Lichfield. He had been to Birmingham, Walsall and Coleshill before reaching Coventry. Interestingly, one of the hermit's most vehement opponents at Coventry was the self-same John Bredon with whom there was so much trouble in 1446. Bredon was also in trouble with the authorities in the early 1440s, after he had claimed to have obtained *parliamentary sanction for the use of* larger than normal measures for corn at a time of food shortage- Ibid., III, p.854.
56. LJRO, B/A/1/11 fo.50^R.
57. Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1429-36, p.246.
58. Victoria County History of Staffordshire, III, p.207.
59. PRO, C1/9/378.
60. Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1446-52, pp.285-6.
61. Plea Rolls, Henry VI, pp.159-60; Plea Rolls, Henry VI & Edward IV, p.117; Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1452-61, pp.432-3; Calendar of Close Rolls, 1454-61, pp.312, 372.
62. PRO, KB9/298/93; Plea Rolls, Henry VI & Edward IV, p.111, 128.
63. M.C.Carpenter, 'Sir Thomas Malory and Fifteenth-century Local Politics', Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research, LIII (1980), pp.37-8n.54.
64. PRO, KB9/234/50.
65. PRO, KB9/232/1/31.
66. PRO, C1/12/250. There is an awful and fanciful monograph on the Dudley-Bredhill dispute by D.R.Guttery. The Two Johns: patron and parson, (Brierley Hill, 1950). The author, however, does make some illuminating points about the stolen books- see pp.21, 26, 30.
67. A.C.Ewald, 'Calendar of French Rolls-Henry VI', Forty-Eighth Report of the Deputy Keeper of the Public Records, (London, 1888), pp.362, 365. He was not a university graduate though. He died in 1471.
68. Plea Rolls, Henry VI, pp.139, 142-3.
69. PRO, C1/39/87. She bought Richard Delves' marriage for three hundred marks.

70. Their marriage was nullified on 8 July 1439- LJRO, B/A/1/9 fo.166^D. Elizabeth Winnington married the Staffordshire sheriff Humphrey Blount of Kinlet a few years later and survived until 1502. Her will is at the Public Record Office, Chancery Lane, London, PCC 22 Blamyr.
71. Plea Rolls, Henry VI, pp.169-70, 180; Calendar of Close Rolls, 1445-52, pp.2, 23-4, 66-7.
72. Plea Rolls, Henry VI, p.206.
73. Plea Rolls, Henry VI & Edward IV, p.202.
74. Ibid., p.174. Littleton and the Abbot were in dispute over another matter as well at this time- the Abbot's failure to maintain, as was customary, a chaplain in a chapel at Littleton's principal residence of Frankley (north Worcestershire), Ibid., pp.174-5.
75. I.S.Leadam (ed.), Select Cases before the King's Council in the Star Chamber, Seldon Society, XVI (1902), pp.130-7; E.W.Ives, 'Patronage at the Court of Henry VIII; the case of Sir Ralph Egerton of Ridley', Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research, LII (1970), pp.348-9.
76. Plea Rolls, Henry VI, pp.173-4.
77. J.Strachey and others (eds.), Rotuli Parliamentorum, (London, 1767-77), V, pp.16-7.
78. Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1441-46, pp.192-3.
79. John Fortescue, The Governance of England, (ed.C.Plummer), (Oxford, 1885), p.141.
80. PRO, C1/45/192. The Griffiths were something of a nuisance in the area. Among other troubles in which they were concerned was a similar case to that brought by Nevowe, brought this time by John Huberd again about this time- PRO, C1/71/154.
81. PRO, Ancient Correspondence, SC1/51/175.
82. LJRO, B/A/1/13 fo.243.
83. PRO, DL5/1 fo.33^R.
84. PRO, KB9/271/100. The inquiry into this took nearly five years to be held.
85. PRO, KB9/255/2/67; Plea Rolls, Henry VI, p.181.
86. PRO, KB9/235/36.
87. POPC, VI, pp.272-3.

88. L.Morsbach, Mittleenglische Original Urkunden von der Chaucerzeit bis zur Mitte des XV Jahrhunderts, (Heidelberg, 1923), p.34. The document was dated 13 October 1446 and formed part of the evidence Meverell amassed to fight Roope. The present location of the Morsbach deeds is unknown to me.
89. British Library, Additional Charters 27504 and 57231.
90. British Library, Additional Charters 27343 dorse.
91. PRO, C1/16/158.
92. POPC, V, pp.290-1.
93. POPC, V, p.295.
94. Calendar of Close Rolls, 1441-47, p.153; Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1441-46, p.246.
95. PRO, Writs and Returns for Parliamentary Elections, C219/15/2/85. The Duke was also Basset's feudal lord for Blore and Grendon.
96. PRO, C1/148/81.
97. I.H.Jeayes, Descriptive Catalogue of Derbyshire Charters, (London & Derby, 1906), nos. 2392, 2394.
98. Calendar of French Rolls, op.cit., p.370.
99. Plea Rolls, Henry VI, pp.182, 194-5.
100. Ibid., pp.182-3.
101. R.L.Storey, The End of the House of Lancaster, (London, 1966), p.156.
102. PRO, KB9/250/45. The inquiry was held at Warwick on 11 January 1445 and Bate himself led the presiding justices, ensuring a verdict favourable to himself.
103. Plea Rolls, Henry VI, pp.191-2.
104. E.A.Ayres, Parliamentary Representation in Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire in the Fifteenth Century, (Unpublished Nottingham M.A. thesis, 1956), p.163. There is also a study of the gentry of this area to which unfortunately I have not been granted access. Nevertheless I will cite it here as a reference for others who may have more success- S.Wright, A Gentry Society of the Fifteenth Century, c.1430-1509, (Unpublished Birmingham PhD thesis, 1978).
105. Historical Manuscripts Commission, Series 24 (Rutland), I, pp.1-2.
106. Ibid., VI, p.29.
107. Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1446-52, p.395. Another son, Thomas, also got into trouble and had to give a recognizance for his future behaviour- Calendar of Close Rolls, 1447-54, p.400.
108. Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1446-52, pp.385-6.

109. F.Madan, 'The Gresleys of Drakelow', SHC, I new series (1898), p.58.
110. Derbyshire Record Office, D231M/T277. It has been suggested that Cockayne was Philip Okeover's step-father, but they were of roughly the same age and no evidence exists that Philip's father, Thomas Okeover the younger, married a future wife of Cockayne's or Cockayne married Philip's mother. That Cockayne did concoct some claim to the property he damaged is given credence by his later quitclaiming the lordship of Okeover to Philip in April 1462-Derbyshire Record Office, D231M/T26.
111. Plea Rolls, Henry VI, pp.196-7. Once again there may be a measure of exaggeration in the account given in the petition, for much of the land at Okeover was leased out at the time- Derbyshire Record Office, D231M/E9, E10. Furthermore, since one lessee renewed his lease on 22 January 1450 (Derbyshire Record Office, D231M/E11), life could not have been too intolerable.
112. Plea Rolls, Henry VI, pp.192-4.
113. M.C.Carpenter, Political Society in Warwickshire, c.1401-72, (Unpublished Cambridge PhD thesis, 1976), pp.225-6.
114. C.Rawcliffe, The Staffords, Earls of Stafford and Dukes of Buckingham 1394-1521, (Cambridge, 1978), p.19.
115. Plea Rolls, Henry VI, p.201.
116. Ibid., pp.195-6.
117. Coventry Leet Book, op.cit., I, p.97.
118. Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1436-41, p.84. Among the eleven Lichfield traders mentioned in the plea rolls as participating in this attack were two parchment makers and a skinner- Plea Rolls, Henry VI, p.160.
119. PRO, KB9/383/92. For the commission, issued on 23 August 1489 see Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1485-94, p.318. Why the vicars began the trouble (by attacking a Thomas Painter) is unknown.
120. PRO, Proceedings in the Court of Star Chamber, STAC 1/2/95ii.
121. PRO, STAC 2/13/247.
122. PRO, STAC 1/2/95i. One of the troublemakers, Roger Marshall, said that they were accustomed 'to gether money wt ther disportes to the profight of the chirches of the seide lordeshipes'. The suit's outcome is unknown.
123. Plea Rolls, Henry VI, pp.222-3.
124. PRO, KB9/282/26; Plea Rolls, Henry VI & Edward IV, pp.107-8.
125. PRO, C67/42 mm.13, 23.
126. PRO, C1/178/18.

127. Plea Rolls, Henry VI & Edward IV, p.201.
128. Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1452-61, p.392.
129. PRO, KB9/410/92.
130. PRO, KB9/408/22-4; PRO, KB9/410/89-91, 93.
131. Plea Rolls, Henry VI & Edward IV, pp.110-11, 125, 131. Pardons were produced. See also PRO, KB9/290/4. For other murders see Plea Rolls, Henry VI, pp.165, 185; Plea Rolls, Henry VI & Edward IV, pp.118, 146, 173, 189, 196; Plea Rolls, Edward IV-Richard III, pp.109-10, 148.
132. K.B. cFarlane, The Nobility of Later-Medieval England, (Oxford, 1973), pp.108-9. Sir Humphrey was also a feoffee for Buckingham's manor of Brustwick (Yorkshire)-Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1452-61, p.78.
133. For Stafford's appointment, see National Library of Wales, Peniarth Mss. 280 fos.22D-23R; for Harcourt, see Storey, op.cit., p.58.
134. Plea Rolls, Henry VI, pp.186, 198-99. See also PRO, KB9/266/71.
135. Harcourt later got this outlawry annulled on the grounds that he was held captive in Chester prison at the time that it was issued. What he was doing there is unknown.
136. Plea Rolls, Henry VI, pp.207-8.
137. Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1446-52, pp.386-7; PRO, KB9/266/50. There were also pardons issued 23 November 1450.
138. M.C.Carpenter, Political Society in Warwickshire 1401-72, (Unpublished Cambridge PhD thesis, 1976), p.304. Sir Robert was also on the list of twenty-five notorious thugs issued by the Parliament of Devils in 1459, though it is unclear just how much this can be put down to political factors- Rotuli Parliamentorum, V, pp.367-8.
139. He was MP for Oxfordshire 1450-1 and for Berkshire 1460-1; sheriff of Oxfordshire & Berkshire 1455-6; JP Oxfordshire 1452-8, 1460-70 and Berkshire 1446-9, 1452-8, 1463-8.
140. C.Scofield, The Life and Reign of Edward IV, (London, 1923), I, pp.412-3, 429n.4; Harcourt's expenses were not £80, only £60- PRO, Writs and Warrants for Issues of the Exchequer, E 404/73/3/27.
141. C.L.Kingsford(ed.), The Stonor Letters and Papers, Camden Society, third series, XXIX (1919), no.110.
142. Harcourt may have been at Hilton looking after his niece Joan's interests. She had married Humphrey Swynnerton the younger whose mother had died 27 March 1470 and whose mother's manor of Hilton may well have been being disputed between Swynnerton as her heir and John Mitton her second husband, by whom she had had issue.
143. PRO, KB9/992/77. This is the return of the presiding Staffordshire coroner John Osmondlow. See also Plea Rolls, Henry VI & Edward IV, pp.176-77.

144. N.Davis (ed.), Paston Letters and Papers of the Fifteenth Century, (Oxford, 1971-6), I, no.213. Davis wrongly dates this letter to 7 December 1471. It was, however, clearly written in 1470 during which the Saturday next after St. Andrew's day fell on 1 December.
145. Humphrey Stafford's pardon was issued on 1 November 1472.
146. Plea Rolls, Henry VI & Edward IV, pp.176-77.
147. Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1467-77, p.470.
148. C.H.Williams, 'The Rebellion of Humphrey Stafford in 1486', English Historical Review, XLIII (1928), pp.181-89.
149. G.Wrottesley (ed.), 'The Chetwynd Cartulary', SHC, XII (1891), no.106.
150. PRO, KB9/402/7. The other two men indicted were Godfrey Holford gentleman of Newcastle and Edward Hardman of Cheshire.
151. D.Hay (ed.), The Anglica Historia of Polydore Vergil, A.D.1485-1537, Camden Society, LXXIV (1950), p.67.
152. Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1494-1509, p.131.
153. W.Cobbett (and others) (ed.), Complete Collection of State Trials, (London, 1809-28), I, pp.278, 282- citing Hall's Chronicle and Bacon's history of Henry VII as it appeared in Kennet's Complete History.
154. Lambeth Palace Library, Shrewsbury Mss. 695 fo.77.
155. The best general discussions of crime in the fifteenth century are to be found in C.D.Ross, Edward IV, (London, 1974), chapter 17; M.Hastings, The Court of Common Pleas in Fifteenth-Century England, (New York, 1947), chapter 15; and J.R.Lander, Conflict and Stability in Fifteenth-Century England, (London, 1969), chapter 7.
156. Lander, op.cit., p.169.
157. Rotuli Parliamentorum, V, p.415.
158. Philippe de Mézières, Letter to King Richard II, (ed.) G.W.Coopland, (Liverpool, 1975), p.10. See Ibid., p.83 for the original French text.
159. PRO, C67/41 m.6. See also Plea Rolls, Henry VI, pp.185, 197.
160. See Margaret Avery's articles 'The history of the equitable jurisdiction of Chancery before 1460', Bulletin of the Institution of Historical Research, XLII (1969), pp.129-44; and 'An evolution of the effectiveness of the court of Chancery under the Lancastrian kings', Law Quarterly Review, LXXVI (1970), pp.84-97. There is also C.Rawcliffe, 'Baronial councils in the later middle ages', in C.D.Ross (ed.), Patronage, Pedigree and Power in Later Medieval England, (Gloucester, 1979), pp.91-2 from which the quotation is taken.

161. British Library, Additional Roll 57840.
162. SRO, D1485/7/4/3.
163. SRO, D(W)1734/5/2136.
164. See SRO, D1743/T8, T399 for cases in 1455 and 1487.
165. T.Nash, Collections for a history of Worcestershire, (London, 1781-99), I, p.490. An earlier claim by Sir Morris Berkeley in the 1450s was settled by an earlier Ormond's use of 'greet mayntenaunce and power' to overturn an earlier award to Berkeley of certain Bergavenny estates by Richard, earl of Warwick- S.Shaw, The history and antiquities of Staffordshire, (London, 1798-1801), II, pp.245-6; PRO, C1/19/6.
166. Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1467-77, pp.535-6; Rotuli Parliamentorum, VI, p.128. See Ibid., VI, pp.218-9 for the reversal of the attainders.
167. Calendar of Close Rolls, 1476-85, pp.364-5, 384, 421-2, 431.
168. For the attack see PRO, KB9/1060/62; for the award see Walter Chetwynd, 'Collections for a History of Pirehill Hundred, SHC, new series XII (1909), p.49.
169. T.Stapleton (ed.), Plumpton Correspondence: a series of letters, chiefly domestic, written in the reigns of Edward IV, Richard III, Henry VII and Henry VIII, Camden Society, IV (1839), pp.90, 100-01, 102.
170. Calendar of Close Rolls, 1485-1500, p.136.
171. Geoffery Chaucer, The Canterbury Tales, tale of Melibeus, lines 2942-3.
172. Burton-on-Trent Public Library, Marquess of Anglesey papers, J.2088b.
173. H.L.E.Garbett (ed.), 'Calendar of early charters etc., in the possession of Lord Hatherton', SHC, 1928, no.24.
174. F.J.Furnivall (ed.), The Gild of St. Mary, Lichfield, Early English Text Society, CXIV (1920 for 1914) extra series, p.11.
175. G.Wrottesley, 'Extracts from the Plea Rolls of the reigns of Henry V and Henry VI', SHC, XVII (1896), pp.115-6, 136-7.
176. I.H.Jeayes and M.Deanesly, 'Descriptive Catalogue of the Charters and Muniments belonging to the Earl of Anglesey', SHC, 1937, no.654. This is the same collection as mentioned in footnote 172. The Anglesey papers are split between Burton and the County Record Office at Stafford. The catalogue wrongly dates this deed.
177. Ibid., no.659. In 1439 and 1445, after Sir John Bagot's death, his son and heir Richard made similar quitclaims- Ibid., nos.674, 688.

178. Ibid., no.698. However, the Abbey did get a licence to enclose land at Abbot's Bromley on 16 July 1440-
Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1436-41, p.434.
179. I.H.Jeayes, Descriptive Catalogue of Derbyshire Charters, (London & Derby, 1906), no. 1027.
180. Historical Manuscripts Commission, Twelfth Report, appendix iv, I, Rutland Mss., pp.6-7.
181. Ibid., p.7.
182. G.P.Mander, 'History from the Wolseley Charters', SHC, 1934, ii, pp.91-4.
183. Ibid., pp.77-86.
184. L.Morsbach, op.cit., pp.49-53.
185. L.Morsbach, 'Eine Englische Urkunde aus dem Jahre 1470', in K.Malone & M.B.Ruud (eds.), Studies in English Philology in honor of Frederick Klaeber, (Minneapolis, 1929), pp.375-9.
186. J.Sleigh, A History of the Parish of Leek, second edition, (London, 1883), p.160. Sleigh prints a testimonial of 1740, incorporating a deed of 1484-5.
187. D.Lysons & S.Lysons, Magna Brittanica, (London, 1806-22), II, ii, p.492n.
188. Victoria County History of Berkshire, III, p.87.
189. Plea Rolls, Henry VI, pp.161-2.
190. Ibid., p.162.
191. Calendar of Close Rolls, 1447-54, p.12. The entry on the roll is dated 3 June 1448, though refers to earlier events. See also William Salt Library, Stafford, SMS 268, p.166.
192. Plea Rolls, Henry VI, pp.188-91.
193. Ibid., pp.191-2.
194. J.Nichols, The History of the Antiquities of the County of Leicester, (London, 1795-1815), IV, pp.192, 916.
195. Keele University Library, Plas Newydd papers, property of the Marquess of Anglesey, Early Paget Correspondence, series 1 box 7 fo.77. This is a letter from Bess of Hardwick in 1581 to Thomas, Lord Paget.

CHAPTER VI

KINSHIP AND MARRIAGE

Much of this thesis has centred upon the lives and relationships of members of the Staffordshire gentry. Various chapters have been designed to highlight the nature of these relationships and their effects on local government, the lay and clerical nobility, disorder and litigation. Besides stressing the importance for success of personal ability, I have also illustrated the importance (some might say necessity) of having supporting political connections- occasionally formalised by the indentured contract or wedding ring. It is with this last factor that I want to conclude.

In his book Feudal Society Marc Bloch began his examination of kinship by asserting that 'ties based on blood relationships existed long before, and were by their very nature foreign to, the human relations characteristic of feudalism.'¹ Yet there is no evidence that in fifteenth-century Staffordshire the two were anything but complementary. No father fought son or brother fought brother during the Wars of the Roses. Families stuck together, though usually, it must be aid, in deciding to opt out of the action. Only in the case of the Mountforts in the 1450s was there any division in a local family between rival magnate affinities. The growing 'strangeness' between Edward IV and Warwick in the late 1460s did, however, strain many friendships. Ralph Wolseley and Walter, Lord Mountjoy took different sides, as did John Delves and Hugh Egerton- the latter pair, though brothers-in-law, fighting in opposing armies at Tewkesbury. Yet the power of kinship and self-interest (to which it was very closely related) were such that the theory that Sir Walter Wrotesley was saved from attainder and execution in 1471 by the intervention of

his kinsman John, Lord Dudley is by no means too fanciful.² One of Dudley's granddaughters was married to Wrottesley's eldest son, and if Sir Walter had been attainted, the couple would have been disinherited. Such an intervention, from the thankful Wrottesley's point-of-view, might have been anticipated; for it was partly what one's kinsmen were for.

It was to his kinsmen rather than to his lord that a gentleman initially turned for aid in time of need. Friends and relations were more immediately accessible. They were not swathed in layers of underlings, often lived locally and might also have a vested interest in his success. Not only was an eldest son who wanted to protect his inheritance to be relied upon; younger sons, brothers, cousins and in-laws too were expected to assist in time of trouble or in one's enterprises. As the earlier section on the disturbances in the Peak District showed, the terrorising Vernon-Cockayne-Meverell gang was led by brothers and kinsmen of the leaders, and two of those leaders, John Cockayne and Thurstan Vernon, were brothers-in-law. It is also no coincidence that when in 1449 the estates of Philip Okeover were near to being completely razed to the ground by this gang, it was Okeover's kinsmen Bagot, Bradbourne and Curzon who gathered and rode to his rescue.

There were three basic reasons- a mixture of affection and self-interest- which nurtured this strength of kinship. The first was simple loyalty to one's immediate family. Blood was thicker than water and familial love existed just as now. Secondly, everybody needed help (one might say, good kinship) at some stage; thus the

wages of disloyalty or failure to provide assistance were retribution in like kind at a future stage. There was also the threat of losing whatever bequests that might have been expected in the 'victim's' last will and testament. This leads into the third point. Though death at human hands in the fifteenth century was rare away from the battlefield, disease was as swift as ever in taking its toll. The possibility of coming into a valuable bequest or even an inheritance could not be ruled out, especially by those married to the daughters or sisters of a land-holder, whose assets and problems might one day be their own. For among the gentry families of Staffordshire between 1440 and 1500 the extinction rate was one in ten and a quarter of them endured at least one minority.³ Thus it was prudent to consider and protect the interests of one's 'extended family'.

Principal concerns of a head of a family were how to ensure the continuation of that family into the next generation and how to provide spouses for his children. On the one hand, a large family would insure against the possibility of the death of an only son leaving no immediate heir; on the other hand, it might mean that one's children might not all be married off as well as the parents would have liked. There was only a limited number of highly eligible bachelors in the area, and each family could only afford to allocate a certain amount of land or money for the marriage settlements of younger children. In 1447 Sir Nicholas Montgomery's daughter Elizabeth had a dowry of two hundred marks for her marriage to Thomas Meverell⁴, while the lawyer William Littleton sixty years later was wealthy enough to bequeath a dowry of four hundred marks for his only daughter⁵, but the

sum of two hundred and eighty marks which Humphrey Swynnerton the younger was able to put aside for his daughters' marriage settlements by the time of his death in 1505 had to be split evenly between seven girls.⁶ The small size of the available dowry may explain why Swynnerton died in his early fifties with all his daughters as yet unmarried. He might conceivably have taken a leaf out of the book of John Harcourt of Ranton who, despite only being a younger son himself managed to wed his brood of four daughters to leading members of the county gentry: Walter Wrottesley the younger, Ralph Lane, Hugh Erdeswick and Swynnerton himself. Harcourt was a shrewd and occasionally ruthless man, and the following two episodes reveal how much importance he placed upon obtaining as favourable a marriage settlement as possible for his kinswomen.

In the first of these Harcourt improved upon the financial settlement made in a marriage contract. He was, as might be expected, a feoffee for his son-in-law Humphrey Swynnerton, and took advantage of the young man's lack of resources. Swynnerton did not receive his mother's Hilton inheritance until 1472 (because it was being held by John Mitton by the courtesy of England). Soon afterwards Harcourt swooped and Swynnerton was forced to enfeoff his wife jointly with him in this awaited property. This was in consideration of 'divers favours, penalties and expenses done and incurred' by Harcourt in Swynnerton's lawsuits and quarrels, and for certain sums paid and dues forgiven to Swynnerton by Harcourt.⁷ Presumably Harcourt had been lending financial help to his daughter and son-in-law, and had decided to be repaid thus. The Harcourts were also to be Swynnerton's executors, thereby taking an even

tighter control on Swynnerton's estates.

The other example concerns Harcourt and the Peshale of Hopton inheritance. Sometime before 1476 Sir John Stanley had paid £100 to old Humphrey Peshale for an assurance that all of his estates would pass to his son, Hugh Peshale, to whom Stanley had married a daughter.⁸ This was probably done because Humphrey had taken a second wife after the death of Hugh's mother. Stanley was afraid that this later union would produce off-spring upon whom some or all of the family property might be devolved, to the disinheritance of his daughter. (Trouble between step-children had previously occurred in the area with the Countess and Talbot Earls of Shrewsbury and ironically within Stanley's own family after his death). The trouble with the Peshale inheritance, however, did not come from Humphrey's second marriage, but his third, to Lettice Harcourt. After the death of Lettice's father, John of Ellenhall in 1484, Harcourt took it upon himself to look after his kinswoman's interests. After Hugh Peshale's untimely death in 1489, he and old Humphrey combined to slice off a large portion of the Peshale lands, including the manor of Knightley, which were enfeoffed on Harcourt and obviously destined for Lettice. This conspiracy was challenged by John Blount, who had married in Hugh's only child, Catherine, what he had thought to be an extremely wealthy heiress. John and Catherine petitioned Chancery over the matter and recovered the lands once an inquiry had shown the stories of Humphrey and Harcourt to be contradictory. Yet it was not until 7 June 1497, after Harcourt's death, that the property, which must have been Hugh's jointure, was recovered by the couple.

Marriage and marriage settlements certainly

regularly exercised the minds of the gentry, but exactly who was marrying whom?

Analysing marriage patterns is difficult. Lists can be made for the places of origin and parentage of the partners, and one can also gauge whether there was any marked preponderance of widows, heiresses or multiple marriages in the lists. However, ultimately there are few useful statistics to be drawn from this exercise. Taking the sheriffs and escheators of Staffordshire between 1440 and 1500, for example, all but one of the sheriffs are known to have married. The exception, Thomas Basset (1465-6), probably married as well. Eight of the sheriffs married twice, one married three times and one, Sir Henry Willoughby (1486-7), four times. Evidence is more sparse for the escheators and nine are not known to have married. This is not, of course, to say that they did not marry, though one, Edward Fowke (1494-7), was a cleric. In other words, marriage was almost universal among these men. This pattern and others to which I now want to turn were not peculiar to the county office holders. They are reflected in the entire gentry of Staffordshire; it is just that it is easier to take these leading gentlemen as an exemplary sample.

Although in theory one could construct diagrams showing distances between the homes of office holders and their wives in an attempt to determine the average distance people went to marry, many factors would render this misleading. These include the effects of differing types of terrain and the quality of road and water communications in an area; the whole question of from which manors to measure from, especially when it is not known where the principal residence of a family was or how much travelling between its estates occurred; the practice of sending sons, especially the eldest

ones out to live on a distant part of the family inheritance; and the contacts and friendships made while the head of a family was performing official duties as an office holder or estate or household administrator for a noble family. For instance, it is clear that Sir Walter Griffith of Alrewas, who was sheriff in 1471-2, met his second wife, Agnes Constable of Flamborough (Yorkshire), or at least her family, while steward of Holderness for the Staffords in the early 1470s, which office the Constables had themselves held a generation earlier.⁹

In the end we must conclude that only generalisations are advisable, and that it is upon the exceptions that most interest should be turned. At the simplest and safest level, the chances of two people getting married were greatest when their families were neighbours, on good terms and not so closely related that the Church would not sanction the match. The greater the distance between the couple's families and the less travelled their kinsmen were, the less likely that the eligibility or even existence of each of the youngsters would be known to the other's family or that marriage negotiations would be entered into. If some figure has to be put onto the distances involved, it would be safe to say that few marriages among the gentry were contracted between individuals living more than fifty miles apart, the exceptions being widows and wealthy heiresses, about whom news travelled far and fast. In short, most people in Staffordshire married someone from that county or an adjacent one. Apart from Griffith, only three of the sheriffs and escheators are known to have had spouses from further afield: William Harper, who married Margaret Cook of Lilbourne (Northamptonshire); Sir Walter Wrottesley, who married Joan Baron of

Reading (Berkshire); and Robert Hill, who married Elizabeth Woodford of Ashby-Folville (Leicestershire). Among the rest of the Staffordshire gentry there were a few others who also married brides from other regions of the country, including Richard Harper (William's brother), a letter from whom closes this chapter. Conversely, there were a few Staffordshire heiresses who attracted husbands from far afield, such as Anne Swynnerton of Hilton and Joan Chetwynd (née Burley), both of whose cases have been dealt with in earlier chapters.

Marriages were arranged, though it is clear from contemporary letters that the feelings of the prospective partners were also taken into consideration. Parental love was such that few would knowingly consign a child to an unwanted or unsuitable match merely for financial or political gain. Not that these were totally ignored, as the following example reveals. The death of Walter, Lord Mountjoy's eldest son, William Blount, at the battle of Barnet meant that Staffordshire and Derbyshire held a highly eligible young widow. The progress of one of her (ultimately unsuccessful) suitors, William Stonor, in 1472 was recorded in this letter from Thomas Mull:

'My cosen Willyam hath ben with a full goodly Gentilwoman, and comynde with her after love's lore: and for certein I knowe that ych of them ys verley (sic) well content of other....Of my lorde Mountjoyes lande she hath ~~iiii~~^{xx} marcs of annuite fe by dede endentid, for where the lande was in value C. marcs shee hath layn it ayen to my seid lord for yelding her yerly ~~iiii~~^{xx} marcs. These certentees I have by my bedfellow Thomas Powtrell, which ys of counsell with my seid lorde, and was of counsell at the marriage makynge....For certeine shee is well named, and of worshipful disposicion.'¹⁰

The reference to Mountjoy's councillor and the 'marriage makynge' could mean merely that Powtrell was present at the wedding ceremony, but it is more likely to be evidence of

the lord's council being called in to advise over this important though personal decision. Certainly advice and brokers were often sought over such matters. Richard Brown of Eslingham (Kent), M.P. for Newcastle-under-Lyme in 1435, arranged the marriage of a daughter of his parliamentary companion from that constituency William Hexstall.¹¹ Back in the 1420s Sir William Mountfort had been consulted over the proposed match between Sir Edward Grey and Elizabeth Ferrers, heiress of the Groby barony.¹² A letter written between 1465 and 1483 by John Aston of Haywood to an intermediary, Ralph Delves, reveals, as did the Stonor letter, a stage in the marriage negotiations:

'Unkell delves I hartely etc. recomende me unto you & to my aunte also desiringe to heare of your wefares, thankinge you of your great kyndnes shewed unto me & to my daughter Elin all tymes prayinge you of your good contynnuance in the same, and where you send me worde by my servaunt Willm. Kirkham to sonde you a bill of my mynde as touchinge my daughters joiture in Leghton, I pray you streyne for the whole manor w^t thappanaances [appertenances?], and also I pray you yf it woulde please you to take the paynes upon you to folow the lawe to the extremitie in all causes for Samsone Erdeswick will keep no payment, wherfore she shall have all the lawe will geve her.'¹³

Though the Stonor letter was written from the viewpoint of a suitor and this Aston one from that of a prospective father-in-law, the considerations of both parties were not dissimilar—human concern tempered with financial diligence.

Although financial concern featured in most marriage negotiations, it was particularly evident where widows and minors were concerned. It is to widows and wards that I now want to turn.

Although modern statistical evidence shows that women tend to live longer than men, the situation in the middle ages cannot be said to have been the same by a simple

extrapolation of this data. Far more babies were lost then at birth or in infancy than are lost today, and lack of hygiene or proper medical care resulted in the deaths of a large number of women either in child-birth or through septicaemia (blood-poisoning) shortly afterwards. Nevertheless, there were usually quite a few widows around, each of whom held dower (usually one third) of their late husband's property. Some of these were elderly and did not want to get remarried, but many were widowed either while young or in middle age; these were the real marital catches. In such cases it is pertinent to note that their later husband(s) tended to be from families of at least as great wealth and prominence as were their initial spouses, and often of superior eminence. For example, Margaret Curzon of Kedleston married Thomas Kniveton after the death of her first husband Thomas Okeover in the late 1430s; while Margaret Aston married the important lawyer and Exchequer official following the early demise of her first husband John Kynnardsley; or again John, Lord Dudley's daughter Eleanor married first Sir Henry Beaumont and then George Stanley of Elford. In the last two of these cases the widows were still young enough to have children by their later spouses- an additional attraction because of the 'courtesy of England' mentioned earlier. Wolseley lived on until 1504 and Stanley until 1508-9, keeping out the children of the widow's first marriage from part of their inheritance. It may have been tension from this sort of situation that was responsible for the fact that on the only occasion that William Blount the elder of Blore is known to have had any connection with his step-father

Nicholas Montgomery it was to sue him for assault while Basset was paying a visit to Cubley (Derbyshire), probably visiting his mother in 1458.¹⁴

As mentioned earlier, the fears of the children of a first marriage over a surviving parent's remarriage was that step-children would partially or wholly disinherit them. Thomas Littleton, who married Joan Chetwynd (née Burley) certainly syphoned off some of the Chetwynd lands for his own brood to the loss of the Chetwynd heirs (though, it will be remembered these were not other children but the Alspath branch of the family). In this case the influence of the Chetwynds of Alspath was obviously diminished by Joan's longevity (she held the Chetwynd estates from 1444 to 1505), as they were deprived of the power that the estates she held would have given them. Cassandra Humphreston, who around 1465 became one of the very few examples in the county of a teenager marrying an old man, Robert Giffard of Chillington, also did the pocket and influence of her heir, her son Sir John, no good by living to be almost ninety, with most of the family lands bestowed upon her.¹⁵ In this case the son did eventually get his inheritance, though only in 1537, and had in the meantime acquired two wives, the second of whom, Elizabeth Montgomery (née Gresley), being a wealthy widow.

Some sons, however, were less fortunate, dying before they could get their hands on their mother's dower (e.g. John Aston the elder, John Harcourt of Ranton¹⁶ and Sir Walter Wrottesley). Alice Butener, widow of Humphrey Lowe of Tressel, even outlived both her heiress daughters' husbands. Widows were thus either an important asset or liability, depending on how one was related to them. They could heavily supplement or diminish a gentleman's wealth and power, especially if they held, besides dower from their

late husband's estates, a life-interest in all those estates and/or property in their own right.

Those with a financial interest in the process of marriage and determination of who should wed whom were not confined to the prospective partners and their fathers. If on the death of a land-holder the heir was under-age, his or her wardship and marriage were part of the feudal incidents pertaining to the feudal overlord of that child's inheritance. Any land held in chief would make the Crown one of these overlords and legally the only one that mattered. However, royal efforts to realise these feudal incidents were resisted by the gentry, who regularly connived to conceal from the Crown the existence of such property held in chief or to give a greatly under-estimated figure for its value. Indeed, the enfeoffment to use had been developed in the later middle ages largely to prevent the loss of revenue and control of the family inheritance to its feudal overlord during a minority- hence the importance of maintaining a well-stocked and trustworthy set of feoffees.

Recognizing that the Crown could claim a relief on a gentleman's inheritance should even the smallest part of this be held in chief by military tenure, Henry VII trawled for wardships, using the inquisition post mortem energetically and indiscriminately wherever there was the slightest possibility of financial gain¹⁷: a boon to later historians but doubtlessly an unrelished extra-workload for escheators at the time. In late 1486 and July 1496 Henry issued commissions in Staffordshire to enquire into feudal incidents especially escheats which were being or might be concealed from him.¹⁸ He was not the first king in this period to recognize the loss of these lucrative perquisites and attempt to prevent it; Henry VI in February 1448 and Edward IV in August 1473 had acted similarly.¹⁹

These commissions and the inquisitions post mortem were of some use to the Crown even when they proved initially barren. They provided records from which royal officers could work on future occasions; for among the gentry's (and indeed all tenants') most powerful weapons was any lack of detailed written evidence about tenures and obligations.

Apart from commissions dealing with the forfeited estates of rebels in 1461 and 1483, these general inquiries into incidents due to the Crown were supplemented by others relating to specific individuals. These commissions, referring to known tenants-in-chief, were issued not to the county escheators via a writ of 'diem clausit extremum', but to groups of four to six important gentlemen of the county. In Staffordshire there were five such commissions between 1440 and 1500: for Richard Delves in 1446, John Winnesbury in 1450, Sir Robert Harcourt in 1471, Ralph Lane in 1477 and John, Lord Mountjoy in 1487.²⁰ In each case the commissioners were local men, including at least one lawyer and drawn from the Duchy of Lancaster's Honour of Tutbury. In September 1473 there were also commissions of inquiry into the heirs and Staffordshire estates of the third Earl of Shrewsbury and the disgraced Sir Walter Wrottesley.²¹ These, curiously, were sent out, not to the local gentry, but to two financial experts: Thomas Stildolf, receiver for the Queen's feefarms and queen-gold and her attorney; and John Elrington, treasurer of the Household, who had been the successful suitor for William Blount's widow's hand. Why these courtiers should have been employed for Staffordshire is a mystery, especially since the commission into Wrottesley's property in Worcestershire,

issued a few days before the Staffordshire one, had been directed to Humphrey Blount and Nicholas Leveson- both of whom had held public office in Staffordshire.

Having emphasised the Crown's difficulties in obtaining information about and possession of those wardships which were due to it, it may be surprising to learn that quite a few Staffordshire under-age heirs and heiresses fell into royal hands (or indeed those of any feudal lord). Some minorities have been discussed in other contexts earlier in this thesis, nevertheless it is worth listing in one place the more important wards of the area at this time: Humphrey and John Beaufo, Humphrey and Robert Blount, Nicholas Burdet, Robert Cawardyn, the two Richard Corbets of Moreton (Shropshire), John Cotes, Thomas Curzon, Richard Delves, John, Lord Ferrers, Humphrey Grey, Walter Griffith, John Handforth, Richard Lane, Richard Macclesfield, Nicholas ontgomery of Cubley (Derbyshire), John Peyto, German Pole, Humphrey Stafford of Grafton (Worcestershire), Anne and Alice Swynnerton, Edward Trussell, John Tuchet and Richard Wrottesley.

Grants of wardship and marriage were highly prized pieces of patronage, sought by a whole variety of people, usually just for financial gain. The grant to Simon Mountfort of the wardship of the son of Clarence's executed follower Thomas Burdet in 1478 was a reward for long and loyal service to the house of York, which may also have owed something to the good lordship of the powerful William, Lord Hastings, whose retainer Mountfort was.²² Courtiers were frequently the recipients of this form of patronage, whether it was as a straight grant or a sale. John Hampton of Stourton received the wardship of John Botrell in 1438 and shared those of

John Woodhill with William Tresham in 1441 and John Grendon (an idiot) with Sir Edmund Hungerford in 1446.²³ William Cumberford, the Stafford servant and lawyer, had the lands of Joan Catesby in 1460.²⁴ When large sums were demanded for the grant of a wardship it was the lawyers and courtiers who were best able to come up with the cash.

Sometimes a guardian did more than just buy up a wardship and marriage (the two usually, though not always, went together). Edward Burton, a yeoman of the Crown, on becoming the guardian of Richard Lane of Bentley in 1477, promptly moved to Staffordshire and married his ward's widowed mother. William Hugford, the Beauchamp/Neville servant, had done the same thing in the early 1460s, becoming step-father to Humphrey Beaufo of Hilton, whom he married to his niece. As by their very nature wards were heirs or heiresses, their marriages were widely sought by others, often neighbours, with children themselves to find advantageous marriages for. Walter Griffith the younger of Alrewas was married off to the daughter of his guardian Sir John Ferrers of Tamworth, and John Handforth was similarly wed to the daughter of his guardian Sir John Savage. The same happened to Richard Corbet the elder, whose marriage had been acquired by Walter, Lord Ferrers on 30 May 1468²⁵, though in Corbet's case the match may not have been the 'fait accompli' it often was for wards; he was twenty years-old at the time and could easily have held out for the few months until he came of age, had he objected to the bride.

Occasionally, the kinsmen of a ward sought to acquire his wardship and marriage, usually to prevent the family estates falling into the hands of an outsider, who might misuse them, having no thought for the long-term effects of over-farming and ignoring maintenance. John,

Lord Audley petitioned in the parliament of 1472-5 for his nephew's wardship. In 1488 Robert Throckmorton bought the wardship of his nephew John Peyto for £160, and five years later the grant of the wardship of German Pole went to his uncle and grandmother.²⁶ In 1468 Walter, Lord Mountjoy had the wardship of his nephew Robert Blount of Grisby (Lancashire), and though that of his step-son Henry, duke of Buckingham was reserved to the Crown, Mountjoy and his wife the Duchess Anne did get the commitment of Henry's estates during his minority.

There are also a couple of unusual wardships from the area. In September 1465 Sir Nicholas Montgomery, sheriff of Staffordshire in 1443-4, who was dying granted the wardship and marriage of his son and heir, Nicholas the younger, to Ralph Wolseley.²⁷ Why he should have done so is unknown. The Montgomerys were a powerful family in both this county and in Derbyshire; if anything, of more importance than the Wolseleys. Ralph Wolseley, though a baron of the Exchequer, was still only an heir to his family's estates and certainly could not have raised enough money to buy the wardship. Perhaps Montgomery merely wished his son's future to be in the hands of somebody he trusted, though I can find no special link between Wolseley and the Montgomerys. Nicholas the younger must also have been not far from attaining his majority anyway, for in 1474 he was deputy-steward of the Honour of Tutbury under William, Lord Hastings, one of whose closest associates he became. The younger Nicholas soon married Jane, daughter of Sir Nicholas Longford of Longford in western Derbyshire, one of his neighbours. Wolseley's only sister had long been married to John Agard, and since he is not known to have had any daughters, a match between the youngster and a Wolseley seems not to have come

into the reckoning. Anyway, had a Wolseley-Montgomery match been contemplated, it would have been easier simply to arrange it normally, rather than make young Montgomery a ward of his prospective in-laws. The mystery remains, heightened by the fact that after 1465 there seems to have been as little contact between the two families as there was before it.

The final wardship I want to mention was that of Roger Horton of Catton, whose marriage was granted away by his father in 1503 to Henry VII's mother, Margaret, countess of Richmond. The elder Horton was bound in five hundred marks that his son would be married to 'such a gentlewoman as her Grace and her assigns shall think convenient.'²⁸ For her part the Countess would 'find' the lad's schooling so that he would 'learn the laws'. In addition, and here's the rub, the Countess promised

'that she, at the cost of the father, will cause labour to be made to the King, that such lawful title as the father has to any manors, lands and tenements in England, may be recovered to him and to his heirs.'

Here, as we have seen repeatedly throughout the thesis, the importance of labouring and good lordship is apparent; so important in fact that Horton's son was, effectively, sold off to purchase them. Marriage like service, whether administrative, legal or military, was a commodity. It could be bought and sold. Being more of a merger of two sets of interest than merely a union of two individuals, marriage and the way in which it affected who were one's kinsmen was often used for political advantage; hence the importance of marrying one's daughters off to gentlemen from important local families wherever possible and the social as well as financial lure of widows and heiresses. As in most societies, success in fifteenth-century England, whether locally or nationally, depended to a large extent on

cultivating the right friendships, being able to rely on competent kinsmen, knowing the right people; and carefully thought-out marriages could be the talismans of success. Wardships could mean financial gain or a short-cut to a favourable marriage, with all its concomitant advantages and new kinsmen.

The criteria for holding office, outlined near the beginning of the thesis- personal ability, a degree of wealth and political acceptability- were the same for procuring an advantageous marriage, from which political success might derive or to which it might lead.

Although three gentry families of the area were raised to the peerage during this period- the Blounts, Suttons and Tuchets- none of them achieved this by marrying into a title. Sir Walter Blount did indeed marry the dowager Duchess Anne of Buckingham, but he had already been created Lord Mountjoy for services rendered to Edward IV. There was a measure of inter-marriage among the nobility of Staffordshire, but this owed little or nothing to the fact that they did hold property within the county- a place most of them hardly visited. The Talbot Earls of Shrewsbury were at the centre of these marriages with the second Earl marrying a daughter of James, earl of Ormond and Wiltshire, the third Earl a daughter of Humphrey, duke of Buckingham and the fourth a daughter of William, Lord Hastings. In addition, the second wife of Thomas Stanley, earl of Derby was Margaret, countess of Richmond, whose previous husbands had been Henry VII's father and Humphrey, duke of Buckingham's second son, Sir Henry Stafford.

Except of course for Herefordshire's Walter Devereux, who married Lady Anne Ferrers of Chartley, none

of the heads of Staffordshire's noble families married within the county. However, five leading local families did marry into this nobility. The marriage of Richard Corbet to Elizabeth Devereux has already been referred to; the others were John Cockayne marrying a daughter of Humphrey, duke of Buckingham, Sir Henry Beaumont marrying a daughter of John, Lord Dudley, Sir Henry Vernon marrying a daughter of the second Earl of Shrewsbury and Sir John Savage marrying a daughter of Thomas, Lord Stanley. In all but the first of these cases the gentleman in question was already part of the lord's affinity before the marriage, which led to an even closer relationship as kinship supplemented the bonds of bastard feudalism. This leads u into the whole question of the relationship between marriage/kinship and political allegiance.

As I showed in the long chapter on patronage and local government office, there was a marked difference betwe n the Stafford affinity, which had not particularly inter-married under Duke Humphrey, and the Neville affinity, which, coming to the fore in the 1460s, was based upon fairly discrete family clans. These clans are developed before Warwick came along; the vital marriages of Hugh Wrottesley, Thomas Astley and Thomas Blount predated the marshalling by Warwick of their families, which concentrated upon their younger generations. The Hastings affinity took the process a step further. Unlike Warwick, Hastings did not attempt to raise a new oligarchy based upon the ties of kinship. He used the existing oligarchy of leading Duchy families, which had emerged under Buckingham and Clarence, simply giving it a new leader. Here again- and this is the important point- there was no particular feeling of marrying within

one's affinity or marrying outside of it. As I pointed out before, marriages were most regularly contracted between neighbours and friends, and these did not necessarily have the same good lord or sympathies as oneself. If they did, so much the better. There certainly were marriages between political allies (such as Elizabeth Meverell to Henry Cockayne, Evis Hampton to Elizabeth Everdon, and Nicholas Agard of Sudbury to Margaret Vernon), but the vast majority cannot be so catagorised. Magnates came and went, but the value of a good marriage was not so transient.

By the end of the century most of the disputes about which I have written were either forgotten or merely dim memories in the minds of old men. The head of the Bassets had married a Meverell and the heir to the Gresley estates and taken a Vernon for his bride. A new age was dawning; an age in which the county gentry would not scorn inter-marriage with the new and essentially-urban wealth of such merchant families as the Levesons of Wolverhampton: a sister of Sir Richard Wrottesley married Thomas Leveson. In this, the Wrottesleys might have been influenced by Sir Richard's own in-laws, the Dudleys, whose close associates the Levesons were. Slightly earlier, around the middle of the century, Richard Leveson had married Joyce, daughter of Fulk Birmingham, but these were the only marriages of their kind that I can discover. For Staffordshire at least such matters were for the sixteenth century. Perhaps the fifteenth century equivalent was the rise in wealth and social importance of lawyers, as seen by the histories of the Arblasters, Lanes, Wolseleys, Sacheverells, Curzons of Kedleston and Littletons. The wealth that such families generated and the contacts that their professional activities^{created} (including serving in local

government) were the keys to their rise. They enabled them to find advantageous marriages, and it was this, rather than opportunities to buy land which ultimately brought social (and indeed territorial) advancement. For although there was an active land market around such prosperous areas of the county as Lichfield, Stafford and Brewood, only tiny patches of land changed hands in most transactions.²⁹ Inheritances were inherited or married into, not purchased.

Though marriages and kinship were essentially local affairs, a considerable role was played (as I have shown) in Staffordshire's affairs by men from out-of-county. Most came from neighbouring shires, though the small group of aliens in Staffordshire also deserve a passing note, as they blended into this political community. Commissions to locate them were held at Stafford or Lichfield³⁰ in 1443, 1450, 1451, 1455, 1456, 1457, 1463, 1467, 1468, 1469 and 1483.³¹ In the returns some seventy-two names³² appear, of which fifty-five came in the two commissions of 1443.

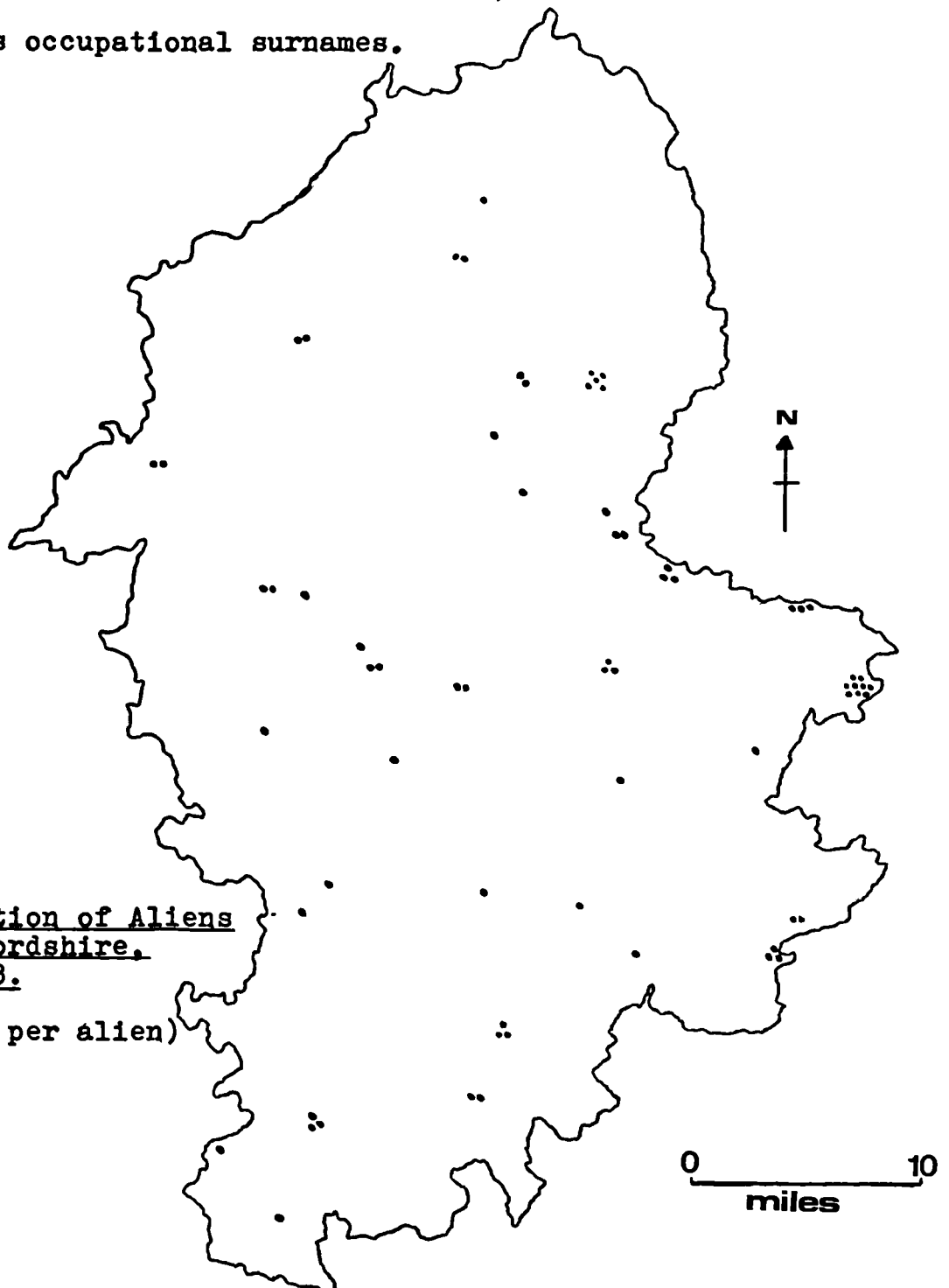
The commissions were to raise money. They named those liable to pay the alien subsidy of the particular time and the sheriffs were duly held accountable for a appropriate sum. This may have led to falsification of the returns; for after finding fifty-five aliens in 1443, the commissioners professed to find only four in 1450 and none at all in the next five commissions.³³ One or two are found in the county in 1467, two in both 1468 and 1469, and eight aliens were recorded in 1483. The places of abode of the aliens in Staffordshire, where known, are set out on the diagram overleaf, though from the map I have excluded three foreign women who married locally: Anabella Irish of Bednall, Anabella Lane of Abbots Bromley and Alice Hascard of Hopton. There was a fairly even distribution of aliens among the English people, with Burton-on-Trent having the

only slight concentration of aliens.

Often the surnames of the aliens revealed their owners' places of origin. 'Frenchman' and 'Irishman' or 'Irish' were common, while 'Welshman' and 'Fleming' also occurred. There were also Scottish immigrants. Many aliens worked as domestic servants, one, Maurice Okynmaker, being in the service of the vicar of Alton. Perhaps Okynmaker was a Talbot recruit from France. One alien was a clerk, others were urban craftsmen: cooper, shoemaker and cordwainer. Walsall even had a 'brigandyn' maker in 1483. Also, 'skinner' and 'hatmaker' appear as occupational surnames.

Distribution of Aliens
in Staffordshire,
1443-1483.

(one dot per alien)



Much of the past is a world forever lost to us despite our efforts to retrieve it from the stone and parchment that survive to record where others once passed. We may have fragmentary records of court sessions, but it is difficult to picture the scenes reported from them. To us a verdict may illustrate political pressure, legal niceties or litigational bloody-mindedness; but of the eloquence of lawyers, the striving for justice or a judge's indigestion, all of which may also affect decisions, we know nothing. We have writs and enrolments in plenty and may know when they were found inaccurate or misspelt; but of the Chancery clerks whose colds, hangovers or sheer exhaustion caused this nothing remains. We have account rolls, though little knowledge of how much clumsiness or care, thrift or extravagance, honesty or fraud, or the vagaries of the English climate affected the 'summa totalis'. Visits to and from friends, personal characteristics, tastes and piety, pains of birth and bereavement, conversation late into the evenings- all these and much more, if we but had them, would bring to life that distant age. In short, our picture of the fifteenth century is like that which we have of its individual gentlemen- an effigy rather than a portrait. The historian's task is to reconstruct the latter from the former.

I want to close this chapter on kinship and indeed the whole thesis with an undated letter from Richard Harper, second son of Humphrey, duke of Buckingham's placeman John of Rushall-by-Walsall and brother of the equally prominent William. Like these two, Richard was a Stafford servant, being an executor of the Duchess Anne and from 1485 until his death in 1492 the family's receiver-general.³⁴ Between these years he was also receiver-general of the Duchy of

Lancaster. Though he was M.P. for Stafford at least twice (1467-8 and 1472-5) and once for Newcastle-under-Lyme (1491-2), he had married a wealthy Essex widow³⁵ and spent much of his time on her estates there, a long way from home and his family. The letter³⁶, though in many ways unremarkable, sums up so much of that life behind the writs, enfeoffments and recognizances, which I have sought to set down in this work. Read slowly, each phrase speaks of a 'real' incident, of the immediate concerns of a later-medieval gentleman, and of the practical, day-to-day meaning of his relationships.

'Master Baryngton as hertly as I kan I recomaund
me to you and to my mastre[s] your wyfe and pray
yow to delyver unto my servaunt bere herof a buk
wich I have promysed a gentilman shall be sent
hym and not saylied in myn absence I pray you to
remember me as I late dede yow in your absence
where ther was grete wordes spoken ayenst yow.
And also now at the sessions of the fforest for
lake of yor claime ye ar lyke to lose your title
of the fforest w^towt specyall helpe wich I have
& woll be gladde alwes to helpe yow well. I
fynde yow kyndly dysposed as knowith god who
kepe yow, savyng my quarell that nether ye nor
my mastres your wyff woll take my pore howse in
your way as ye ryde to London. I wold I hadde the
cheyne in plegge & then ye wold se me. From
Ippyngbury the xxvi day of August

Yours to his power Richard Harpur

Of such men were the political communities of the shires
composed; with such bonds they were held together.

FOOTNOTES

1. M.Bloch, Feudal Society, second edition in two volumes, (London, 1965), I, p.123.
2. G.Wrottesley, The History of the Family of Wrottesley of Wrottesley, (Exeter, 1903), p.244.
3. These statistics are derived from an examination of eighty-six leading county families during the period: Arblaster, Archer, Astley, Aston, Bagot, Barbour, Basset, Beaufo, Beaumont, Biddulph, Blount of Elvaston, Blount of Kinlet, Boughay, Brereton, Bromley, Cawardyn, Chetwynd of Ingestre, Cockayne, Colcough, Cotes of Cotes, Cotton of Hamstall Ridware, Cumberford, Curzon of Croxall, Davenport, Delves, Dudley (Sutton), Egerton, Erdeswick, Everdon, Ferrers of Chartley (both Ferrers & Devereux), Fitzherbert, Fowke, Giffard, Gresley, Grey of Whittington, Griffith, Hampton, Harcourt of Ellenhall, Harcourt of Ranton, Harper, Hexstall, Hill, Humphreston, Kynnersley, Lane, Lee of Aston-by-Stone, Leveson, Littleton, Lowe, Macclesfield, Meverell, Mitton, Montgomery, Mountfort, Mynors, Neville of Tyrley, Newport, Okeover, Peshale of Hopton, Peshale of Horsley, Peyto, Rugeley of Hawksyard, Rugeley of Longdon, Salway, Savage, Stafford of Grafton, Stafford of Stafford, Stanley, Swynnerton of Hilton, Swynnerton of Swynnerton, Trussell, Tuchet (Audley), Vernon, Warings, Wells, Whalley, Whitgreve, Whorwood, Wilkes, Winnesbury, Wolseley, Wood and Wrottesley. Of these, nine (possibly ten) ended in the male line, while twenty-one (possibly twenty-three) had a minority between 1440 and 1500.
4. L.Morsbach, Mittelenglische Original Urkunden von der Chaucerzeit bis zur Mitte des XV Jahrhunderts, (Heidelberg, 1923), pp.39-41.
5. Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem-Henry VII, (H.M.S.O., 198-1955), III, no.517.
6. Ibid., III, no.1125.
7. See footnote no.6.
8. Public Record Office, Early Chancery Petitions, C1/186/2, 3.
9. C.Rawcliffe, The Staffords, Earls of Stafford and Dukes of Buckingham 1394-1521, (Cambridge, 1978), pp.212, 232.
10. C.L.Kingsford (ed.), The Stonor Letters and Papers, Camden society, third series, XXIX (1919), no.121. See also Ibid., no.124. Blount's widow was Margaret, daughter and co-heiress of Sir Thomas Ethingham. She actually remarried an up-and-coming courtier John Elrington.
11. J.C.Wedgwood, History of Parliament 1439-1509, (London, 1936-8), I, pp.120-1.
12. Historical Manuscripts Commission, Series 55 (Various), VII, p.332.

13. British Library, Harleian Mss. 2059 fo.109^R.
14. G.Wrottesley, 'Extracts from the Plea Rolls, temp. Henry VI and Edward IV, Collections for a History of Staffordshire (cited as SHC), William Salt Archaeological Society, new series IV (1901), p.110.
15. G.Wrottesley, 'The Giffards from the Conquest to the present time', SHC, new series V (1902), pp.109-110.
16. Harcourt's influence in Staffordshire was negligible since his mother Margaret- a formidable woman- had decided to take the family's estates in this county (Ellenhall, Coven, Sharesnull and Saredon) as her dower.
17. H.E.Bell, An Introduction to the History and Records of the Court of Wards and Liveries, (Cambridge, 1953), pp.1-3.
18. J.C.Wedgwood, 'Staffordshire Members of Parliament', SHC, 1917-8, p.274; Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1494-1509, p.66. The second of these was repeated on 1 September 1496.
19. Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1446-52, pp.138-40; Ibid., 1467-77, p.407.
20. Ibid., 1441-46, pp.462-3; Ibid., 1446-52, p.387; Ibid., 1476-85, p.77; Ibid., 1485-94, p.178.
21. Ibid., 1467-77, p.408 (bis). Stildolf's wife, who was a s rvant of Queen Elizabeth, had an annuity of five marks from the town of Stafford from 6 January 1481- Calendar of Close Rolls, 1476-85, pp.182-3.
22. Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1476-85, p.102.
23. Calendar of Fine Rolls, 1437-45, pp.56-7; Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1441-46, pp.2-3, 452.
24. alendar of Fine Rolls, 1437-45, p.249.
25. Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1467-77, pp.95-6.
26. Ibid., 14 5-94, pp.210, 431.
27. Historical Manuscripts Commission, Series 78 (Hastings), I, p.110.
28. R.Ussher, An Historical Sketch of the Parish of Croxall, (London, 1881), p.214- Hatton family deeds no.40.
29. G. Wrottesley, 'Final Concords or Pedes Finium, commencing 1 Edward III., A.D.1327', SHC, XI (1890), pp.228-56.
30. One commission was held elsewhere, at Wolverhampton, on 16 July 1443.
31. Public Record Office, Lay Subsidies, E179/177/55 (bis), 64, 66, 74, 68, 67m.2, 73, 78, 70, 81m.2.

32. The return for 1467 is barely legible. The total figure for aliens may be seventy-three.
33. Commissions in the 1450s also took pains to stress that no Italian merchants had entered the county. Cheap silk imports, allied to an endemic xenophobia, lay behind the numerous restrictions on foreigners and activities of foreign traders. The commissioners for the alien subsidy were apparently required to look out for any contravention of the statutes governing these merchants. See R.A.Griffiths, The Reign of Henry VI, (London, 1981), p.791.
34. Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1494-1509, p.45.
35. Victoria County History of Essex, IV, p.213.
36. British Library, Egerton Mss. 2664 fo.2^R.

CONCLUSION

I have deliberately painted this portrait of Staffordshire on as broad a canvas as possible to obtain the fullest appreciation of the complexity of human relationships and social interdependence. To sum up fifteenth-century Staffordshire in a few choice phrases is beyond my limited powers. Thus my conclusion is more of a musing on two central concepts- power and success- the appreciation of which may prove of wider benefit in understanding the county's community.

By 'success' I mean the fulfilment or surpassing of an individual's aims; and by 'power' I mean the ability to influence others. These concepts have traditionally been linked together. Yet, certainly in the study of a county in the later middle ages, important qualifications are needed to such an assumption. For the nobility and gentry, there was far more to success than the acquisition of political offices. Some men had no interest in government and politics and, like the Nevilles of Tyrley, enjoyed the quiet, safe life to that of the ambitious courtier. Some had no aptitude for politics and were wise enough to recognise this and refrain from getting involved; while others had pressing financial difficulties which did not allow them time for county offices. Are these men to be dubbed failures? Surely not. Not everybody was on the make, though those who were are easier to spot. If success has to be measured, the question 'what did this man grab?' is less important than that of 'what did this man pass on?'. Success lay not with the high-fliers who died sine prole, but with those who consolidated their family's position, perhaps extended it slightly, and had sons to whom to bequeath it. The dilemma facing Henry VIII in the late 1520s was not novel.

Success was not synonymous with power, nor power with wealth- survival was more important than these. This is not to decry the value of holding offices of profit under the Crown, a bishop or a local magnate, merely that these were a means to an end, not an end in themselves. Lasting success, not surprisingly, depended on the ability to last. Warwick, Clarence and Hastings found this out to their cost among the local magnates, while on a humbler level John Hampton, the Peshales of Hopton and Stanleys of Elford, great men in their time, left barely a rack behind. By the time John Leland visited Staffordshire the wealthiest landholder in the county was not descended from one of the leading gentry families of the fifteenth century, but James Leveson, the wool merchant of Wolverhampton and the staple at Calais.

The importance of magnate connections in securing political office and wealth is clearly evident from the evidence presented earlier. However, this influence was dependent more on the calibre of the individual gentleman than his social position. Lords chose men of ability; after all, they themselves would be judged by the quality of their affinity as much as its size. Support had to be attracted and it was too expensive to attempt to build an affinity solely through lavish annuities. So the quality and ability of a particular lord became of importance. John, Lord Dudley could never hope to gain more wealth than, for instance, Henry, duke of Buckingham- yet by surviving, consolidating his family's general position and using his personal qualities to the full, he was the more important figure locally and

nationally. Similarly, the contrast in fortune between the Harpers of Rushall and the Cockaynes of Ashbourne at the gentry level was a matter of personality. The former family grew successful through loyal and efficient service, while the latter squandered their power in a dissoluteness which came home to roost with the murder of Thomas Cockayne in 1488 by a neighbour as they rode to church and the pathetic impecuniosity of Thomas' loutish father John in his final years.

Yet Staffordshire was essentially a county at peace, where virtue and ability were usually rewarded, though not always as promptly as some would have liked. As for the inhabitants in general- they wined, they dined, they whored and (occasionally) they slaughtered, but no more than a thousand generations before them or, like as not, the thousand yet to come.

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- (ii) Published Original Source Material
- (iii) Secondary Source Material

Abbreviations in section (iii) for Staffordshire periodicals

- NSJFS North Staffordshire Journal of Field Studies
- SHC Collections for a History of Staffordshire, William Salt Archaeological Society
- TLAHS Transactions of the Lichfield Archaeological and Historical Society, which subsequently became
- TSSAHS Transactions of the South Staffordshire Archaeological and Historical Society

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Additional Charters - 19858, 27179, 27343, 27504-11, 27514-5,
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| | |
|------------|---|
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| DL 5 | Duchy of Lancaster, Entry Books of Decrees and Orders |
| DL28 | Duchy of Lancaster, Accounts, various |
| DL29 | Duchy of Lancaster, Ministers' Accounts |
| DL37 | Duchy of Lancaster, Chancery Rolls |
| DL41 | Duchy of Lancaster, Miscellanea |
| E 5 | Bills and Writs of the Exchequer of Pleas |
| E 28 | Council and Privy Seal Receipts |
| E101 | Accounts, various |
| E163 | King's Remembrancer, Miscellanea |
| E179 | King's Remembrancer, Subsidy Rolls |
| E199 | King's Remembrancer, Sheriffs' Seizures |
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| KB27 | King's Bench, Plea Rolls |
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1SHERIFFS OF STAFFORDSHIRE 1440-1500 (under-sheriffs in brackets)

- 4 November 1440 Humphrey Lowe
 4 November 1441 Richard Archer
 6 November 1442 William Mitton
 4 November 1443 Nicholas Mountgomery
 6 November 1444 Sir Thomas Blount
 4 November 1445 Sir John Griffith (Nicholas Leveson)
 4 November 1446 Humphrey Blount
 9 November 1447 Thomas Ferrers
 (The old sheriff had to stay on as the man originally appointed, John Hampton, talked his way out of having to serve)
 20 December 1449 Humphrey Swynnerton
 3 December 1450 John Stanley
 8 November 1451 Thomas Astley
 8 November 1452 Robert Aston
 5 November 1453 Richard Bagot (John Streethay)
 4 November 1454 John Cotton
 4 November 1455 John Delves
 17 November 1456 John Cotes
 7 November 1457 William Mitton
 7 November 1458 Hugh Egerton
 7 November 1459 Sir John Stanley
 7 November 1460 Walter Wrottesley (John Salter)
 7 November 1461 John Harcourt
 (The old sheriff had to stay on because of the precarious political scene and the lack of others prepared to accept the post)
 5 November 1463 Humphrey Peshale
 5 November 1464 Sir John Stanley
 5 November 1465 Thomas Basset
 5 November 1466 John Harcourt
 5 November 1467 John Acton
 5 November 1468 Sir John Stanley (William Praers)
 5 November 1469 Sir Randle Brereton
 8 November 1470 John Delves (William Praers)
 11 April 1471 Henry Beaumont
 9 November 1471 Sir Walter Griffith
 9 November 1472 William Basset
 5 November 1473 George Stanley
 7 November 1474 Sir John Stanley
 5 November 1475 John Aston
 5 November 1476 Hugh Egerton
 5 November 1477 Richard Bagot (Simon Hadington)
 5 November 1478 Nicholas Mountgomery
 5 November 1479 John Aston
 5 November 1480 William Basset
 5 November 1481 Humphrey Stanley
 5 November 1482 Nicholas Mountgomery (Simon Hadington)
 6 November 1483 Sir Thomas Wortley
 5 November 1484 Sir Marmaduke Constable
 12 September 1485 Sir Humphrey Stanley
 5 November 1486 Henry Willoughby
 4 November 1487 William Harper
 4 November 1488 Hugh Peshale
 5 November 1489 Sir Thomas Gresley
 5 November 1490 Ralph Okeover
 5 November 1491 Roger Draycote
 26 November 1492 Richard Wrottesley
 17 November 1493 Sir Humphrey Stanley
 5 November 1494 Sir Robert Harcourt
 5 November 1495 John Mitton
 5 November 1496 John Draycote
 5 November 1497 Sir Thomas Gresley
 5 November 1498 William Harper
 11 November 1499 Sir John Ferrers

APPENDIX 2
ESCHEATORS OF STAFFORDSHIRE 1440-1500

6 November 1440 Humphrey Cotes
 November 1441 Robert Whitgreve
 November 1442 Thomas Cotton
 6 November 1443 Nicholas Leveson
 6 November 1444 Nicholas Warings
 6 November 1445 Humphrey Blount
 6 November 1446 John Barbour
 6 November 1447 William Vernon
 6 November 1448 John Archer
 11 November 1449 Richard Beaufo
 11 December 1450 Sir John Gresley
 11 December 1451 Thomas Bate
 11 December 1452 Roger Draycote
 3 December 1453 Nicholas Leveson
 6 November 1454 John Cotes
 4 November 1455 William Colwich
 4 November 1456 William Humphreston
 7 November 1457 Humphrey Swynnerton
 7 November 1458 William Colwich
 7 November 1459 Hugh Davenport
 7 November 1460 Robert Coyney
 8 November 1461 Thomas Erdeswick
 (The old escheator had to stay on, presumably because no-one else
 was prepared to accept the post)
 4 November 1463 Robert Hill
 5 November 1464 John Lee
 5 November 1465 William Owdeby
 5 November 1466 Nicholas Agard
 5 November 1467 Philip Preston
 5 November 1468 Richard Reed
 5 November 1469 George Stanley
 6 November 1470 John Cawardyn
 7 November 1471 John Mynors
 5 November 1472 Thomas Woodall
 5 November 1473 Thomas Swyneshead
 5 November 1474 Humphrey Swynnerton
 (The escheator stayed in office for five years)
 5 November 1479 William Harper
 5 November 1480 Richard Rugeley
 (The escheator stayed in office for three years)
 6 November 1483 John Agard
 10 December 1484 Robert Hill
 1 November 1485 William Harper
 5 November 1486 Robert Mershe
 1487 Thomas Woodshaw
 (How long the escheator stayed in office is unknown)
 1492 Louis Lloyd
 5 November 1493 William Fowke
 (Edward Fowke, the son and heir of William
 rendered the account, as his father died in
 office. How long William was in office is unknown)
 1497 Edward Knight
 (How long the escheator stayed in office is unknown, but it was
 not after 1501)

APPENDIX 3

COMMISSIONS IN STAFFORDSHIRE

1. 3 June 1440 Commission to discover those liable to pay the alien subsidy- to William, earl of Suffolk, Humphrey, earl of Stafford, John, Lord Talbot, James, Lord Audley, John, Lord Dudley, Sir Roger Aston, William Lee, John Harper, John Hampton, Thomas Arblaster, Robert Whitgreve and the sheriff (Sir John Gresley the elder).
2. 28 Nov. 1440 Commission to raise a loan for Henry VI- to William Heyworth, bishop of Coventry & Lichfield, Sir Roger Aston, John Hampton, Thomas Arblaster, Hugh Erdeswick, John Harper, Robert Whitgreve and the sheriff (Humphrey Lowe).
3. 18 Feb. 1441 Commission to raise the parliamentary subsidy- to Humphrey, earl of Stafford, Thomas Stanley, Thomas Arblaster, Robert Whitgreve and the sheriff (Humphrey Lowe); and the collectors.
4. 20 Nov. 1441 Commission of the peace- to Humphrey, earl of Stafford, James, Lord Audley, John, Lord Dudley, William, Lord Ferrers, Sir Roger Aston, William Lee, John Harper, John Hampton, Thomas Arblaster and Robert Whitgreve; and the royal justices William Westbury and William Goderede.
5. 30 March 1442 Commission to raise a loan for Henry VI- to William Heywood, bishop of Coventry & Lichfield, Humphrey, earl of Stafford, Sir Roger Aston, Hugh Erdeswick the elder, Thomas Stanley and the sheriff (Richard Archer).
6. 12 Nov. 1442 Commission of the peace- to Humphrey, earl of Stafford, James, Lord Audley, John, Lord Dudley, William, Lord Ferrers, Sir Roger Aston, John Harper, John Hampton, Thomas Arblaster, William Cumberford and Robert Whitgreve; and the royal justices William Westbury and William Yelverton.
7. 1 June 1446 Commission to raise a loan for Henry VI- to William Heyworth, bishop of Coventry & Lichfield, Robert Whitgreve, Thomas Arblaster, William Cumberford and the sheriff (Sir John Griffith).
8. 6 Dec. 1446 Commission of the peace- to Humphrey, duke of Buckingham, James, Lord Audley, John, Lord Dudley, William, Lord Ferrers, Sir Roger Aston, John Harper, John Hampton, Thomas Arblaster, Robert Whitgreve and William Cumberford; and the royal justices William Yelverton and Richard Bingham.
9. 8 Feb. 1448 Commission to inquire into feudal revenues owed to but concealed from the King- to John Hampton, John Harper, Robert Whitgreve, John Archer, William Cumberford, Thomas Arblaster and the sheriff (Thomas Ferrers the elder) and escheator (William Vernon).
10. 4 July 1449 Commission of the peace- to William, earl of Suffolk, Humphrey, duke of Buckingham, William Booth, bishop of Coventry & Lichfield, James, Lord

Audley, John, Lord Dudley, William, Lord Ferrers, Sir Sampson Meverell, John Harper, John Hampton, Thomas Arblaster, Robert Whitgreve and William Cumberford; and the royal justices William Yelverton and Richard Bingham.

11. 25 Sept. 1449 Commission to raise a loan for the French wars- to William Booth, bishop of Coventry & Lichfield, Thomas Stanley, John Harper, John Hampton, Thomas Arblaster and Robert Whitgreve.
12. 8 August 1449 Commission to assess and collect the parliamentary defence subsidy- to William Booth, bishop of Coventry & Lichfield, Humphrey, duke of Buckingham, Sir Richard Vernon, Sir Sampson Meverell, Robert Grey, Hugh Erdeswick the elder, John Harper, William Cumberford and the sheriff (Humphrey Swynnerton).
13. Early 1453 Commission to raise a loan to finance the French wars- to Humphrey, duke of Buckingham, George Radcliff, John Hampton, John Stanley and John Riddell.
14. 20 Nov. 1453 Commission of the peace- to Humphrey, duke of Buckingham, Reginald Butler, bishop of Coventry & Lichfield, James, Lord Audley, John, Lord Dudley, Sir Sampson Meverell, John Harper, John Hampton, Thomas Arblaster and William Cumberford; and the royal justices William Yelverton and Richard Bingham. In addition William, Lord Ferrers and Robert Whitgreve were appointed though they were dead at the time.
15. 14 Dec 1453 Commission of the peace- to Humphrey, duke of Buckingham, Reginald Butler, bishop of Coventry & Lichfield, James, Lord Audley, John, Lord Dudley, Sir Sampson Meverell, John Harper, John Hampton, Thomas Arblaster, Thomas Wolseley, Roger Draycote and William Cumberford; and the royal justices William Yelverton and Richard Bingham.
16. 22 April 1454 Commission of the peace- to Humphrey, duke of Buckingham, Richard, earl of Warwick, Reginald Butler, bishop of Coventry & Lichfield, James, Lord Audley, John, Lord Dudley, Sir Sampson Meverell, John Harper, John Hampton, Thomas Arblaster, William Cumberford, Thomas Wolseley and Roger Draycote; and the royal justices William Yelverton and Richard Bingham.
17. 16 July 1454 Commission of the peace- to Richard, duke of York, Richard, earl of Warwick, Humphrey, duke of Buckingham, John, earl of Shrewsbury, Reginald Butler, bishop of Coventry & Lichfield, James, Lord Audley, John, Lord Dudley, Sir Sampson Meverell, John Harper, John Hampton, Thomas Arblaster, William Cumberford, Thomas Wolseley and Roger Draycote; and the royal justices William Yelverton and Richard Bingham.

18. 14 May 1455 Commission to raise money for the defence of Calais- to Reginald Butler, bishop of Coventry & Lichfield, John, Lord Dudley, William Cumberford, John Hampton, Sir John Gresley and Sir John Griffith,
19. 22 Jan. 1456 Commission of the peace- to Richard, duke of York, Richard, earl of Warwick, Humphrey, duke of Buckingham, John, earl of Shrewsbury, Reginald Butler, bishop of Coventry & Lichfield, James, Lord Audley, John, Lord Dudley, Sir Sampson Meverell, John Harper, John Hampton, Thomas Arblaster, William Cumberford, Thomas Wolseley, Roger Draycote and Thomas Everdon; and the royal justices William Yelverton and Richard Bingham.
20. 9 May 1456 Commission of the peace- to Richard, duke of York, Richard, earl of Warwick, Humphrey, duke of Bucknigham, John, earl of Shrewsbury, Reginald Butler, bishop of Coventry & Lichfield, James, Lord Audley, John, Lord Dudley, Humphrey, Lord Stafford, Sir Sampson Meverell, John Harper, John Hampton, Thomas Arblaster, William Cumberford, Thomas Wolseley, Roger Draycote and Thomas Everdon; and the royal justices William Yelverton and Richard Bingham.
21. 26 Sept. 1457 Commission of array- to Humphrey, duke of Buckingham Humphrey, Lord Stafford, Sir Sampson Meverall, John Hampton, John Harper, Thomas Arblaster and William Cumberford.
22. 17 Dec. 1457 Commission to assign the number of archers each town, hundred etc. in the county shall supply and how they are to be paid for- to Humphrey, Lord Stafford, William Branston, abbot of Burton, John, Lord Dudley, Sir John Griffith, John Hampton, William Mynors, John Harper, John Stanley, William Cumberford, Hugh Egerton (not Ralph, as is at times thought), John Delves, Thomas Everdon and William Mitton.
23. 20 June 1458 Commission to enquire into all murders, rapes, felonies, conspiracies etc. in Staffordshire, Shropshire and Worcestershire- to John, earl of Shrewsbury, John, Lord Dudley, Sir John Burgh, Sir John Griffith, William Burley, John Harper, Thomas Greswold, Thomas Horde, John Cotes, Ralph Wolseley and the sheriffs of the three counties (William Mitton, Fulk Sprencheaux and the under-sheriff of the last county Walter Wrottesley).
24. 24 Feb. 1459 Commision of the peace- to Richard, Duke of York, Richard, earl of Warwick, Humphrey, duke of Buckingham, James, Lord Audley, John, Lord Dudley, Sir Sampson Meverell, John Harper, John Hampton, Thomas Arblaster, William Cumberford and Roger Draycote. In addition Reginald Butler, bishop of Coventry & Lichfield was appointed, though he was dead at the time.
25. 21 Dec. 1459 Commission of array- to Humphrey, duke of Buckingham, John, earl of Shrewsbury, Sir Henry Stafford,

Sir Sampson Meverell, John Hampton, John Harper, Thomas Arblaster, Roger Draycote, Thomas Wolseley and Thomas Everdon.

26. 18 March 1460 Commission of the peace- to Humphrey, duke of Buckingham, John, earl of Shrewsbury, John, Lord Dudley, Sir William Vernon, John Harper, John Hampton, Thomas Arblaster, William Cumberland and Roger Dratcote; and the royal justices Richard Bingham and Richard Choke. In addition Reginald Butler, bishop of Coventry & Lichfield was also appointed, though he was dead at the time.
27. April-May 1460 Commission to assemble and lead troops against the Yorkists when they land- to Humphrey, duke of Buckingham, Sir Henry Stafford and John, Lord Dudley (wrongly called William).
28. March 1461 Commission of array- to William, Lord Hasting, Sir Walter Blount, Sir John Stanley, Sir John Gresley, Humphrey Peshale, William Basset, Philip Okeover, George Stanley and the sheriff (Walter Wrottesley).
29. 12 Lay 1461 Commission to take over Eccleshall and Stafford castles and Henry VI's goods and to arrest rebels- to John, Lord Berners, Sir Robert Harcourt, Sir Walter Blount, William Mitton, William Harcourt and John Harcourt.
30. 14 May 1461 Commission to seize Lancastrian rebels' property in Staffordshire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire- to William, Lord Hastings, Sir Walter Blount and the sheriffs (Walter Wrottesley and Richard Willoughby).
31. 8 July 1461 Commission of the peace- to Richard, earl of Warwick, John, Lord Audley, John, Lord Dudley, Sir Walter Blount, Sir Thomas Astley, William Cumberland, John Harper, Nicholas Warings, Thomas Everdon, John Halse, bishop of Coventry & Lichfield, Thomas Wolseley and Walter Wrottesley; and the royal justices Richard Bingham, Roger Bailey, Richard Choke and Thomas Heath.
32. 11 Dec. 1463 Commission of the peace- to Richard, earl of Warwick, John, Lord Audley, John, Lord Dudley, Sir Walter Blount, Sir Walter Wrottesley, John Harper, William Cumberland, John Halse, bishop of Coventry & Lichfield, Sir Thomas Astley, Nicholas Warings, Thomas Wolseley, Ralph Wolseley and John Delves; and the royal justices Richard Bingham, Richard Choke, Thomas Heath and Roger Bailey.
33. 12 Feb. 1464 Commission of the peace- to John Halse, bishop of Coventry & Lichfield, Richard, earl of Warwick, John, Lord Audley, John, Lord Dudley, Sir Walter Blount, Sir Thomas Astley, Sir Walter Wrottesley, Sir John Gresley, John Harper, William Cumberland, Nicholas Warings, Thomas Wolseley, Ralph Wolseley and John Delves; and

the royal justices Richard Bingham, Richard Choke, Thomas Heath and Roger Bailey.

34. 15 July 1464 Commission of the peace- to John Halse, bishop of Coventry & Lichfield, Richard, earl of Warwick, John, Lord Audley, John, Lord Dudley, Sir Walter Blount, Sir Thomas Astley, Sir John Gresley, William Cumberford, Nicholas Warings, Thomas Wolseley, Ralph Wolseley, John Delves and the royal justices Richard Bingham, Roger Bailey, Richard Choke and Thomas Heath.

35. 3 June 1465 Commission of the peace- to John Halse, bishop of Coventry & Lichfield, Richard, earl of Warwick, John, Lord Audley, John, Lord Dudley, Walter, Lord Mountjoy, Sir Thomas Astley, Sir Walter Wrottesley, Sir John Gresley, William Cumberford, Nicholas Warings, Thomas Wolseley, John Delves, Ralph Wolseley, John Wood and the royal justices Richard Bingham, Richard Choke, Thomas Heath and Roger Bailey.

36. 1 July 1465 Commission to assess the populace of Staffordshire for the parliamentary subsidy- to Sir Robert Aston (sic- he was dead), Sir John Griffith, Sir Thomas Astley, John Delves, Hugh Egerton and Richard Bagot.

37. 18 Feb. 1467 Commission of the peace- to John Halse, bishop of Coventry & Lichfield, Richard, earl of Warwick, John, earl of Shrewsbury, John, Lord Audley, John, Lord Dudley, Walter, Lord Mountjoy, Sir Thomas Astley, Sir Walter Wrottesley, Sir John Gresley, William Cumberford, Nicholas Warings, Thomas Wolseley, John Delves, Ralph Wolseley, John Wood and the royal justices Richard Choke, Richard Bingham and Roger Bailey.

38. 16 Nov. 1468 Commission of the peace- to John Halse, bishop of Coventry & Lichfield, George, duke of Clarence, Richard, earl of Warwick, John, earl of Shrewsbury, John, Lord Audley, John, Lord Dudley, Walter, Lord Mountjoy, Henry, Lord Grey of Codnor, Sir Thomas Astley, Sir Walter Wrottesley, Sir John Gresley, Sir John Stanley, Thomas Littleton, William Cumberford, Nicholas Warings, Thomas Wolseley, John Delves, Ralph Wolseley, John Wood and the royal justices Richard Bingham, Richard Choke and Roger Bailey.

39. 29 Oct. 1469 Commission of array- to William, Lord Hastings, John, Lord Dudley, Sir Henry Stafford and Sir John Stafford.

40. 29 March 1469 Commission of the peace- to John Halse, bishop of Coventry & Lichfield, George, duke of Clarence, Richard, earl of Warwick, John, earl of Shrewsbury, John, Lord Dudley, Henry, Lord Grey of Codnor, Walter, Lord Mountjoy, Sir Thomas Astley, Sir Walter Wrottesley, Sir John Gresley, Sir John Stanley, Thomas Littleton, William Cumberford, Nicholas Warings, Thomas Wolseley, Ralph Wolseley, John Delves, John

Wood, Henry Vernon and the royal justices
Richard Bingham, Richard Choke and Roger Bailey.

41. 26 Mar. 1470 Commission of array- to William, Lord Hastings, Walter, Lord Mountjoy, Sir John Gresley, Sir John Stanley, Humphrey Peshale, William Basset, Philip Okeover, George Stanley (also escheator) and the sheriff.
42. 4 Dec. 1470 Commission of the peace- to John Halse, bishop of Coventry & Lichfield, George, duke of Clarence, Richard, earl of Warwick, John, earl of Shrewsbury, Sir Walter Wrottesley, Sir John Gresley, Sir John Stanley, William Cumberford, John Wood, William Mitton, Robert Hill and the royal justices Richard Choke and Roger Bailey.
43. 18 Apr. 1471 Commission of array- to George, duke of Clarence, Henry, duke of Buckingham, Sir Henry Stafford, Henry Beaumont, John Acton and the sheriff.
44. 8 July 1471 Commission of the peace- to John Halse, bishop of Coventry & Lichfield, George, duke of Clarence, Richard, duke of Gloucester, Henry, duke of Buckingham, John, earl of Shrewsbury, John, earl of Wiltshire, John, Lord Audley, John, Lord Dudley, Henry, Lord Grey of Codnor, Walter, Lord Mountjoy, William, Lord Hastings, Sir John Stanley, Thomas Littleton, William Cumberford, Nicholas Warings, Ralph Wolseley, Hugh Egerton, John Acton, Richard Bagot, William Basset and the royal justices Roger Bailey, Thomas Urswick and Guy Fairfax.
45. 7 Mar. 1472 Commission of array- to George, duke of Clarence, Richard, duke of Gloucester, Henry, duke of Buckingham, John, earl of Shrewsbury, John, earl of Wiltshire, John, Lord Dudley, John, Lord Audley, William, Lord Hastings, Walter, Lord Mountjoy, Henry, Lord Grey of Codnor, Sir John Stanley, Hugh Egerton, John Harper, William Cumberford, John Acton, Richard Bagot, William Basset and the sheriff and the royal justice Roger Bailey.
46. 2 July 1472 Commission of the peace- to John Halse, bishop of Coventry & Lichfield, George, duke of Clarence, Richard, duke of Gloucester, Henry, duke of Buckingham, John, earl of Shrewsbury, John, earl of Wiltshire, John, Lord Audley, John, Lord Dudley, Henry, Lord Grey of Codnor, Walter, Lord Mountjoy, William, Lord Hastings, Sir John Stanley, Thomas Littleton, Ralph Wolseley, Hugh Egerton, John Acton, Richard Bagot, William Basset, Nicholas Warings and the royal justices Roger Bailey, Thomas Urswick and Guy Fairfax.
47. 4 Apr. 1473 Commission of the peace- to John Halse, bishop of Coventry & Lichfield, George, duke of Clarence, Richard, duke of Gloucester, Henry, duke of Buckingham, John, earl of Shrewsbury, John, earl of Wiltshire, John, Lord Dudley,

Henry, Lord Grey of Codnor, Walter, Lord Mountjoy, John, Lord Audley, William, Lord Hastings, Sir John Stanley, Thomas Littleton, Ralph Wolseley, John Wood, Robert Hill, Hugh Egerton, John Acton, Richard Bagot, William Basset, Nicholas Warings and the royal justices Roger Bailey, Thomas Urswick and Guy Fairfax.

48. 18 Aug. 1473 Commission into the Ancient Estates of the Crown- to Sir Thomas Littleton, Sir John Stanley, Hugh Egerton, John Acton, John Harcourt, Richard Bagot, William Basset, Ralph Wolseley, Robert Hill, John Wood, William Harper, Richard Peshale, the sheriff and the royal justice Roger Bailey.
49. 12 Feb. 1474 Commission of the peace- to John Halse, bishop of Coventry & Lichfield, George, duke of Clarence, Richard, duke of Gloucester, Henry, duke of Buckingham, John, Lord Audley, John, Lord Dudley, Henry, Lord Grey of Codnor, Walter, Lord Mountjoy, William, Lord Hastings, Sir John Stanley, Sir Thomas Littleton, Nicholas Warings, Ralph Wolseley, John Wood, Robert Hill, Hugh Egerton, John Acton, William Basset, William Harper and the royal justices Roger Bailey, Thomas Urswick and Guy Fairfax.
50. 10 Nov. 1475 Commission of the peace- to John Halse, bishop of Coventry & Lichfield, George, duke of Clarence, Richard, duke of Gloucester, Henry, duke of Buckingham, John, Lord Audley, John, Lord Dudley, Henry, Lord Grey of Codnor, William, Lord Hastings, Sir John Gresley, Sir John Stanley, Sir Thomas Littleton, Ralph Wolseley, Robert Hill, Hugh Egerton, William Basset, William Harper and the royal justices Roger Bailey, Thomas Urswick and Guy Fairfax.
51. 23 Feb. 1478 Commission of the peace- to John Halse, bishop of Coventry & Lichfield, Richard, duke of Gloucester, Henry, duke of Buckingham, John, Lord Audley, John, Lord Dudley, John, Lord Mountjoy, Henry, Lord Grey of Codnor, William, Lord Hastings, Sir John Gresley, Sir Thomas Littleton, Ralph Wolseley, Robert Hill, John Acton, William Basset, William Harper, John Aston and the royal justices Roger Bailey, Thomas Urswick and Guy Fairfax.
52. 1478 Commission to enquire into the escheated estates of George, duke of Clarence- to Hugh Egerton, John Harcourt, William Harper, George Stanley, Robert Hill, Peter Beaupie and John Worsley.
53. 11 Nov. 1480 Commission of the peace- to John Halse, bishop of Coventry & Lichfield, Richard, duke of Gloucester, Henry, duke of Buckingham, John, Lord Audley, John, Lord Dudley, Henry, Lord Grey of Codnor, John, Lord Mountjoy, William, Lord Hastings, Sir John Ferrers, Sir John Gresley, Sir Thomas Littleton, Ralph Wolseley, Robert

Hill, John Acton, William Basset, Humphrey Stanley, William Harper, John Aston and the royal justices Roger Bailey and Guy Fairfax.

54. 27 Apr. 1483 Commission for the Alien Subsidy (n.b. this never actually reported, as it was superceded by a commission issued by Richard III, see no.57)- to William, Lord Hastings, Sir John Gresley, Sir John Ferrers, Hugh Egerton, Ralph Wolseley, William Basset, William Harper, Robert Hill and the royal justice Roger Bailey.
55. 26 June 1483 Commission of the peace- to John Halse, bishop of Coventry & Lichfield, Henry, duke of Buckingham, John, duke of Norfolk, John, Lord Audley, John, Lord Dudley, Henry, Lord Grey of Codnor, John, Lord Mountjoy, Sir John Ferrers, Sir John Gresley, Nicholas Montgomery, Ralph Wolseley, Robert Hill, John Acton, Richard Bagot, William Harper, John Aston and the royal justices Roger Bailey, Humphrey Starky and Thomas Tremayle.
56. 30 July 1483 Commission of the peace- to John Halse, bishop of Coventry & Lichfield, Henry, duke of Buckingham, John, duke of Norfolk, Edward, viscount Lisle, John, Lord Audley, John, Lord Dudley, Henry, Lord Grey of Codnor, John, Lord Mountjoy, Sir John Ferrers, Sir John Gresley, Nicholas Montgomery, Ralph Wolseley, Robert Hill, John Acton, Richard Bagot, William Harper, John Aston and the royal justices Roger Bailey, Humphrey Starky and Thomas Tremayle.
57. 1 Sept. 1483 Commission to assess the Alien Subsidy- to Sir John Gresley, Sir John Ferrers, Hugh Egerton, Ralph Wolseley, Nicholas Montgomery, John Aston, Richard Bagot, William Harper, Robert Hill and the royal justice Roger Bailey.
58. 5 Sept. 1483 Commission of the peace- to John Halse, bishop of Coventry & Lichfield, John, duke of Norfolk, Edward, viscount Lisle, John, Lord Dudley, Henry, Lord Grey of Codnor, John, Lord Mountjoy, Sir John Gresley, Nicholas Montgomery, Ralph Wolseley, Robert Hill, William Basset, John Aston and the royal justices Roger Bailey, Humphrey Starky, Thomas Tremayle and Gervaise Clifton.
59. 10 Dec. 1483 Commission to discover and seize rebels' lands and goods for the Crown- to Nicholas Montgomery, Robert Hill, the sheriff and the royal justices Sir Gervaise Clifton and Roger Bailey.
60. 18 Feb. 1484 Commission of the peace- to John Halse, bishop of Coventry & Lichfield, John, duke of Norfolk, Edward, viscount Lisle, John, Lord Dudley, Henry, Lord Grey of Codnor, John, Lord Mountjoy, Sir John Gresley, Sir Nicholas Montgomery, Ralph Wolseley, Humphrey Peshale, William Wilkes, Robert Hill, Richard Wrottesley and the royal justices Roger Bailey, Humphrey Starky, Thomas

Tremayle and Sir Gervaise Clifton.

61. 1 May 1484 Commission of Array- to John, Lord Dudley, Sir Nicholas Montgomery, Humphrey Peshale, Ralph Wolseley, Robert Hill, William Wilkes (not William Wells- CPR, 1476-85, pp.397-401) and the sheriff.
62. 8 Dec. 1484 Commission of Array- to John, Lord Dudley, Sir Marmaduke Constable, Sir Thomas Wortley, Sir John Gresley, Sir Nicholas Montgomery, Ralph Wolseley, Humphrey Peshale, Robert Hill, John Cawardyn, William Wilkes (not Wells, see above Ibid., pp.488-92) and the sheriff.
63. 13 Mar. 1485 Commission of the peace- to John Halse, bishop of Coventry & Lichfield, John, duke of Norfolk, Edward, viscount Lisle, John, Lord Dudley, Henry, Lord Grey of Codnor, Sir John Gresley, Sir Nicholas Montgomery, Ralph Wolseley, Humphrey Peshale, William Wilkes, Richard Wrottesley, Robert Hill, William Harper and the royal justices Roger Bailey, Humphrey Starky, Thomas Tremayle and Sir Gervaise Clifton.
64. 27 Sept. 1485 Commission of the peace- to John Halse, bishop of Coventry & Lichfield, Thomas, earl of Derby, John, Lord Dudley, Sir John Gresley, Sir Hugh Peshale, Sir Humphrey Stanley, William Basset, Hugh Egerton, Richard Wrottesley, George Stanley, Hugh Erdeswick, William Harper, Robert Hill, William Wilkes, John Blount and the royal justices Humphrey Starky and Thomas Tremayle.
65. 11 Nov. 1486 Commission of the peace- to John Halse, bishop of Coventry & Lichfield, Thomas, earl of Derby, George, earl of Shrewsbury, John, Lord Dudley, Sir John Gresley, Sir Humphrey Stanley, Sir Hugh Peshale, William Basset, Hugh Egerton, Ralph Wolseley, Richard Wrottesley, George Stanley, Hugh Erdeswick, William Harper, William Wilkes, John Blount and the royal justice Thomas Tremayle.
66. Late Nov.1486 Commission to enquire into escheated estates- to Sir Humphrey Stanley, Ralph Wolseley, William Harper and the sheriff.
67. 12 Feb. 1487 Commission of the peace- to John Halse, bishop of Coventry & Lichfield, Jasper, duke of Bedford, Thomas, earl of Derby, George, earl of Shrewsbury, John, Lord Dudley, Sir John Gresley, Sir Hugh Peshale, Sir Humphrey Stanley, William Basset, Hugh Egerton, Richard Wrottesley, Ralph Wolseley, Geogre Stanley, William Harper, William Wilkes, Roger Praers, John Blount and the royal justices Thomas Tremayle and William Hody.

68. 15 Dec. 1487 Commission of the peace- to John Halse, bishop of Coventry & Lichfield, Thomas, earl of Derby, George, earl of Shrewsbury, Edward, Lord Dudley, Sir Humphrey Stanley, Sir Hugh Peshale, Hugh Egerton, William Basset, Ralph Wolseley, Hugh Erdeswick, Richard Wrottesley, George Stanley, William Harper, William Wilkes, Roger Praers, John Blount and the royal justices Thomas Tremayle and William Hody.
69. 21 Jan. 1487 Commission to assess the parliamentary subsidy and appoint collectors for it- to George Stanley, Roger Praers, John Blount and William Wilkes.
70. 23 Dec. 1488 Commission to muster troops for the Brittany campaign- to George, earl of Shrewsbury, Edward, Lord Dudley, Sir John Savage, Sir James Blount, Sir Humphrey Stanley, Sir Henry Willoughby, Hugh Egerton, Humphrey Swynnerton and the sheriff.
71. 10 June 1489 Commission of Jail Delivery for Staffordshire- Sir Humphrey Stanley, George Stanley, Hugh Erdeswick, William Harper, Roger Praers, William Wilkes and Robert Swyneshead.
72. 23 Aug. 1489 Commission to enquire into the riots in Lichfield- to Edward, Lord Dudley, Sir James Blount, Sir Thomas Gresley, Nicholas Montgomery, William Basset, William Harper, William Wilkes, Richard Harper, Roger Praers and the sheriff.
73. 7 July 1491 Commission to raise a loan for a war in France- to Edward, Lord Dudley, Sir Humphrey Stanley, Nicholas Montgomery, William Harper, Thomas Brereton and William Creton.
74. 13 Feb. 1493 Commission of the peace- to John, Archbishop of Canterbury, William Smith, bishop of Coventry & Lichfield, Arthur, prince of Wales, Jasper, duke of Bedford, Thomas, earl of Derby, George, earl of Shrewsbury, Edward, Lord Dudley, Sir Humphrey Stanley, Sir Reginald Grey, William Basset, Hugh Egerton, Ralph Wolseley, Hugh Erdeswick, George Stanley, William Harper, William Wilkes, Roger Praers, John Blount, John Bredock and the royal justices Sir William Hody and Thomas Tremayle.
75. 23 Apr. 1496 Commision of Array- to Thomas, earl of Derby, George, earl of Shrewsbury, Edward, Lord Dudley, Sir Humphrey Stanley, William Basset, George Stanley, Hugh Egerton, Ralph Wolseley, Nicholas Agard, William Wilkes, William Harper, Roger Praers, John Blount and the sheriff.

76. 23 Apr. 1496 Commission of the peace- to George, earl of Shrewsbury, Edward, Lord Dudley, Sir Humphrey Stanley, William Basset, Ralph Wolseley, Hugh Egerton, Nicholas Agard, William Harper, William Wilkes, Roger Praers and John Blount.
77. 8 July 1496 Commission to enquire into concealed
(repeated wardships and marriages due to the Crown in
1 Sept. 1496) Staffordshire, Derbyshire and Leicestershire-
Sir Humphrey Stanley, Sir Ralph Shirley, Sir Ralph Longford, John Savage, John Agard, Nicholas Kniveton, Thomas Babbington, Thurstan Aleyn and the royal justices Andrew Dymmock, John Cutte and John Luthington.
78. 13 July 1496 Commission of the peace- to John, archbishop of Canterbury, William Smith, bishop of Lincoln, Arthur, prince of Wales, Thomas, earl of Derby, George, earl of Shrewsbury, Edward, Lord Dudley, Hugh Egerton, George Egerton, Richard Wrottesley, Nicholas Agard, William Harper, William Wilkes, Roger Praers, John Aston, John Blount and the royal justices Sir William Hody and Thomas Tremayle.
79. 12 Sept. 1497 Commission of Jail Delivery for Staffordshire-
to Sir Humphrey Stanley, George Stanley, Richard Wrottesley, Nicholas Agard, William Harper, Roger Praers and John Blount.
80. 22 Nov. 1499 Commission of the peace- to John, archbishop of Canterbury, John Arundel, bishop of Coventry & Lichfield, Arthur, prince of Wales, Thomas, earl of Derby, George, earl of Shrewsbury, Edward, Lord Dudley, Sir Humphrey Stanley, Sir William Houghton, Hugh Egerton, George Stanley, Richard Littleton, Nicholas Agard, William Harper, William Wilkes, Roger Praers, John Blount and the royal justices Sir William Hody and Thomas Tremayle.

APPENDIX 4MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT IN STAFFORDSHIRE 1440-1500

| | <u>Knights of shire</u> | <u>Stafford boro'</u> | <u>Newcastle-under-L. boro'</u> |
|---------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1439-40 | John Hampton Thomas Arblaster | Rob. Whitgreve ? | ? ? |
| 1442 | John Hampton Ralph Egerton | Rob. Whitgreve Richard Brown | John Needham William Cumberford |
| 1445-6 | ? ? | ? ? | ? ? |
| 1447 | John Stanley William Mitton | Rob. Atkinson William Garnet | John Needham John Cudworth |
| 1449 | John Hampton William Cumberford | Richard Brown Nicholas Ashby | Thomas Everdon John Needham |
| 1449-50 | John Hampton Robert Whitgreve | Humph. Whitgreve William Preston | Ralph Wolseley Thomas Mayne |
| 1450-1 | John Gresley John Stanley | Humph. Whitgreve John Barbour | Thomas Colcough Richard Mosley |
| 1453-4 | John Gresley John Hampton | William Barbour John Barbour | Thomas Colcough John Spencer |
| 1455-6 | William Vernon Humph. Swynnerton | William Barbour John Barbour | Richard Mosley John Spencer |
| 1459 | ? ? | ? ? | ? ? |
| 1460-1 | Walter Wrottesley ? | ? ? | ? ? |
| 1461-2 | Nicholas Warings John Gresley | ? ? | ? ? |
| 1463-5 | Walter Wrottesley John Stanley | ? ? | ? ? |
| 1467-8 | John Delves John Stanley | Richard Harper John Preston | James Norris Robert Hill |
| 1469 | ? ? | ? ? | ? ? |
| 1470-1 | ? ? | Richard Harper ? | ? ? |
| 1472-5 | Edmund Dudley John Stanley | Robert Hill Richard Harper | William Paston John Wood |
| 1478 | John Bagot John Ferrers | John Egerton Thomas Gresley | William Young Reginald Bray |
| 1483 | John Egerton ? | ? ? | ? ? |
| 1484 | John Egerton John Ferrers | ? ? | ? ? |

| | <u>Knights of Shire</u> | <u>Stafford boro'</u> | <u>Newcastle-under-L.boro'</u> |
|---------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1485-6 | ? ? | ? ? | ? ? |
| 1487 | Humphrey Stanley ? | William Trussell Henry Lisle | ? ? |
| 1489-90 | Humphrey Stanley ? | Richard Harper ? | ? ? |
| 1491-2 | Humphrey Savage Humphrey Stanley | William Chetwynd Richard Pennisby | Richard Harper Richard Blount |
| 1495 | Humphrey Stanley ? | John Ferrers Humphrey Barbour | ? ? |
| 1497 | ? ? | ? ? | ? ? |

In addition to these the following are likely to also have served:

| | | |
|-------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1439-40 | Robert Whitgreve | Stafford boro' |
| 1459 | William Vernon & John Hampton | Staffordshire |
| 1470-1 | William Mitton & John Delves | Staffordshire |
| " " | William Paston & Robert Hill | Newcastle boro' |
| 1485-6 | Humphrey Stanley | Staffordshire |
| 1480s)- 1490s) | John Egerton | Newcastle boro' |

APPENDIX 5PARLIAMENTARY ELECTORS FOR KNIGHTS OF THE SHIRE IN
STAFFORDSHIRE 1440-1500

(Information taken from Public Record Office, Writs and
Returns for Parliamentary Elections, C219)

The following are the only surviving documents.

- | | |
|---------|---|
| 1442 | Writ of 3/12/1441 - C219/15/2/84 Return - C219/15/2/85 M.P.s - Robert Whitgreve & Richard Brown Sheriff - Richard Archer Electors (24) - Sir Roger Aston, Sir John Gresley, Sir Philip Chetwynd, Hugh Erdeswick, Ralph Basset, Richard Bagot, Robert Coyney, John Brown, Humphrey Cotes, William Lee, John Harper, John Mynors, John Boughay, William Bradshaw, Humphrey Clerkson, Thomas Lockwood, Ralph Thornburr, John Aleyn, Thomas Alsop, Roger Stockley, Thomas More, Thomas Peshale, John Smith and Ralph Salaward. |
| 1447 | Writ of 14/12/1446 - C219/15/4/90 Return - C219/15/4/91 M.P.s - John Stanley & William Mitton Sheriff - Humphrey Blount Electors (8) - Robert Whitgreve, Humphrey Cotes, Nicholas Leveson, Thomas Lockwood, William Burton, John Osmondslow, Thomas Staumford & John Boughay. |
| 1449 | Writ of 2/1/1449 - C219/15/6/91 Return - C219/15/6/92 M.P.s - John Hampton & William Cumberford Sheriff - Thomas Ferrers Electors (12) - Robert Aston, Richard Bagot, John Mynors, John Brown, Humphrey Cotes, Robert Whitgreve, Hamlet Winnesbury, Thomas More, Cornelius Worsley, Thomas Lockwood, William Selman and James Moreton. |
| 1449-50 | Writ of 22/9/1449 - C219/15/7/94 Return - C219/15/7/95 M.P.s - John Hampton & Robert Whitgreve Sheriff - Thomas Ferrers Electors (12) - Robert Coyney, Thomas Wolseley, Thomas Lockwood, William Burton, William Preston, William Sharesmith, Nicholas Underhill, John Codeshale, John Fundesley, Robert Painter, Ralph Orchard and William Deek. |

- 1450-1 Writ of 5/9/1450 - C219/16/1/89
 Return - C219/16/1/90
 M.P.s - John Stanley & John Gresley
 Sheriff - Humphrey Swynnerton
 Electors (25) - Sir Thomas Blount, Sir John Griffith, Hugh Erdeswick, John Cotton, Hugh Wrottesley, Thomas Astley, Roger Draycote, Robert John Mynors, Richard Beaufo, William Rugeley, Thomas Rugeley, Thomas Wolseley, Robert Hill, A. Roston, Thomas Colcough, Roger Strolley, Thomas Whittington, William Burton, John Streethay, John Cawardyn, William Bradshaw, Richard Temple, Thomas Lockwood and Humphrey Clerkson.
- 1453-4 Writ of 21/2/1453 - C219/16/2/90
 Return - C219/16/2/91
 M.P.s - John Gresley & John Hampton
 Sheriff - Robert Aston
 Electors (14) - Roger Draycote, Thomas Wolseley, Thomas Rugeley, Roger Clerk, Thomas Lockwood, John Streethay, Humphrey Clerkson, John Colwich, Thomas Aleyn, John Aleyn, John Staumford, William Wyde, Thomas Hampton and John Smith.
- 1455-6 Writ of 26/5/1455 - C219/16/3/60
 Return - C219/16/3/61
 M.P.s - William Vernon & Humphrey Swynnerton
 Sheriff - John Cotton
 Electors (16) - Roger Draycote, John Harper, ??????, John Mynors, John Cotes, John Barber, Thomas Joce, Thomas Lockwood, Thomas ? , ? Bucknale, William Sharesmith, Thomas Harper, Roger Clerk, Richard Broke, Thomas Noel and William Warner.
- Note in the 1455-6 return one name is missing from the list of the electors, as are parts of two others.
- 1467-8 Writ of 28/2/1467 - C219/17/1/100
 Return - C219/17/1/101
 M.P.s - John Delves & John Stanley
 Sheriff - John Harcourt
 Electors (13) - Roger Clerk, Thomas Lockwood, John Osmondslow, Robert Noel, George Stanley, Richard Norman, Richard Rugeley, Thomas Plinlesden, Richard Doyoge, Richard Broke, John Dandon, John Palmer and Robert Aleyn.

- 1472-5 Writ of 29/8/1472 - C219/17/2/104
 Return - C219/17/2/105
 M.P.s - Edmund Dudley & John Stanley
 Sheriff - Sir Walter Griffith
 Electors (21) - Humphrey Blount, George Stanley,
 Hugh Davenport, John Cawardyn,
 Thomas Rugeley, Richard Leveson,
 John Salford, John Ringley,
 Nicholas Leveson, William
 Biddulph, James Moreton, Thomas
 Noels, Humphrey Swynnerton of
 Blymhill, Robert Swineshead,
 Ralph Checkener, William
 Charnebury, Thomas More, John
 Wright, Richard Smith, William
 Francis and John Chirkyll.
- 1478 Writ of 22/2/1478 - C219/17/3/113
 Return - C219/17/3/114
 M.P.s - John Bagot and John Ferrers
 Sheriff - Richard Bagot
 Electors (26) - John Harcourt, Richard Mitton,
 Richard Norman, John Halse,
 Richard Rugeley, William
 Thornbury, Robert Bayer, John
 Brole, Henry Byford, Robert
 Cumberford, Ralph Salt, William
 Sonbage, ? Nik?son, Roger
 Parker, Thomas Fulford, Ralph
 Dawne, William Green, Hugh
 Bradshaw, John Rogers, Roger
 Perry, Thomas Pace, Robert
 Gunaryour, John Sperry, Ralph
 Smith, John Fletcher, John
 Bartram.

APPENDIX 6

OFFICERS OF THE BISHOPS OF COVENTRY AND LICHFIELD IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

* Denotes 'at least' Mich. is of course Michaelmas (29 September)

Receiver-general

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*Mich.1423 - *Mich.1429 John Hitchkin
*Mich.1443 - *Mich.1445 John Fisher
*Mich.1453 - *Mich.1455 John Whelpdale (probably from Mich.1452)
*Mich.1456 - early 1473 Edmund Basset
  25/3/1473 - early 1485 John Halse
  25/3/1485 - *Mich.1488 Richard Shirbourne
*Mich.1497 - *Mich.1498 John Heath
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Auditor

*Mich.1424 - *Mich.1429 William Repington
*Mich.1463 - *Mich.1485 Thomas Rogers

Steward

Mich.1463 - Mich.1464 John Harper
*Mich.1463 - *Mich.1473 John Gresley
*Mich.1484 - *Mich.1485 John Brown

Steward of the Household

*Mich.1454 - *Mich.1462 Edmund Basset

Masterforester in Staffordshire

***Mich.1423 - *Mich.1429 John Bagot**

Master of Game and Rule in Cannock Forest

Hereditary possession of the Aston family of Haywood until 1538

'Appositoris' general

| | | | |
|-----------|---|------|-----------------------------|
| ? | - | 1453 | Henry Wrightington |
| 8/9/1453 | - | ? | David and Stephen Kenrick |
| 30/9/1461 | - | ? | David Kenrick and John Hody |

Steward of the Liberty in Warwickshire

| | | |
|--------------|---|-----------------|
| 8/12/1458 - | ? | William Grimsby |
| 23/11/1461 - | ? | William Hugford |

Steward of the Liberty in Staffordshire and Shropshire

25/3/1459 - *Mich.1459 John Harper
*Mich.1464 - *Mich 1476 John Stanley (Stanley died in 1476)
3/10/1488 - ? George, earl of Shrewsbury

Bailiff of the Liberty of Staffordshire, Derbyshire,
Shropshire and Warwickshire

| | | | | |
|------------|---|------------|----------------|--|
| 24/1/1459 | - | ? | Roger Everdon | |
| *Mich.1462 | - | Mich.1463 | John Streethay | |
| Mich.1463 | - | *Mich.1469 | George Stanley | |
| *14/6/1470 | - | *Mich.1476 | John Harcourt | (except Warwickshire *Mich.1472-*Mich.1473 Thomas Rounton) |

Collector of Beaudesert

*Mich.1423 - *Mich.1429 Thomas Butler
 *Mich.1444 - *Mich.1445 John Halse
 *Mich.1447 - *Mich.1448 Thomas Butler
 *Mich.1449 - *Mich.1450 Henry Wrightington
 *Mich.1453 - *Mich.1457 David Broughton
 *Mich.1461 - Mich.1465 John Osbourne
 Mich.1465 - *Mich.1469 William Fletcher
 *Mich.1470 - *Mich.1498 Ralph Salt
 *Mich.1503 - *Mich.1504 Richard Tripet
 *Mich.1508 - *Mich.1509 Thomas Colwich

Parker of Beaudesert

*Mich.1424 - *Mich.1425 William Repington
 18/6/1426 - death Thomas Arblaster (died c.1433)
 c.1433 - death Thomas Arblaster II (died c.1471)
 c.1471 - death Richard Arblaster (died 1483)
 10/2/1483 - death Richard Arblaster II (died 1502)

Parker of Blore

*Mich.1447 - *Mich.1448 David Kenrick
 *Mich.1449 - *Mich.1450 Stephen Kenrick
 *Mich.1454 - *Mich.1464 David Kenrick
 20/2/1464 - *Mich.1476 John Halse (probably until death in 1485)

Collector of Brewood

*Mich.1447 - Mich.1464 John Fowke
 Mich.1464 - *Mich.1475 William Fowke
 *Mich.1477 - *Mich.1479 John Northall
 *Mich.1484 - *Mich.1485 Henry Bickford
 *Mich.1491 - *Mich.1492 Richard Brown
 *Mich.1497 - *Mich.1498 John Baker
Bailiff of Burton-in-Wirral

*Mich.1447 - *Mich.1450 Henry Cliff
 *Mich.1461 - *Mich.1485 John Brown

Collector of Cannock

*Mich.1423 - Mich.1426 Simon Colman
 Mich.1426 - Mich.1427 William Brook
 Mich.1427 - *Mich.1428 Richard Aleynson
 *Mich.1429 - Mich.1430 Thomas Salford
 *Mich.1443 - Mich.1444 William Booth
 Mich.1444 - *Mich.1445 Richard Aleynson
 *Mich.1447 - *Mich.1448 John Reynold
 *Mich.1449 - *Mich.1450 John Radich
 *Mich.1453 - Mich.1454 Richard Aleynson
 Mich.1454 - *Mich.1455 William Chapman
 *Mich.1456 - *Mich.1457 William Braylesford
 *25/3/1459 - *Mich.1459 John Baxter
 *Mich.1461 - *Mich.1462 John Cox
 *Mich.1463 - Mich.1464 Richard Chapman
 Mich.1464 - Mich.1465 William Packington
 Mich.1465 - Mich.1466 William Colman
 Mich.1466 - *Mich.1467 John Brook
 *Mich.1468 - *Mich.1469 Elizabeth Pope

*Mich.1470 - *Mich.1471 Hugh Collins
 *Mich.1472 - Mich.1473 Robert Sprot
 Mich.1473 - Mich.1474 Roger Birches
 Mich.1474 - Mich.1475 John Brook
 Mich.1475 - *Mich.1476 John Reynold
 *Mich.1477 - Mich.1478 William Brayesford's heir (he died in office)
 Mich.1478 - *Mich.1479 Robert Coradin and Henry Hall
 *Mich.1480 - *Mich.1481 John Justice (alias Aveston)
 *Mich.1482 - *Mich.1483 Hugh Smith
 *Mich.1484 - Mich.1485 Richard Hennison
 Mich.1485 - *Mich.1486 John Tromin
 *Mich.1487 - *Mich.1488 John Hudde
 *Mich.1491 - *Mich.1492 William Worsley
 *Mich.1496 - Mich.1497 William Stanley
 Mich.1497 - *Mich.1498 Thomas Lamepit
 *Mich.1503 - *Mich.1504 Thomas Alport
 *Mich.1508 - *Mich.1509 Ralph Bostock

Rider of Cannock Wood

*Mich.1423 - Mich.1444 Richard Rugeley
 Mich.1444 - Mich.1459 William Rugeley
 17/12/1459 - ? Edward Ellesmere
 7/6/1461 - *Mich.1469 John Halse
 *Mich.1470 - *Mich.1509 John Egerton

Bailiff of Chadshunt

*Mich.1447 - *Mich.1464 Thomas Wilkins
 *Mich.1484 - *Mich.1485 Thomas Whalley
Steward of Chadshunt

*Mich.1463 - *Mich.1464 William Hugford

Farmer of the Palace of Coventry

*Mich.1423 - *Mich.1429 Nicholas Gore
 *Mich.1443 - *Mich.1444 Thomas Chesterfield

Bailiff of Eccleshall

*Mich.1447 - *Mich.1448 David Kenrick
 *Mich.1449 - *Mich.1450 Stephen Kenrick
 25/3/1459 - *Mich.1459 James Moreton
 *Mich.1484 - *Mich.1485 Robert Combe

Constable of Eccleshall Castle

6/8/1453 - *Mich.1459 Edmund Basset (probably until his death in early 1473)
 26/3/1474 - ? Hugh Egerton
 *Mich.1475 - *Mich.1476 Robert Combe
Keeper of Eccleshall Castle Prison

14/12/1459 - *Mich.1476 Robert Careswall
 29/6/1500 - ? Reginald Wolvesdon

Bailiff of Farndon

*Mich.1447 - *Mich.1450 'Unam Berneston'
 *Mich.1463 - *Mich.1464 John Brown
 *Mich.1484 - *Mich.1485 Thomas Whalley

Bailiff of Haywood

*Mich.1423 - Mich.1453 Ralph Bishton
 Mich.1453 - *Mich.1457 Thomas Nixon
 *25/3/1459 - *Mich.1463 Ralph Bishton
 *Mich.1464 - Mich.1485 Robert Combe
 Mich.1485 - *Mich.1492 Thomas Awbey
 *Mich.1497 - *Mich.1498 Henry Whitford
 *Mich.1503 - *Mich.1504 Richard Tripet
 *Mich.1508 - *Mich.1509 Thomas Colwich

Parker of Haywood

*Mich.1423 - *Mich.1457 John Fisher
 *25/3/1459 - *Mich.1459 Thomas Hampton
 *Mich.1461 - early 1464 John Halse (but there is an account
 17/3/1464 - *Mich.1471 Robert Beele for 1464-5 from Halse)
 *Mich.1472 - *Mich.1509 John Egerton

Steward of Haywood

The Aston family of Haywood: Roger ? -1437
 Robert 1437-1465
 John 1465-1483
 John II 1483-1523

Bailiff of Itchington

*Mich.1447 - *Mich.1464 John Steel
 *Mich.1484 - *Mich.1485 Thomas Whalley

Bailiff of Lichfield

*Mich.1449 - *Mich.1450 John Stalkes
 *25/3/1459 - *Mich.1459 Eustace Hustock
 *Mich.1461 - Mich.1462 Robert Bridde
 Mich.1462 - Mich.1463 Eustace Hustock
 Mich.1463 - *Mich.1464 Thomas Rugeley
 *Mich.1472 - *Mich.1473 William Fletcher
 Sometime 1473-84 Edward Dorset
 *Mich.1484 - *Mich.1485 Sampson Piry
 *Mich.1505 - *Mich.1506 John Dyson
Collector of Longdon
 *Mich.1423 - *Mich.1448 Thomas Butler
 *Mich.1449 - *Mich.1450 Henry Wrightington
 *Mich.1453 - *Mich.1457 David Broughton
 *25/3/1459 - Mich.1465 John Osbourne
 Mich.1465 - *Mich.1469 William Fletcher
 *Mich.1470 - *Mich.1498 Ralph Salt
 *Mich.1503 - *Mich.1504 Richard Tripet
 *Mich.1508 - *Mich.1509 Thomas Colwich

Keeper of Oakley Wood

*Mich.1463 - *Mich.1464 John Savage

Bailiff of Prees

*Mich.1472 - *Mich.1485 Richard Podmore (rent collector *Mich.1484-
 *Mich.1485 was Thomas Hill)

Bailiff of Puys (Rugeley) in Cannock Chase

Hereditary possession of the Mitton family

Bailiff of Old Rents in Rugeley

*Mich.1478 - *Mich.1479 William Cambridge

Collector of Old Rents in Rugeley

*Mich.1423 - *Mich.1426 John Jekes
 *Mich.1428 - *Mich.1429 William Wood
 *Mich.1443 - *Mich.1445 Richard Weston
 *Mich.1447 - *Mich.1448 Robert Aston
 *Mich.1449 - *Mich.1450 John Willot
 *Mich.1453 - Mich.1454 Agnes Hood
 Mich.1454 - *Mich.1455 Nicholas Norman
 *Mich.1456 - *Mich.1457 William Wood
 *25/3/1459 - *Mich.1459 William Hugson
 *Mich.1460 - Mich.1461 Richard Walker
 Mich.1461 - *Mich.1462 Thomas Barker
 *Mich.1463 - Mich.1464 Thomas Dawes
 Mich.1464 - Mich.1465 John Wigan
 Mich.1465 - Mich.1466 John Aston
 Mich.1466 - *Mich.1467 Thomas Smith
 *Mich.1468 - *Mich.1469 Richard Norman
 *Mich.1470 - *Mich.1471 William Willot
 *Mich.1472 - Mich.1473 Richard Fletcher
 Mich.1473 - Mich.1474 Ralph Wolseley
 Mich.1474 - Mich.1475 John Wigan
 Mich.1475 - *Mich.1476 Thomas Rugeley
 *Mich.1477 - Mich.1478 Agnes Weston
 Mich.1478 - *Mich.1479 John More
 *Mich.1480 - *Mich.1481 William Nevowe
 *Mich.1484 - Mich.1485 Thomas Astley
 Mich.1485 - *Mich.1486 Richard Rugeley
 *Mich.1487 - *Mich.1488 William Wood
 *Mich.1491 - *Mich.1492 'The lord of Aston' (John Aston II)
 *Mich.1497 - *Mich.1498 Ralph Wolseley
 *Mich.1503 - *Mich.1504 John Field
 *Mich.1508 - *Mich.1509 John Dilesove

Collector of New ('ad hoc') Rents in Rugeley

*Mich.1423 - *Mich.1426 John Jekes
 *Mich.1428 - *Mich.1429 William Smith
 *Mich.1443 - *Mich.1445 Richard Weston
 *Mich.1447 - *Mich.1448 John Radich
 *Mich.1449 - *Mich.1450 Henry Wrightington
 *Mich.1453 - *Mich.1457 David Broughton
 *25/3/1459 - Mich.1465 John Osbourne
 Mich.1465 - *Mich.1469 William Fletcher
 *Mich.1470 - *Mich.1498 Ralph Salt
 *Mich.1503 - *Mich.1504 Richard Tripet
 *Mich.1508 - *Mich.1509 Thomas Colwich

Bailiff of Sawley

*Mich.1447 - *Mich.1450 John Geffrey
 *25/3/1459 - *Mich.1459 Edmund Basset
 *Mich.1463 - *Mich.1473 William Widows
 *Mich.1484 - *Mich.1485 William Widowson (This could be one man)

Steward of Sawley

*Mich.1463 - *Mich.1464 John Gresley

Bailiff of Tachbrook

*Mich.1447 - *Mich.1450 John Savage
 *25/3/1459 - *Mich.1464 John Rounton
 *Mich.1472 - *Mich.1473 Thomas Rounton
 *Mich.1484 - *Mich.1485 Thomas Whalley

Steward of Tachbrook

*Mich.1463 - *Mich.1464 William Hugford

Bailiff of Tarvin

*Mich.1447 - *Mich.1448 Robert Codgrave
 *Mich.1461 - *Mich.1485 John Brown

Bailiff of Trumwyn in Cannock Chase

Hereditary possession of Salway family

Collector of Whittington

*Mich.1423 - *Mich.1429 William Dekin
 *Mich.1443 - *Mich.1445 John Shaw
 *Mich.1447 - Mich.1448 William Newport
 Mich.1448 - Mich.1449 John Stanley
 Mich.1449 - Mich.1450 Thurstan Southworth
 Mich.1450 - Mich.1452 William Rugeley
 Mich.1452 - Mich.1453 Thomas Ostler
 Mich.1453 - *Mich.1455 William Multon
 *Mich.1456 - Mich.1461 Eustace Hustock
 Mich.1461 - *Mich.1462 Robert Bridde
 *Mich.1463 - Mich.1471 Thomas Rugeley
 Mich.1471 - Mich.1473 William Fletcher
 Mich.1473 - *Mich.1476 Thomas Snelston
 *Mich.1477 - *Mich.1481 Edward Dorset
 *Mich.1484 - *Mich.1492 Sampson Piry
 *Mich.1497 - *Mich.1504 John Dyson

Farmer of Wybunbury

24/6/1460 - 4/5/1471 John Delves (killed at Tewkesbury)
 *Mich.1472 - *Mich.1485 Hugh Egerton

APPENDIX 7STAFFORDSHIRE MEN FIGHTING IN THE WARS OF THE ROSES

* Killed ? Probable ?? Educated guess

(L) Lancastrian/royal force (Y) Yorkist

Saint Albans 22 May 1455

Humphrey, duke of Buckingham (L)

John, Lord Dudley (L)

Humphrey, Lord Stafford (L)

Blore Heath 23 September 1459

James, Lord Audley*(L)

John, Lord Dudley (L)

John Egerton*(L)

Sir John Gresley (L)

Nicholas Leveson (L)

Richard Leveson (L)

Sir John Stanley (L)

William Stanley (Y)

Ludford/Ludlow 12 October 1459

Humphrey, duke of Buckingham (L)

John II, earl of Shrewsbury (L)

Walter, Lord Ferrers of Chartley (Y) this may have been his
father. The barony was not
granted until 1461, but I
include it for clarity.

Walter Blount (Y)

Fulk Stafford (Y)

Northampton 10 July 1460

Humphrey, duke of Buckingham*(L)

John II, earl of Shrewsbury*(L)

John, Lord Audley (Y)

Walter Blount (Y)

John Stafford (Y)

Wakefield 31 December 1460

Sir Thomas Ferrers (Y)

Saint Albans 17 February 1461

John III, earl of Shrewsbury (L) he was still a minor

Humphrey Tuchet*(L)

??Humphrey Whitgreve (L)

John Wood (Y)

Bosworth 21 August 1485

George, earl of Shrewsbury (Richard III)

Walter, Lord Ferrers of Chartley (Richard III)

Thomas, Lord Stanley (Henry Tudor)

Richard Bagot*(Henry Tudor)

James Blount (Henry Tudor)

??William Chetwynd (Henry Tudor)

Humphrey Cotes*(Henry Tudor)

Thomas Curzon*(Henry Tudor)

Sir John Devereux (Richard III) son & heir of Walter, Lord Ferrers

Robert Harcourt (Henry Tudor)

?Nicholas Kniveton the elder (Henry Tudor)

Sir Hugh Peshale of Horsley (Henry Tudor)

John Sacheverell*(Richard III)

Sir John Savage the younger (Henry Tudor) and other members of
his family

Humphrey Stafford of Grafton (Richard III)

Thomas Stafford of Grafton (Richard III)

Sir Humphrey Stanley (Henry Tudor)

William Stanley (Henry Tudor)

Sir Gilbert Talbot (Henry Tudor)

??Henry Vernon (Henry Tudor)

Rebellion of 1486

Humphrey Stafford of Grafton later taken and executed

Stoke April 1487

Sir Humphrey Stanley (Henry VII)

Sir Gilbert Talbot (Henry VII)

In addition to these may be added the following who died around 'the right time' and may have done so in battle: Richard Beaufo (d.1460), Humphrey Beaufo (d.1485), Richard Boughton (d.1485), Sir Randle Brereton (d.1470), Sir John Bromley (d.1485), Robert Grey of Whittington (d.1460) and Sir Henry Stafford (d.1471).

APPENDIX 8

RECEIPTS OF THE HONOUR OF TUTBURY*

| | | |
|-----------|-------|--------------|
| 1437-38 | £861 | |
| 1438-39 | £652 | |
| 1439-40 | £795 | |
| 1440-41 | £749 | Average £778 |
| 1441-42 | £1055 | |
| 1442-43 | £602 | |
| 1443-44 | £733 | |
| 1476-77 | £577 | |
| 1477-78 | £774 | |
| 1478-79 | £744 | Average £764 |
| 1479-80 | £874 | |
| 1480-81 | £851 | |
| 1499-1500 | £1038 | |

Information taken from Public Record Office, Duchy of Lancaster,
 Accounts, various, DL28/5/2 fos.2^R, 18^R, 35^R, 52^D, 69^R, 84^R, 107^D;
 DL28/5/11 fos.2^R, 14^R, 26^R, 38^R, 50^R;
 DL28/6/1A fo.2.

All figures are receipts clear.

*All figures are rounded off to the nearest pound.

APPENDIX 9GENEALOGIES

The following list of genealogies of county families is designed as far as possible to include younger siblings whose marriages may indicate important links. It was an age of large families and lack of space precludes my including of every younger son or daughter. Where relevant, I have indicated cross references. These are the abbreviations

used:bn Born
 c Circa/about
 d Died
 dsp,dwp Died childless, Died before father
 occ Last known occurrence. Where two dates are given, they indicate the first and last known occurrences, to give some idea of the dates of the individual
 = married
 = Married first, second etc. Husband on top, wife below
 ¹/₂ Married in 1450. Sometimes this replaces an indication of whether this was the first or second marriage when it is obvious which it was

Dates and relationships recorded in earlier genealogies have been retained, except in cases when my own research has shown these to be inaccurate.

ACTON of Bewdley (Derbys) and Whittington
 see also Lowe and Grey of Whittington

Walter Acton= ?
 |
 Robert Grey=Eleanor²John Acton=Cecily Clay
 d1460 | Lowe 2 d1479

ACTON of Longnor (Salop)

? Sprencheaux=William Acton
 |
 Mary Horde=Thomas²Joan Downe
 d1480 |
 Thomas II= ?
 b. 1456

AGARD of Foston (Derbys) and Newborough

Thomas= ?
 oc. 1456
 |
 Ralph Jane=John Agard Nicholas Agard
 Wolseley d1504 w27-1516 of Newborough
 |
 ? -Ralph Nicholas=Isabel Clement Margery=John Rolleston
 d1516 Ferrers d1485
 |
 John= ?
 1490-1519
 |
 3 daughters
 all unmarried
 in 1497
 |
 8 sons

AGARD of Sudbury (Derbys)

see also Montgomery, Vernon and Ferrers of Tamworth

John Agard= ?
 |
 John II=Anne Montgomery
 d1498
 |
 Margaret Vernon=Nicholas
 b. 1465

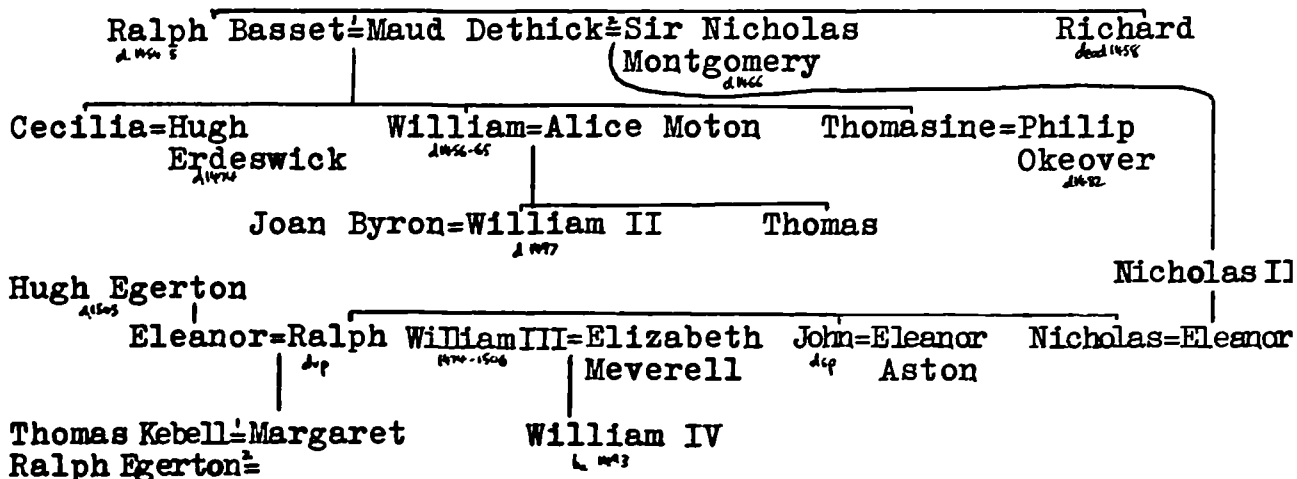
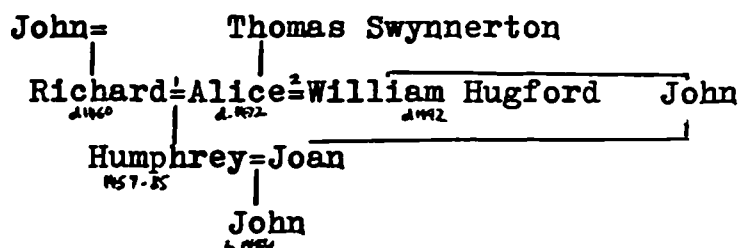
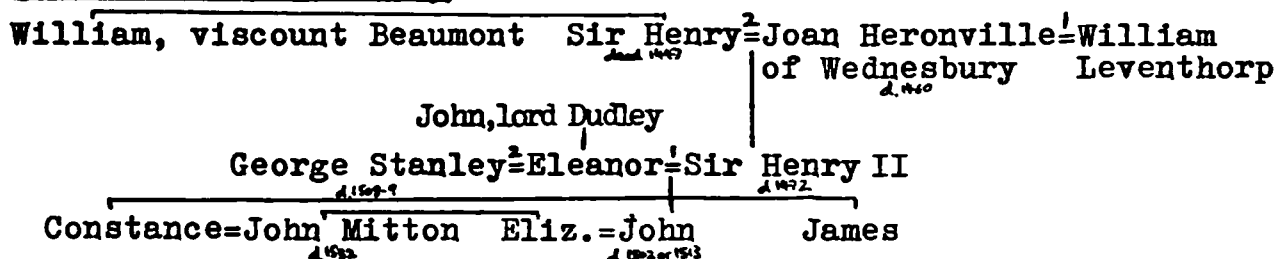
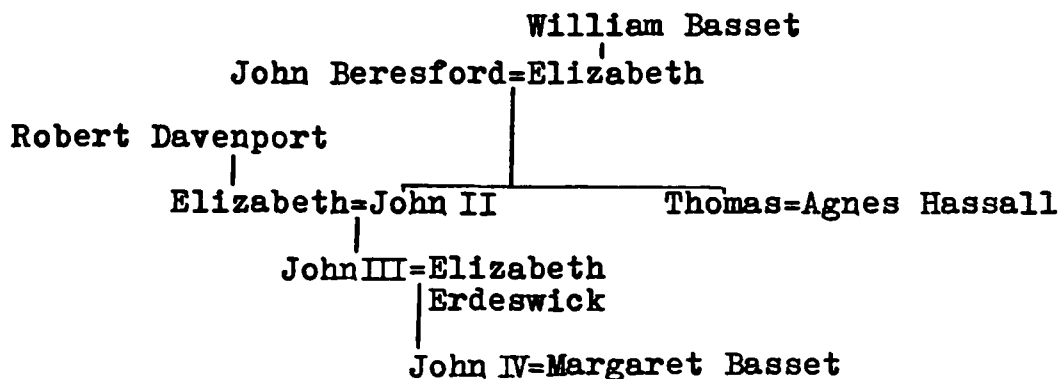
ARBLASTER of Longdon

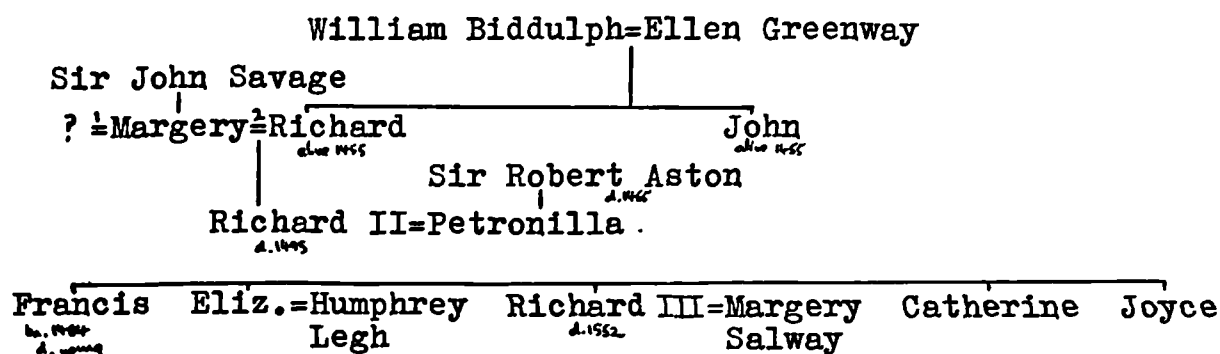
see also Bagot

Thomas=Alice Worthyn
 d1437 | of Manchester and Dosthill (Warwicks)
 |
 Thomas II=Alice Butler
 d1471 | of Pickleton (Bucks)
 |
 William Thomas III Edmund Richard=Agnes
 d1461-3 oc. 1444 d1443
 |
 Margaret Richard II=Maud Bagot
 oc. 1508 d1502 b. 1460
 |
 Humphrey
 b. 1489

BASSET of Blore

see also Montgomery and Okeover

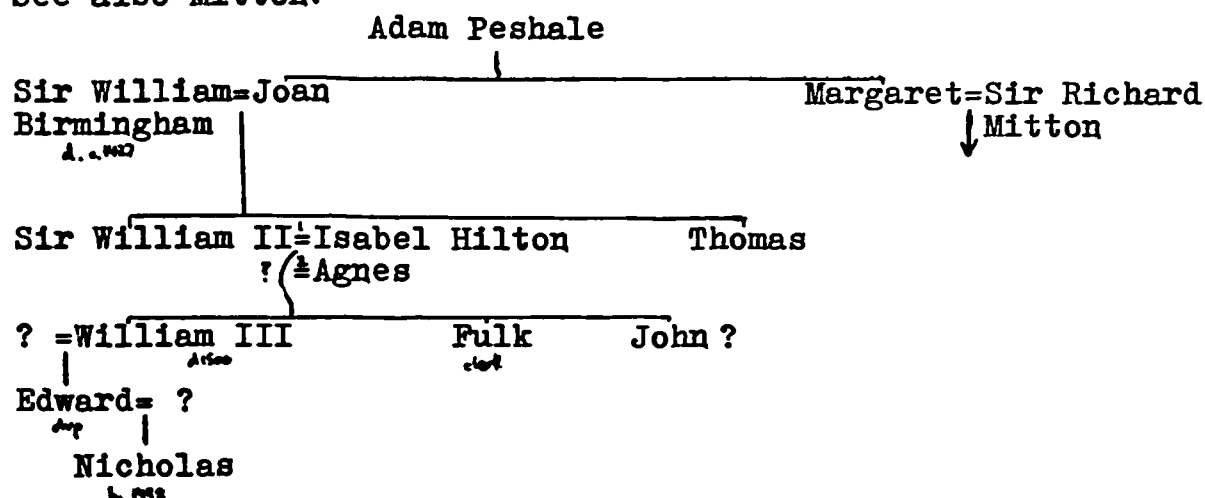
BEAUFO of Whilton (Northants) and Burford St. John (Oxfordshire)
see also Swynnerton of Hilton and HugfordBEAUMONT of WednesburyBERESFORD of Beresford

BIDDULPH of Biddulph

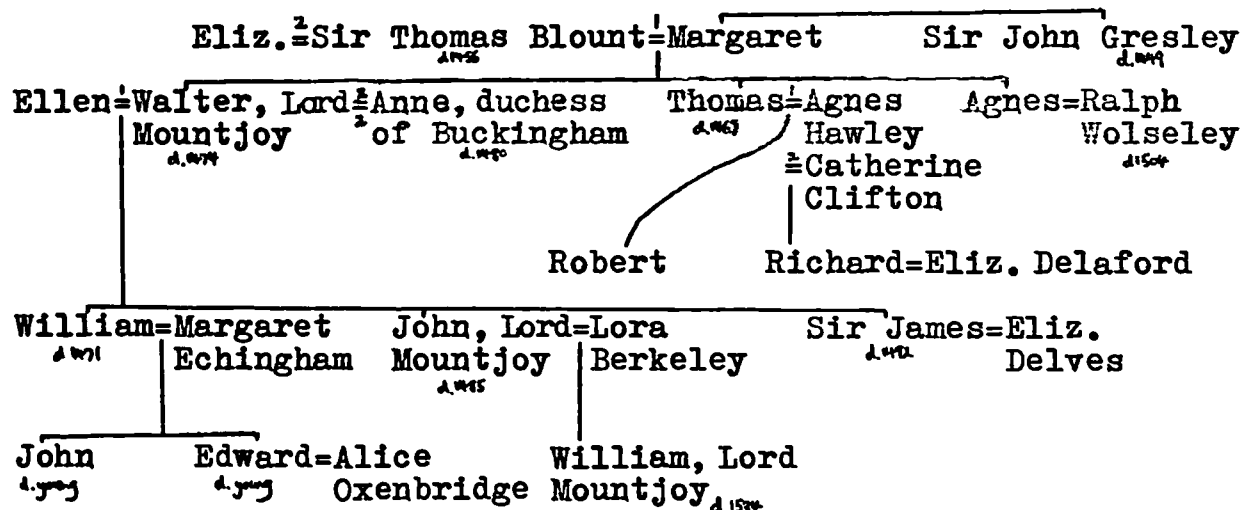
Note- There is also a William Biddulph who was elector of Staffordshire in 1472.

BIRMINGHAM of Birmingham

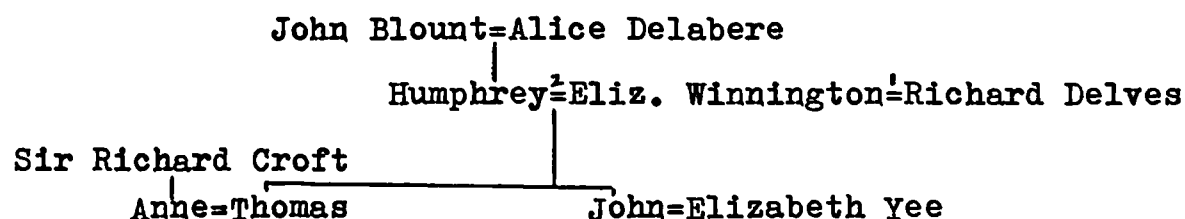
See also Mitton.

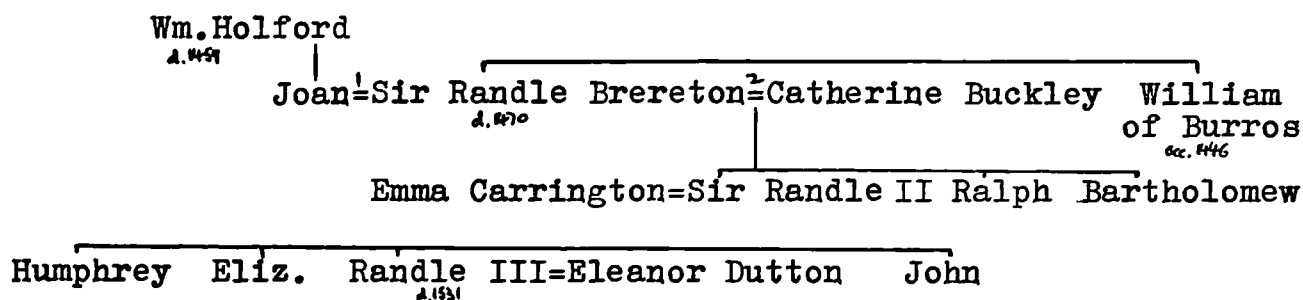
BLOUNT of Elvaston and Barton Blount (Derbyshire)

See also Gresley, Stafford and Wolseley.

BLOUNT of Kinlet (Shropshire)

See also Delves

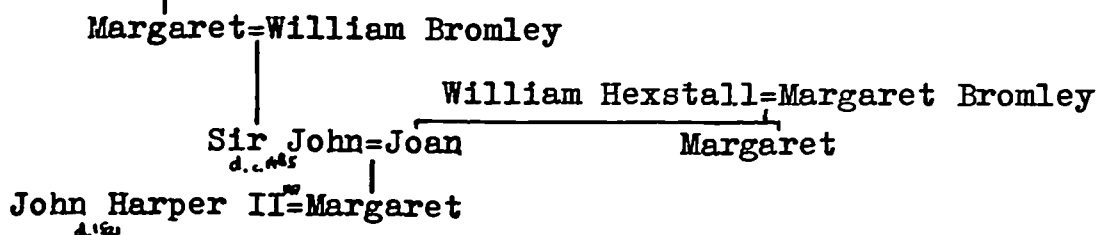
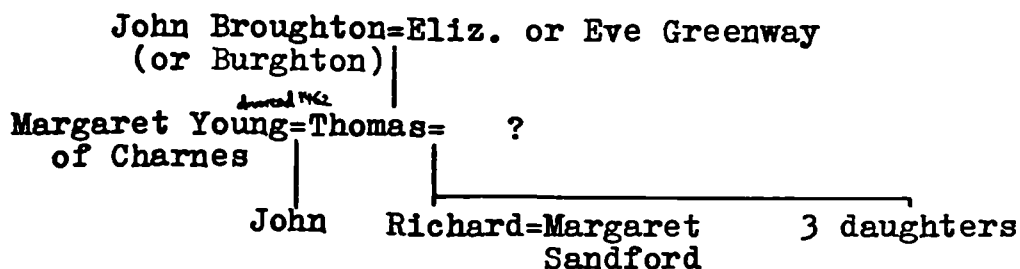
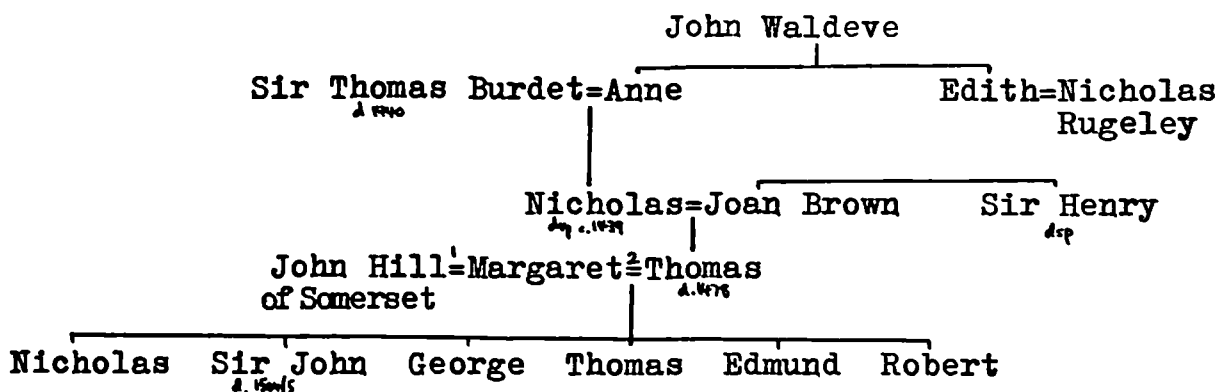
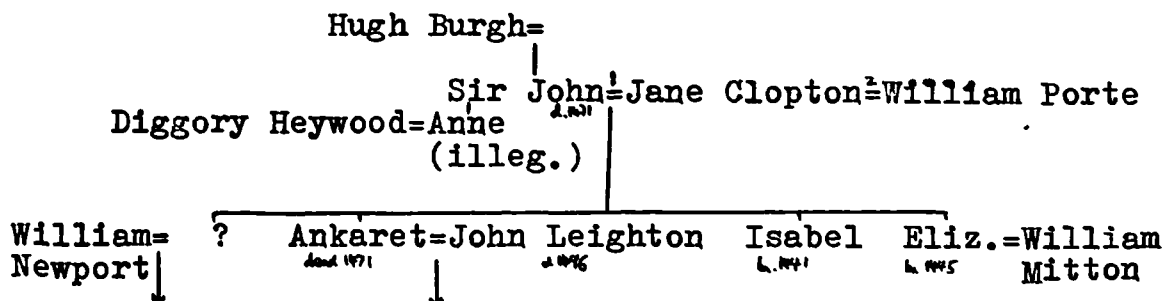


BRERETON of Brereton and Malpas (Cheshire)BROMLEY of Baddington (Cheshire) and Ashley

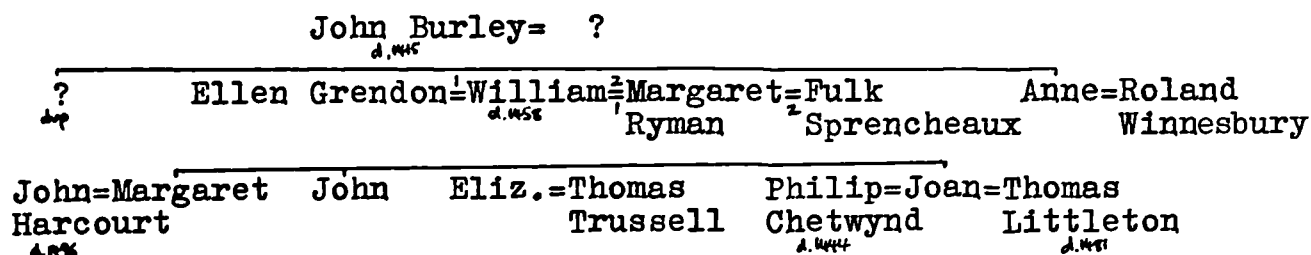
See also Hexstall and Harper

Randle Mainwaring

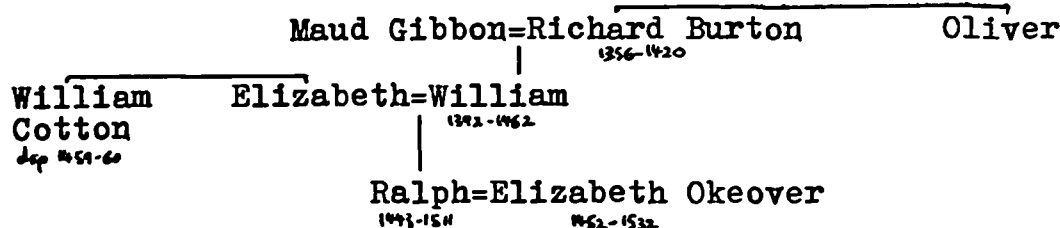
d. 1456

BROUGHTON of BroughtonBURDET of Arrow (Warwickshire)BURGH of Wattlesborough (Shropshire)

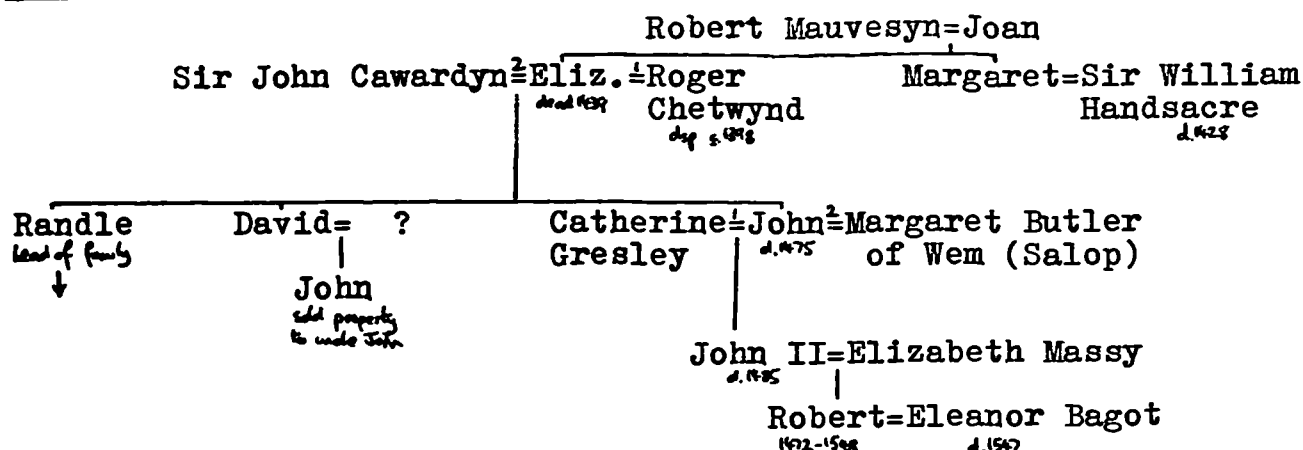
BURLEY of Bromcroft (Shropshire)
See also Chetwynd and Littleton



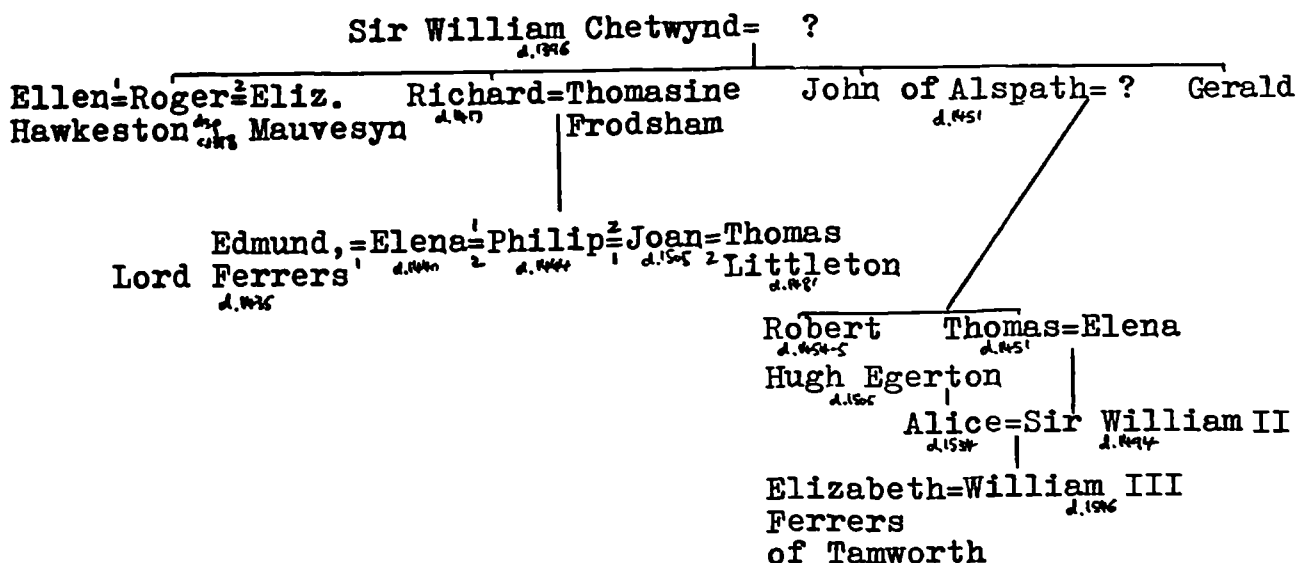
BURTON of Fauld-by-Hanbury



CAWARDYN of Mauvesyn Ridware

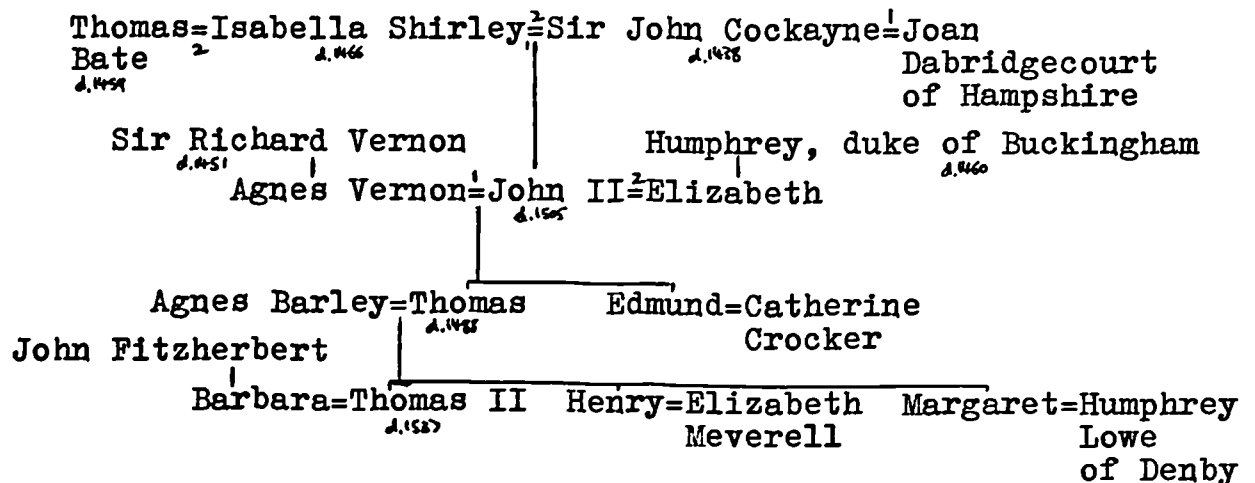


CHETWYND of Ingestre and Alspath
See also Littleton and Burley



COCKAYNE of Ashbourne (Derbyshire)

See also Vernon and Meverell

COLCOUGH of Newcastle-under-Lyme (2 families)

(a) William Colcough= ? Elizabeth

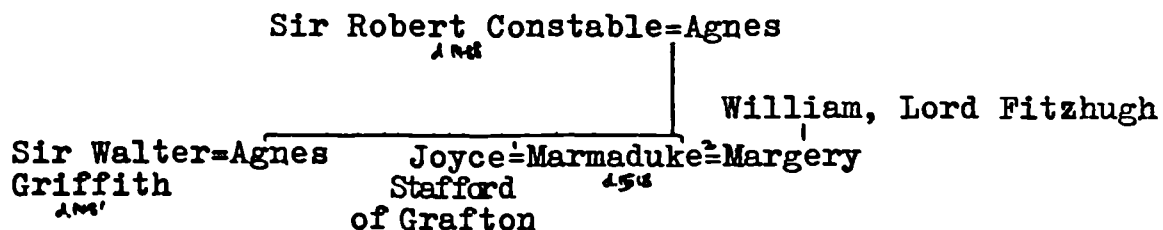
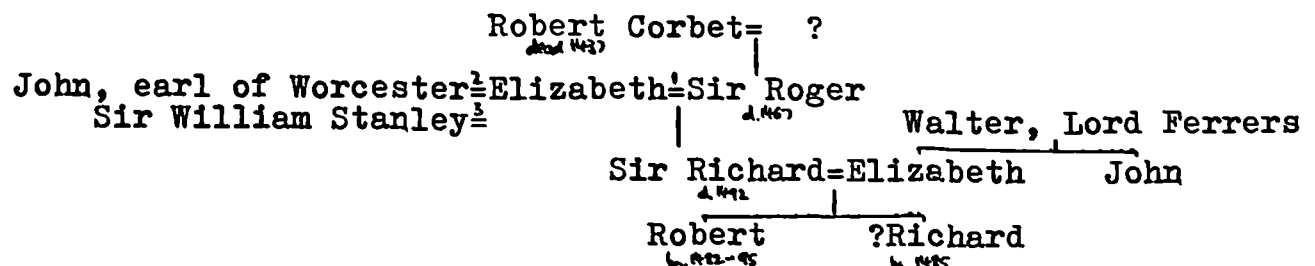
William II

(b) Richard Colcough= ?

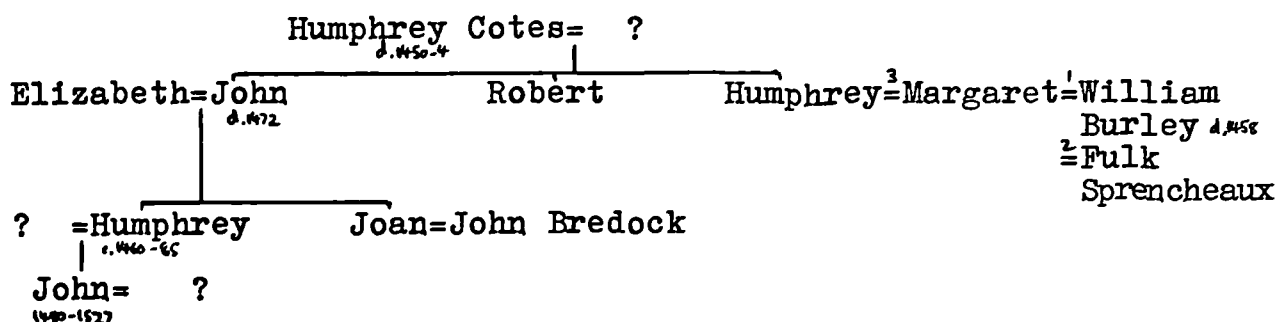
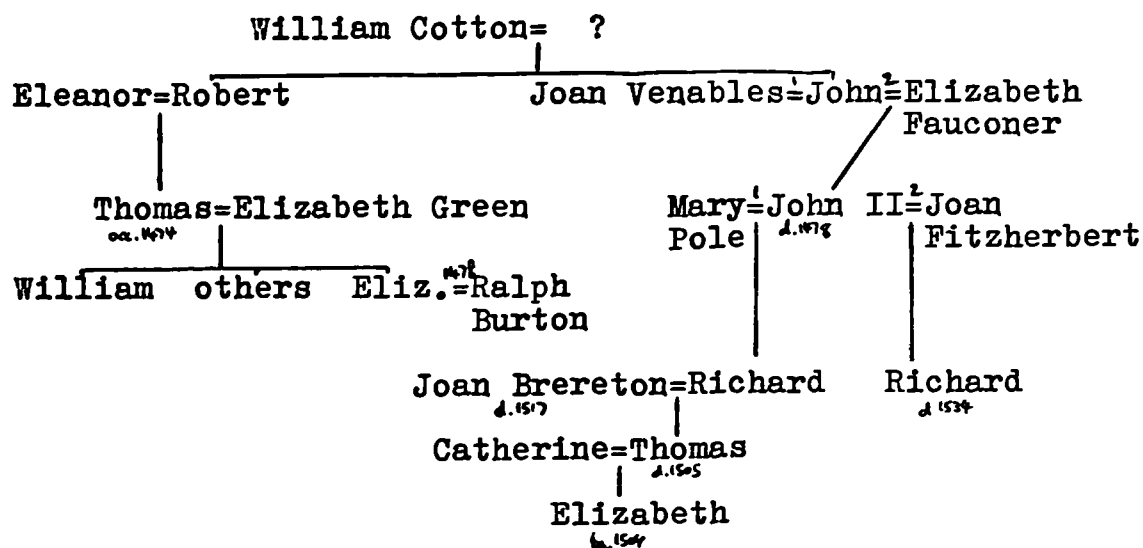
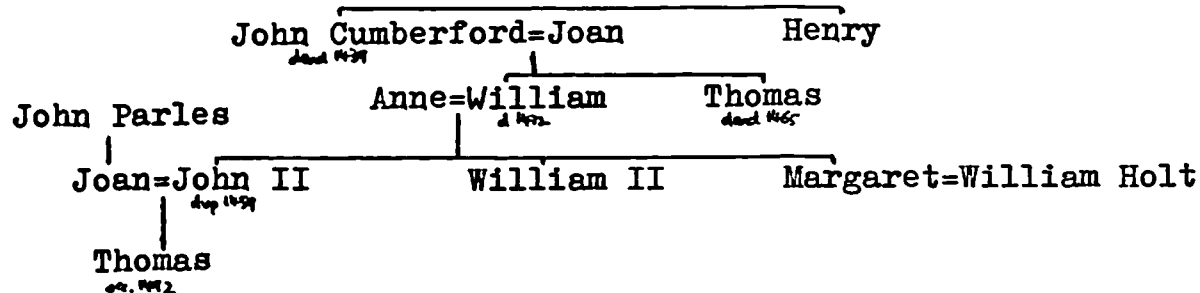
John= ?

Thomas= ? Mainwaring
 of Over Peover (Cheshire)Richard=Blanche Thomas II Ralph/Roger
 DavenportJohn II=Agnes
 LockwoodCONSTABLE of Flamborough (Yorkshire)

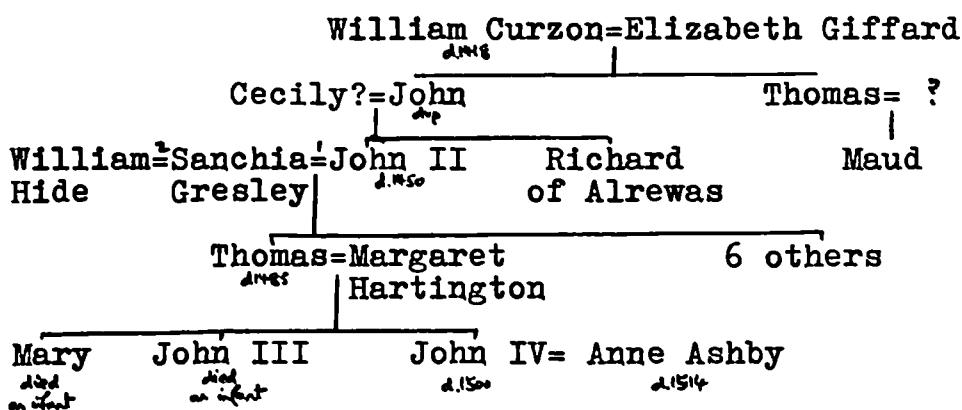
See also Stafford of Grafton and Griffith

CORBET of Moreton Corbet (Shropshire)

Note- Robert Corbet's Inquisition Post Mortem says he died leaving a ten year-old brother! This surely should be 'son'.

COTES of WoodcotesCOTTON of Cotton and Hamstall RidwareCUMBERFORD of Cumberford and WiggingtonCURZON of Croxall

See also Gresley



DRAYCOTE of Draycote and Paynesley

John Draycote=Agnes Gascon
d. 1422

Roger I=Agnes Aston Christopher
d. 1412-20

Roger II=Catherine Savage
d. 1414

Sir John II=Elizabeth Eyre

DUDLEY (Sutton) of Dudley

John, Lord Dudley=Elizabeth Berkeley
1400-87

Joyce = Edmund = Maud Sir John William Oliver Jane Eleanor = Henry
Tiptoft / 1410-93 Clifford Beaumont
d. 1472

Edward, = Cecily Willoughby Edmund = Elizabeth
Lord Dudley 1442-1500 Grey
1457-1521

EGERTON of Wrinehill

See also Delves and Peshale

William Egerton=Ellen Hawkeston
of Wrinehill

son John son Ralph = Elizabeth
d. 1454 d. 1451-2 Randle Mainwaring
d. 1456

Hugh = Mary Margery = John Anne = Humphrey Ellen = John
d. 1506 Dutton Lane Peshale Delves
d. 1464 d. 1478 d. 1471

Ralph = Isabella Ellen = Ralph Isabella = Thomas John = ? Cotes
Hill Basset Harcourt d. 1518 = Alice Gresley
younger son possibly by a second wife d. 1528 = Eleanor Brereton

ERDESWICK of Sandon

Thomas Erdeswick=Ellen Venables

Hugh = Thomasine Henry = Joan Sampson Elizabeth = John
d. 1451 Meynell Twiford Kingsley

Hugh II = Cecilia Basset Margaret = Ralph Thomas others
d. 1473 Macclesfield

John Harcourt
Elizabeth = Hugh III Sampson = Elizabeth Grey
d. 1500 of Whittington

EVERDON of Bushbury

William Everdon= ?
d. 1143

Maud=Thomas=Elizabeth=Thomas Eliz=John Corbin Roger Clemence=Nicholas
East | d. 1171 2 Rous =Bevis Hampton occ. 1462 Warings
Humphrey d. 1450

FERRERS of Chartley

See Devereux and Chetwynd

Edmund, Lord Ferrers=Elena=Philip Chetwynd
d. 1435 d. 1440 d. 1444

Elizabeth=William, Lord Ferrers Joan=John, Edmund
Bealknap | d. 1471 1412-50 Lord Clinton of Teighon (6th)
Anne=Walter Devereux occ. 1451
d. 1438 c. 1432-65

FERRERS of Groby and Tamworth (two families)

See also Grey of Groby, Gresley and Stanley of Elford

William, Lord Ferrers of Groby
d. 1445

Thomas, duke
of Norfolk

Baldwin Freville

Isabel=Sir Henry
d. 1402

Thomas =Eliz. Margaret=Hugh
of Tamworth d. 1451 Willoughby
=Richard
Bingham
d. 1406

Edward=Elizabeth
Grey
d. 1403

Sir John=Eliz. Wydeville=Edward IV Edward,
viscount
Lisle
d. 1492

William,
Lord Hastings
d. 1443

Anne=Sir Thomas II
d. 1448

Ralph
dean of
Tamworth

Sir Henry= Margaret
Hexstall
d. 1449

Thomas Gresley=Anne
1455-1504

John I= Maud Stanley
c. 1448-80

Alice=John
Egerton
d. 1518

Dorothy=John II= Maud
Harper 1462-1503 Griffith

Joan= Walter
Griffith II
1473-1531

FITZHERBERT of Norbury (Derbyshire)

Henry Booth

Alice= Nicholas= Elizabeth Ludlow
d. 1473

Ralph=Elizabeth John= Margery Robert=Elizabeth Joan=John
Marshall of Elwell (Babington of Uphall) Joseline Cotton
d. 1463 d. 1462

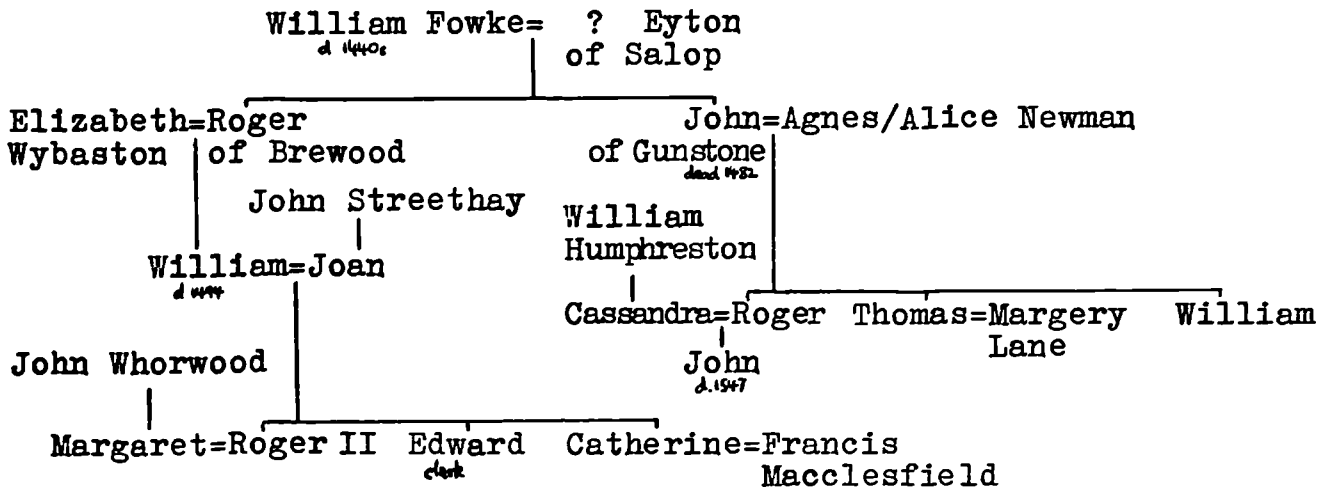
John= Benedicta
Bradbourne
d. 1521

Anthony
d. 1538

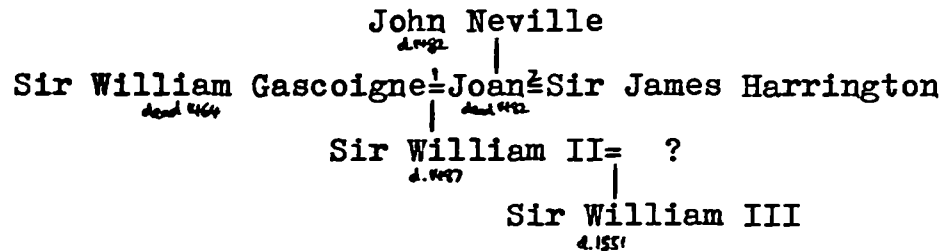
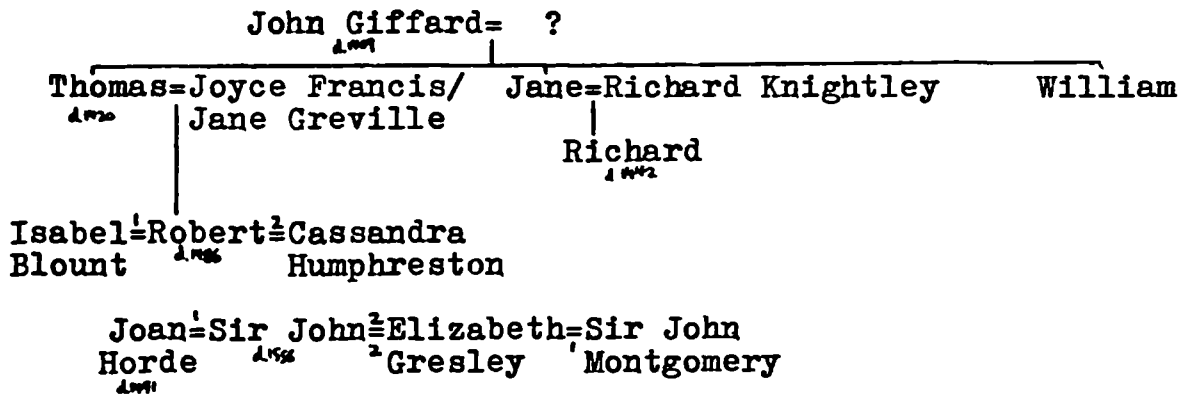
Humphrey

Barbara= Thomas
Cockayne
d. 1537

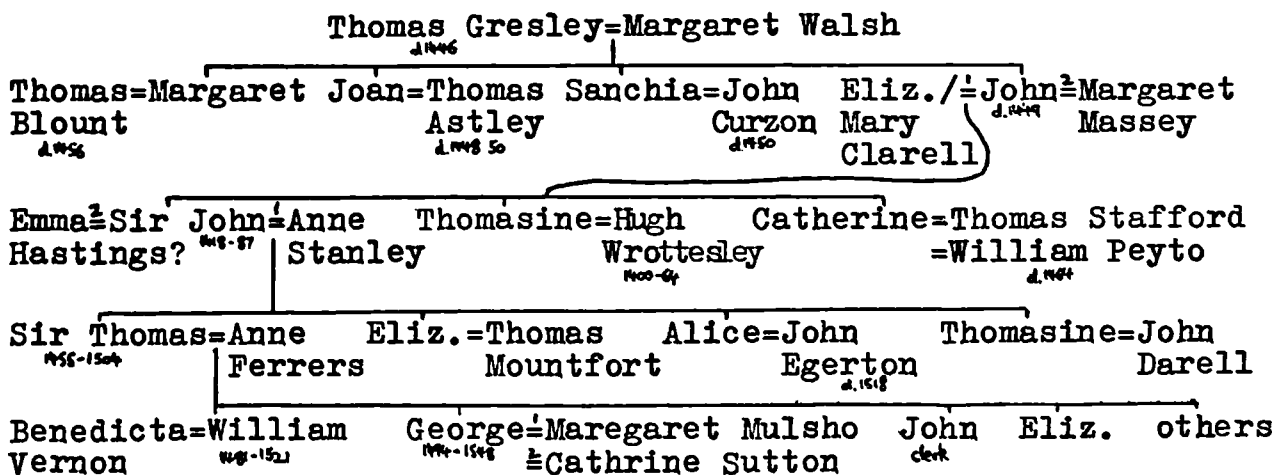
Joan= John
Pole

FOWKE of Brewood and GunstoneGASCOIGNE of Tyrley

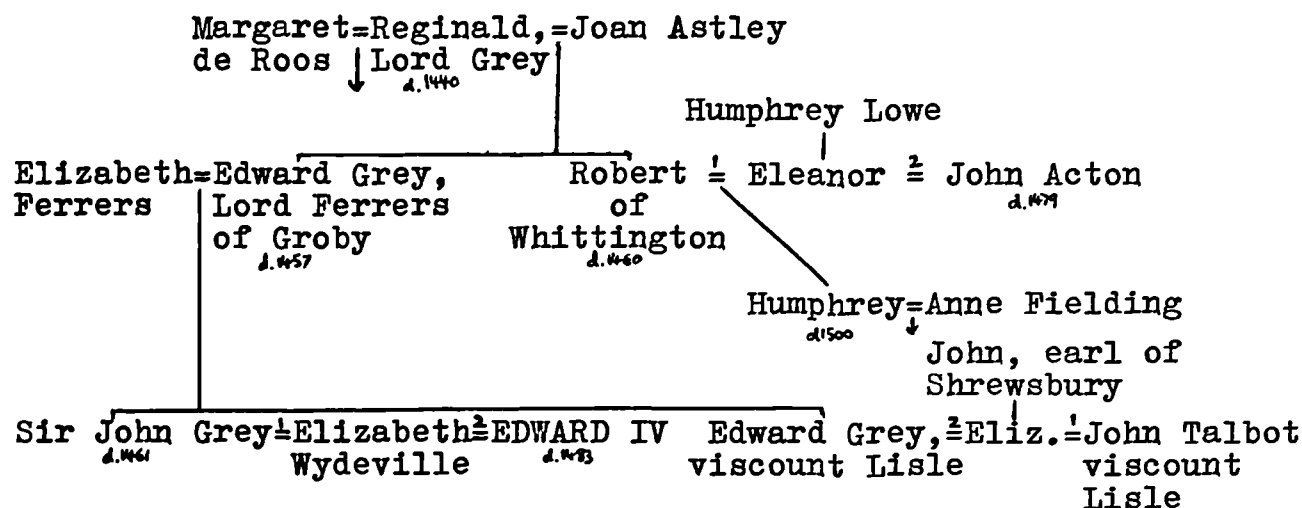
See also Neville of Tyrley

GIFFARD of ChillingtonGRESLEY of Drakelow

See also Blount, Peyto, Wrottesley, Stanley of Elford, Ferrers

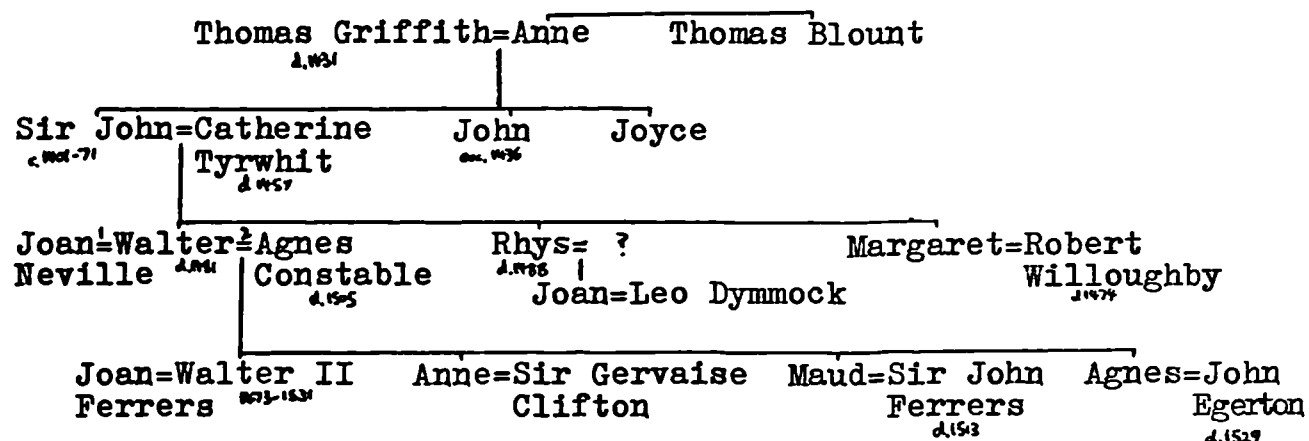


GREY of Groby and Whittington-by-Kinver



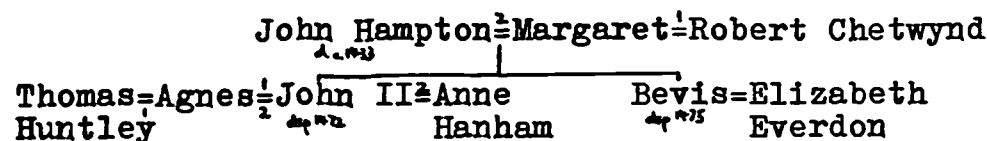
GRIFFITH of Wychnor and Alrewas

See also Constable and Blount



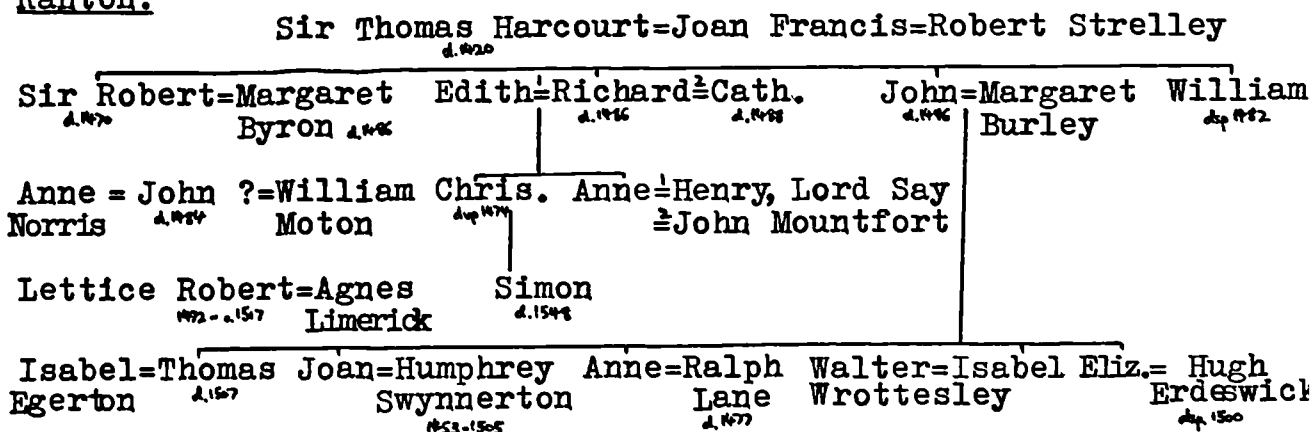
HAMPTON of Stourton, Kinver and Dunston-by-Wolverhampton

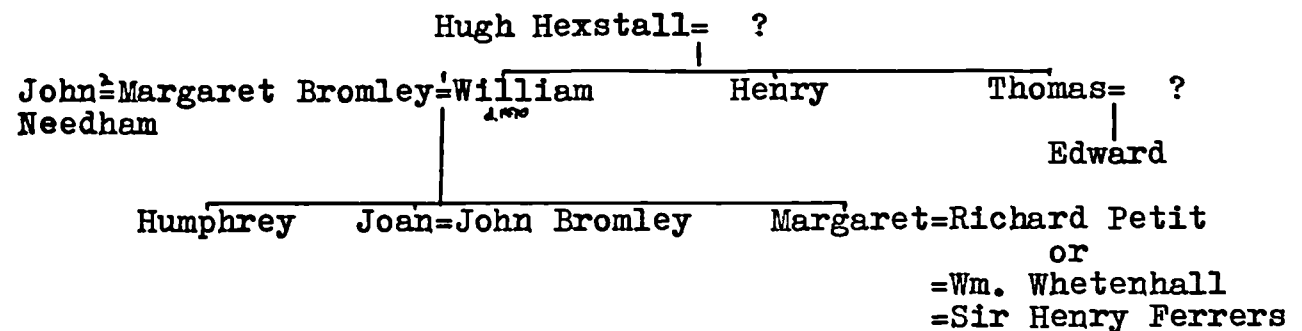
See also Everdon



Note-John Hampton the younger's heir was Bevis. The family estates then passed to Thomas Hampton of Hampton (Hampshire).

HARCOURT of Staunton Harcourt (Oxon.), Maxstoke, Ellenhall and Ranton.





HILL of Marchington and Houndhill

Robert Hill=Agnes
d. 1448
 |
 Robert II=Elizabeth Woodford
d. 1485
 |
 ? =Robert William
 |
 Humphrey

HUGFORD of Emscote (Warwickshire)

See also Beaufo

Thomas Hugford=Margaret Dinge
d. 1470
 |
 John Metley Thomas Swynnerton
 |
 Margaret=John Joan=William=Alice=Richard Beaufo
d. 1465 d. 1472 d. 1460
 |
 Alice=Richard Anne=Gerald Joan=Humphrey
 Cotes Danet d. 1485

KNIVETON of Quixall (Derbyshire)

John Curzon
 of Kedleston
d. 1405
 |
 Thomas=Margaret=Thomas Kniveton Nicholas=? Henry
 Okeover d. 1438 d. 1447 d. 1447
 |
 Agnes=John John Nicholas=? Thomas=Margaret
 Bagot Shaw
d. 1470

KYNNARDSLEY of Loxley

Robert=?
ca. 1455
 |
 Robert Aston
d. 1465
 |
 Ralph Wolseley=Margaret=John
d. 1504 d. 1465-6
 |
 Robert II=Elizabeth=William Joner
d. 1544-5
 |
 Margaret Agard=Thomas=Dorothy Wolrich
d. 1537-8

LANE of Bentley and Hide

See also Egerton and Harcourt

Richard Lane=Elizabeth Hide
d. 1438
 |
 John=Margery Hugh Egerton
d. 1469 d. 1525
 |
 Edward Burton=Joyce=Ralph Margaret Richard Alice
 Cresset d. 1477
 |
 Anne Harcourt=Richard Christine Margery=Thomas Fowke
d. 1517

LEE of Aston-by-Stone
See also Stanley

William Lee=Matilda
d. 1443-4
|
Sir James =
d. 1453
|
Ellen=Humphrey Stanley= ?
d. 1504

LEGH of Adlington (Cheshire)

Robert Legh=Matilda=William
d. 1445 d. 1478 Hanford
|
Isabel=Robert II=Isabel Ellen=Roger
Savage d. 1479 Stanley Legh
| of Ridge
Robert=Ellen Venables
d. 1486
|
Thomas=Catherine Reginald
d. 1514 Savage

LEVESON of Wolverhampton (two families)

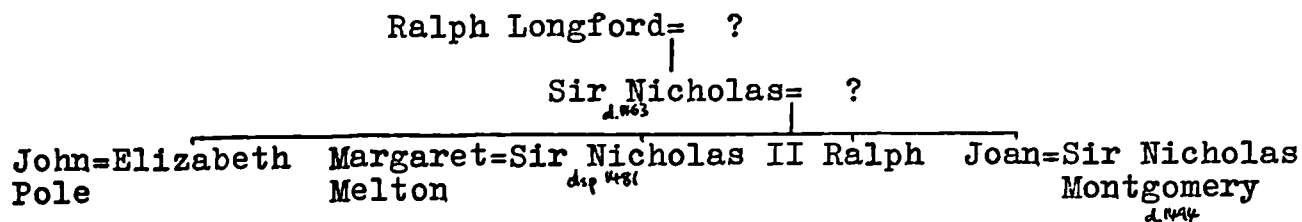
Richard Leveson= ?
|
Richard William=Joan John=Agnes
dep d. young
|
Richard=Juliana Joan Rushall=Richard
dep
|
Isabel=William James=Eliz. Maud Prestwood=Nicholas=Hillary
d. 1458-67 occ. 1481, 1482 alive 1474
|
Richard=Joyce Richard=Joan John William
d. 1478-80 Birmingham occ. 1465, 1503 Bradbury occ. 1461, 1490 dep 1491-2
|
Fulk Walter=Eliz. William John Nicholas James= ?
dep Arden
|
Thomas Eliz. John 3 daughters

LITTLETON of Frankley (Worcestershire) and Pillaton
See also Chetwynd, Talbot and Winnesbury

John Massy=Maude²Thomas Westcote=Elizabeth Littleton
|
Thomas Littleton=Joan=Philip Chetwynd Nicholas=Agnes others
d. 1461 Burley d. 1444 Westcote Vernon
|
Ellen=Sir William=Mary Richard=Alice Thomas
Walsh d. 1507 Whittington d. 1528 Winnesbury
|
Joan=Sir John John=Eliz. Talbot Edward=Ellen Swynnerton
d. 1507 Aston l. 1444 1456-1558

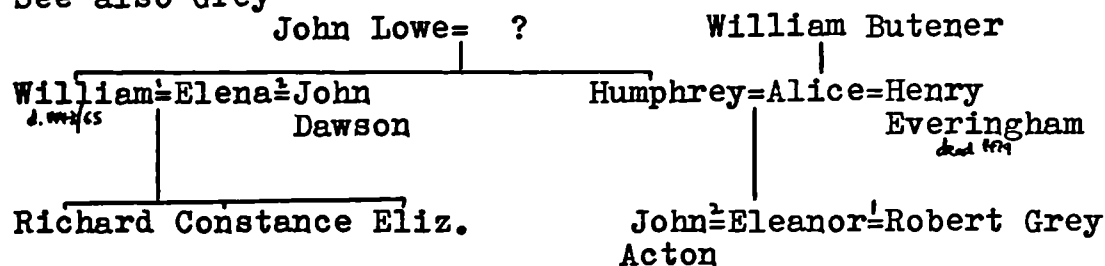
LONGFORD of Longford (Derbys)

See also Montgomery

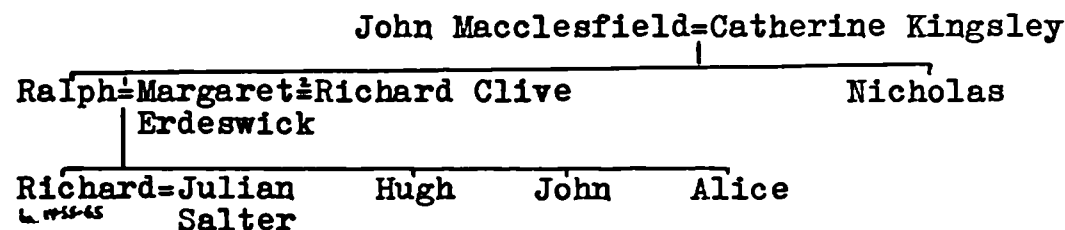


LOWE of Tressel, Seisdon and Whittington-by-Kinver

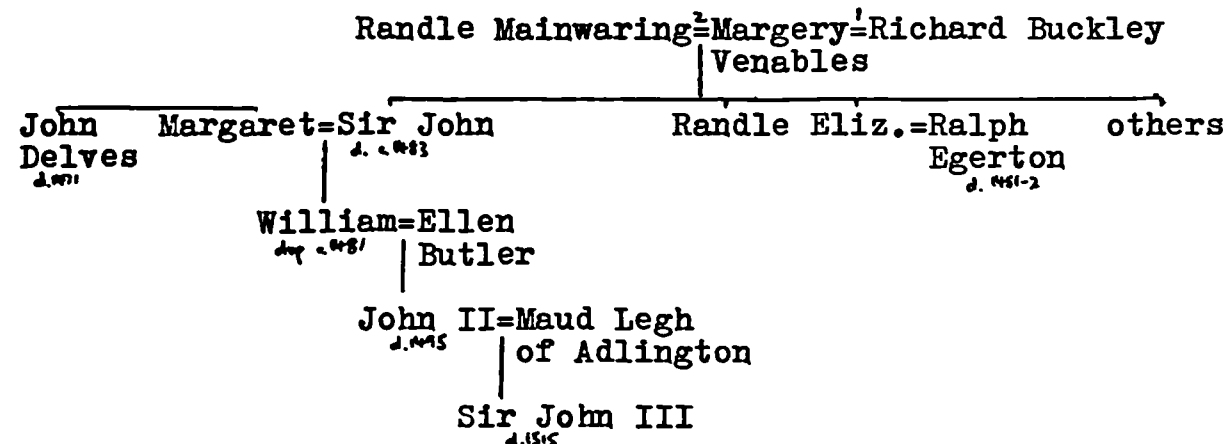
See also Grey



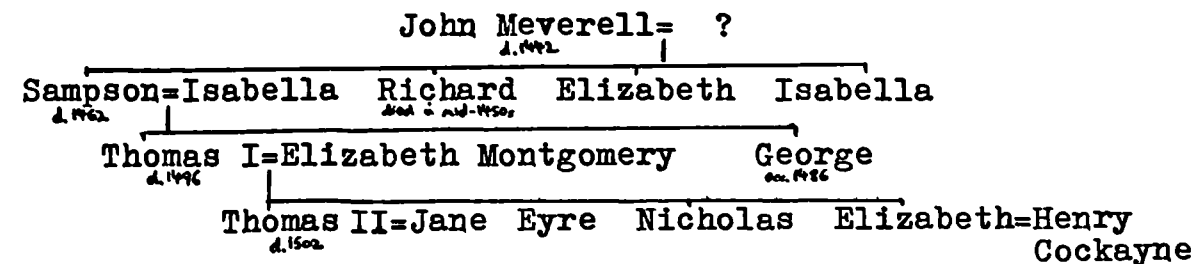
MACCLESFIELD of Maer



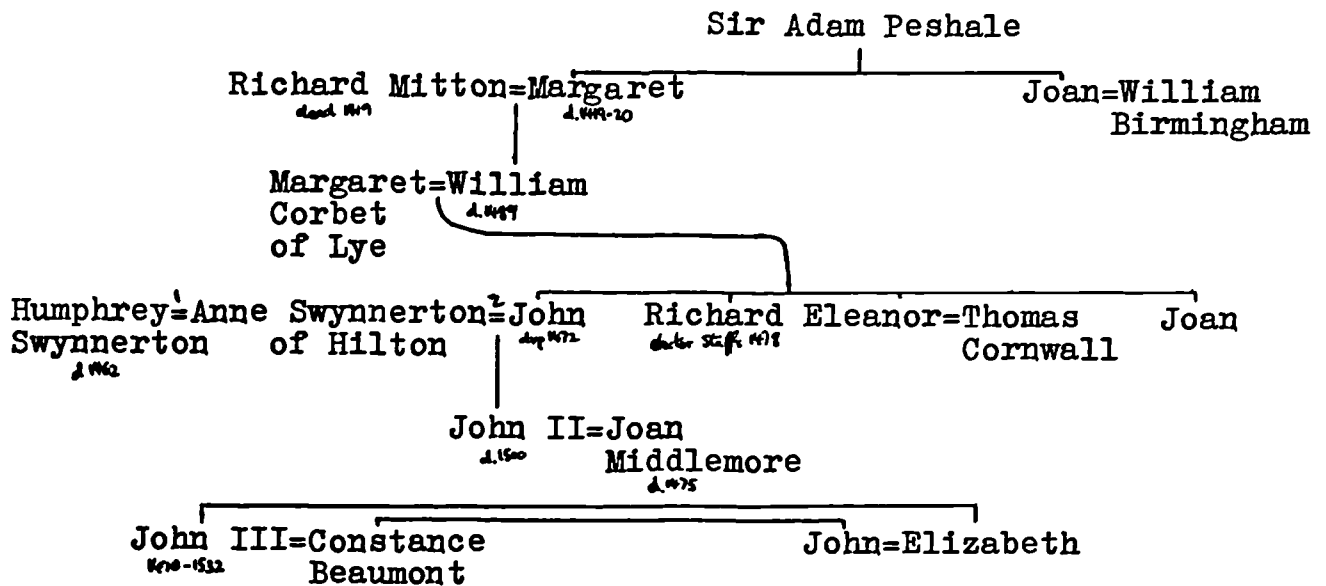
MAINWARING of Over Peover



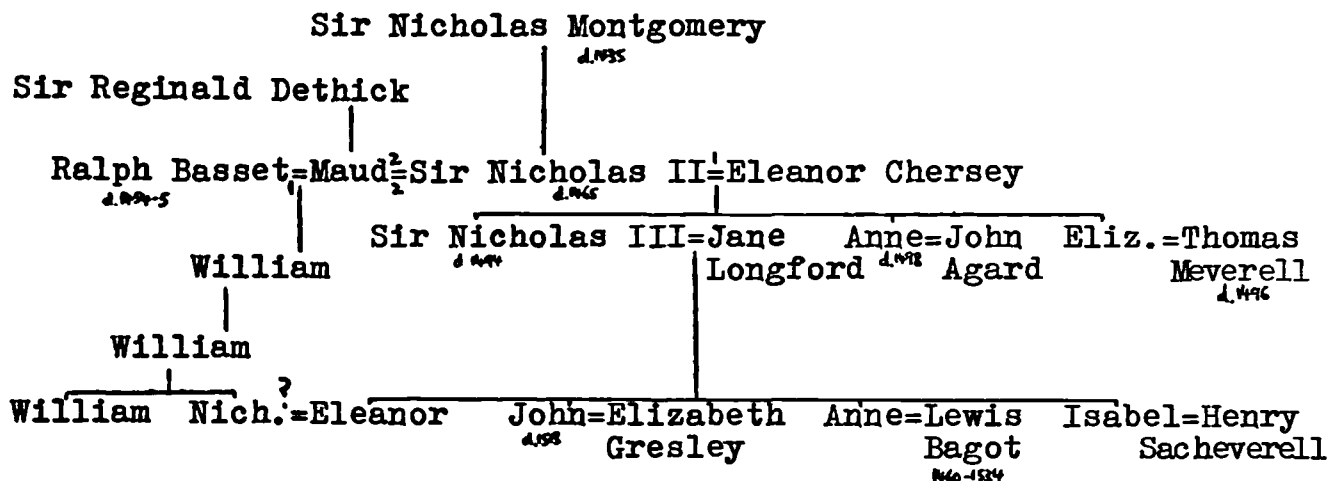
MEVERELL of Throwley and Tideswell



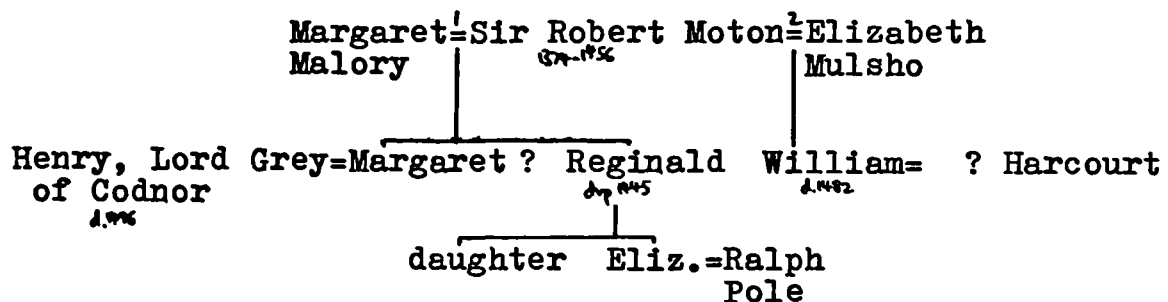
MITTON of Weston-under-Lizeard
See Swynnerton and Beaumont



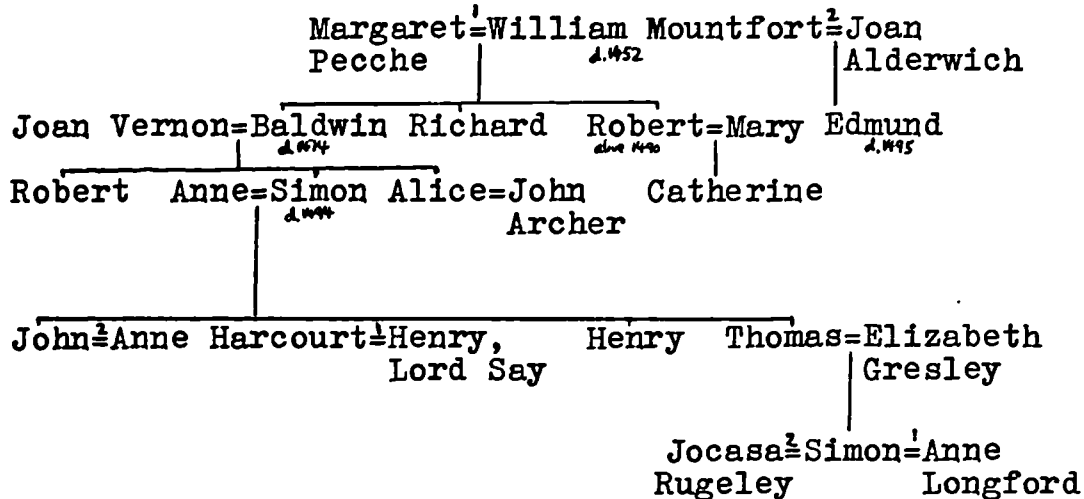
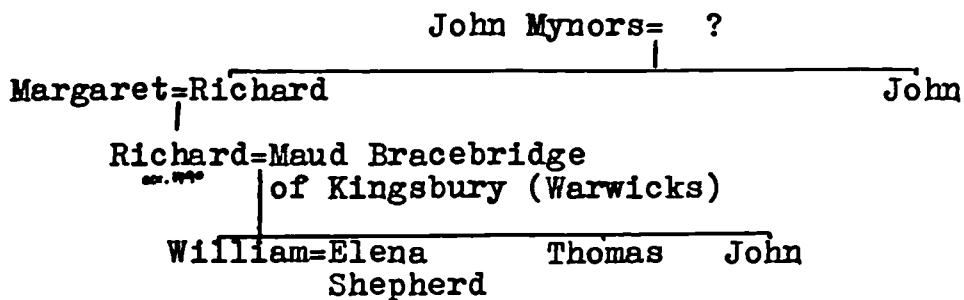
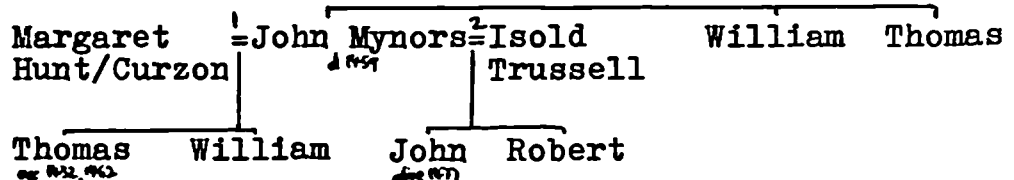
MONTGOMERY of Cubley (Derbyshire)
See also Basset, Meverell and Longford



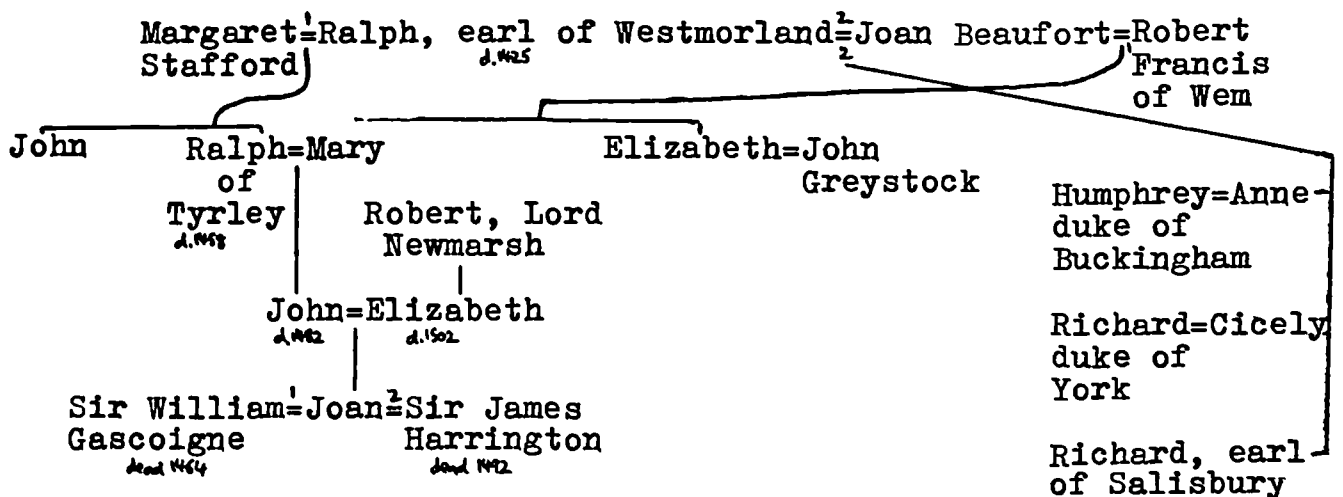
MOTON of Pickleton (Warwickshire)



NOTE- an Alice Moton married William Basset probably in the first two decades of the fifteenth century. She is obviously a daughter of Sir Robert, but which of his wives was her mother is not clear.

MOUNTFORT of Coleshill (Warwickshire)MYNORS of BlakenhallMYNORS of Uttoxeter

Note- there is no little confusion about this. Some genealogies make Isold Trussell the wife of the younger John. A Rose Mynors who was married to Rowland Thirkill also figures somewhere in the proceedings, possibly as a daughter of Isold and whichever John Mynors she married.

NEVILLE of Tyrley

NEWPORT of Lichfield

Sir William= ?
long Mary
 William=Alice Burgh
dead 1466
 John William=Joan
acc. 1447

NOEL of Hilcote and Stafford

Richard= ?
 Jane=Thomas=Jane Draycote Robert
 Sonde
 Thomas=Isabel Robert=Maud Brereton
 Chitwood acc. 1466 acc. 1466, 1467
 ? Pole=James John Richard
 Mary=Robert Arthur Thomas others

OKEOVER of Okeover

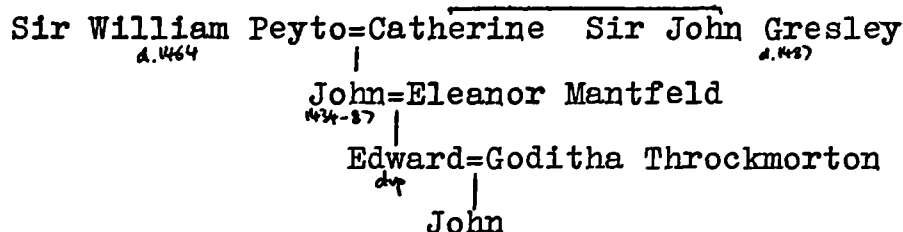
Sir Philip Okeover=Alice
 Ralph Moton=Eliz. ¹/₂ Thomas ²/₂ Thomasine=George Sallow John
 of Cheshire
 Thomas II=Margaret Curzon=Thomas Kniveton Isabel John
d. 1471 d. 1471
 Philip II=Thomasine Basset
dead 1462
 Ralph=Agnes Eliz. ¹/₂ Ralph Burton Margaret=Robert Findern
d. 1444 Bradbourne d. 1500 c. 1492

Humphrey=Isabella Aston William Thomas
d. 1558

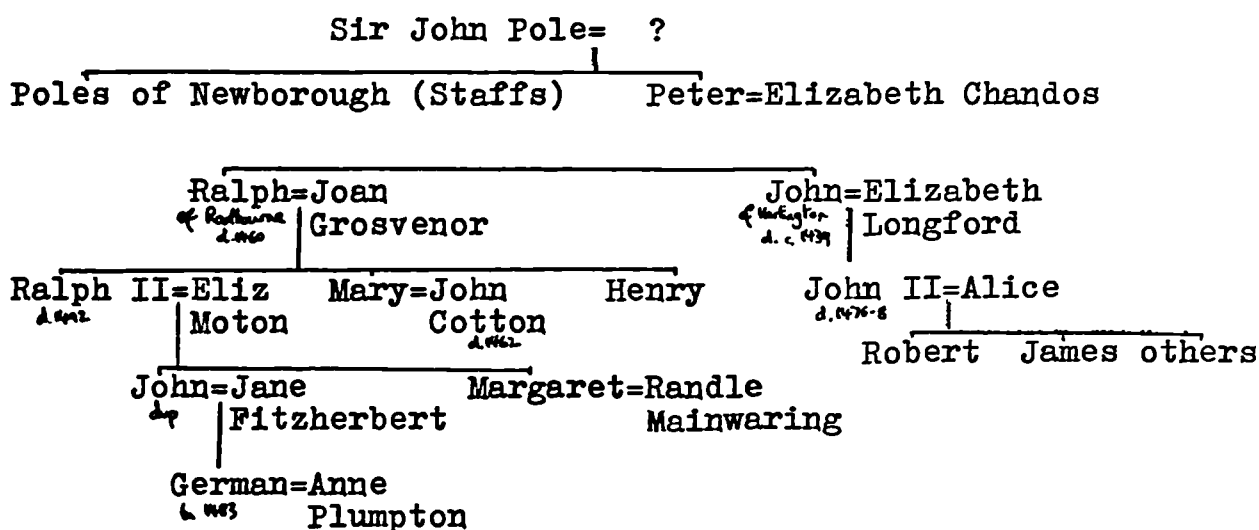
PESHALE of Hopton and Horsley (two families)

? ¹/₂ Sir Thomas Peshale ²/₂ Alice Gnosall
 Richard Nicholas=Ellen Malpas Humphrey=Maud Swynnerton
 of Horsley
 Julian=Sir Hugh= ? Richard=Maud
 Corbet of Horsley d. 1481 d. 1458
 Henry=Ellen=Humphrey Anne Egerton=Humphrey=Margaret
 Delves d. 1529 Chadworth
 John ¹/₂ Lettice
 Harcourt
 Isabella Stanley=Hugh=Eliz. Vernon
 Catherine=John Blount

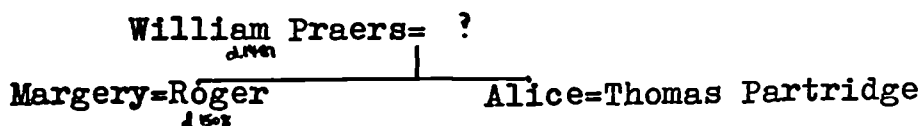
PEYTO of Chesterton (Warwickshire) and Great Wyrley
See also Gresley



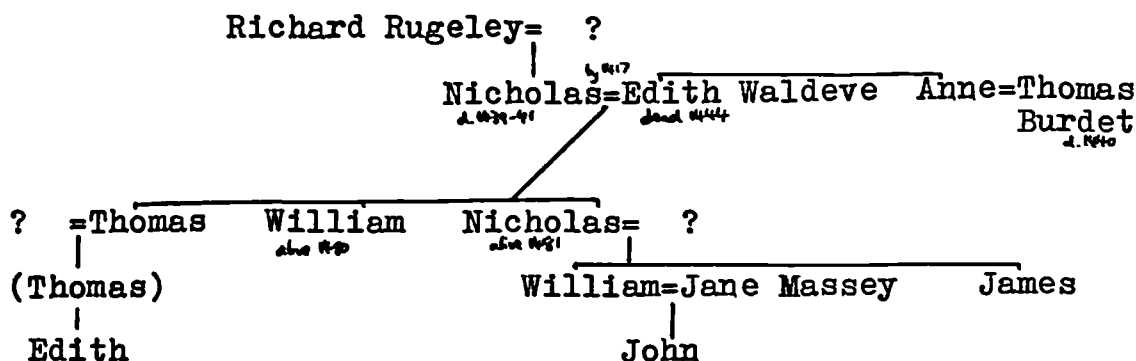
POLE of Hartington and Radbourne (Derbyshire) (two families)



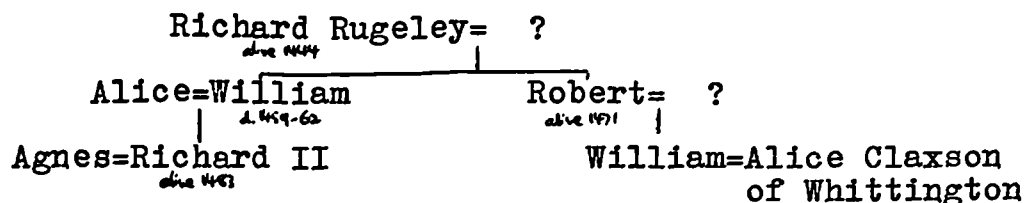
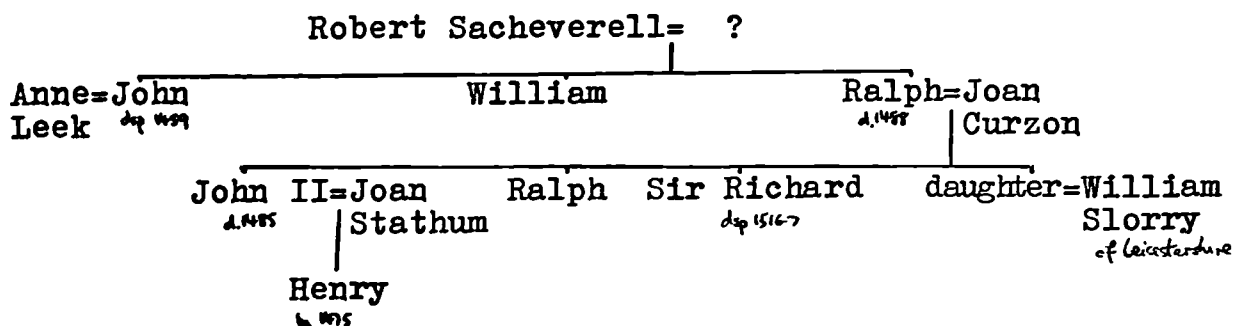
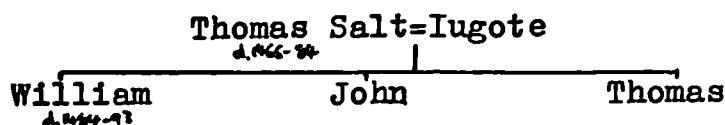
PRAERS of King's Bromley



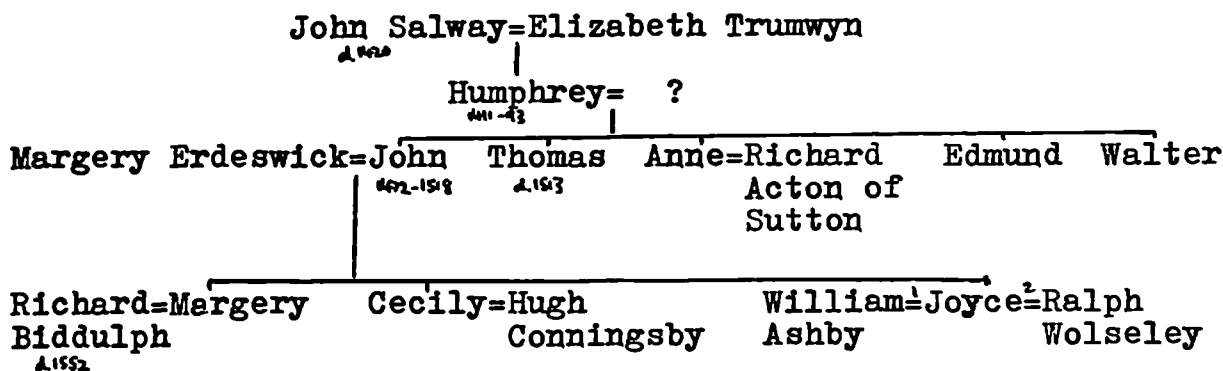
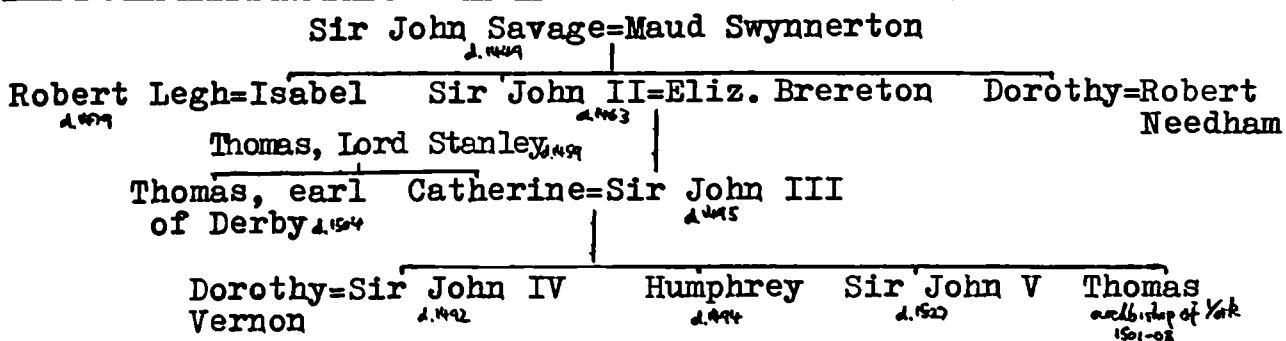
RUGELEY of Hawksyard



Note- there is a disagreement over the children of Thomas Rugeley. One version says that he left an only daughter Edith, while Stebbing Shaw says that there was a son, Thomas, living in 1498. Somewhere on this genealogy there is a place for Simon Rugeley of Hawksyard, who died in 1516, leaving a son, Thomas, aged ten. However, I cannot tell where these fit in.

RUGELEY of ShenstonSACHEVERELL of Hope and Hopewell (Derbyshire)SALT of Rickerscote

Note- Ralph Salt, who was the Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield's rent-collector for Longdon, Beaudesert and part of Rugeley in the 1470s, 1480s and 1490s may be related to these Salts.

SALWAY of Cannock and Stanford (Worcestershire)SAVAGE of Clifton (Cheshire) and Rushton Spencer

SNEYD of Bradwell

Richard Sneyd=Agnes
 |
 Nicholas=Margaret Downes
 | of Shrigley (Cheshire)
 |
 Joan Ledsam=William
 |
 Richard=Anne Foulshurst
 |
 Anne Barrow=William II=Jane Chetwynd
 |

STAFFORD of Grafton(Worcestershire)

See also Constable

Humphrey Stafford=Eleanor John William
 |
 Aylesbury
 |
 Richard Humphrey II=Catherine Thomas Eliz.=Richard Joyce
 | Fray Beauchamp
 |
 Marmaduke=Joyce Margaret=John Humphrey III=Margaret Anne William
 Constable Archer Fogge

STAFFORD of Harvington-by-Kidderminster (Worcestershire)

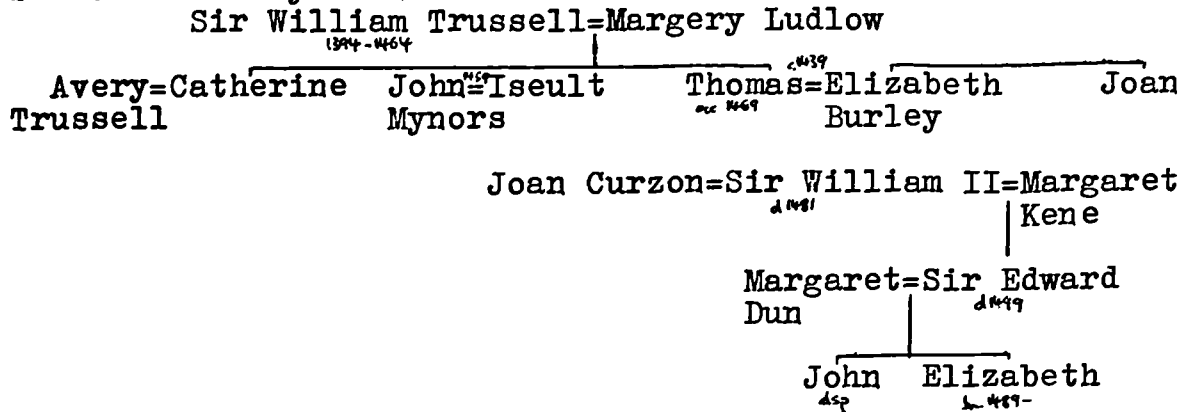
Humphrey Fulk=Margaret John
 of Heywood's Frome
 (Herefordshire)

STAFFORD of Stafford

See also Blount

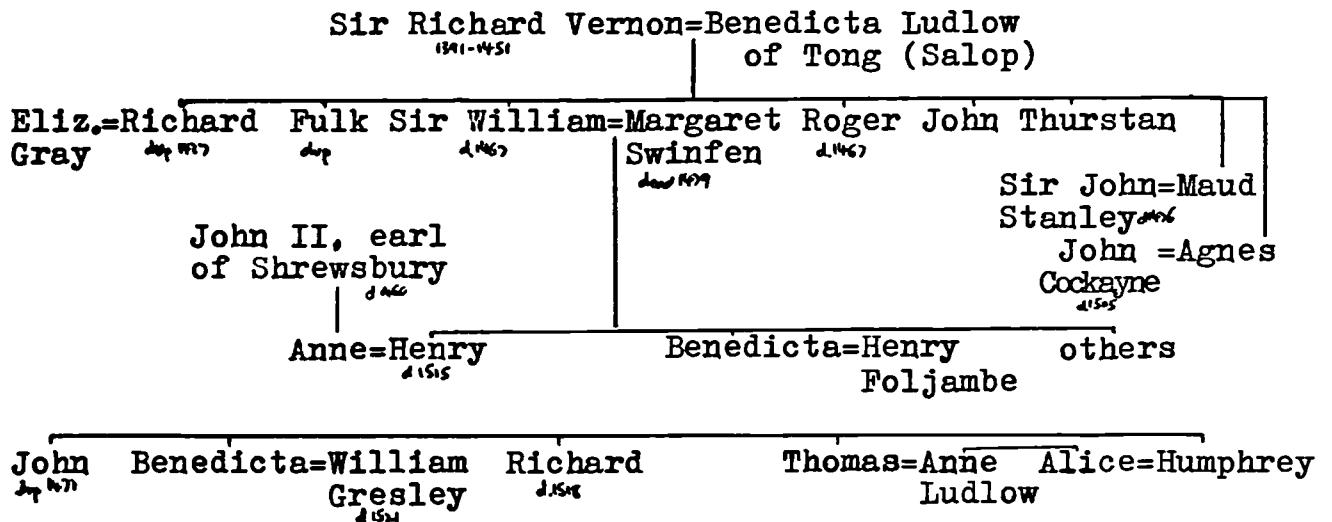
Humphrey Stafford=Anne Neville=Sir Walter Blount,
 earl of Stafford Lord Mountjoy
 and Duke of Buckingham
 |
 Margaret=Humphrey, Edmund=Margaret=Sir Henry John Cath.=John
 Beaufort Lord Stafford Tudor Beaufort=Thomas, earl of earl of
 | | e. of Derby Wiltshire Shrewsbury
 | | |
 HENRY VII
 |
 Duke Henry=Cath.=Jasper, duke of Bedford Humphrey
 | Wydeville
 |
 Eleanor=Duke Edward Henry, earl Elizabeth Anne
 of Wiltshire

TRUSSELL of Acton Trussell and Billesley (Warwickshire)
 See also Chetwynd and Littleton

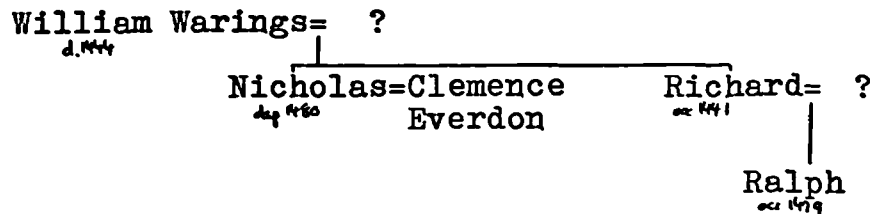


Note-I think that there was another daughter to Sir Edward Trussell. Sir William the elder may have had a younger brother John, who was in the Stafford of Grafton/Burdet raiding party on the Harcourts in 1450. There is also a William Trussell, who became bailiff of Maxstoke and keeper of Maxstoke castle in 1486.

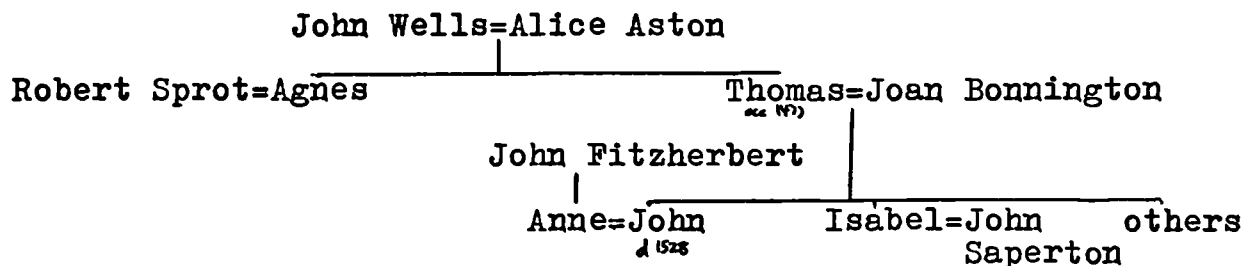
VERNON of Haddon (Derbyshire) and Harlaston

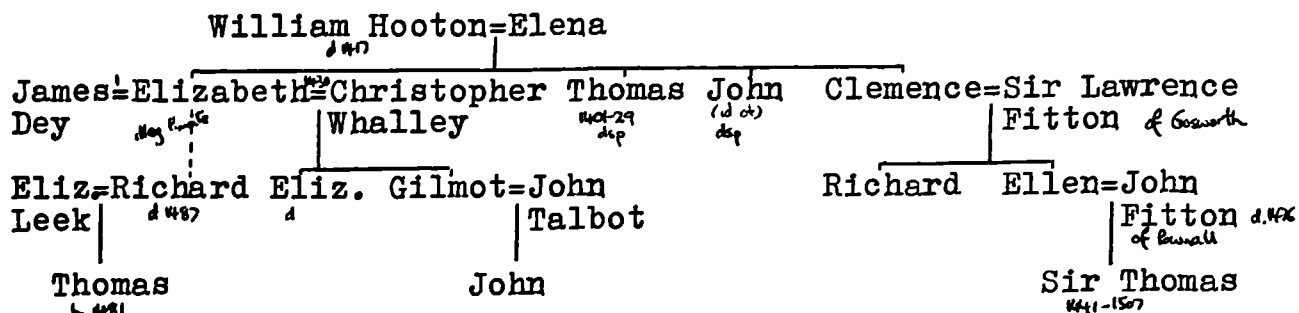
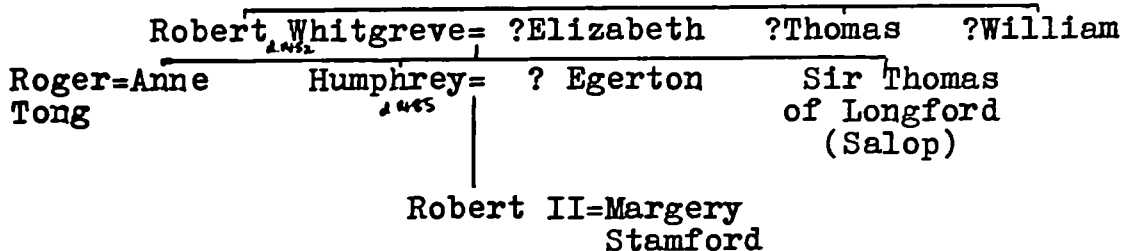
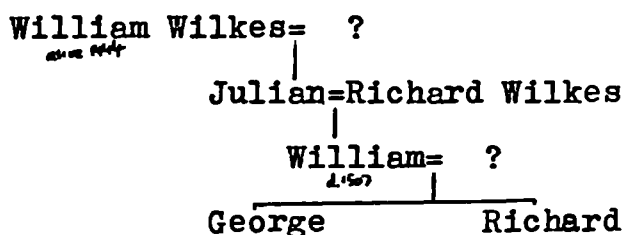
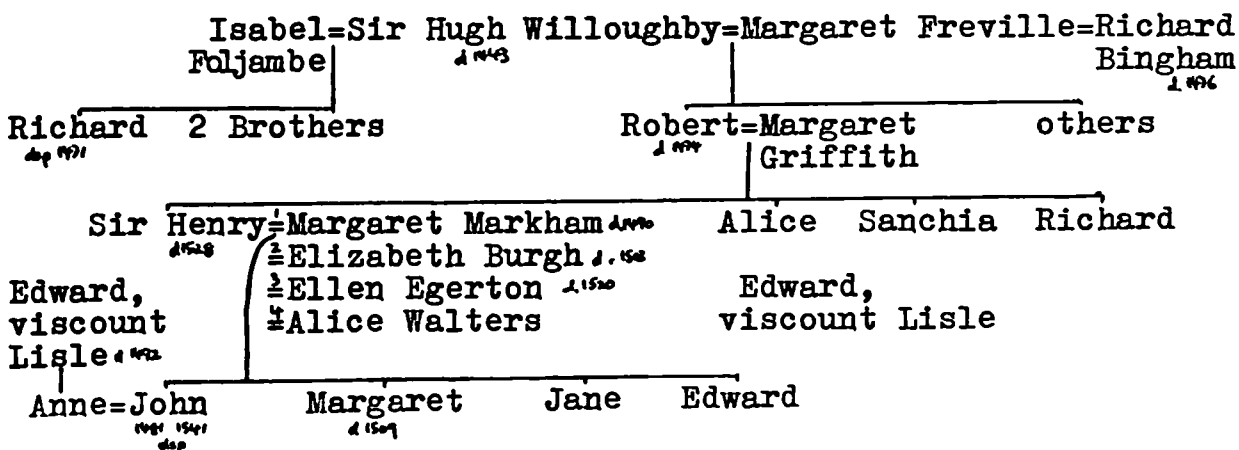
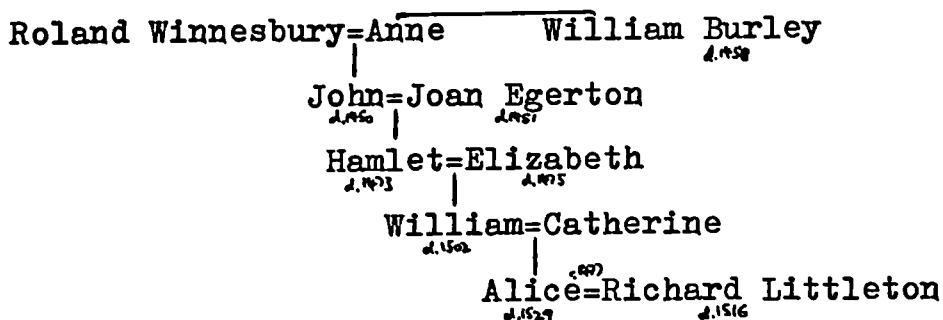


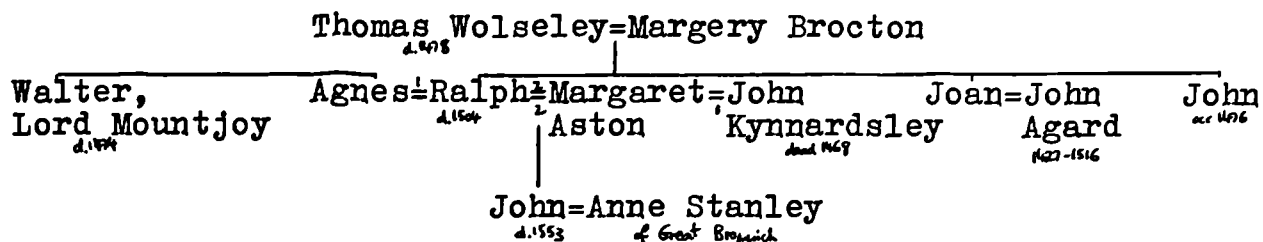
WARINGS of Lea-by-Wolverhampton



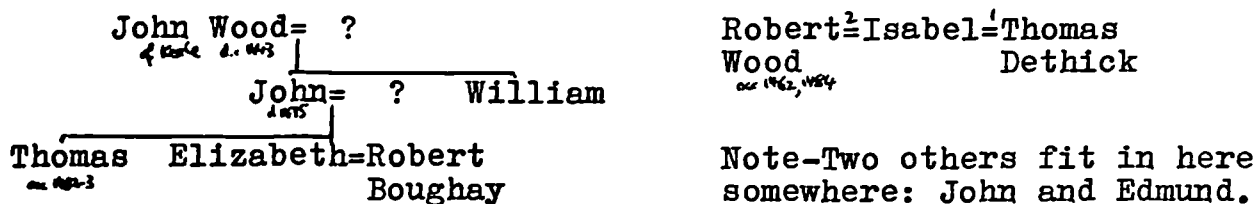
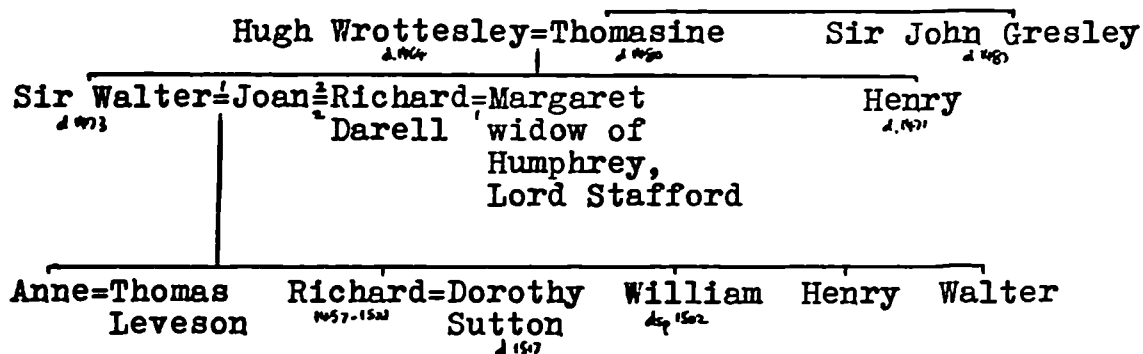
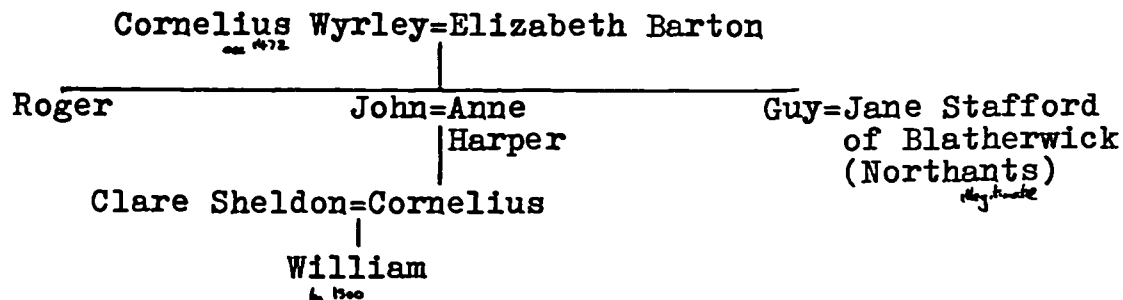
WELLS of Hoarcross



WHALLEY of Darlaston-by-StoneWHITGREVE of Burton-by-StaffordWILKES of Autherley and WillenhallWILLOUGHBY of Wollaton (Nottinghamshire)WINNESBURY of Pillaton, Penkridge and Hockleton (Salop)

WOLSELEY of Wolseley

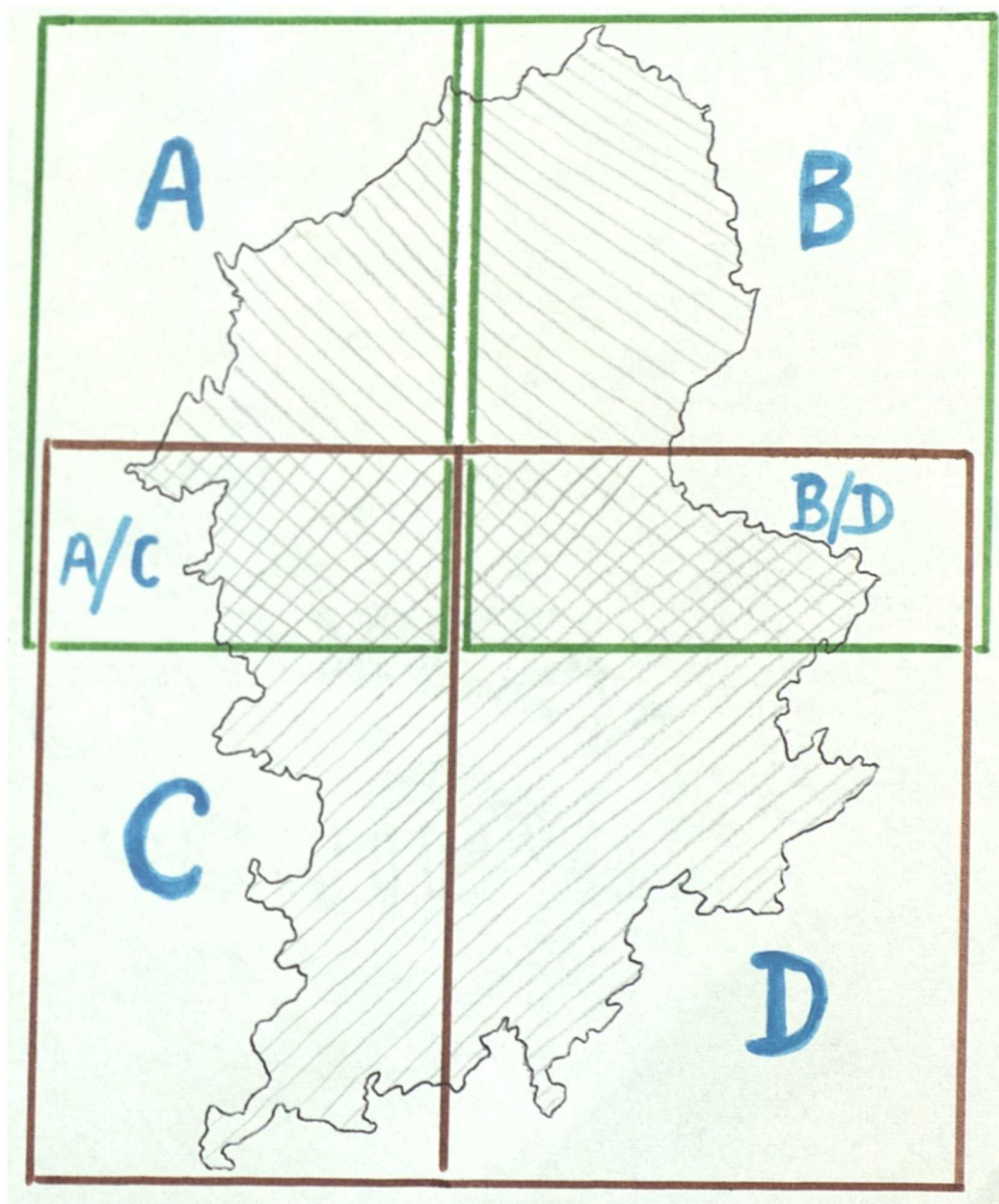
Note-Although direct evidence is lacking to prove it, I believe that Ralph Wolseley had another younger brother, Thomas. This Thomas, who survived Ralph, held the family property at Careswell and Tibbington, probably for the term of his life only.

WOOD of Keele and Uttoxeter (two families)WROTTESELEY of WrottesleyWYRLEY of Handsworth

APPENDIX 10

Emmanuel Bowen's Map of Staffordshire, 1747 (with index).

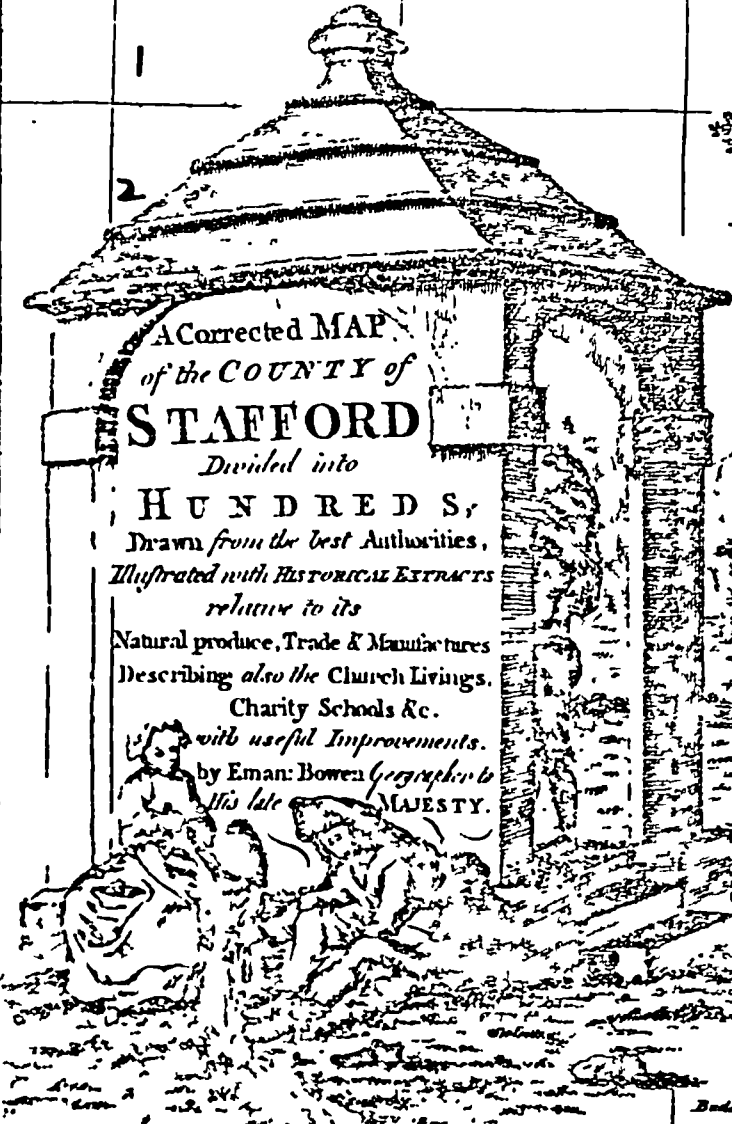
I have included this map of Staffordshire to enable the reader to note, as he reads the text of the thesis, the locations mentioned therein. The map has been photocopied from the endpiece of the volume of Collections for a History of Staffordshire published for 1917-8 by the William Salt Archaeological Society, and was my basic geographical guide during the research for this thesis. The map, as bound here, is divided into four sections, corresponding to the following scheme.



A Corrected MAP
of the COUNTY of
STAFFORD
Divided into
HUNDREDS,
Drawn from the best Authorities,
Illustrated with HISTORICAL EXTRACTS
relative to its
Natural produce, Trade & Manufactures
Describing also the Church Livings,
Charity Schools &c.
with useful Improvements.
by Eman: Bowen Geographer to
His late MAJESTY.

Gawsworth
Explanation

- Burrough Towns with the Num
- Members they send to Parli
- Rectories, Vicarages, and Cur
- Post Stages
- Ancient Religious Houses
- Modern Charity Schools
- Measured Distances
- The Market Days are shown their respective Towns



C H E S H I R E

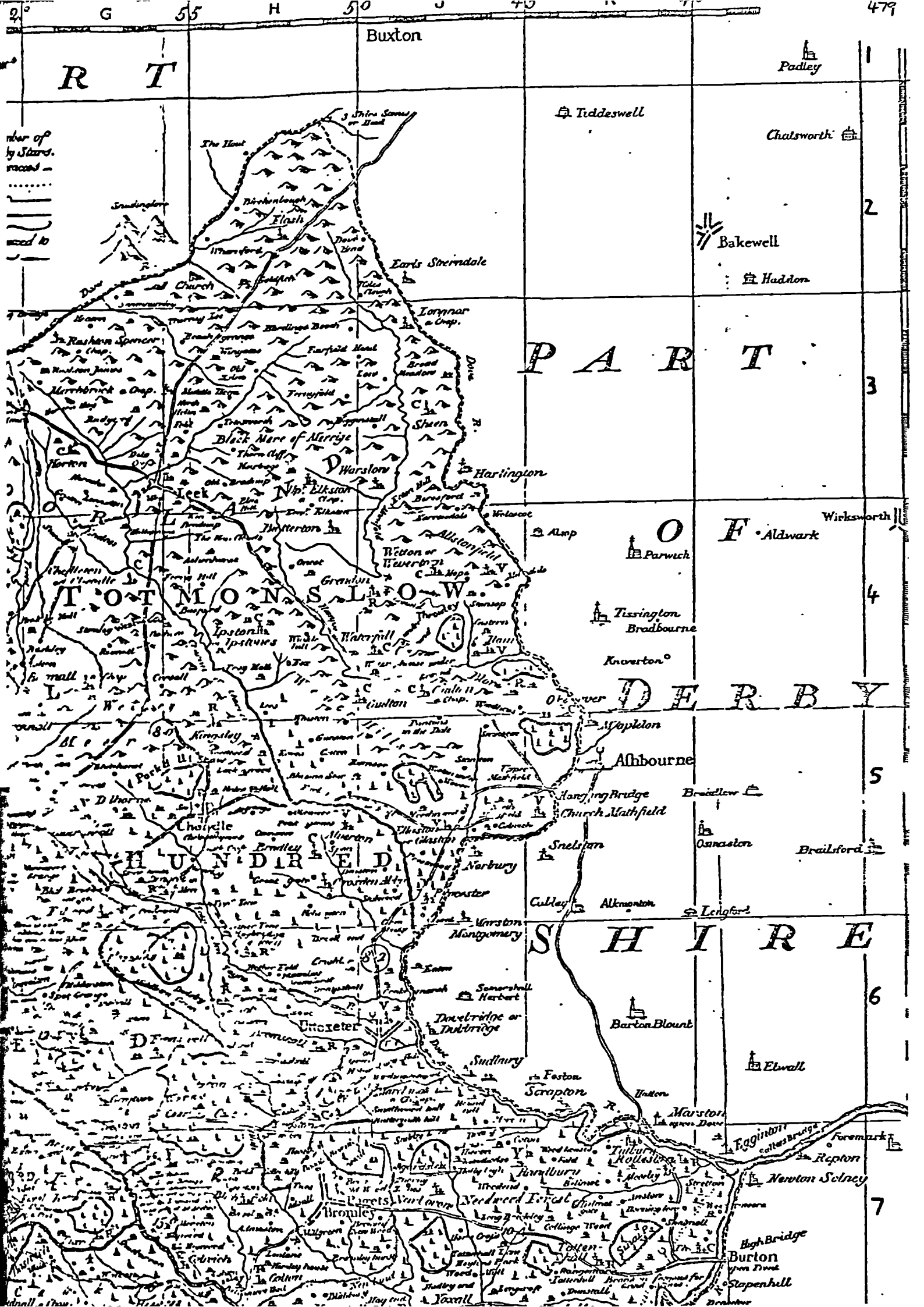
Y R E

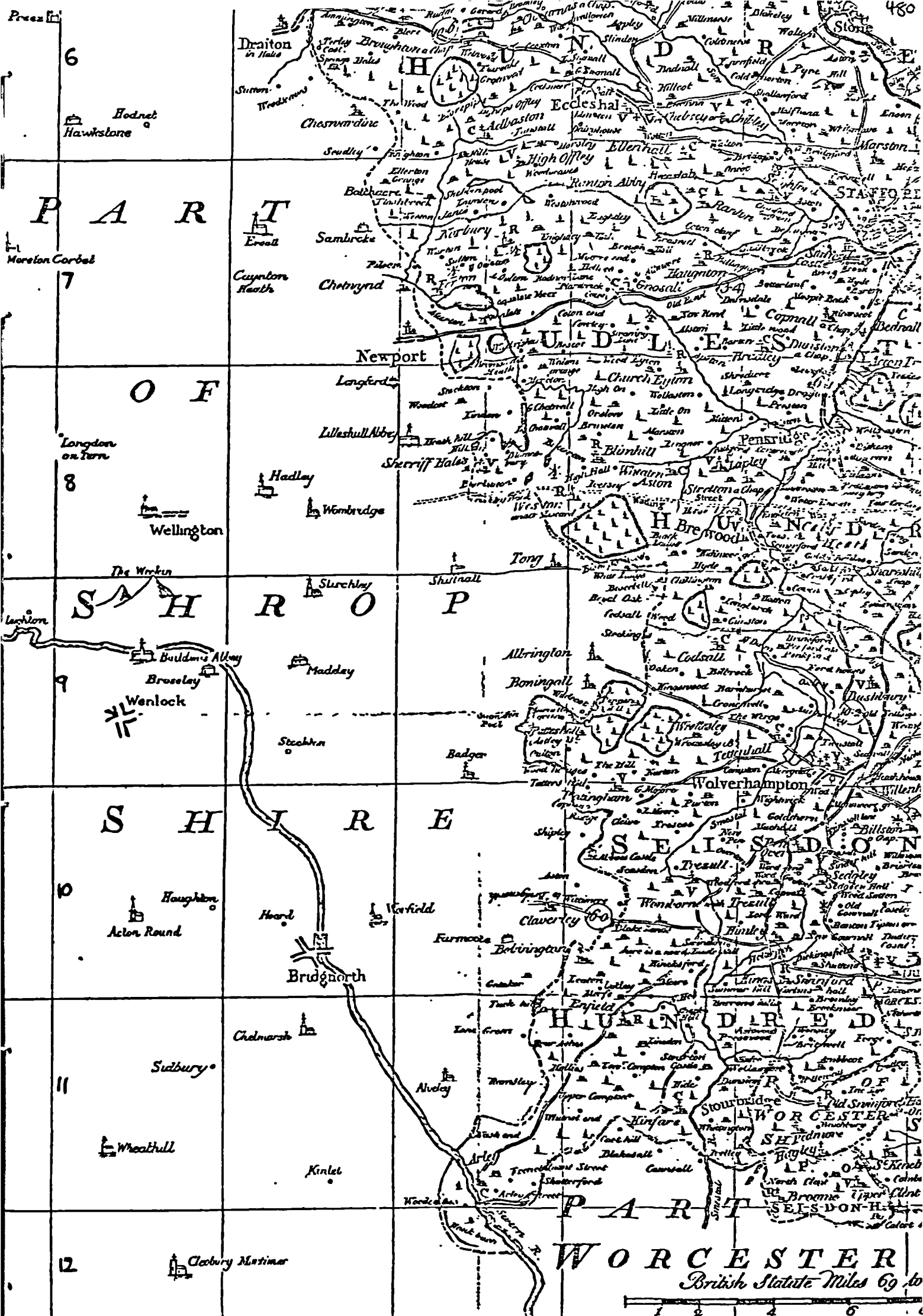
P A R

T

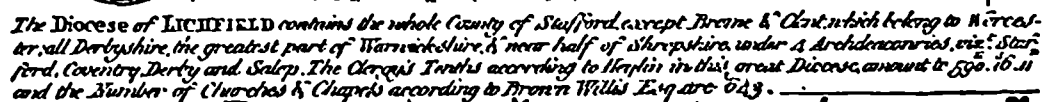
STAFFORD







W O R C E S T E R
British Statute Miles 69 to



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