

RICHARD II'S SERVANTS AND THE MISSENDEN INHERITANCE

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BUCKINGHAMSHIRE in the later fourteenth century lacked a "great family". The knightly Moleyns family of Stoke Poges probably held the largest bloc of property in the county: knights headed its commissions of peace and array early in Richard II's reign. A respected local figure was Sir Thomas Sackville, of Fawley, his only manor in the county. He represented Buckinghamshire in 14 of the 24 parliaments in the reign. Less wealthy gentlemen (of whom Sackville may be an example) could play a prominent part in local affairs, becoming influential through service on their neighbours' business and on commissions. Despite his activity on Buckinghamshire commissions, Sackville was probably less well known in some parts of the county; many of his private links were with his Oxfordshire neighbours; his fellow member of parliament usually came from another part of the county. The loyalties of the Buckinghamshire gentry may have been especially local, partly due to the county's lack of physical unity, partly to its lack of a "great family", a large liberty, an important central borough or a famous shrine. Their loyalties were not especially focused on the Crown, which was not a large landowner there. But many families owed their establishment in the county or advancement to service in the royal household—Buckinghamshire was ideal for commuting to court. Thomas Missenden's career is a good example. The struggle for his grandson's wardship reveals traces of the appearance and complexity of Buckinghamshire society: it cannot be seen as a straightforward struggle between "court" and "county" interests.

Edward III appreciated Thomas Missenden's service. In 1337 Thomas, king's yeoman (probably in the buttery), received Welsh royal grants; in 1338, having served "long and faithfully", two corrodies in the king's gift. In 1343 and 1359 he was butler of the household. He had married, probably in 1342, Isabella, daughter of Sir John Brocas, a Berkshire landowner who had gone far in royal service: the marriage brought him Lincolnshire property.¹ Thomas distinguished himself on the Crécy campaign. In the following years he acquired Buckinghamshire and Hampshire property: in 1348 a manor in Great Missenden and part of one in Quainton, in 1354 Farley Chamberlayne (Hants.)² The two first witnesses to the grants of Quainton were prominent Buckinghamshire landowners—Sir Gerard Braybrooke, who held Horsenden, and John Hampden of Great Hampden. In 1351 they were Thomas's fellow witnesses to a grant to Missenden Abbey. In 1363, when Thomas acquired properties in the Isle of Oleron, Braybrooke's son and

heir Sir Gerard and Reginald Hampden acted in the conveyance.³ In the same year Sir William Moleyns witnessed a grant made by Sir John Brocas. Thomas was elected for the shire to the 1363 parliament with John Hampden, and again in 1365 with Sir Roger Puttenham, Moleyns' friend. Thomas had speedily become established in Buckinghamshire society, helped probably by the Brocas connection, by links made with Missenden Abbey, and also by his daughter's marriage.⁴

Thomas was alive in 1369, when he and his wife obtained royal licence to entail Lincolnshire property on their son and heir Edmund and his wife Juliana. There is little information about Edmund. Styled knight, in 1382 he went surety for his uncle Sir Bernard Brocas, a son of Sir John and Hampshire landowner who became Queen Anne's chamberlain. In 1393 Sir Edmund was elected for Buckinghamshire to attend the Winchester parliament—a convenient journey for one with Hampshire ties.⁵ He died on 10th or 12th October 1394. On 4th November, before the escheators' inquisitions on his inheritance had been returned, Brocas and Sir Edmund's widow Juliana were granted its custody, paying the full value as farm, and the marriage of his eight-year-old son and heir, Bernard. But the Lincolnshire escheator found that the two manors there were Juliana's jointure, through Thomas Missenden's 1369 entail; the Buckinghamshire escheator that Sir Edmund had given his property in the county to Brocas, John Knight, parson of Quainton, and Walter Cramford of Doddershall. Therefore these parts of the inheritance were not then subject to royal wardship: the grant made to Brocas and Juliana was cancelled.⁶ These arrangements, so satisfactory to the family, seem to have been upset as a result of the return of Richard II from Ireland in May 1395. In July Thomas Pever, William Tyrington, Simon Weedon and the Buckinghamshire escheator were appointed to enquire into concealments of Sir Edmund's property. Pever was head of an old established and well-to-do Bedfordshire family: Tyrington, probably his friend, was a servant in the royal household who had settled there. Weedon may have belonged to a family living near Quainton. The escheator, John Reyner (not the man who had held the 1394 inquisition), found on 17th August that Sir Edmund had died seised of his Buckinghamshire property. On 22nd September John Worship, an usher of the king's chamber, was granted its custody during Bernard's minority, without farm, "in consideration of his great expense in recovering the king's right to the premises". Worship, a close business associate of Pever, had, like Tyrington, married a landed Bedfordshire widow. Pever, the country gentleman without a court place, and the two royal servants found association worthwhile. In 1393 the three of them (Pever then being sheriff of Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire) had been appointed to survey forfeited Bedfordshire goods of which Tyrington had been granted a share. Thus Worship's local contacts and access to the king probably enabled him to get control of part of the Missenden inheritance. Reyner came from Billington, a hamlet near his manor of Leighton Buzzard (Beds.).⁷

The Missenden family were left in control only of Bernard's Lincolnshire and Hampshire property, and of his marriage. Brocas may have been too ill to exercise influence at court: he died before 4th February, 1396. By then

Juliana had married Thomas Shelley, esquire, who on the 1395 expedition had been in the retinue of the king's half-brother, John Holand, Earl of Huntingdon (Duke of Exeter 1397-9). Shelley may have been introduced to Juliana by John Verdon, Holand's esquire, who had property in Quainton. In October 1396 Shelley, the king's esquire, was granted a share in goods from which Verdon had previously received a grant. In 1398 Shelley was appointed steward of Cornwall for life: by 1399 he was steward of Holand's household. The St. Albans chronicler Walsingham commented on the rapid rise of his fortunes—which he owed doubtless to his connection with Holand, one of Richard's most lavishly rewarded favourites in the last years of the reign. There is plenty of evidence that Shelley was very acquisitive of property and completely unscrupulous: nevertheless, he may have had a certain charm.⁸

On 12th February, 1397, Worship gave up all claim to the Missenden wardship in Chancery. On 1st June the attorney of Walter Cramford (Sir Edmund's sole surviving alleged feoffee) appeared there, alleging that Sir Edmund had enfeoffed the properties long before his death. The plea was sent before the justices of the King's Bench, and an inquisition was held at the Aylesbury assizes, the result of which was in Cramford's favour. On 20th November the Buckinghamshire escheator was ordered to give up the property, which Cramford subsequently gave to Shelley and his wife.⁹

The struggle for the inheritance casts a little light on Sir Edmund and his father. Thomas engaged in the legally tricky business of building up a landed inheritance: yet neither he nor his son seems to have been burdened with lawsuits on its account. Thomas procured royal licence for his 1369 Lincolnshire enfeoffments, whose aim was to create a life tenancy for his daughter-in-law, Juliana. He provided for his wife Isabella by settling his Great Missenden and Quainton properties on her for life. Isabella was alive in May 1391: so for most of his life Sir Edmund did not hold his principal Buckinghamshire property. In March 1392 the sheriff of Buckinghamshire was ordered to procure the election of a coroner in place of Sir Edmund, "who has no lands in the county whereupon he may dwell according to his estate". His father had carved out an inheritance: the seemingly insignificant Sir Edmund spent a lifetime waiting for his. When at last he could dispose of his Buckinghamshire inheritance, no royal licence seems to have been procured.¹⁰ Shelley proved a more effective protector: his influence may have assisted Cramford's plea. Worship's friends failed to appear at Aylesbury to answer the proclamation asking for information or challenges. Local opinion was probably sympathetic to the Missenden family—Shelley was elected for the shire to both 1397 parliaments.¹¹ Cramford's loyal service may have helped the family—for he was locally influential.

He belonged to a family which had held Doddershall, near Quainton, since the early 13th century. By 1363 he had succeeded his father Robert, who witnessed the 1348 grants of Quainton to Thomas Missenden. In 1369 Walter was in the military retinue of Amaury St. Amand (lord of Grendon, nearby), and again in 1372. In 1377-8 he was escheator of Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire, in 1379 on the Buckinghamshire commission to collect subsidy,

and in 1380 to survey and control assessment of another subsidy. In 1381 he was among those appointed to determine services owed to St. Albans Abbey.¹² In 1388-9 an opponent petitioned the Chancellor for a writ to restrain Walter Crauford [*sic*] of Buckinghamshire, alleging that “le dit Walter est si grant en ycelle pays qe nul poit auoir droit ne reson de luy”. Two of Walter’s subsequent sureties to keep the peace were Thomas Cowley and John James. Like Walter, Cowley was by birth a very minor Buckinghamshire landowner: he had been frequently escheator. James was a prosperous burgess of Wallingford (Berks.), closely connected with Buckinghamshire gentry, among them the experienced shire knight, Sackville.¹³ In 1388 Walter witnessed a demise of Dunton with Sackville. In 1390 he was associated with an important Buckinghamshire family: Ashendon was quitclaimed to Sir Philip la Vache of Chalfont St. Giles, a distinguished royal retainer and friend of the Moleyns family; among the witnesses were Cowley, Edmund Brudenell of Amersham (king’s attorney in the King’s Bench) and Cramford. In 1392 a number of Buckinghamshire landowners certified a claim of descent Cramford (“Grauntfort”) was making: among them were Sir Edmund Missenden and John Barton, probably the rising Buckinghamshire lawyer who was Shelley’s fellow shire knight in the first 1397 parliament, and Exeter’s attorney in 1399.¹⁴

Cramford’s career strikingly illustrates the influential role in local affairs that could be played by the minor landowner. His usefulness appears again in his appointment in 1404, with Edmund Hampden, Brudenell and one other, to enquire into trespasses committed against king and people in the county. He does not seem to have added to his patrimony, as Cowley did through marriages, and Barton and Brudenell through the profits of a legal career. In 1406 he procured licence to have Mass celebrated in the chapel of his house at Doddershall. This may have been a social pretension: or he may have found the ride to Quainton or Grendon wearying.¹⁵ (The property is a very isolated one.)

Shelley was executed for complicity in the plot of January 1400 against Henry IV. His neighbours failed to participate. A man entered his Aylesbury property and stole 6 oxen, leading them without interference into Hertfordshire. The Missenden inheritance was taken into the king’s hands, but on Juliana’s petition she received the Buckinghamshire and Lincolnshire property as jointure, held with Sir Edmund. She lost the wardship of Farley (Hants.), which was granted to others in 1400, 1402 and 1403, on the last two occasions to landowners with court connections who had acquired Buckinghamshire property, possibly friends of the family: John Frome, lord of Buckingham and king’s councillor, and John Boys, who held land in Quainton, and in 1402 appears connected with Henry IV’s half-brother, Bishop Beaufort. Frome married a daughter to Bernard Missenden, who came of age in 1407, the year his mother died. He died in 1409, leaving two daughters under age. The wardship of the whole inheritance and their marriages were granted to the king’s son Humphrey.¹⁶

Thus successive generations of royal servants and a royal prince sought to profit from temporarily controlling an inheritance—founded by a royal ser-

vant—over which the king could exercise feudal prerogatives. There were ways in which the family could keep control during a minority. The husband could make a life tenancy in it for his wife. Relatives and friends could bid against rival offers for a grant of wardship and marriage. These expedients had disadvantages. Families also might conceal the fact that a minor was a tenant-in-chief, or held certain property: they might forge charters of enfeoffment. Local escheators and juries might connive at this.¹⁷ Richard II seems to have been aware of the need to combat more systematically local indifference to royal rights. In 1391 William Blundell was appointed during pleasure king's approver of escheats and forfeitures throughout the realm. Sheriffs and escheators were to make inquisitions on all properties which he informed them were concealed. Blundell had to pledge a large sum not to practice extortion in office. In the 1395 parliament, during the king's absence in Ireland, the Commons petitioned successfully for the abolition of his commission. In 1398 he was re-appointed, doubtless an unpopular move: Henry IV's usurpation probably terminated this second appointment.¹⁸ Members of the royal household who hoped to search out wardships for themselves may have resented his activities as much as others. Crown rights were for the gentry to regulate: thus their ambitions and local protectiveness raged over Sir Edmund's incomplete (or fictitious) jointure.

¹ *C(alendar of) F(ine) R(olls)*, 1327-37, 38-9; *ib.*, 1337-47, 329; *C(alendar of) C(lose) R(olls)*, 1337-9, 391, 403; *ib.*, 1354-60, 541; *C(alendar of) P(atent) R(olls)*, 1340-3, 500; Montagu Burrows, *The Family of Brocas*, etc., 57ff. For Thomas's possible family origins at Great Missenden, Lipscomb, *History . . . of the County of Buckingham*, i (1847), 382, and *V(ictoria) C(ounty) H(istory)*, ii, 349n.

² *CPR*, 1345-8, 481-2; *VCH Bucks.*, ii, 348; *CCR*, 1346-9, 556, 558, 588; *CPR*, 1354-8, 44-5. The Prince of Wales, who confirmed Thomas's Welsh grants, was overlord of Quainton (*Black Prince's Register*, i, 112, 140, 90). In 1353 Thomas founded a chantry in Quainton Church, for the good estate of the king, himself and his wife (*CPR*, 1350-4, 493). For further marks of royal favour to him, *Cal. of Charter Rolls, 1341-1417*, 141, 208. He was listed in the royal household in 1368 (R. E. G. Kirk, *Life-Records of Chaucer*, 166).

³ *C(alendar of) I(nquisitions) P(ost) M(ortem)*, x, p.400; *VCH Bucks.*, ii, 287-8; *The Cartulary of Missenden Abbey*, iii ed. J. G. Jenkins, p.209; *CIPM*, xii, p.3.

⁴ Montagu Burrows, 295; *Official Return*, etc., i, 172, 174; *CPR*, 1367-70, 35, 210. Thomas was connected with the Abbot of Missenden in 1347: his son Sir Edmund held half the Abbey's advowson at his death (*CCR*, 1346-9, 388; *ib.*, 1396-9, 177). Thomas's daughter Joan married John Lenveysey, who inherited a manor in Great Missenden and half the Abbey's advowson: his heir was the well-to-do landowner Sir John Cheyne of Chenies. After Lenveysey's death the manor was leased to Thomas's widow for life, with reversion to Missenden Abbey (*CIPM*, xi, pp.84-5; *PRO*, *Cal. of Inquisitions, Richard II*, pp.103-4; *VCH Bucks.*, ii, 349). Moleyns appointed the Abbot of Missenden to assist in his funeral rites (Gibbons, *Early Lincoln Wills*, 60).

⁵ *CPR*, 1367-70, 256; *CFR*, 1377-83, 284; Montagu Burrows, 90ff, 128; *Official Return*, i, 244. Brocas then sat for Hampshire (*ib.*, 245; cf. *CCR*, 1392-6, 117).

⁶ *PRO*, Chancery Miscellanea, C.47/49/2; *ib.*, Exchequer Inq.P.M., E.149/64/5; *CFR*, 1391-9, 130; *CCR*, 1392-6, 343-4. On 16th June, 1395, Brocas and Juliana were granted custody of only Farley (Hants.), with Bernard's marriage (*CPR*, 1391-6, 575). Sir Edmund had granted Knight a share in a rent from Farley, for life (*CCR*, 1392-6, 343).

⁷ *CPR*, 1391-6, 650; *CIPM*, xi, p.162; *CPR*, 1385-9, 60; *VCH Beds.*, iii, 337; *CCR*, 1389-92, 319; *VCH Bucks.*, iii, 365; E.149/64/5; *CPR*, 1391-6, 619; *ib.*, 487; *ib.*, 1388-92, 361; *ib.*, 1391-6, 220, 239; *PRO*, Common Pleas, C.P.40/538/m.250.

⁸ *Cal. of Select Pleas and Memoranda of . . . London*, 1381-1412, 235; *CPR*, 1391-6, 535; *ib.*, 1388-92, 456; *ib.*, 1396-9, 36; *ib.*, 409; *Chronique de . . . Richart Deux*, ed. B. Williams, 259; *Annales Ricardi Secundi*, etc. in *Johannis de Trokelowe . . . Chronica et Annales* (Rolls Series), 327. Huntingdon's companion in flight in 1400, alluded to by these chroniclers, is

service in May 1391 (*CPR*, 1388-92, 406). He held Aylesbury from February 1397 until September 1399, having been granted it by the Countess of Ormonde during her husband's absence in Ireland and without his consent (*CCR*, 1399-1402, 148). Huntingdon wrongfully put him in possession of Westbury and maintained him there (*CPR*, 1401-5, 453). For Shelley's bad conscience about his treatment of William Wimbledon, *ib.*, 1399-1401, 237.

⁹ *Ib.*, 1391-6, 619; E.149/64/5; *CCR*, 1396-9, 177; *ib.*, 1399-1402, 154. Before 10th February 1397 Pever, Tyrington and Weedon swore in Chancery that they had never received the 1395 commission to enquire into Sir Edmund's property (*ib.*, 1396-9, 112; cf. *ib.*, 96).

¹⁰ *Ib.*, 1389-92, 349; *ib.*, 451. The widow Isabella had married Sir John Golafre, to whose family her own were connected by marriage (*VCH Bucks.*, ii, 348; Montagu Burrows, 118, 281; for her vow of chastity after Golafre's death, Wykeham's Register (ed. T. F. Kirby, ii, 307-8). Golafre's nephew John, king's esquire, stood by Richard II in 1399 (J. S. Roskell, *The Commons in the Parliament of 1422*, 184-5). Shelley and Sir Bernard Brocas's son and heir Sir Bernard, master of the king's buckhounds, both revolted in Richard's favour in 1400 (*Chronicles of London*, ed. C. L. Kingsford, 62; *CFR*, 1391-9, 183; *CPR*, 1399-1401, 193).

¹¹ *Official Return*, i, 252, 255. In the second parliament Shelley sat with Sir Thomas Aylesbury, son of a wealthy Buckinghamshire landowner, Sir John, of Milton Keynes, who seems to have had no close court connections. Throughout the period 1391 to 1398 Sir John asserted the illegitimacy of Richard Basset, a minor in royal ward: but his claims in the Common Pleas were set aside on grounds of the minority. In 1394 the Earl of Rutland, the king's cousin, was granted the wardship: in 1399 Shelley and Verdon were among those enfeoffed in some of Basset's Northamptonshire property (cf. *Northamptonshire Past & Present*, III, no. 6, 291-6).

¹² *VCH Bucks.*, iv, 96; Descriptive Catalogue (1852) of Doddershall Park deeds, nos. 65-6; PRO, E.101/29/29; *VCH Bucks.*, iv, 52; *CFR*, 1377-83, 34, 148, 228-9; *Gesta Abbatum*, etc., (Rolls Series), iii, 353. Sir John Cheyne of Chenies was also in Amaury's 1369 retinue (see above, note 4). I owe thanks to Mr. and Mrs. C. Prideaux of Doddershall Park for their hospitality in allowing me to consult their archives, and for allowing me to cite them.

¹³ *Select Cases in Chancery*, 1364-1471, ed. W. P. Baildon, p. 127; *CCR*, 1385-9, 632; *ib.*, 447; *CFR*, 1377-83, 349; *ib.*, 1383-91, 77, 210; Roskell, 193; *CCR*, 1392-6, 87. In 1363-6 Cramford was regarder in Bernwood Forest, of which Sir Edmund de la Pole of Boarstall Castle was forester (*The Boarstall Cartulary*, ed. H. E. Salter and A. H. Cooke, pp. 174, 176-7; *CCR*, 1354-60, 592). Cowley was verderer in Bernwood in 1394 (*ib.*, 1392-6, 197). James's son married Pole's daughter.

¹⁴ *Ib.*, 1385-9, 593; *ib.*, 1389-92, 171; E. Rickert in *Modern Philology*, xi, 1913-4; *CCR*, 1377-81, 492; *CPR*, 1396-9, 49; J. Wake, *The Brudenells of Deene*. I owe thanks to Miss C. Baker and Mr. A. Vere Woodman of The Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society for giving me a copy of Cramford's certification (cf. Doddershall deeds, no. 93). For Barton, Roskell, 150-1; *CPR*, 1396-9, 520.

¹⁵ *Ib.*, 1401-5, 364; *CCR*, 1360-4, 552; *VCH Bucks.*, iii, 187; *CCR*, 1422-9, 140; Repingdon's Register, ed. M. Archer, i, 63; Doddershall deeds, nos. 143, 145, 153. Possibly in the mid-15th century William Cramford mortgaged Doddershall manor for £60 (PRO, C.I./17/20).

¹⁶ *CPR*, 1399-1401, 189; *CCR*, 1399-1402, 154, 213; *CFR*, 1399-1405, 57, 159, 203; *VCH Bucks.*, iii, 481; A. L. Brown in *E.H.R.*, lxxix (1964), 2-9, 30; Doddershall deeds, nos. 112, 116; *CFR*, 1405-13, 78, 80; *CCR*, 1409-13, 7; *CPR*, 1408-13, 102, 141.

¹⁷ In 1403 two king's knights were granted a rent in Buckinghamshire held by Sir Edmund, said to have been concealed from Richard II and Henry IV, "as they have offered to sue for the recovery of the rent at their own expenses" (*ib.*, 1401-5, 329). John Longville, the escheator who found favourably for the Missenden family in 1394, was from the county (*CCR*, 1392-6, 344; *VCH Bucks.*, iv, 507).

¹⁸ *CPR*, 1388-92, 382; *CCR*, 1389-92, 366; *ib.*, 325; *CPR*, 1391-6, 564; *CFR*, 1391-9, 262. In 1391 Blundell was also appointed to enquire into concealments and waste in the royal demesne and farms in Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire (*CPR*, 1388-92, 440). In 1399 there were widespread fears about the king's intentions concerning wardships (*Annales Ricardi Secundi*, etc., 240). In 1400 the former sheriff of Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire, the former escheator and sheriff of Oxfordshire and Berkshire, and the former sheriff of Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire (Worship) swore that they had not received writs to co-operate with Blundell (*CCR*, 1399-1402, 121, 187, 290).

firmly identified as Shelley by PRO, E.101/335/7. Shelley may have been in his or the king's